

Gandhi,
Khilafat
and
the Partition

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CONTENTS

Introduction - 'A Fable Agreed Upon'

Prologue - Learning from History

Part I - Gandhi, Khilafat and the Partition

Part II - Gandhi and the Freedom Movement

Part III - Appendixes

Introduction

'A Fable Agreed Upon'

History in the service of the Party

"*What is history*" Napoleon once asked, "*but a fable agreed upon?*" This is as true of Indian history as of Europe. A historical fable is usually concocted to serve the interests of a favored few. In India after independence in 1947, history was made to serve the beneficiaries of the Congress Party that came to power—of a political dynasty in particular. (Ancient and medieval history was also distorted, but that is not the concern here.) Of immediate interest to the Congress Party was the creation and propagation of a version of history of the Freedom Movement in which the role of the Congress Party and its leaders was made all important, while the contributions of others were minimized. As part of this, some figures like Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, who gave everything while getting nothing in return were vilified and even persecuted.

But even here, in the exaltation of the Congress, one can discern a distinct pattern. It was not the Congress as a whole that was exalted, but the leadership and the movement following the rise of Mahatma Gandhi, coinciding roughly with the death of Bal Gangadhar Tilak. This prominently included the Nehru clan and equally prominently excluded earlier stalwarts like Sri Aurobindo and later rivals like Subhash Bose. The Nehru clan, which came to hold power for nearly forty of the first fifty years in independent India, acquired Gandhi's name also through the fortuitous circumstance of Jawaharlal Nehru's daughter Indira marrying a Zoroastrian by name Feroze Gandhi who had nothing to do with the Mahatma. Through another fortuitous marriage, this legacy —and name— is now

wielded by the staunchly Catholic Italian woman Sonia Maino with close ties to her Mother Church. So the Congress party, which sprang from the Hindu Renaissance of the nineteenth century, is now for all practical purposes in the hands of a Catholic clique.

This extraordinary turn of history demands serious study, particularly how Gandhi's name and his 'legacy' came to be invoked in this venal exercise. The problem is not merely Gandhi the Saint protecting Gandhi the Politician, but a more recent phenomenon – of safeguarding Gandhi the Capital Investment. Gandhi the Saint demands a life of utmost simplicity and service; Gandhi the Politician – now turned Capital Investment – has become a convenient conduit for acquiring wealth without limit and power without accountability. His saintliness is invoked only to shield venality and stifle debate.

A no less disturbing trend is the inquisitorial atmosphere that has come to prevail in India as regards Gandhi and his role in history. Any academic, journalist or even writer who raises doubts about him is likely face the wrath of powerful interests for 'hurting the sentiments' of people. In reality, it hurts only the prospects of politicians and a multitude of individuals and institutions that thrive in his name; there have been no protests by the people, but only of Congress party workers. As an example, a Marathi play based on the testimony of his assassin Godse was banned because it raised some questions about the 'authorized' version of Gandhi. The objection to the play came entirely from the Congress workers and not any 'people'. It ran without incident for several weeks in Gandhi's home state of Gujarat. Is Gandhi's greatness so delicately poised that even the statement of his assassin is enough to topple it?

The present effort is intended to serve as a corrective in this stifling atmosphere. It seeks to initiate a fresh debate about Gandhi and his contributions by focusing on two

areas in which his role has remained all but unchallenged over the past fifty years: nationalism and the freedom movement. In reexamining these, I have drawn my material from two little known sources – ‘*Gandhi and Anarchy*’ by C. Sankaran Nair, and the three volume ‘*History of the Freedom Movement*’ by R. C. Majumdar. The former is a contemporary account by a leading Congressman from an earlier generation, while the latter is a magisterial account by one of modern India’s greatest historians. It is a telling commentary on the intellectual and political climate in independent India that the Congress Government made a serious effort to suppress Majumdar’s great work; Majumdar himself in an Appendix gave an account of it. (Majumdar’s books are published by Firma KLM of Calcutta; Nair’s book is out of print.)

The present work makes no claims to being a scholarly study; it may in fact be seen as an extended summary of the two works cited above, especially Volume III of Majumdar’s trilogy. Several generations of Indians – including my own – have grown up on a diet of history that serves only the interests of a narrow clique. In addition, it ignores the enormous contribution made by the Swadeshi movement before Gandhi arrived on the scene –by leaders like Surendra Nath Bannerji, Bipin Chandra Pal, Lala Lajpat Rai, and, above all, Sri Aurobindo and Bal Gangadhar Tilak. It can be argued that this Swadeshi movement was the real national movement, and the Congress after the death of Tilak fell into the hands of careerists and opportunists who happened to reap the benefits of historical events –like World War II and its fallout. Even this they botched with timid policies and unprincipled compromises leading to the holocaust of the Partition and the Kashmir problem. This, even more than independence, is the legacy of the Congress Party; independence would probably have come, but lack of both vision and strength of purpose led to problems that

have remained unresolved even after fifty years.

Subhas Bose's contribution suppressed

Upon careful study of these sources, one thing becomes quite plain: **there has been a systematic campaign by successive Congress Governments to diminish Subhas Bose and his contribution to Indian independence.** Two examples should suffice. When Indira Gandhi was Prime Minister, all copies of a film on Bose prepared under Sardar Patel were confiscated and destroyed. In addition, the film 'Subhas Chandra Bose', with the renowned actor Abhi Bhattacharya in the lead role, was banned by the Government during the emergency. (Earlier, Nehru's Government had forbidden display of Subhas Bose's photographs in all offices of the defense establishment. Happily this is no longer true.)

Bose's contribution, however, cannot permanently be ignored. After supplying some startling evidence, in the second edition of Volume III of his work, Majumdar observed:

*"It seldom falls to the lot of a historian to have his views, differing radically from those generally accepted without demur, confirmed by such an unimpeachable authority. As far back as 1948 I wrote in an article that **the contribution made by Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose towards the achievement of freedom in 1947 was no less, and perhaps, far more important than that of Mahatma Gandhi...**"*

The 'unimpeachable authority' he cited happened to be Clement Attlee, the Prime Minister of Britain at the time of India's independence. (This is discussed in Part II.) This will no doubt come as a shock to most Indians brought up to believe that the Congress movement driven by the 'spiritual force' of Mahatma Gandhi forced the British to leave India. But both evidence and the logic of history are against this beautiful but childish fantasy; it was the fear of mutiny by the Indian armed forces — and not any 'spiritual force' —

that forced the issue of freedom.

(Also, if Gandhi's 'spiritual force' really brought independence from the British, it would tend to make the British rulers a lot more spiritual than what history tells us. For example, there were no 'spiritual' considerations when King Henry VIII broke from Church of Rome; nor any in evidence in the recent problems afflicting the English royal family or relationships with Ireland. The British seem to a singularly unspiritual race.)

Lessons of history

This reexamination of history holds important lessons for the future. First, **spiritual principles, no matter how noble, are usually helpless in dealing with a ruthless adversary. But a dogmatic belief in the efficacy and effectiveness of such a principle invariably leads to self-delusion and results in misery for its believers.** In the Khilafat, for example, had Gandhi frankly told his followers and the Government that he would do his best to keep his movement non-violent, but could not promise that it would remain so, he would have put people on guard, and the scale of the tragedy might have been reduced. Instead, he refused to accept failure or responsibility and kept insisting that the Government suspend all activities against the Mopla rebels as they went on their destructive spree.

An objective analysis of history shows also the failure of nonviolence as a political *tactic*. **There are times when violent methods have to be used to counter violence. There is a famous Sanskrit line: *ahimsa paramo dharmah, dharmahimsa tathaiva ca* – "Non-violence is the highest principle, and so is violence in defense of the righteous". Pacifists are fond of quoting only the first part.** Its real meaning is that in order to establish peace one should be prepared to use force to defend *dharmah*. Mindless attachment to pacifism inflicts untold suffering on the innocent, while sheltering cowards and opportunists - as with the Congress Party today.

Recognizing this, John Stuart Mill wrote long ago:

“War is an ugly thing, but it is not the ugliest of things. The ugliest is that man who holding that nothing is worth defending or worth fighting for would let better men than himself protect him”.

And Sri Aurobindo said:

“The sword of the warrior is as necessary to the fulfillment of justice as the holiness of the saint. To maintain justice and to prevent the strong from despoiling, and the weak from being oppressed is the function for which the Kshatriya was created. Therefore, says Krishna in the Mahabharata, God created battle and armor, the sword, the bow and the dagger”.

Votaries of pacifism do not wish to face this truth, for it demands too much of them. But innocent people who trust their leaders to protect them are made to pay the price. This has been the tragedy of India under its supposedly pacific leaders.

Gandhi's greatness

Since some of the things I have to say in these essays are bound to raise the ire of many Indian (and non-Indian) admirers of Mahatma Gandhi, I should perhaps make my own position clear. I regard Gandhi as a great man, but not a constructive political leader, much less a statesman. I see him as a crusader after causes with no consistent vision embodying either nationalism or national policy. I see his career as a succession of crusades in causes that were sometimes totally unworthy – like the Khilafat. On the other hand, important causes like the Swaraj in 1920 and the national movement in 1932 were abandoned on a personal whim, leaving his followers in the lurch. Above all, he embodies for me two viewpoints that have done immense harm in the world, especially India – theocracy and moral relativism.

His ‘saintliness’ was an anachronism – a medieval idea mixing religion and politics. Unlike Sri Aurobindo, who left

politics to pursue a spiritual life, Gandhi remained a politician to the last. His saintliness often magnified the sufferings of the innocent while absolving the aggressors of any accountability or even guilt. His moral relativism manifested itself in the slogan of *sarva dharma samabhava*, which could be, and was, used to equate evil and good – the murderer and the victim. Going by this measure, as an extreme case, Gandhi and Godse were morally equivalent for each being true to his own *dharma*. As we shall see later, this was the principle applied by Gandhi himself during the Mopla Rebellion, and also in defending the behavior of the Ali brothers when they invited the Amir of Afghanistan to invade India in defense of Islam. This is hardly consistent with a vision of nationalism.

Gandhi's real greatness lies outside politics – in social work and the inspiration he provided in the fight against oppression worldwide. And it was no small achievement. From Martin Luther King to Nelson Mandela, every leader fighting oppression and injustice has drawn his inspiration from Gandhi. If we take away his contribution as a political leader, Mahatma Gandhi loses nothing in greatness. If anything he gains considerably. *Gandhi the Man was much greater than Gandhi the Politician, but the latter represents a much more valuable asset to those exploiting his name. (Gandhi the Man demands also a great deal from his followers in the form of simplicity and service, and promises little reward.)* And that is India's tragedy.

More fundamentally, it is important that Indian thinkers outgrow the habit of uncritical acceptance of the ideas of someone simply because he is considered 'great'. *The ideas and actions of everyone must be judged on their own merits – not against the background of his real or imagined greatness.* As Karl Popper said: "*If our civilization is to survive, we must break with the habit of deference to great men. Great men make great mistakes*"

And this applies to Gandhi no less than it does to Lord Rama, Gautama Buddha, Jesus Christ, Prophet Muhammad – and to every man and woman that ever lived. I will be more than satisfied if the present work leads to some reexamination of the history of the period dominated by Mahatma Gandhi.

I have included three Appendixes, the first two relating to the Mopla Rebellion, and the third on the treachery of the Communists during the freedom struggle. My goal in these is to highlight important facets of history that have been whitewashed by politically motivated scholars to serve their own interests.

Acknowledgements

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Prologue

Learning from History

When I began this essay, my goal was to highlight the need for reexamining recent history, the role of the Congress and its leadership in the Freedom Struggle – especially of Mahatma Gandhi. This is still the main goal, which I have tried to reach by bringing to light the distortions of history resulting from forty years of dominance of the national scene by the Congress Party and its dependents. But now, another challenge presents itself before the nation: the rise of Islamic Fundamentalism in the neighborhood – already a reality in Afghanistan, soon to take hold of Pakistan. This is bound to have its impact on the hundred million Muslims living in India. Does the history discussed in these essays have any lessons to offer?

The first point to note is that the ‘de-secularization’ of Pakistan in the form of increasing Islamization is a reality. Whether it will take the form of an ‘Islamic revolution’ after the Iranian pattern as predicted by its former premier Benazir Bhutto remains to be seen. How will the Muslims of India react to it? Are they going to behave like their predecessors during the Khilafat, when the defeat of far away Turkey raised their passions to fever pitch? Will this be followed by uprisings like the Mopla Rebellion?

When we compare the situation in India today with what it was in 1920, we find both similarities and differences. **The Muslim masses today are no more enlightened and no less under the grip of reactionary forces than they were at the time of the Khilafat nearly eighty years ago.** But they are much weaker relative to the Hindu majority. Also, there are no Muslim leaders on the horizon that command the kind of influence and authority that the Ali brothers did. Neither is there a Hindu leader of the stature of Mahatma Gandhi

willing to stake all for the sake of 'unity', and carry the people with him. At the same time, there is no shortage of secondary leaders willing to take the side of any Muslim demand regardless of its merit. The Congress Party – as well as the Communist – is practically in their hands. **Only future will tell if Indians have learnt any lessons from their history – from the Khilafat to the Partition to Kashmir to the Bangladesh War.**

Of one thing one can be certain: if there is any upheaval in the name of Islam in the neighboring Pakistan, the Indian Muslims will not remain unaffected by it. The real question is whether Indian leaders will act with the national interest foremost, or display the same kind of sophistry and equivocation as in the past. The postures of the Congress Party – and the machinations of the Communists – inspire little confidence in this regard.

The world also has an important lesson to learn: **religion can act as a cover for committing the most unspeakable atrocities** as the Appendixes to this document record. But for reasons that this writer finds incomprehensible, the world does not want to learn this basic truth. To those familiar with the history reported here, the atrocities in the name of religion by the Taliban in Afghanistan comes as no surprise. But if we fail to learn from this history, the pattern will only repeat itself somewhere else. The more things change, the more they remain the same.

Part I

Gandhi, Khilafat and the Partition

Background: Need for Revisiting History

Every age views history and its heroes in the light of its own experience and values. As a result, events and personalities are periodically reexamined and their true significance reassessed. For nearly fifty years, Gandhi's position as the Father of the Nation, and as the preeminent figure in India's struggle for freedom has stood unchallenged. In recent years, voices of doubt about his role in the national movement, especially his policy of what many see as excessive accommodation of Muslims are being raised. A few critics go so far as to claim that **he was only a Son of India who went on to become the Father of Pakistan.**

One need not take such an extreme position. Nonetheless, fifty years after he left the scene, the need for a reexamination of Gandhi and his real contribution can hardly be disputed. Even his strongest critics have to admit that his influence on the social and political movements of this century has been enormous, and by no means limited to India. Every fight against injustice, every struggle against oppression, has drawn its inspiration from Gandhi and his methods. From Martin Luther King to Nelson Mandela, Gandhi's influence has been profound and acknowledged. His influence on the Indian national life, however, is an enigma. **Those who claim to uphold his legacy – especially the most prominent political dynasty that carries his name – cannot be said to live by his ideals of service, simplicity and poverty. Nor do they look with favor upon the heritage and tradition from which he drew his strength and sustenance.**

The fact is that **the Congress Party today, which he led for nearly quarter of a century, has fallen into the hands of an**

elite that is largely hostile to the Indian tradition and culture which the Mahatma embodied; it is now in the hands of individuals representing interests and values far removed from the people of India. Its recent electoral fortunes seem to underline this failure. How do we account for this phenomenon of the successors of Gandhi being simultaneously alienated from the people and their tradition and in turn rejected by them? This alone is sufficient to call for a reexamination of Gandhi and his contribution to nationalism. To understand the present, we must visit the past.

The Gandhi enigma: saint or politician?

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, better known as the Mahatma, is a unique figure in modern history. Though a politician most of his working life, he is remembered today mainly as a spiritual figure who drew his inspiration from the best in all religions. Even while acknowledging his role as a political leader, there is a marked tendency to regard his political career as a mere sidelight in a life dedicated to spiritual quest. B. R. Nanda, probably the best known among those who may be called 'authorized' biographers of Mahatma Gandhi wrote:

"It was inevitable that Gandhi's role as a political leader should loom larger in the public imagination, but the mainsprings of his life lay in religion not politics. ... His deepest strivings were spiritual".

So here is an anomaly. Those who claim to be his followers swear by 'secularism' – the separation of religion from the affairs of the state, while Gandhi himself was opposed to the notion. Whatever the admirers of Gandhi's 'spiritualism' may claim, it is as a politician that he left his mark on history. While his religious thought has exercised little influence on the spiritual movements of the last hundred years, his influence on the political scene has been enormous. The Congress party, the dominant political

institution in the half-century after independence, treats him as its icon. As a result, any criticism of Gandhi and his politics is likely to bring down the wrath of interested parties who hold up his 'saintliness' as a counter-argument. His martyrdom is invariably brought up in silencing arguments against his policies and actions.

This creates a peculiar problem for anyone trying to study the history associated with Gandhi and his times. Gandhi the Saint intrudes on the scene whenever one tries to unravel the complexities of Gandhi the Politician. And yet it was Gandhi the Politician and not Gandhi the Saint who dominated the national scene in the decades leading to independence. It was Gandhi the Politician, and not the Saint who turned Swaraj into a movement in support of the theocratic aims of the Khilafat; it was Gandhi the Politician and not the Saint who expelled Subhash Bose after his election as Congress president; it was Gandhi the Politician and not the Saint who imposed Pandit Nehru over Sardar Patel as prime minister of India against the wishes of the party; it was also Gandhi the Politician and not the Saint who imposed his will on the newly formed Congress Government to release funds for Pakistan which was then at war with India.

All these were political actions that must be evaluated on their own merits, but his 'saintliness' invariably acts as a diversion whenever one brings up these and other controversial aspects of his political career. **The fact is that Gandhi was first and foremost a man of politics. His views on religion and philosophy are studied today only because of his dominance of the political scene at a crucial period in history. Unlike his contemporary Sri Aurobindo, Gandhi would be little known as a philosopher had he stayed aloof from politics. His writings on religious subjects – like his interpretation of the *Bhagavadgita* – are known today only because of his importance and influence as a politician; but a**

halo of saintliness always surrounds him.

In consequence of this halo shielding his political career like a fortress, balanced historical accounts of Gandhi and the party he led are hard to come by. In addition, he has become a valuable asset for interest groups in politics and academia with their own axes to grind; they fiercely resist any attempt at a reevaluation of his career and achievements. They fear this could lead to his being dislodged from his lofty seat undermining their own positions. Rare has been the author who has breached the fortress, there have been none in recent years.

As a result, to get a balanced picture of Gandhi, especially his early career, we need to go to little known works written at a time when people were willing to write freely about him. One such work is Sir C. Sankaran Nair's *Gandhi and Anarchy*. Written in 1922 when the Mahatma was yet to acquire his halo, it is an eyewitness account of Gandhi and his politics against the background of the Khilafat agitation and the Punjab atrocities, which became the platform for Gandhi's first nationwide non-cooperation movement. This was to catapult him to the pre-eminent position in the Congress party that he held for the rest of his life.

Gandhi's support for the Khilafat led to a major uprising in Malabar known as *Mopla Rebellion*. Sankaran Nair was from Malabar, and he no doubt felt the pain personally. This is all but forgotten today, if not deliberately suppressed. Nair in his book gives a vivid account of the now all but forgotten Mopla Rebellion - including Gandhi's own part in it - based on contemporary records. (The Moplas are a Muslim sect of Malabar in Kerala who went on a rampage of murder and rapine following the failure of the Khilafat agitation. It took several months to put down.) He includes also a large number of contemporary documents relating to the Mopla Rebellion and other important events. All this makes his book a valuable primary source.

Gandhi's religion: Semitized Hinduism

To study Gandhi, one has to come to grips with the fact that to him religion and politics were inseparable. This naturally brings up a basic question: what were his religious beliefs like and what role did they play in his politics? This takes us back to his biographer Nanda's claim which I quoted earlier, that the roots of Gandhi's politics lay in his religion. I feel Nanda has got it backwards. It would be closer to the truth to say: "The mainspring of Gandhi's religion lay in his politics." I would go further and suggest **that religion for Gandhi was a tool that served to rationalize a particular course of political action that he had already decided upon.** This was often justified by his supporters as the 'faith of the Mahatma', said to be rooted in his 'soul force' (Gandhi's words). Sri Aurobindo saw it differently. As he wrote:

*"I do not call it faith at all, but a rigid mental belief and what he calls soul force is only a strong vital will which has taken a religious turn. That, of course, can be a tremendous force for action, but unfortunately Gandhi spoils it by his ambition to be a man of reason, while **in fact he has no reason in him at all,** What he has in its place is a remarkable type of unintentionally sophistic logic". (Emphasis added.)*

We run into this "unintentionally sophistic logic" over and over again when we examine Gandhi's career. A movement is started, some incomprehensible, often disastrous decisions are taken leaving his faithful followers in the lurch, and the whole thing explained away with resort to sophistic arguments based on unverifiable claims. Sankaran Nair is more emphatic if less subtle. Writing in the context of the Punjab atrocities, he charges: "Mr. Gandhi is not a student but an impulsive fanatic indifferent to facts but obsessed by phantasmagoria. He jumps to what he calls conclusions, but which have in fact no premises."

All this might be permissible in religion – for this, after

all, is how most religious movements begin. But Gandhi brought the same methods into his politics, for he was pre-eminently a political activist. No matter. As far as Gandhi was concerned, religion and politics went together. This also helps one understand how he could wholeheartedly support a purely theocratic movement like the Khilafat. In this he was a throwback to an earlier age when religious beliefs and institutions dominated politics. It may be said that **he was taking India from the Age of Enlightenment, which the leaders of the Hindu Renaissance were trying to bring about, back to the Age of Faith, or the Dark Ages.**

The practice of using religion to gain secular ends is of course nothing new. Moses did it; Prophet Muhammad did it as did his modern follower Ayatollah Khomeini. In our own time, Mother Teresa justified her consorting with swindlers and mass murderers for the sake of money with the claim: "I am accountable only to God." This idea of a higher power that places one beyond the pale of humanistic considerations is the foundation of Semitic creeds like Christianity and Islam. But Hinduism, Gandhi's professed faith, has no room for it. As we shall soon see, Gandhi's answer to this seeming deficiency in Hinduism was to recast Hinduism suitably to meet his political needs.

This brings us face to face with a little understood fact about religions that has been obscured by the Gandhian slogan of *sarva dharma samabhava* – from which he (and his followers) concluded that all religions teach essentially the same thing, and are therefore equally valid. This is far from true, for Semitic religions – or prophetic creeds – differ from the pluralistic Hindu tradition in two fundamental respects. These differences need to be clearly understood if one hopes to make any headway in untangling the religio-political dialectic that underlay Gandhi's politics (and religion).

1 The tenets of prophetic creeds are always

communicated through a human medium who claims to be the Voice of God. He (or his followers) may claim to be a Prophet or Son of God, or Imam or something else, but he is always seen as a privileged person who alone can communicate with God. Ordinary mortals must accept his diktats as the word of God, which is enforced by his followers. And this monopoly is facilitated by monotheism: One God can have only One Intermediary. For this reason, the God of men like Moses and Muhammad brooks no rivals. (Pluralistic Hinduism on the other hand knows no such exclusive medium with monopoly over access to God.)

2 A prophetic creed claims to derive its authority from a single book for which a divine origin is claimed. Its followers are not given a choice in the matter. Unlike a Hindu who is free to question, select or reject any part or all of his scripture, a Muslim cannot question the claims of the Quran or the authority of the human representatives known as the clergy. Its religious book is therefore also the source of (secular) authority. The Quran, for example, is both the prayer book of Islam as well as the source of Islamic law – or the *Shariat*. It is therefore impossible to separate religion from politics in Islam. Islam abhors secularism. In fact, outside India, devout Muslims view secularism – or the separation of religion from the state – as a great evil. (Gandhi seems to have held a similar view.)

This leads to a third feature of creeds of authority: their scripture can become a convenient device for imposing irrational and even anti-humanistic laws and regimes. God, after all, is needed as authority only in such circumstances, not for justifying acts beneficial to humanity. This holds one of the keys to Gandhi's political career also: **he saw himself guided by a higher force that justified irrational and even anti-humanist policies and conduct. And he invoked a higher principle - *ahimsa* (nonviolence) - to justify positions that could not be defended on rational or even humanistic**

grounds.

It is my sense that to fashion himself a convenient tool for his politics, Gandhi took the pluralistic Hinduism and gave it a Semitic exclusivistic twist by making ahimsa – or nonviolence – his central creed or dogma. In his hands, Hinduism became a dogmatic religion like Islam, with ahimsa at its center, and Gandhi as the Prophet of ahimsa. Like all prophets he could be tyrannical in imposing his beliefs. This took the form of 'fasts unto death' to gain his ends – a tactic that bordered on blackmail.

Ahimsa applied selectively

But this creed of ahimsa was selective, and applied only to the Hindus. As one examines his political career, one sees that he insisted that Hindus be true to *ahimsa*, while he condoned and even rationalized violent behavior by Muslims. This went with his principle of *sarva dharma samabhava*. Muslims were acting according to the teachings of Islam, and the Hindus also had to be true to the teachings of Hinduism – at least his version of it with *ahimsa* as the central creed. In practice, this *ahimsa* translated into a complete submission of one side to the demands of the other, making it indistinguishable from appeasement. His notion of 'tolerance' was for one side to completely submit to the demands of the other. The following statement by Gandhi, made as far back as 1909 illustrates Gandhi's attachment to appeasement in the name of unity, and his propensity for combining contradictions with the help of his 'unintentionally sophistic logic' – as Sri Aurobindo put it:

"As a man of truth, I honestly believe that Hindus should yield up to the Mohammedans whatever the latter desire, and that they should rejoice in so doing. We can expect unity only if such mutual large-heartedness is displayed."

As Majumdar observed (Volume II, pp 313-14):

"The first sentence is one of those pro-Muslim sayings which

bore the special trademark of Gandhi and did incalculable harm to Hindu-Muslim unity by putting a premium on Muslim intransigence. It was repeated in 1947 when Gandhi made the proposal, which astounded even his devout followers, that Jinnah should be the supreme ruler of India, with a cabinet of his own choice, which might consist only of Muslim ministers. The word 'mutual' in the second sentence is meaningless, as Gandhi never dared make similar request to the Muslims, and they never showed the slightest intention of doing any such foolish thing. Gandhi's attitude did not change even after the creation of Pakistan".

This would have had the effect of realizing the dream of Muslim leaders like the Ali brothers — *of replacing the British rule with Muslim rule!* We shall see later that this seems to have the intention of the Khilafat leaders when they supported Gandhi in his Nonviolent Non-Cooperation movement which he launched in support of the Khilafat.

All this introduced a strong element of moral relativism in his dealings, with different standards of behavior permitted for the Hindus and the Muslims over the same issues. In practical terms, this became a policy of appeasement rooted in moral relativism — insisting on nonviolence where Hindus were concerned, but tolerating and even rationalizing violence on an unprecedented scale by the Muslims. It was only natural that this should have inflamed animosities leading to violence on a large scale. *The Mopla Rebellion, which is discussed next, is a vivid example of Gandhi's dual stand rooted in moral relativism.* As one studies the consequences of his actions, and his equivocal conduct in the face of unspeakable atrocities committed on innocent people, his halo seems to lose some of its luster.

He and the Congress seemed to learn nothing from it. They repeated the folly leading to the holocaust of the Partition. Like the mythical Bhasmasura, he was himself consumed by the violent passions unleashed by his

equivocal position on nonviolence. So were a million others, who, unlike Gandhi, had no hand in it. This was a high price to pay for one man's reputation as a saint — the Apostle of Nonviolence; at the least he was also the Apostle of Moral Relativism.

The politics of moral relativism

The point of all this: just as Gandhi's religious ideas were rooted in his political needs, his 'spiritualism' also cannot be studied in isolation from his politics. **He and his teachings derive their importance only because of his career as a politician. Take away the politician, there is little left and that little has nothing to do with India or Hinduism. Most people do not realize how great Gandhi's debt to nineteenth century Western pacifists like Thoreau and Tolstoy was, and how little his philosophy owed to the Hindu tradition. His most important work, *Hind Swaraj*, does not contain any reference to a single major Indian work.**

Sri Aurobindo was one of the few to see Gandhi in his true dimensions — as a Western pacifist in Hindu garb:

“... Gandhi is a European - truly a Russian Christian in an Indian body. ... When Europeans say that he is more Christian than many Christians (some even say he is "Christ of our times") they are perfectly right. All his preaching is derived from Christianity, and though the garb is Indian, the essential spirit is Christian. He may not be Christ, but at any rate he comes in continuation of the same impulsion in him. He is largely influenced by Tolstoy, the Bible and has a strong Jain tinge in his teachings; at any rate more than by the Indian scriptures — the Upanishads or the Gita which he interprets in the light of his own ideas”.

A more insightful account of Gandhi's 'spirituality' has never been written. The catastrophe of the Khilafat and its aftermath seemed to do little to change his belief; he repeated the blunder with Jinnah and the Muslim League leading to the greater catastrophe of the Partition. The issue

here is not merely the division of India, which may have become unavoidable by then, but his conduct in the face of such a great human tragedy. He persisted with his dual standards resulting in untold hardships for Hindu and Sikh refugees, while insisting on the protection of Muslim property. The results could be tragic as the following example shows.

In January 1948, many Hindu and Sikh refugees in Delhi had taken shelter in some abandoned mosques. Gandhi put pressure on the Congress Government to have these refugees evicted from these temporary homes. As a result, a large number of refugees – including women and children – were forced to spend the nights in the cold rain. Such heartless behavior in the service of an abstract principle (which no one understood) only exacerbated mutual hatred already at fever pitch. **It is an irony of history that the 'Apostle of Nonviolence' was directly responsible for two of the most violent explosions of this violent century.** This is inevitable when one selectively imposes dual standards.

While much is made of his nonviolence, his moral relativism was at least as important a part of his religio-political philosophy. Its contribution to history was also incomparably greater. **His message of nonviolence has fallen by the wayside – his followers resort to violence when it suits them – but his practice of moral relativism continues in the form of appeasement in the name of 'secularism'.** This has resulted in opposition to such enlightened policies as a uniform legal code for all. Humanistic reform benefiting beleaguered Muslim women, is the casualty.

Gandhi's moral relativism – of applying different standards to different people – came to the fore during the Khilafat agitation and the Mopla Rebellion that followed on its heels; it came to the fore again during the Partition twenty-five years later. To understand Gandhi, and his often incomprehensible political moves, we need to come to grips

with his moral relativism along with his peculiar logic. They offer a better insight into his career than his ahimsa, which in any case operated only selectively. It has become irrelevant today outside academic circles.

When Gandhi returned to India from South Africa, circumstances allowed him to rapidly gain ascendancy in national politics. His method was to use nonviolent non-cooperation to gain Swaraj (self-rule). Muslim leaders like the Ali brothers (Mohammed Ali and Shaukat Ali) did not share his vision but simply found him useful. Their main interest was the restoration of the Sultan of Turkey following Ottoman Turkey's defeat and dismemberment in the First World War. This was known as the Khilafat movement more of which later. Gandhi promised support for the Khilafat in exchange for the support of the Ali brothers and the Muslims of India for his non-cooperation movement.

The Khilafat movement was a disaster in more ways than one. Indian history books carefully leave out the Khilafat fiasco, or if they mention it all they present it as a unifier of Hindus and Muslims. The reality is quite different. It resulted in a massacre of tens of thousands of innocent Hindus all over India. It was particularly virulent in Kerala where a Jihad (Holy War against infidels) called the Mopla Rebellion erupted which took several months to put down. To make matters worse for Gandhi, Muslim leaders like the Ali brothers, whom he had sponsored and supported during the Khilafat, publicly humiliated him; Mohammed Ali even said that a Muslim thief was better than Gandhi, simply because of the thief's faith in Islam!

What was the Mopla Rebellion like to make historians shy away from it? **Sankaran Nair** has this to say:

"For sheer brutality on women, I do not remember anything in history to match the Malabar [Mopla] rebellion. ... The atrocities committed more particularly on women are so horrible and unmentionable that I do not propose to refer to them in this book. I

have selected a few out of literally hundreds that might be selected from the English and vernacular papers... One narrative is by Mrs. [Annie] Beasant". [See Appendix for more]

This brutality was to be equaled if not surpassed in the holocaust of the Partition, which was the result of Gandhi and the Congress failing to learn from their mistakes. What was Gandhi's reaction to the Mopla outrages? At first he denied that the atrocities took place at all. But he could not keep it up for long in the face of overwhelming evidence including reports from his Muslim friends. He then equivocated and rationalized. He called the Moplas "God fearing" and said "they are fighting for what they consider as religion, and in a manner they consider as religious."

This from the Apostle of Nonviolence! It applied to the victims, but the perpetrators could be excused as 'God fearing' because they were acting according to their religion which sanctioned violence against unbelievers. It is not easy to find a better example – or worse – of moral relativism. This was too much for **Annie Beasant**. That spirited Englishwoman wrote:

"It would be well if Mr. Gandhi could be taken into Malabar to see with his own eyes the ghastly horrors which have been created by the preaching of himself and his "loved brothers", Mohammed and Shaukat Ali. ... Men who consider it "religious" to murder, rape, loot, to kill women and little children, cutting down whole families, have to be put under restraint in any civilized society".

It is hardly surprising that the partisans of Gandhism – not to mention its beneficiaries – don't want to be reminded of the Khilafat or the Mopla Rebellion. It is time, though that we did reexamine this history and its impact on modern India, for it has lessons to offer. But first, what was this Khilafat that simultaneously catapulted Gandhi to the top of the Congress leadership, and had such catastrophic consequences for the country? This is what is examined next.

Khilafat: sophistry and obscurantism

The Khilafat agitation is one of the defining events of modern Indian history, but history books today treat it in a perfunctory fashion if they mention it at all. Gandhi had a direct hand in the Khilafat agitation. In his *Gandhi and Anarchy*, Nair makes it central to his evaluation of Gandhi and his politics. Majumdar provides more details. But both assume readers to be familiar with the historical background to the agitation, which may not be true of readers today. So here is a brief account.

When the First World War ended in 1918, Ottoman Turkey, which had fought on the same side as Germany, had suffered a massive defeat. The result was the breakup of the Ottoman Empire ruled by the Sultan of Turkey who had also pretensions to the title of the Caliph or the leader of all Muslims. The defeat of Turkey was seen as a major blow to the prestige of Islam especially by many Muslims and their leaders in India. They formed committees to press the British Government to restore the Sultan in a movement known as the Khilafat. Here in brief is the history behind the Khilafat.

The Khilafat movement is generally described as a demand by the Muslims for the restoration of the Sultan of Turkey to his rightful office of the Caliph. This is a serious misrepresentation. Muslims outside India did not recognize the Turkish Sultan as Caliph; *it was strictly an Indian movement but with a foreign focus*. The Turks themselves under Kemal Ataturk eventually drove their Sultan into exile. The last Caliph with a legitimate claim to the title was the Abbasid Caliph al-Mustasim. He had been executed by the Mongol Huleku Khan (grandson of Chengiz) following the sack of Baghdad in 1258.

Recognizing its value as a political symbol, the Mameluk Sultan of Medieval Egypt invited a member of the family to set up a puppet Caliphate in Cairo. These Caliphs were "complete nonentities" – as the *Encyclopædia Britannica* puts

it – and their claim was ended for all time when the Ottoman (Turkish) Sultan Selim invaded Egypt in 1517. Later, the Ottoman Sultans styled themselves Caliphs, but this was a nineteenth century politically motivated fiction concocted to buttress their rapidly slipping hold over the provinces of the Empire. It was a cynical ploy by the Ottomans who had themselves extinguished the last vestiges of it.

The various Indian Muslim leaders of the Khalifat agitation – the Maulvis, the Maulanas and Their Highnesses like the Aga Khan – were not of course unaware of this history. But they correctly surmised that it did not really matter as long it suited their purpose and some useful dupes could be found. Their belief was justified when Gandhi and the Congress launched the non-cooperation movement in support of the Khilafat demand. (One also suspects that the at least some Muslim leaders entertained the utopian scheme of restoring Muslim rule in India, which they believed had been usurped by the British.)

Gandhi's own stand on the Khilafat betrayed a remarkable degree of ignorance and confusion over the issues. He seemed to be ignorant of both the history and the political situation as it stood at the time of the Armistice in 1919. He seemed unaware of the basic fact that neither the Arabs nor the Egyptians had any desire to be ruled by the Turkish Sultan – let alone submit to him as their Caliph. Syria and Lebanon – formerly under Ottoman rule – were now under French control. It was not therefore, in the power of the British to restore them to Turkish rule, even were they so inclined. And most absurdly, the Turks themselves had no use for their Sultan cum pseudo-Caliph whom they drove into exile. In the face all this, Gandhi's massive agitation for the restoration of the Sultan bordered on the preposterous.

By no stretch of the imagination can the Khilafat be regarded an issue affecting the nation or Swaraj. In return

for his support for the Khilafat, Gandhi obtained, or thought he obtained Muslim support for launching his nationwide nonviolent non-cooperation movement. Islam sets no great store by nonviolence, but Khilafat leaders like Mohammed Ali agreed to support his agitation *in return for Gandhi's promise of Swaraj within a year!* To compound the confusion, Gandhi had gone on to redefine Swaraj to mean support for the Khilafat. In his words:

"To the Musalmans Swaraj means, as it must, India's ability to deal effectively with the Khilafat question. ... It is impossible not to sympathise with this attitude. ... I would gladly ask for the postponement of the Swaraj activity if we could advance the interest of the Khilafat".

So Swaraj, which previously meant self-rule, became transformed overnight into support for the Khilafat! So which 'Swaraj' activity was he willing to postpone, and which 'Swaraj' had he promised to the Ali brothers within the year? Did Sri Aurobindo not tell us that Gandhi was endowed with a "remarkable kind of unintentionally sophistic logic?"

This is not the whole story of Gandhi's surrender on the Khilafat issue. This apostle of Hindu-Muslim unity went on to claim: "We talk of Hindu-Mahomedan unity. It would be an empty phrase if the Hindus hold aloof from the Mahomedans when their vital interests are at stake." This 'vital interest' was the restoration of the Khilafat in far away Turkey at the cost of national freedom! On this Majumdar observed (Vol. III, p 50):

"If a hundred million Muslims are more vitally interested in the fate of Turkey and other Muslim states outside India than they are in the fate of India, they can hardly be regarded as a unit of Indian nation. By his own admission that the Khilafat question was a vital one for the Indian Muslims, Gandhi himself in a way admitted that they formed a separate nation; they were in India, but not of India".

It is sobering to contrast this sophistry and equivocation on the part of Gandhi (and his followers) with Sri Aurobindo's ringing statement on nationalism made many years earlier (1908):

"It [nationalism] overleaps every barrier; it calls to the clerk at his counter, the trader in his shop, the peasant at his plough; it summons the Brahmin from his temple and takes the hand of the Chandala from his degradation; it seeks out the student in his college, the schoolboy at his book, it touches the very child in its mother's arms... There is no room for sophistry here – of being "in India, but not of India."

There was no room for sophistry in the words of the Khilafat leaders either, that was supplied by Gandhi and his followers. Khilafat leaders like the Ali brothers made no secret of their loyalty to Islam above India. As Majumdar records (*op. cit.* p 53): "In their public speeches they emphasized the identity of the interests of the Indian Muhammadans with the interests of the Muhammadans everywhere in Tripoli and Algeria in preference to those of the Hindus." When there were rumors that the Amir of Afghanistan might invade India, **Muhammad Ali** said:

"If the Afghans invaded India to wage holy war, the Indian Muhammadans are not only bound to join them but also to fight the Hindus if they refuse to cooperate with them."

This extraordinary statement was probably rooted in his belief that the Muslims had a right to rule India after the British usurpers left, and it was the duty of the Hindus to support them. Still Gandhi supported his 'dear brother' Muhammad Ali for being true to his religion! Gandhi's conduct during the Khilafat seems to knock the bottom out of any claim for his being the 'Father of Indian Nationalism'.

The lesson of the Khilafat fiasco may be summarized as follows: it showed that the enthusiasm of the Muslim masses in India could be aroused only through appeals to religious symbols of an alien culture rooted in an alien land. In order

to gain their support for his non-cooperation movement, Gandhi had to go to a discredited foreign institution, and associate himself with characters like the Ali brothers who had no scruples over inviting the king of Afghanistan to invade India in defense of Islam. In the bargain Gandhi had to redefine Swaraj itself, changing it from a symbol of nationalism into a pan-Islamic theocratic symbol of no relevance to India. It is only natural that the whole issue should be mired in obscurantism and sophistry. The following single statement by Gandhi demonstrates both:

“I claim that with us both the Khilafat is the central fact, with the Maulana Muhammad Ali because it is his religion, with me because, in laying down my life for the Khilafat, I ensure the safety of the cow, that is my religion, from the knife of the Mussalman”.

So it was a bargain in which Muahammad Ali gets to keep his Caliph while Gandhi is rewarded with the cow. Even after all this compromise and appeasement, the conduct of the Khilafat leaders leading to the Mopla Rebellion showed that the country had gained nothing in return. The nation, the people of Malabar in particular were made to pay a terrible price. It was only in 1929 that Swaraj as complete independence returned to the Congress agenda. What one finds disturbing in all this is Gandhi’s willingness to go the full distance in this sordid affair, even to the extent of defending the Muslim leaders’ invitation to the Amir of Afghanistan to invade India. He justified this also on the ground that their religion (Islam) teaches it! Is it any wonder that his successors failed to give a national vision?

Lessons of history

All this highlights a vital point made to me by the distinguished scholar Dr. D. Prithipaul, formerly professor of philosophy at the University of Alberta, Canada: *the Muslims of India have never behaved like a minority*. Instead, they see themselves – or at least their leaders do – as a privileged lot whose views, beliefs and practices must take

precedence in every aspect of national life. *This allows them to set the rules of conduct not only for themselves as believers, but also for the non-believers.* And this includes everything connected with the country – from politics to the arts, extending even to how history should be presented.

This helps one draw an important political and historical lesson: the primary, even the sole concern of the Muslim leadership has been maintaining the separateness of Muslim identity. The great fear of the Muslim leaders – a depressingly large number of who come from theological backgrounds – is that the Muslims of India might rediscover their ancient heritage and even return to it. This is probably the reason why the *ulema* want the Muslim masses to remain backward and ignorant. The Muslim intellectuals, however, seem to live in constant dread of exposure of the Islamic record resulting in a possible Hindu backlash. This leads them to convoluted semantic exercises – denying the historical record that is for all to see.

The Mopla Rebellion also demonstrates that a population with a low level of education and culture may be aroused to a fever pitch of fanaticism with appeals to religion. It certainly helped Khilafat leaders like Mohammed Ali that the Muslim clergy had kept the Muslim masses in state of backwardness. The question is, is the situation any better today?

A careful examination of the Khilafat – its background and the aftermath – shatters several myths about Gandhi and the Congress. Since he was by far the most influential political leader at the time he cannot escape responsibility for the two great catastrophes – the Mopla Rebellion and the Partition. He learnt nothing from the former to make him prevent the latter; the same tactics were followed with similar results. Even worse, he kept assuring that he would never allow the country to be partitioned but allowed it in the end. Those who trusted him paid a heavy price. In the

face of the extraordinary violence that his politics unleashed, the claim made for Gandhi as the Apostle of Nonviolence is not easy to sustain. As previously observed, moral relativism went with his *ahimsa* in the guise of *sarva dharma samatva*. His *ahimsa* is now dead and gone, but the plague of moral relativism continues to visit the country and its politics.

Mopla Rebellion: 'Swaraj within a year'

Sankaran Nair (and several other early leaders) saw Gandhi as a force of reaction whose methods would go to undermine a century of progress. He also believed that many Congressmen were following him not out of any conviction but as an easy route to personal advancement only to be used by him in turn. Nair observed:

"Some politicians, who naturally desire to use him and the influence he has acquired for putting pressure on the Government to concede further reforms, also have joined him. But I am satisfied he is using them all to further his own ends, an attempt in which he is bound to fail. His success, i.e., the success of the reactionary forces in India to obtain what they call Dominion status, or Home Rule, but, *which really means their rule, will not only lead to bloodshed and anarchy and dismemberment of the Empire...*" (Emphasis added.)

Prophetic words, written in 1922, fully twenty-five years before the Partition. It is worth noting that Nair here makes two telling points. First, the agitation was not merely for gaining Home Rule, *but to seize power for Gandhi's wing of the Congress party as the sole ruler of the country, with their Raj replacing the British Raj*. Next, the consolidation of reactionary forces under Gandhi would lead to bloodshed, anarchy and dismemberment. Nair was proved right on both counts.

Contemporary accounts like Nair's *Gandhi and Anarchy* hold quite a few surprises, at least for those of us who have

grown up with the conventional version of the history the Freedom Struggle. The most startling fact to come to light is probably Gandhi's promise of "Swaraj within a year" to the Ali brothers in return for their support for his non-cooperation movement. What actually did Gandhi's promise of 'Swaraj' entail, beyond forcing the British to leave India? What was to take its place, especially since Gandhi had redefined Swaraj to mean the Khilafat for the benefit of the Ali brothers? (Gandhi had also diverted a substantial sum of money from the Tilak Swaraj Fund to the Khilafat movement.)

There is at least one other major surprise. Annie Beasant tells us that the Mopla uprising began exactly a year later. In her words: "The Khilafat Raj is established there [in Malabar]; on August 1, 1921, *sharp to the date first announced by Mr. Gandhi for the beginning of Swaraj and the Vanishing of the British Rule*, a police inspector was surrounded by the Moplas, revolting against that Rule." (Emphasis added)

The outbreak began on August 1, and by August 20 it had spread to the surrounding areas and become a full-scale rebellion. Civil authority broke down, and the Army had to be called in. According to Annie Beasant "From that date [August 1] onwards thousands of the forbidden war-knives were secretly made and hidden away, and on August 20, the rebellion broke out; Khilafat flags were hoisted on police stations and Government offices. ..." By then civil authority had all but disappeared and anarchy prevailed. (This is confirmed by others, see Appendix. Incidentally, August 1, 1921 was also the first death anniversary of Tilak.)

All this indicates careful planning by the Khilafatists for the uprising well before its actual outbreak which took place on the exact date of expiry of Gandhi's promise. *Somebody or some organization had to be financing it* – most likely the Khilafat Committee with wealthy patrons like the Aga Khan behind it. It was by no means a spontaneous outburst rooted

in frustration as some historians claim. This also had the effect of catching the victims unprepared, for they had no way of knowing beforehand what the promise of 'Swaraj' – and its failure – held for them. Gandhi had promised them that it was to be a 'Nonviolent Non-cooperation' movement. They had no reason to expect such a violent outbreak, let alone planned mutiny. Had the Ali brothers given Gandhi an ultimatum? At the very least, Gandhi had been reckless in his promise of Swaraj in one year. And those who trusted him paid a terrible price.

Again what was this Swaraj to be – the one which Gandhi had promised to the Ali brothers? Who would be the new rulers? Was it to be a 'Khilafat Raj' – as Annie Beasant called it – headed by the Ali brothers? Gandhi's infatuation with the Ali brothers is hard for us to comprehend today. What did Gandhi hope to get in return? Uncontested leadership of the Congress, which was up for grabs following Tilak's death on August 1, 1920? All these are questions begging for answers.

It is worth noting that the goal of Swaraj as complete independence did not return to the Congress agenda until 1929, long after the failure of the Khilafat. *All this has been swept under the rug by historians.* This alone is sufficient to justify the need for a re-examination of the history. There are probably many more skeletons in the closet waiting to be exposed. And in this, Nair's book, which includes a large Appendix consisting of contemporary records, can be a valuable source. There are of course many other works, but *Gandhi and Anarchy* is a useful place to begin.

Conclusion: need for historical revision

One of the main goals of this essay is to highlight the need for a reexamination of the version of the history of India leading to Indian independence in 1947. The official, or the Congress version is a classic example of President Truman's adage that history is always written by the winner. Fortunately this need not be the case in India. There exist ample records to produce a more balanced account, especially

of the early period. Sankaran Nair's *Gandhi and Anarchy* is a notable example. While we need not agree with all his conclusions – he is a product of his time carrying his own biases – his work, as a primary source, can serve as a useful starting point.

One of the problems connected with any reevaluation is that Gandhi has now become a valuable political and even economic asset; his value as a political investment is diminishing, but his name still carries substantial economic value. The 'Gandhians' fear that any reexamination by studying sources that might be critical of Gandhi will jeopardize their capital. True greatness on the other hand need not fear criticism or even abuse. Abraham Lincoln was probably the most vilified president in American history, but that in no way diminished him.

The problem today is that Gandhi has fallen into the hands of men and women of straw who project their own vulnerabilities on to him. This has led them to suppress works even moderately critical of him. Even the court records of the Gandhi murder case were censored for decades, simply because they contain Godse's statement. In this climate of fear and intolerance, it is inevitable that a work like Dalvi's recent play on Gandhi's murderer should gain recognition out of proportion to its merit. It is simply filling the vacuum created by absence of serious debate.

The antidote to this unhealthy state of affairs is a free exchange of ideas and an unfettered debate. When this comes about, the loser will not be Gandhi so much as those who have turned his name and his memory into a lucrative investment. As a new generation of historians begins to study India's recent past, Gandhi's 'Bargain with the Devil' – of compromising with reactionary and even anti-national elements – could serve as a useful starting point. Whether this proves to be the case or not, there cannot be much dispute over the need for such a reexamination. Only then can history escape from being a 'fable agreed upon'.

Part II

Gandhi and the Freedom Movement

Background

The late R.C. Majumdar, often called the dean of Indian historians, completed a three-volume work on the Indian Freedom Movement. In this he put forward two fundamental theses that few Indian historians were willing to face. First, **Gandhi's role in the achievement of freedom was exaggerated by the beneficiaries of his 'legacy'**. Next, **the freedom movement demonstrated that the Muslim leadership - if not the masses - was concerned more with Pan-Islamic issues than national issues, and Gandhi often acquiesced to it.** As example, Majumdar cited Gandhi's defence of the Ali brothers when they invited the Amir of Afghanistan to invade India in defense of Islam. The Ali brothers actually went further. They claimed that such a *jihad* (holy war) would be carried out not only against the British, but also against the Hindus who refused to cooperate in the enterprise. (This was discussed in some detail in Part I.)

Little of this is found in history books in use today. As Majumdar points out, all this has been whitewashed to suit the political interests of certain groups. The result is massive distortion of history. In his own words:

"... It is an ominous sign of the time that Indian history is being viewed in official circles in the perspective of recent politics. The official history of the freedom movement starts with the premise that India lost independence only in the eighteenth century and had thus an experience of subjection to a foreign power for only two centuries. Real history, on the other hand, teaches us that the major part of India lost independence about five centuries before, and merely changed masters in the eighteenth century." (Vol. I: pp xii-xiii)

On the other key point, concerning Hindu-Muslim unity, Majumdar has this to say:

"... Political exigencies gave rise to the slogan of Hindu-Muslim fraternity. An impression was sought to be created that the Hindus and the Muslims had shed so much of their individual characteristics, and there was such a complete transformation of both and a fusion of their cultures that there was no essential difference between the two ... it was unfortunately never a historical fact. Sir Syed Ahmad, M.A. Jinnah and other Muslim leaders who never believed in it entertained more realistic views in this respect than either Mahatma Gandhi or Jawaharlal Nehru. ... The Hindu leaders deliberately ignored patent truth and facts of history ... Even today [1962] the Indian leaders would not face the historical truth, the failure to recognize which has cost them dear. They live in a fancied fraternity and are as sensitive to any expression that jars against the slogan of Hindu-Muslim bhai-bhai as they were at the beginning of the century." (Vol I: pp xix-xx)

Majumdar was not the first to state these unpalatable truths; others like Veer Savarkar and Sri Aurobindo had also said similar things though not perhaps with the same clarity of detail. The difference was that while Savarkar was a political leader, out of favor with the 'mainstream' of historical (and political) viewpoint of post-independence India, Majumdar was a historian with an international reputation. Savarkar could be and was dismissed as a Hindu ideologue, but it was not so easy to brush Majumdar aside. Nonetheless, the Congress Government withdrew support to Majumdar, and sponsored Tarachand - a greatly inferior scholar in every way - to write a more palatable if less truthful version of the 'history' of the Freedom Movement. Majumdar became - in his own words - a *persona non grata* with the authorities.

While the Government withdrew its support to Majumdar, it could not silence him. Despite his advanced age, and without any sponsors, Majumdar completed the

Herculean task of compiling his three-volume *magnum opus*. The results were rewarding. Critics in India and abroad hailed it as a major work. Several went to compare it with Tarachand's officially sponsored work - greatly to the advantage of Majumdar. Majumdar lived long enough to see the second edition in print, in which he expressed his gratitude for the well-deserved accolades:

"I take this opportunity of offering my sincere thanks to the different journals and newspapers, both in India and outside, for their appreciative review of the first edition of the three volumes. My special thanks are due to the 'American Historical Review' (April 1962, January 1964) for a comparative estimate of my 'History of the Freedom Movement' and that by Dr. Tarachand published by the Government of India".

Nonetheless, Majumdar's work on the Freedom Movement has not attracted the attention that it merits. It will probably take another generation before both scholars and the public can face up to the reality of Gandhi's failures both as a national leader and as a unifier of Hindus and Muslims. A prominent political dynasty and its courtiers and camp followers are living in opulence while claiming his legacy - in stark contrast to the life of simplicity and service that the Mahatma himself followed and advocated.

It is clearly beyond the scope of this essay to cover everything covered by Majumdar in his three volumes. But it is such a major work, and yet so little known to the public at large, that a summary of his main conclusions would serve to highlight the magnitude of the distortion of history carried out by his successors. This is all that is attempted here. For the most part, the present essay is a summary of Volume III.

The Freedom Movement: Bose's contribution ignored

Historically speaking, the most important fact to emerge from a restudy of the Indian Freedom Movement is the

following: *it was Subhas Bose, rather than Gandhi or his associates, who contributed the most to India's freedom in 1947.* This represents a radical change of perspective but rests on unimpeachable authority. In the Introduction, I had noted that in the second edition of his Volume III, Majumdar produced startling new evidence that confirmed his earlier claim that Subhas Bose's contribution to Indian independence in 1947 was probably greater than Gandhi's. We shall be looking at Bose's leadership of the INA and its campaigns later in the article, but first a look at the evidence Majumdar referred to. It comes from no less a person than Clement Attlee, the Prime Minister who took the decision to grant independence to India. Since this is of fundamental importance, it is worth placing it on record. The full details can be found in Majumdar, Volume III pages 609 -10.

When B.P. Chakravarti was acting as Governor of West Bengal, Lord Attlee visited India and stayed as his guest for three days at the Raj Bhavan. Chakravarti asked Attlee about the real grounds for granting independence to India. Specifically, his question was, when the Quit India movement lay in ruins years before 1947 where was the need for the British to leave in such a hurry. Attlee's response is most illuminating and important for history. Here is the Governor's account of what Attlee told him:

"In reply Attlee cited several reasons, the most important were the activities of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose which weakened the very foundation of the attachment of the Indian land and naval forces to the British Government. Towards the end, I asked Lord Attlee about the extent to which the British decision to quit India was influenced by Gandhi's activities. On hearing this question Attlee's lips widened in a smile of disdain and he uttered, slowly, putting emphasis on each single letter - "mi-ni-mal." (Emphasis added.)

Chakravarti later mentioned this conversation with Attlee in a speech broadcast on All India Radio, but left out all

references to Gandhi. (He should not have.) Majumdar had reached the same conclusion years earlier, as far back as 1948. This writer (Rajaram) can support the conclusion on the basis of discussions with men and officers of the Indian armed forces of the period - including his own relatives. In any event, we have Attlee's own authoritative words.

The crucial point to note is that thanks to Subhas Bose's activities, the Indian Armed Forces began to see themselves as defenders of India rather than of the British Empire. This, more than anything else, was what led to India's freedom. This is also the reason why the British Empire disappeared from the face of the earth within an astonishingly short space of twenty years. Indian soldiers, who were the main prop of the Empire, were no longer willing to fight to hold it together.

This also accounts for the outwardly puzzling fact that the Congress Party, dominated by the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty, has tried to turn Subhas Bose into a *persona non grata*. He poses a serious threat to the political dominance of the dynasty, and could even jeopardize it, taking with it the power and privileges that have accrued to its beneficiaries. Thanks to the Congress domination of Indian institutions for over forty years, history books have been written to serve its interests. This is one of the significant conclusions to follow from a reexamination of recent Indian history.

Gandhi and the Freedom Movement

It is time now to take a look at the different phases of the Indian Freedom Movement and Gandhi's role in each one of them. But first it is useful to have an idea of the different schools of thought that existed when Gandhi returned to India from South Africa in 1916. Broadly speaking, there were two groups, called the *Moderates* and the *Extremists*. The Moderates consisted of leaders of an earlier generation like Gopal Krishna Gokhale and his followers (which at one time included both Gandhi and Jinnah). These believed in

constitutional methods, of appealing to the British Government to grant a greater part to Indians in running their country. The Extremists on the other hand believed in more radical methods, including violent rebellion against the British when necessary. Its most important leaders were Sri Aurobindo, and after his departure, Bal Gangadhar Tilak. Tilak was the unchallenged leader of the Congress.

The moderate leaders, that is to say leaders before the rise of the aggressive nationalism of Sri Aurobindo and Tilak, contended that their policy of cooperation, if consistently followed, would have led to 'dominion status' or a self governing colony along the lines of Canada and Australia, leading eventually to complete independence. This is highly questionable in the light of British behavior immediately following the First World War, when all promises made to get India's cooperation in the War were unceremoniously broken. But it can seriously be argued that the path of 'Responsive Cooperation' initiated by Tilak and accepted by Gandhi almost up to 1920, would have met with greater success than the course followed by Gandhi after Tilak's death in 1920. Majumdar describes it as follows:

"Its essence was to accept and work the reforms that were offered, and carry on mass agitation for more and more until the goal [of freedom] was attained. In the circumstances created by the Second World War this procedure would have gained enormous strength and could scarcely have failed in the long run. ... according to a school of thought, it is very likely that the transfer of power under this process would have been far more smooth and the partition of India, with all its attendant horrors, might, perhaps, have been avoided".

Whether the partition could have been avoided is debatable. As the Khilafat movement showed, the state of mind of the Muslim leadership, and even of the Muslim masses, following Turkey's defeat in the War had reached such a pitch that a partition of the country had by then

probably become unavoidable. It is not widely known today that immediately after the Jallianwallah Bagh massacre, the Muslim villagers in the Punjab rose up and swore loyalty to the Amir of Afghanistan. And Gandhi, as much as anyone fed this separatist sentiment with his support of the Khilafat as we saw in the last chapter.

In the face of this history, it is not easy to see how the Partition could have been avoided; but the holocaust that accompanied the tragic event might have been avoided with better leadership than what Gandhi and the Congress provided during those crucial days and weeks. They kept on assuring the people and deceiving themselves that the country would never be partitioned, while in reality they had effectively conceded it long ago. As K.M. Munshi put it: "We accepted the partition to avoid civil war, but we got both - the partition and the civil war."

This issue will be taken up in a later section, but first we need to examine the role of Gandhi in the three major movements that he led: the Khilafat, the Civil Disobedience movement and the Quit India movement. To complete the picture, it is necessary also to take a look at Subhas Bose and his activities, and the major way in which they contributed to independence from British rule. The Khilafat was studied in the last chapter so one can begin with the Civil Disobedience Movement.

Civil Disobedience movement: triumph of unreason

In the long and tortuous course of India's struggle for freedom, it is difficult to find a better - or worse - example where confusion and unreason reigned and opportunities missed than the Civil Disobedience movement launched in 1930. And yet, if proper leadership and creative strategic vision had been forthcoming, India would probably have achieved freedom fully a decade before she actually did.

It is convenient to pick up the story with the Lahore

session of the Congress held in December 1929. The Bengal Swadeshi movement of twenty years ago was only a memory, and the fire of the Mopla rebellion had burnt itself out. Tilak was no longer on the scene and Gandhi had gained more or less complete control of the Congress. There were new faces on the leadership scene - notably Motilal Nehru and his son Jawaharlal. Some wags used to quip that the Congress had become the property of the 'Father, Son and the Holy Ghost'.

The Lahore session of the Congress declared complete independence to be its goal. In fact it went further. Gandhi was put in charge of a national Civil Disobedience movement to force the British to grant independence. The leaders of the Congress claimed that British rule had resulted in four basic disasters for the Indian people. The manifesto said: (1) "India has been ruined economically ... Village industries such as hand-spinning, have been destroyed. (2) Customs and currency have been so manipulated as to heap further burden on the peasantry. ...Customs duties betray clear partiality for British manufactures, and revenue from them is used not to lessen the burden on the masses but for sustaining a highly extravagant administration. (3) Politically, India's status has never been so reduced as under the British regime. ...The tallest of us has to bend before foreign authority. [Is it any different today in the Congress - under the Sonia Gandhi regime?] (4) Culturally, the system of education has torn us from our moorings, and our training has made us hug the very chains that bind us. Spiritually, compulsory disarmament has made us unmanly, and the presence of an army of occupation, employed with deadly effect to crush in us the spirit of resistance ..."

The Congress Working Committee, now a puppet in Gandhi's hands, proclaimed (Volume III, pp 273-4):

"We hold it to be a crime against man and God to submit any

longer to a rule that has caused this fourfold disaster to our country ... We will therefore prepare ourselves by withdrawing, so far as we can, all voluntary association from the British Government, and will prepare for civil disobedience, including non-payment of taxes. ... We therefore hereby solemnly resolve to carry out the Congress instructions issued from time to time for the purpose of establishing Purna Swaraj [complete independence]”.

The proclamation of the manifesto with these stirring words was followed by the solemn observation of Independence Day (January 26, 1930) on the banks of the river Ravi. It evoked tremendous enthusiasm all over the country. Then something very strange happened. Before the 'ink with which this manifesto was written' had time to dry, Gandhi wrote something in his paper *Young India* that practically sabotaged the whole thing. Instead of demanding complete independence, he listed eleven administrative reforms and appealed to the Viceroy in the following words (Volume III, p 274):

“This is by no means an exhaustive list of pressing needs, but let the Viceroy satisfy us with regard to these very simple but vital needs of India. He will then hear no talk of Civil Disobedience; and the Congress will heartily participate in any Conference where there is perfect freedom of expression and demand”.

What happened to the pledge to achieve Purna Swaraj - complete independence? Was all this to be thrown away in exchange for some bureaucratic measures? He did not even consult the Congress Working committee before issuing the statement. But Gandhi always behaved like a dictator. As Majumdar observes (p 271): "Everything was nominally left to the All India Congress Committee but practically to Gandhi. ... Undeterred by the past experience of hopeless muddles in which Gandhi placed himself and the great national organization on more than one occasion, he was chosen to be the Dictator, a position which he maintained,

with rare exceptions, for the next thirteen years."

Nonetheless the Civil Disobedience Movement demonstrated how a determined assault on the British Government could lead to freedom, something which Subhas Bose with much less fanfare achieved quarter of a century later. Civil Disobedience movement began with the famous Dandi Salt March. Gandhi's heart may not have been in it at the beginning, but once he took charge he handled it with masterful effect and turned it into an international media event. This is one aspect of Gandhi's personality that has not received its due attention - his skill in handling the media. He and his companions began the campaign from Sabarmati (near Ahmedabad) on March 12, 1930, continuing in a slow march lasting 24 days that gradually built up to a climax. It reached the small coastal town Dandi on April 5 where Gandhi and his companions formally broke the Salt Monopoly Law by making salt. It is impossible not to admire the manner in which Gandhi turned this simple act into a world event that dominated newspaper headlines everywhere.

This was followed by Civil Disobedience all over the country - from Peshawar to the southernmost part of India. The British used brutal methods to suppress the movement but failed. Indians by and large are not aware of the savagery of the British authorities in their attempt to suppress this uprising. Censorship laws ensured that the worst aspects of the Government's methods did not get into the newspapers. But Majumdar managed to unearth several important eyewitness accounts in some American archives and provides a detailed account. As just noted they failed to suppress it. Had Civil Disobedience been pursued to its logical conclusion, it is difficult to see how the British could have held on much longer. But once again, it was frittered away by Gandhi when he accepted the Gandhi-Irwin pact. It is enough to make one wonder if he really understood the

meaning of Purna Swaraj.

After the magnificent promise of the Civil Disobedience, the Gandhi-Irwin pact was an anti-climax. The first clause of the pact stated that the "Civil Disobedience movement be discontinued, and that, with the approval of His Majesty's Government, certain action be taken by the Government of India and the Local Governments." The second clause specified a Federal structure with a division of responsibility between Indians and the British. With this, the dream of Purna Swaraj, so eloquently proclaimed in the manifesto, disappeared in a puff of smoke.

"Was it for this that our people had behaved so gallantly for a year?" Jawaharlal Nehru asked in anguish. "Were all our brave words and deeds to end in this? The independence resolution of the Congress, of the pledge of January 26, so often repeated?"

Nehru and other leaders were of course fully justified in their disappointment. But characteristically, they acquiesced and beat an inglorious retreat from Independence or even Dominion status. India was to remain under British rule with a few sops thrown in. Nothing perhaps reveals the servile state of mind of the Congress more clearly than the ignoble conduct of its 'leaders' following Gandhi's capitulation. Nehru's remarks are illuminating: "So I decided, not without great mental and physical distress, to accept the agreement and work for it wholeheartedly."

But this was to have serious consequences. The British Government correctly judged that the Congress leaders were toothless tigers who, for all their rhetoric, would back down in the face of firmness. They were justified in their assumption when Gandhi again backed down when he was handed a second chance to lead the nation following the failure of the Second Round Table Conference. This came about as follows.

The Gandhi-Irwin pact was followed by the Second Round Table Conference to decide the fate and shape of the reforms. It failed. This led to a resumption of the Civil Disobedience movement. The new Viceroy, Lord Willingdon, probably the most reactionary of the breed, let loose a reign of terror, but failed to crush it. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya said (Volume III, p392):

"It is estimated that nearly 120,000 persons, including several thousand women and quite a number of children, have been arrested and imprisoned during the last fifteen months. It is an open secret that when the Government started repression, the official expectation was that they would crush the Congress [movement] in six weeks' time. Fifteen months have not enabled the Government to achieve the object. Twice fifteen months will not enable it to do so".

But what the Government could not achieve in fifteen months of brutal repression, Gandhi, who was in prison along with other important Congress leaders, achieved in fifteen minutes. Here is how Majumdar describes it (Volume III, page 393):

"While the heroic fight of Congressmen ... were still fresh in public memory Gandhi threw a bombshell in the shape of an announcement on May 8, 1933, that he would begin a fast of 21 days for purification of himself and his associates for "greater vigilance and watchfulness in connection with the Harijan cause." The Government released him from prison. Gandhi issued a statement to the President of the Congress to suspend the Civil Disobedience movement for a full month, or even six weeks".

This effectively sabotaged the movement. The reason he gave for this stunning *volte face* was singularly incongruous. "The whole purpose of the fast will be frustrated if I allowed my brain to be occupied by any extraneous matter, that is any matter outside the Harijan work."

He then appealed to the Viceroy to withdraw the oppressive measures and release the Civil Disobedience

prisoners. Willingdon haughtily turned down his request. A *temporary* suspension would not do, and the Government had no intention of negotiating with the Congress. The movement was suspended for six weeks, and then for another six weeks. The Viceroy refused even a request for interview by Gandhi. The Congress suspended the Mass Civil Disobedience movement in favor of what it called Individual Civil Disobedience. It was little more than a face saving exercise in semantics. An indignant leader asked: "Does it need an Indian National Congress to tell an individual to break laws on his own responsibility and take the consequences?"

Soon the Individual Disobedience Movement was 'dead as a doornail' - as one leader put it. It was an ignoble retreat from a cause for which so many had sacrificed so much. As Majumdar observes (Volume III, p 398):

"The sudden suspension of the Mass Civil Disobedience movement campaign on May 8, 1933, without any rhyme or reason undoubtedly came as a stunning blow to many. But Gandhi's action did not evoke much open criticism at the time, because much of India was preoccupied with the question of his health. Only Vithalbhai Patel [the elder brother of Vallabhai] and Subhas Bose, ... issued a manifesto condemning Gandhi's decision to suspend the Civil Disobedience movement and stating that it virtually undid the work and the sacrifice of the last thirteen years. According to the manifesto, it signified the failure of the Civil Disobedience campaign, as also of Gandhi's leadership".

A few others, like F.K. Nariman, spoke in similar vein. But by and large the Congressmen overtly or covertly approved of Gandhi's policy and continued to follow his lead. In other words, *the people of India were willing to make sacrifices, but the Congress leaders had no stomach for a fight to the finish.* Gandhi and the Congress had "sounded the death-knell of the fight for independence for which hundreds of thousands had undergone untold miseries and sufferings."

The 'leaders' had shown themselves unfit for leadership. It was both a blunder and a tragedy.

So, at a time when independence was within grasp, when the people of India were prepared to fight the oppressor to the bitter end, Gandhi and the Congress had once again let them down. After this, although the people of India repeatedly showed the will to fight, the Congress leadership proved unequal to the challenge. This was demonstrated again in their conduct during the Second World War, as we shall next see.

(This was also the case in 1962 when China attacked India. The country rose as one, prepared to fight the Chinese, but Nehru - an effete though voluble 'leader' with no tradition or even comprehension of the military - completely lost his nerve. When his emissary went to see Kennedy, begging for help, Kennedy asked the hapless man: "The British were able to stand up to the Germans for three years before we came to their help, and you couldn't hold out for three days?" This undeserved humiliation was heaped on the country entirely because of Nehru's failure of nerve.)

War years: failure of the Quit India movement

As part of the agreement negotiated between the political parties and the British Government, elections were held in 1937. This was under the new constitution introduced under the Government of India Act of 1935. After prolonged negotiations with the Government, the Congress was able to form ministries in several provinces where its members were in a majority in the legislatures. Nominally Gandhi had nothing to do with the elected Governments or even the party. Since 1934 he was not even a member of the Congress. But characteristically, he exercised power without accountability. As Majumdar puts it (Volume III, p 478):

"It was well known that the Congress leaders took no decision

in vital matters without consulting him and, in general, it may be said that his was in the last resort the will of the Congress. The author of the official history of the Congress expressed the bare truth when he said that Gandhi, "though not a member of the Congress, was still the power behind the throne." Nehru conveyed the same idea when he described Gandhi as the "permanent super-President of the Congress," and remarked that the "Congress at present meant Gandhiji."

It was the ultimate in power without responsibility. So the present situation in the Congress in which a personality dominates the party with scant regard for democratic norms or any accountability is hallowed by tradition. Subhas Bose for one was to pay dearly for questioning Gandhi's infallibility. All this would be interesting in itself, but soon, gathering war clouds in Europe brought India and the Congress face to face with world politics. Also, the election of Subhas Bose as President in 1938 heralded the emergence of a new leadership that was by no means willing to be Gandhi's rubber stamp. Subhas Bose foresaw war in Europe and felt that it offered an excellent opportunity for India to press home its demand for independence. This brought him into conflict with the Gandhi's wing of the party. In his own words (Volume III, p 479):

"As Congress President, the writer [Subhas Bose] did his best to stiffen the opposition of the Congress Party to any compromise with Britain and this caused annoyance in Gandhian circles who were then looking to an understanding with the British Government. ... After the Munich Pact, in September 1938, the writer [Bose] began an open propaganda throughout India in order to prepare the Indian people for a national struggle, which should synchronize with the coming war in Europe. This move, though popular among the people in general, was resented by the Gandhiites who did not want to be disturbed in their ministerial and parliamentary work and who were at that time opposed to any organized struggle".

In other words, the Congress was happy with the crumbs of office while Bose wanted to launch a national struggle for freedom. This brought him into conflict with the Gandhi wing of the Congress, which sabotaged his efforts by launching what was virtually a non-cooperation movement against Bose as President. He could not function any more and resigned his office. He later went on to form his own party called the Forward Bloc and carried on the struggle according to his own beliefs. Later still, Bose took charge of the Indian National Army (INA) in Southeast Asia, which contributed in a major way to the attainment of freedom.

Bose's apprehensions were fully justified when Britain declared war against Germany a year after the Munich Pact. As in 1914, India automatically became a belligerent but with a difference - there were in 1939 several popularly elected ministries in the provinces. The Congress made no official statement but there was considerable sympathy for Britain among the ranks of the senior Congress leaders including Gandhi and Nehru. Bose was opposed to supporting Britain. His stand had a great deal of influence in the Congress, but he was now without power in the party.

Things took a turn for the worse when the Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, issued a tactless statement on 17 October 1939. "He reiterated that Dominion Status was the goal of British policy, but pointed out that for the present the Act of 1935 held the field. The only hope he held out was at the end of the war it would be open to modification in the light of Indian views, full weight being given to the opinions and interests of the minorities." (Volume III, pp 494-5.)

In other words, it would be business as usual except that Indians were now expected to fight for Britain as loyal subjects in exchange for future promises. In the light of the experience of the First World War, when Britain broke all promises, Indian leaders - and not only of the Congress - were not willing to buy the Viceroy's line. The Congress

refused to support the British war effort. As a first step, the Working Committee asked all the Congress ministries to resign which they did in October-November of 1939.

But this was not followed by any constructive policy along the lines suggested by Bose. While Congress ministries resigned, the Muslim League strengthened its hold. Jinnah in particular was relieved by the resignations, for the Congress controlled eight out of the eleven provinces. For the crucial next six years, when the War was transforming the globe, the Congress and its leaders remained in the wilderness. Jinnah however consolidated his hold over the Muslims with many on the fence joining his organization. Then in March 1940, the Muslim League, in its Lahore Session, made a formal demand for a separate independent state - Pakistan.

While the Congress and its leaders dithered, Bose increasingly took the initiative. Disturbed by the lack of any concrete action on the part of Gandhi and his associates, Bose noted: "It was generally expected that after the Congress Ministries resigned office, the campaign of passive resistance would begin. But this expectation was not fulfilled. Many people are of the opinion that British intrigue was responsible for this."

Bose's views carried considerable weight in the Congress. Because of the systematic distortion of history carried out by the Congress Governments after independence, most Indians today are not aware that Bose was at the time probably the most influential leader in the country - having eclipsed older leaders like Gandhi and Nehru. And he "carried on a continuous propaganda against cooperation in the war and in favor of commencing a national struggle for independence."

It is a measure of his growing influence that the rank and file of the Congress membership was moved by his appeals and activities. In the Ramgarh session in March 1940, the

Working Committee adopted a resolution declaring "nothing short of complete independence can be accepted by India." But characteristically, while holding out the *threat* of Civil Disobedience, no concrete policy or plan was enunciated.

Bose was not content to only issue statements. In April 1940, he and his followers (Forward Bloc) commenced all over the country, a campaign of disobedience. Many of them were arrested and thrown in jail. In early July, Bose was himself arrested and jailed along with hundreds of his followers. Only a few days before his arrest, Bose made a passionate appeal to Gandhi to "come forward and launch his campaign of passive resistance." It fell on deaf ears. It is worth noting that this was fully two years before Gandhi and his followers reluctantly launched the Quit India movement that ended in fiasco. It is again a measure of the distortion of history, that this movement undertaken by Bose and his followers rarely finds mention in history books.

There can be no question, however, about Gandhi's sincere attachment to his creed of nonviolence. "The issue" according to Gandhi, "was one of pacifism, and not of India's freedom." This was not a view of a majority of Congressmen who felt: "The Indian National Congress was not a pacifist organization but one for achieving India's freedom." They also reserved the "right to take to the sword if they had no other alternative."

The Working Committee of the Congress, which met in Wardha in June 1940, went further. Its members declared that they were "unable to go the full length with Gandhiji; but they recognize that he should be free to pursue his great ideal in his own way." In other words, Gandhi and the Congress were to go their own separate ways. The Working Committee and the Congress also differed with Gandhi over his opposition to the restoration of the Congress ministries in the provinces and entry into the Central Council.

In other words Gandhi's influence in the Congress was on

the wane. First Subhas Bose and then the Congress Working Committee itself had defied him. Recognizing perhaps that his hold over the Congress - and the country - was slipping, Gandhi perceptibly changed his stand. In April 1942, he suggested that the interests of both India and Britain lay "in orderly and timely withdrawal of Britain from India." In effect he was inching towards the policy advocated by Subhas Bose nearly four years earlier. This was to culminate in the Quit India movement that Gandhi himself was to launch three months later.

There was another factor that contributed to Gandhi's change of stand leading to the Quit India agitation - the popular success of the revolutionaries. The role of revolutionaries has also been systematically underplayed by 'official' historians of the Congress Governments. A number of revolutionaries had joined the Non-Cooperation movement of Gandhi only to be disillusioned when he suspended it. They publicly repudiated the nonviolence of Gandhi. Bhagat Singh was one of them. The revolutionaries repeatedly stated that their main object in resorting to violent acts like throwing bombs at government targets was to rouse the nation from its lethargy in the struggle for freedom induced by Gandhi's policy of nonviolence. Majumdar writes (Volume III, p 550):

"It has been admitted by the author of the official history of the Congress ... that at the time of the Karachi Congress of 1931, it was doubtful whether Gandhi or Bhagat Singh occupied the chief attention of India. There were black flag demonstrations against Gandhi and he had to be taken away from the train before it reached the Railway Station where the demonstrators were waiting to receive him [with black flags]. ... As a matter of fact, Gandhi fully realized the growing influence of revolutionary ideas over young men, and it is not without reason that the revolutionaries claimed that they practically, though indirectly, forced Gandhi to renew the struggle for freedom, in 1930 and again in 1942; for he

feared that otherwise he would lose the leadership of the country and the initiative would pass into the hands of the revolutionary young men".

This according to the official historian of the Congress! In fact Gandhi himself admitted it. His fears were justified when shortly before his arrest in 1942, Jayaprakash Narayan, one of his beloved followers, repudiated the Gandhian idea of nonviolence. So a combination of factors, leading to his declining influence in the Congress and the country, persuaded Gandhi to launch the Quit India movement in August 1942. But typically the movement was botched, with no clear plan or leadership. The people who trusted and followed the leaders were left to fend for themselves. (Also, as we examine this history, it is remarkable how small a part was played by Nehru; he was neither a leader like Subhas nor an organizer like Patel.)

In any event, Gandhi launched - or was forced to launch - his mass movement, now known as the Quit India movement, in August 1942. Congress historians have turned it into an epic struggle of titanic proportions. The reality is quite otherwise. Although the people of India acquitted themselves nobly, making heroic sacrifices, the leaders gave a dismal account of themselves. The Government crushed it in three months. There were some isolated activities in the provinces, but the back of the movement had been broken by the end of the year.

At the same time, it is important to recognize that the failure was at the level of leadership for the people showed themselves willing to make sacrifices. In Majumdar's words: "The great revolt of 1942 was really a soldiers' battle. The General bungled, but all glory to the Soldiers who gave a good account of themselves ..." This estimate is confirmed by no less an authority than Sardar Patel. "Never before had such widespread uprisings happened in India in the history of the British Raj, as the did during the last three years. We

are proud of the spirit in which the people reacted..."

It also showed that heroism of the people is wasted in the absence of leadership. In giving their call to "Do or die" in a fight to a finish, the Congress leaders had failed to give even a *general plan* for the revolt, let alone a *detailed plan of action*. (Gandhi himself declared: "Do or die. We shall either free India or die in the attempt.") Once the leaders were arrested, its rapid collapse was a foregone conclusion. As Majumdar put it (Volume III, p 557-8):

"Nothing but an almost insane credulity would make one seriously believe that the British Government would allow the Congress leaders, after they have declared open rebellion and asked the British to quit India, to go on making preparations on an elaborate scale to give effect to the formal resolution passed to that effect, without making the most desperate effort to nip it in the bud and crush it with all the force that they could command, ... The Congress leaders must, or should, have known all this before they staked everything on this final campaign, as they put it, with grim resolve to do or die. *They neither did nor died, but cannot absolve themselves from responsibility for the death and sufferings to the rank and file during the outbreak of 1942*". (My emphasis.)

As noted the movement was crushed within two to three months. At the very outset the movement took on a violent character, which was only to be expected. Gandhi deplored it, followed by Nehru and also Maulana Azad. But some 'Gandhians' writing later would not leave truth well alone. R.R. Diwakar claimed that the 1942 struggle was predominantly nonviolent and "incomparable with anything in past history." This would make Gandhi a liar - clearly an impossibility; Gandhi had absolved himself of all responsibility for the struggle of 1942. Again Majumdar puts it clearly in focus (Volume III, pp 555-6):

"... unless one is prepared to accuse him [Gandhi] of deliberate

falsehood, no credit - or discredit - for what actually happened in 1942 really belongs to him. This point must be clearly understood in any assessment of the struggle of 1942 or of the part played by Gandhi in India's battle for freedom. Gandhi had fired his last shot (of course figuratively) in 1932 and missed. For ten years he remained a non-combatant. On August 8, 1942, he again pulled his trigger but there was no shot because he forgot to put any cartridge in the chamber. Then he retired, finally, from direct active participation in India's struggle for freedom".

Majumdar also notes that "far from claiming any credit for [the 1942 movement] ... both Gandhi and the Congress offered apology and explanation for the "madness' which seized the people participating in it." On December 11, 1942, the Congress Working Committee issued a statement deploring the violence and absolving Gandhi of the responsibility. Jayaprakash Narayan went further when he said: "To fasten the August [1942] programme on Gandhiji is a piece of perjury of which only the British ruling class is capable of."

So the Quit India movement was a monumental fiasco, not a glorious victory as made out by Congress propagandists. Not a trace of it remained in India by 1944. As it had totally collapsed in urban areas, the Congress leaders made a last ditch appeal to the people, to the farmers in particular, to not cooperate with the Government. Nothing came of it. As Majumdar notes: "The appeal fell flat on people ... Valour, courage and heroic self-sacrifice could not make up for the leadership and necessary equipment."

The failure of the 1942 revolt signaled the end of the Gandhian cult of nonviolence, and signaled also the end of Gandhi's leadership of the national movement. (This nonviolence was resurrected in the next decade by Nehru as *Pancha Sheela* in his dealings with China shortly after the Chinese Rape of Tibet, but that is a different story.) It was time now for different methods and a different leadership. It

was left to Subhas Bose to carry on the struggle for freedom. Recognizing the impotence of the Congress, hobbled by indecision and timidity, he was forced to evolve a radically different strategy. This led him to take command of the Indian National Army, which carried on a heroic armed struggle against the British occupiers. This is what eventually forced the British to leave India: this is also what the various Congress leaders - beginning with Nehru himself - have been trying to conceal and distort.

Road to freedom: Subhas Bose and the INA

Following his breach with Gandhi, Bose launched his own non-cooperation movement. At that time he was probably the most influential political leader in India, especially with the youth of the country. The rest of his short career reads like a thrilling romance. If his career and achievements outside India, leading eventually to the rise of the spirit of nationalism in the armed forces had been widely disseminated, he would undoubtedly have been celebrated as a great popular hero. Nehru, with his interminable pedantic speeches, would have suffered greatly in comparison. This no doubt is one of the reasons why successive Congress Governments went to such lengths to turn Subhas Bose into a *persona non grata*.

Several volumes have been written on the INA, so what follows is a very brief summary of Subhas Bose's activities during the War. As noted earlier, Bose on his own initiative launched a campaign of disobedience for which he was arrested in July 1940. He was shortly released from prison due to ill health, but kept under house arrest. Bose somehow managed to escape from detention in the early hours of January 17, 1941. Traveling incognito, he went by train to Peshawar near the Afghan border. Then under the nose of the British border patrol, he crossed the Indian border by foot at Jamru and reached Garhi in Afghanistan. Boarding a car waiting for him, he made his way to Kabul where plans

had been made for him to travel to Moscow with an Italian passport. And on March 28, 1941, he flew to Berlin where he was received by the German Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop. This shows that foreign governments regarded Bose as a leader of the highest importance.

Bose proposed that he would raise 'Free India' units from Indian prisoners of war in Germany, in exchange for a Declaration of Indian Independence by the Axis powers. Since Germany was at the time still allied with Russia, and India was thought to fall in the Russian sphere of influence, Germany was not prepared to declare India independent. (This is Mujumdar's surmise which appears reasonable.) But Bose was allowed to speak to the prisoners and raise Free India units. His plan was to turn them from British Indian soldiers into Indian National soldiers. He felt that this would eventually turn a substantial part of the Indian army to the national cause. He was confident of German victory and felt that as his Free India units marched against the British, Indian soldiers of the British would join him. His plan received a fillip when Germany declared war against Russia. There were no longer any restraints on his activities.

When he went to speak to the Indian prisoners, at first he met with considerable hostility, and his speech was interrupted. Apparently the British indoctrination was too strong and too thorough to be so easily overcome. Bose then changed his tactics. He met with the men individually and in small groups and gradually won them over. Recruits began to pour in for his Indian Legion, and by January 1942, he had formed two infantry units. Bose founded Free India Centers in Rome and Paris also, and the Indian Legion soon reached its planned strength of 3000. But then Japan's entry into the War and their phenomenal success against the British in Southeast Asia made Bose change his plans.

Japanese successes against the British in Southeast Asia have few parallels in the annals of war. Singapore fell on

February 15, 1942 and Rangoon on March 7. While the Israeli victory in the Six Day War, and the Indian victory in the Bangladesh War are comparable in speed of success, they were achieved in smaller theatres. Bose immediately saw that Southeast Asia, because of its proximity to India and its substantial Indian population, offered a much better base for his operations than Europe. In addition, the sensational collapse of British power in Asia had made a great impact on the Indians living in the region, raising their nationalistic feelings. They saw that freedom was within grasp.

The leader of what may be called the Indian National Movement in Southeast Asia was Rash Bihari Bose. With a Japanese wife, he had settled in Japan as a citizen of that country. Through largely his efforts, several Free India Centers were established throughout Southeast Asia to further the cause of Indian independence. Thanks to his initiative, a conference was held in Tokyo on 28-30 March 1942. At this conference, a resolution was passed to form an Indian National Army (INA) under the direct command of Indian officers to conduct a campaign for the liberation of India. This was followed by a conference at Bangkok in June, attended by more than a hundred delegates from Burma, Malaya, the Andamans and Nicobar and other countries of the region. Rash Bihari Bose was elected Chairman.

Rash Bihari Bose raised the tricolor flag of independent India, and the Indian Independent League with the attainment of independence as its goal, was formally inaugurated. It was decided also to invite Subhas Bose to takeover the leadership.

The formation of the Indian National Army was the work of Captain Mohan Singh of the 14th Punjab Regiment, a prisoner of war. He was one of the 40,000 Indian prisoners handed over to the Japanese by the British Colonel Hunt after the fall of Singapore. (Only the Indian units at Singapore had offered any resistance, the British were busy

leaving.) Mohan Singh managed to escape from prison, but then approached the Japanese with an offer to raise units for an Indian National Army (INA) that would join the Japanese in the fight against the British. The goal was to drive the British out of India. Many Indian prisoners of war joined the INA, but many others - especially the officers - did not. By the end of August 1942, forty thousand prisoners of war had signed a pledge to join the INA. This should give an idea of the magnitude of the British defeat in Southeast Asia.

Much anti-propaganda has been directed against the INA, implying that its recruits were mercenary cowards who joined it only to escape from prison. But their fighting record does not support this view. The following resolution passed during the formation of the INA shows them to be true patriots (Volume III, p 583):

"... an Indian National Army be formed comprising the Indian troops and civilians in East Asia. Captain Mohan Singh would be the Commander-in-Chief of this Army of Liberation of India. The Indian Independence League [with Rash Bihari Bose as President] would make arrangements for the supply of men, material and money required by the Indian National Army, and would request the Japanese Government to supply the necessary arms and equipment, ships and aeroplanes required by the Indian National Army which would be commanded entirely by Indian Officers and would fight only for the liberation of India".

This shows that Indian civilians from the region also joined the INA and otherwise supported it. Many businessmen and traders made generous donations to the cause. In addition, it is hardly credible that a person of Subhas Bose's proven patriotism and record of sacrifice would have been associated with a mere mercenary outfit. It should be noted however, that the INA had much less success in recruiting officers than soldiers. This shows that the Indian officers, because of their closer association with their British counterparts, had become more 'Anglicized',

and chose not to have anything to do with the fellow Asians of the region.

As noted, Subhas Bose was invited to join and take over the leadership of the campaign. This presented formidable difficulties. It took eight months before the Germans were prepared to let Bose go because of the dangers of a long sea voyage in hostile waters. Finally, after a long and hazardous submarine voyage, first in a German U-boat, and then a Japanese submarine, Bose and his companion Abid Hassan landed in Sumatra (in Indonesia) on 28 April 1943. He was met by a Japanese delegation and arrived at Tokyo on 13 June 1943. The very next day he was received by the Japanese premier Tojo and later also by the Emperor.

Tojo told Subhas Bose that British defeat in the war was certain, but Japan had no demands to make on India beyond the necessities of war, and was prepared to see India independent. He also encouraged Subhas Bose in his plan to form a Provisional Government, which would take control of the territory from which the British were evicted.

Subhas Bose arrived in Singapore on 2 July 1943, and took over the leadership of the Indian Independence League from Rash Bihari Bose on July 4. He made public his decision to form a Provisional Government of Free India and to lead the Indian National Army towards India. The next day, the formation of the INA was announced to the world, and on August 25, Subhas Bose assumed formal command of the INA. His call was *chalo Delhi* - March to Delhi. At last, the INA and the Indian Independence League had found a leader of stature to match their lofty goals.

The Provisional Government of Free India was announced at an emotional public meeting held at Singapore on 21 October 1943. The proclamation declared (Volume III, p 588):

"It will be the task of the Provisional Government to launch

and to conduct the struggle that will bring about the expulsion of the British and their allies from the soil of India. It will then be the task of the Provisional Government to bring about the establishment of a permanent National Government of Azad Hind [Free India] constituted in accordance with the will of the Indian people and enjoying their confidence”.

It should be noted that at all times Subhas Bose was conscious of the fact that the INA must preserve its identity as a *national* army, and not become a tool of the Japanese. This in fact was the basis of his appeal to Indian prisoners of war. When Field Marshal Terauchi, Commander-in-Chief of the Japanese forces in Southeast Asia, suggested to Bose that the Japanese would do all the fighting necessary to liberate India while he should only assist in enlisting the support and goodwill of the Indian people, Bose was shocked. Bose told him, "Any liberation of India secured through Japanese sacrifices would be worse than slavery." Indians must make the maximum sacrifice in blood and effort to free their homeland. The INA units therefore must be the vanguard of any campaign to liberate India.

Terauchi conceded Bose's point, but as a military man, he wanted a demonstration of competence in the field by the INA soldiers. It was a common belief among the Japanese that Indian troops were only British mercenaries. In view of the dismal performance of the British under the Japanese assault, they had no great opinion of Indian soldiers. Terauchi's demand was probably no more than what any military officer in his place would have asked. But Bose would not yield, and Terauchi suggested a compromise. He proposed that an INA regiment be deployed as a test case, and if this regiment "came up to the Japanese standard" he said, "the rest of the army would be sent into action."

Terauchi had no reason to regret his decision. The INA came through with flying colors. Moved by the brilliant performance of the INA soldiers in the field, the Japanese

Commander-in-Chief in Burma went to Subhas Bose, and bowing before him said: "Your Excellency, we were wrong. We misjudged the soldiers of the INA. We know that they are no mercenaries, but real patriots." (Volume III, p 597)

Much nonsense has been written about the INA as a fighting force and about Subhas Bose as a commander. Judged by any standards, Bose's success in building up from scratch an army that could fight on equal terms and at times even best the highly trained and superbly equipped British Indian Army, was a fantastic achievement. And this eventually led to India becoming free. It demonstrated leadership qualities and organizational abilities of the highest order. Compared to Bose's (and INA's) contribution to history and record of leadership, the various sporadic movements organized by Gandhi and his followers seem puerile. And yet there is no shortage of Congressmen - including Nehru of *Pancha Sheela* fame - who accuse him of being an impractical dreamer! In modern Indian history, only Sardar Patel's integration of the Indian states is an achievement that stands on the same level.

As a fighting force, the INA was a remarkable machine considering the enormous handicaps of experience, equipment and training under which it had to work. When it began, it had no officer who had commanded even a battalion, and yet within two years it was called upon to fight the British Army of corps strength or more. Whenever it had to face local engagements, the INA units were often more than a match for the British units. This was recognized by the Japanese commanders when they proceeded to place Japanese troops under the direct command of Captain Suraj Mal of the INA. It was probably the first time in the history of the Japanese Army that its men had been placed under the command of a foreign officer. To call the men and officers of the INA 'traitors' would be like calling George Washington and other American freedom fighters traitors,

simply because they too had fought on the British side during the French and Indian Wars, and yet took French help in their fight for freedom.

In the field, men and officers of the INA displayed uncommon gallantry under incredibly harsh conditions. The following account of the capture of the height known as Mythun Khunou gives an idea (Volume III, p 600):

"A whole British brigade, 3000 strong, supported by heavy artillery and aeroplanes led an attack against 600 INA men. The situation became extremely grave as all the commanding heights and strategic points were in the hands of the British. The commander of the INA brigade issued orders to capture the heights at any cost. Lt. Mansukh Lall, commanding a platoon of 30 men, showed unparalleled heroism in capturing one of these heights. "While leading his small and semi-starved force up the ridge, he was wounded 13 times; through exhaustion and loss of blood, he staggered and fell to the ground." His men wavered, but "making a last supreme effort, with 13 bullet wounds in his body, he rose to his feet and personally led the final assault on the height ..." The British forces retreated leaving the height in possession of the INA".

This episode was by no means exceptional. When it entered India, what stopped the INA at the tactical level was the torrential Indian monsoon rather than the British Army; at the strategic level, what forced its retreat was the general collapse of the Japanese position in the East. Shahnawaz Khan of the INA, who saw a great deal of action as commander of the Subhas Brigade (named after Subhas Bose in spite of his vigorous protests), wrote (Volume III, p 603):

"Thus ended the main INA and Japanese offensive which had been started in March, 1944. During this period, the INA, with much inferior equipment and extremely poor supply system, was able to advance as much as 150 miles into Indian territory. While the INA was on the offensive, there was not a single occasion on which our forces were defeated on the battlefield, and there was

never an occasion when the enemy, despite their overwhelming superiority in men and material, was able to capture any post held by the INA. On the other hand, there were very few cases where the INA attacked British posts and failed to capture them. In these operations the INA lost nearly 4000 men as killed alone”.

The war in the East, including the performance of the INA, shattered the carefully nurtured myth that Indian soldiers fought well only when led by British officers. The ignominious defeat of the British at Singapore and elsewhere in the East was a blow from which British prestige never recovered. They could no longer pretend that only they could lead troops or that Asiatics could not fight without European officers. This was not an easy thing for the British to stomach. In the face of this it is hardly surprising that British writers should have tried to make light of the INA as a fighting force and of Subhas Bose as a leader.

It is unnecessary to go into details of the INA campaigns, for its significance was less military than national. At last India had a *national army* commanded by a leader of the first rank that posed a serious threat to the British hold over India. This was something that the other Congress leaders, steeped in pacifism and bereft of a national vision, had failed to provide in twenty-five years. All they had to offer were a series of sporadic movements that crumbled as soon as they met resistance, or due to the whimsical decisions of a leader trying to be a holy man.

Subhas Bose did not live to see the country free. He died in an air crash under somewhat mystifying conditions. He left Saigon in a Japanese bomber and arrived at Taihoku in Famosa (Taiwan) on August 18, 1945. He left in another plane for an unknown destination, after which there is a complete blank. The official Japanese version is that his plane crashed almost immediately after takeoff, but there are many gaps in the account.

Japan surrendered on September 15, 1945, formally

ending the war. After the war, the British Indian Government put on trial three men of the INA - a Hindu, a Muslim and a Sikh - for desertion and treason. This historic trial, held at the historic Red Fort at Delhi was a national sensation. The country, including many in the armed forces, regarded these men as patriots rather than traitors. The British saw the writing on the wall: Indians would no longer fight for the British. The British Indian Army was now for all practical purposes the Indian National Army. *This was Subhas Bose's great achievement.* The British saw that the sooner they left the better for themselves, for, at the end of the war, *India had some three million men under arms.*

This is what forced the British out of India - a fact admitted by no less a person than Prime Minister Attlee. Subhas Bose's campaign to free India had finally borne fruit, though he was no longer on the scene to witness it.

It is an irony of history that the British prevailed in the war against Japan because of the Indian Army; we have this on the word of Field Marshall Slim, Commander-in-Chief in the East. India too gained independence only because of the Indian soldiers. So both British victory in the East - Pyrrhic though it proved to be - and Indian independence were due to the Indian Army. But the latter needed a leader of indomitable courage and will to lead it in the *national* cause. It was fortunate for India that such a man appeared on the scene in the person of Subhas Bose. Nehru, Gandhi and others were part of a side show.

Gandhi, Congress and the Partition

As with everything connected with the Freedom Movement, the role of Gandhi and the Congress in the Partition has been widely misrepresented. It was not a last ditch compromise forced by Mountbatten in 1947 as history books report. The fact is that Gandhi had all but conceded the partition of India *as far back as 1940*, but in typically Gandhian fashion kept insisting that the country would be

partitioned 'over his dead body'.

To their credit, the Muslim leaders never made any secret of where their loyalties lay, only Gandhi and the Congress preferred to hold on to a fantasy to facing the truth that was there for all to see. Majumdar has this to say (Volume III, pp 450-1):

"... the Hindu-Muslim fraternity, artificially created by Gandhi at the behest of Muhammad Ali and other Pan-Islamists, tumbled down like a house of cards as soon as the Khilafat movement came to an ignoble end, and a bitter feud between the two communities, signalized by communal riots, marked the period. Most of the so-called Muslim nationalist leaders - who were only Pan-Islamists masquerading under this disguise - now appeared in their true color".

Muhammad Ali, who was the principal lieutenant of Gandhi in his Satyagraha campaign in 1920-21, refused to join him in the second campaign in 1930. ... He made no secret of the fact that Muslims, as a whole, were guided by Pan-Islamism. ... In his address as Congress President in 1923 he reminded the audience that "extra-territorial sympathies are part of the quintessence of Islam."

So it was there for all to see, only Gandhi and the Congress chose to remain blind to reality. On this point it is worth noting that Sri Aurobindo had seen through the whole thing as well as its disastrous consequences as far back as 1923. He told a disciple in 1939: "I told C.R. Das [in 1923] that the Hindu-Muslim question must be solved before the Britishers go, otherwise there is going to be civil war. He also agreed and wanted to solve it." He also pointed out that the Congress was committing a serious mistake in its dealings with Jinnah.

"Instead of doing what was necessary, the Congress is trying to flirt with Jinnah, and Jinnah simply thinks that he has to obstinately stick to his terms to get them. The more they try, the more Jinnah becomes intransigent".

In other words, the Congress was on its course of appeasement, the only consistent policy it had followed. On May 28, 1940 he was even more specific when he told a disciple:

"Have you read what Gandhi has said in answer to a correspondent? He says if eight crores of Muslims demand a separate State, what else are the twenty-five crores of Hindus to do but surrender? Otherwise there will be civil war."

The shocked disciple said: "I hope that is not the type of conciliation he is thinking of." But Sri Aurobindo had no such illusions. He replied:

"Not thinking of you say? He has actually said that and almost yielded. If you yield to the opposite party beforehand, naturally they will stick strongly to their claims. It means that the minority will rule and the majority must submit. ... This shows a peculiar mind. I think this kind of people are a little cracked".

And yet this charade - that Gandhi and the Congress would not allow the country to be divided - was maintained for seven long years!

The fact of the matter is that after the failure of the Quit India movement of 1942, the Congress - and Gandhi - was a spent force. It is unnecessary to go into the sorry story of greed, betrayal and cowardice that led to the holocaust. A brief account will suffice. Gandhi's standing was by then so low that when he wrote to the new Viceroy Lord Wavell with a proposal for India after the War, the Government in Britain responded that Gandhi's proposal "obviously did not even form the starting point for a profitable discussion."

After this rebuff Gandhi realized that he and the Congress were in no position to negotiate with the Government, and his only hope lay perhaps in reaching an agreement with the Muslim League in the hope of presenting a united front. Actually, Gandhi had been negotiating with Jinnah through Rajagolachari (Rajaji) well

before this; only, things were now critical. His situation now bordered on the pathetic. On July 17, 1944 he wrote to Jinnah: "I have always been a *servant* and friend to you. Do not disappoint me." Jinnah refused Rajaji's plan but agreed to discuss the partition with Gandhi.

This led to a furious reaction throughout the country. Savarkar only echoed the indignation of the people when he asserted that the "Indian provinces were not the private properties of Gandhiji and Rajaji so that they could make a gift of them to anyone they liked." But the meetings went on. As Majumdar puts it (Volume III, pp 573-4):

"The Gandhi-Jinnah talks commenced on 9 September 1944, and continued till the 27th, but the two failed to arrive at an agreement. The concrete offer made by Gandhi was a partition of India into Hindusthan and Pakistan on a basis, which did not materially differ from the plan finally accepted in 1947". (Emphasis mine.)

This gives the lie to the Congress story that Gandhi and the Congress were opposed to partition till the very end. The main point of difference was Gandhi's refusal to accept Jinnah's two-nation theory, and the right of the Muslims to self-determination on that basis. The nation should be grateful to Gandhi on this point, but it is not true that he was opposed to the creation of Pakistan to the very end. Considering how weak his position was this was probably the best Gandhi could do. But one unfortunate effect of all this was that it had the effect of greatly enhancing the prestige of Jinnah in the eyes of the Muslims.

This twenty-five year record of bungling brings up a fundamental character of the Congress as an organization and also of its members and 'leaders'. At crucial times, when faced with issues of moment, their nerve failed and they became clueless. Instead of facing the issue squarely, they surrendered their judgement and placed the fate of the country in the hands of someone with 'charisma' - like

Gandhi or Nehru. Repeated failures did not make them reexamine their beliefs and conduct. Gandhi committed blunder after blunder, but maintained an iron grip over his followers. It was the same with Nehru. After he had thoroughly botched the accession of Kashmir, he presided over the fiasco of the *Pancha Sheela*, leading to a humiliating defeat at the hands of China. And yet only death removed him from his high office.

His daughter also missed a great opportunity after victory in the Bangladesh War when all outstanding problems with Pakistan could have been solved, but she gave away what the armed forces had gained for a scrap of paper called the 'Simla Agreement'. It was truly a case of snatching defeat from the jaws of victory. (Her son Rajiv is too insignificant a figure to find a place in history, though he too made a mess in Sri Lanka.)

The story is no different today. When the Congress is facing an existential crisis, the leaders of this once great organization can think of nothing better than begging a foreign woman of no education or experience to save them! It is difficult to believe that this is the stuff of the people who fought the mighty British Empire and brought freedom to the country. We now know they did not. They only reaped its benefits. Majumdar's history has exposed and exploded their pretensions.

There is one person who shines amidst this gloomy and depressing scene - Sardar Vallabhai Patel. As Sri Aurobindo observed, he was the only strong man among them. At this point it is perhaps worth dispelling another myth propagated by some modern (Leftist) historians - that the British unified India. Nothing could be further from the truth. The cultural unity of India is of untold antiquity. British India was not a politically cohesive unit. It consisted of several large provinces directly under British rule and nearly six hundred hereditary principalities or 'Princely

States' who had treaty relationships with the British. The Viceroy was the Governor General of the provinces directly administered by the British Government, as well as the Crown representative to the rulers of the princely states. That is why he was called the Viceroy.

The man who unified this hodgepodge assemblage was Sardar Vallabhai Patel. British conquered large parts of it but did not unify them. Napoleon also conquered large parts of the feudal states that are now part of Germany, but he did not unify them. That was the work of Bismarck. To claim that the British unified India would be like giving credit to Napoleon for unifying Germany. For this reason, people who understand history call Patel the Bismarck of India. Only the challenge faced by Patel was incomparably greater.

But this unification would be impossible had a cultural bond of untold antiquity not already existed among the people of India. Indian nationalism consisted in reawakening in the people awareness of this ancient truth. (Anti-nationalists on the other hand, want to deny this unity and divide India into culturally disparate units.) This cultural awakening was the work of leaders like Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo. Gandhi and Nehru on the other hand pursued only mirages like Hindu-Muslim unity and secularism. Indian nationalism is spiritual and cultural - not merely political.

One shudders to think of what might have happened had Sardar Patel not been on the scene to effect this political union. Nehru, with his head in the clouds, bungled over Kashmir and all but botched Hyderabad also. With Nehru instead of Patel in charge, India might have been saddled with six hundred Kashmirs, with the British - Churchill in particular - watching the scene with glee.

We may now sum up. It was the combination of threats and acts of violence by Jinnah that resulted in the birth of Pakistan. It was the potential threat of a violent uprising by

the Indian armed forces that led to India's independence. It is sheer fantasy to think that the 'spiritual force rooted in nonviolence' can yield major political ends. Rama and Krishna were not lacking in spiritual wisdom, but had to resort to force to suppress evil. Even Parashu-Rama, a Brahmana, was forced to bear arms to destroy evil rulers. Spiritual force has played little role even in supposedly religious institutions like the Vatican. India without Gandhi is conceivable, while a Pakistan without Jinnah is not. It demonstrates the success of Jinnah and his violence and the failure of Gandhi and his nonviolence. Those who believe in the power of 'spiritual force' to attain political aims are living in the Land of Lotus Eaters.

Gandhi the Saint

This brings us back to Gandhi the Saint, and Gandhi the Politician. A point to note, however, is that even when being most saintly, Mahatma Gandhi was loathe to give up politics, or even political power. Unlike Sri Aurobindo, who retired from politics in pursuit of spiritual goals, Gandhi remained a politician to the last. When he had ceased being even an ordinary member of the Congress, he continued to exercise his authority. The Subhas Bose episode is a striking example of it.

He has been called the 'most saintly of politicians'. Gandhi himself claimed that he was only a 'politician trying to be a saint', which is a more accurate description since it highlights the fact that he *was* a politician, and remained one to the last. Unfortunately, his followers invariably suspended their reason when faced with political actions presented by Gandhi. Even when they had serious doubts over a course of action being followed, they refrained from checking him. Politically unwise decisions were supinely accepted simply because they came from Gandhi. As Majumdar notes:

"This kind of absolute devotion and self-surrender has been

highly extolled by certain religious sects But when it forms the basis of political action and is cited as justification for doing things not approved on rational principles, it becomes difficult for a historian to appreciate the laudable sentiments of his disciples. The inevitable effect of such sentiments was that the great political leaders of the Congress came to look upon Gandhi as a superman, who was infallible and acted by instinct, not logic or reason, and therefore should not be judged by ordinary standards which we apply to other leaders".

Even strong men, who should have known better, allowed themselves to be dominated by him and sought refuge in his supposed infallibility. Jawaharlal Nehru, who prided in his rationalism, admitted "Gandhi was a unique personality and it was impossible to judge him by the usual standards, or even apply the ordinary canons of logic to him." The reality is that few had the strength of character to stand up to his bullying tactics.

Nehru's rationalization amounts to what Americans call a copout. As a result of such blind faith on the part of his followers, Gandhi was not held to account for the consequences of his inspired if ill-advised actions. His sponsorship of the Khilafat and the resulting Mopla Rebellion is a prime example. His supposed saintliness, and his followers' blind trust in him, allowed him to come out of this disaster unscathed. It is difficult to see how any other politician could have survived such a disaster. Blunder after blunder, Gandhi the Saint rescued Gandhi the Politician. Majumdar's observation on this point is highly relevant:

"I yield to none in my profound respect for Gandhi, the saint and humanitarian. But as the author of this volume [Volume III], I am concerned only with the part he played in the struggle for freedom from the British yoke. I have necessarily to view his life and activities, thoughts, and feelings primarily from a narrow angle, namely as a politician and statesman leading a great political organization which was not intended to be a

humanitarian association or the World Peace Society, but had been formed for a definite political object, namely, to achieve India's freedom from political bondage”.

This admirably sums up the goals of the present writer also.

CHRONOLOGICAL SUMMARY

1919

March 13 Jallianwalla Bagh Massacre.

November 23-24 Gandhi presides over All India Khilafat Conference.

1920

March 10 Gandhi recommends non-cooperation in support of the Khilafat.

April 17 All India Khilafat Committee accepts Gandhi's plan.

May 18 Central Khilafat Committee accepts non-cooperation.

August 1 Tilak dies. Gandhi becomes the undisputed leader of the Congress.

August 21 The Khilafat agitation begins with All India strike on Gandhi's promise of 'Swaraj within the year'.

September 4 Congress special session in Calcutta accepts Gandhi's plan of non-cooperation in support of the Khilafat.

1921

August 21 The year ends without 'Swaraj within the year' promised by Gandhi. The Mopla Rebellion breaks out.

November 1 Ali brothers sentenced to two years' rigorous imprisonment.

Mopla Rebellion crushed after the loss of thousands of lives.

1922

February 1 Gandhi communicates to the Viceroy his decision to launch Mass Civil Disobedience.

February 5 Mob violence at Chauri-Chaura.

February 11-12 Gandhi suspends Mass Civil Disobedience.

March 18 Gandhi sentenced to six years' imprisonment.

1923

January 1 C.R. Das resigns as Congress President.

Sri Aurobindo cautions Das about the looming Hindu-Muslim problem, and the need to solve it before the British leave.

1924

February 5 Gandhi released on grounds of ill health.

1925

August 22 Vithalbhai Patel (brother of Sardar Vallabhai) elected President of the Central Legislature.

1926

November 8 Appointment of the Simon Commission.

December 26-28 Congress in its Madras session declares independence as India's goal.

1928

February 3 Arrival of the Simon Commission. Nationwide protests.

December 29-31 Calcutta session of the Congress accepts the Constitution Drafted by the Nehru Committee.

1929

April 8 Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Datta throw bombs in the Assembly Hall in Delhi.

October 31 Viceroy's declaration of Dominion Status and the First Round Table Conference (RTC).

December 23 Gandhi invited to the RTC but refuses to attend.

December 29 Lahore session of the Congress begins. Declares Purna Swaraj

(complete independence) as its goal. Resolves to boycott the Legislatures and approves Civil Disobedience.

1930

January 1 The tricolor flag of Indian independence hoisted on

the banks of the Ravi.

January 26 Independence Day observed.

March 12 Gandhi begins Civil Disobedience with the Dandi march.

April 5 Gandhi arrives at Dandi and breaks the Salt Law. Gandhi and other Congress workers arrested.

1931

January 26 Gandhi and Congress Working Committee members released.

March 4 Gandhi-Irwin talks.

March 5 Gandhi-Irwin Pact.

March 23 Bhagat Singh and his comrades hanged.

March 29 Karachi session of the Congress approves of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact. Black flag demonstrations against Gandhi.

September 12 Second Round Table Conference with Gandhi as the sole

- December 11 Congress representative fails to reach a conclusion.

December 29 Viceroy turns down Gandhi's request for interview.

1932

January 1 Civil Disobedience revived.

January 4 Gandhi arrested.

August 17 Ramsay Macdonald announces the Communal Award.

September 20 Gandhi begins 'fast unto death' protesting Communal Award.

September 25 Poona pact (between Gandhi and Ambedkar).

November 17 Third Round Table Conference.

December 24

1933

May 8 Gandhi suspends Civil Disobedience. Gandhi released from jail.

August 1 Individual Civil Disobedience launched. Gandhi arrested.

August 5 Gandhi released.

1934

May 20 Congress officially suspends Civil Disobedience.

1935

August 4 New Government of India Act passed.

1937

July 7 Congress permits members to hold office and form ministries.

1938

February 19 Subhas Bose unanimously elected Congress President. Breach develops between Bose and Gandhi.

September Breach between Subhas Bose and Gandhi widens following the Munich Pact when Bose recommends non-cooperation in the event of War in Europe which he foresees.

1939

March 10-12 Subhas Bose reelected against Pattabhi Sitarmayya, though Gandhi campaigns against Bose. Gandhi and his followers make it impossible for Bose to function as President.

April 29 Subhas Bose resigns as Congress President.

September 3 Second World War breaks out.

October 27 All Congress Ministries resign.

November 15

1940

March 19 Congress session at Ramgarh indirectly endorses Subhas Bose's stand on non-cooperation.

June 17-20 Congress Working Committee relieves Gandhi from the responsibility of guiding the Congress.

July 2 Subhas Bose arrested.

1941

January 17 Subhas Bose escapes from house arrest and makes his way to the Afghan border.

March 28 Subhas Bose arrives in Berlin after long journey through Afghanistan and Russia.

December 7 Japan enters the War.

December 23-30 The Congress Working Committee relieves Gandhi of the responsibility of leading the *Satyagraha*.

1942

February 15 Fall of Singapore.

March 7 Fall of Rangoon.

March 23 Cripps Mission arrives in India.

March 28-30 Indians in Southeast Asia invite Subhas Bose to take over leadership of the struggle against the British.

April 12 Cripps Mission leaves without result.

August 8 Quit India resolution passed. Violent outbreaks all over India. Gandhi and followers arrested. Movement fails due to poor planning and lack of leadership.

1943

February 8 Subhas Bose leaves Germany for Japan.

May 16 Subhas Bose arrives in Tokyo after a long submarine voyage.

June 2-4 Subhas Bose arrives in Singapore and takes over leadership of the Indian independence movement.

September Indian National Army (INA) raised.

October 21 Provisional Government of Free India set up in Singapore.

November 6 Japanese premier announces handing over of the Andaman and Nicobar islands to Subhas Bose's Provisional Government.

November 9 INA troops leave for the front.

December 31 Subhas Bose visits the Free Indian territories of Andaman and Nicobar.

1944

January 4 Subhas Bose arrives in Rangoon.

February 4 INA commences fight, making advances.

March 19 INA enters Indian territory.

June 26 INA and the Japanese Army forced to retreat.

July 27 Gandhi's terms to the Viceroy on postwar India rejected.

September 9-27 Gandhi's negotiations with Jinnah fail.

1945

April Germany defeated. Allied troops occupy Germany.

August 18 Death of Subhas Bose in a plane crash? (Still controversial.)

September 15 Japan surrenders.

December Elections to the Central Legislative Assembly.

1946

February Mutiny by the naval ratings.

March 24 British Cabinet Mission arrives to discuss India's future.

June 16 Cabinet Mission statement on the Interim Government.

June 22 Viceroy's proposal for the Interim Government.

July 29 Muslim League rejects the Cabinet Mission Plan and announces 'Direct Action'.

July 31 Jinnah rejects Viceroy's proposal.

August 8 Congress accepts Viceroy's invitation to join the Interim Government.

August 16 Muslim League launches 'Direct Action' with the Calcutta killings.

September 2 Interim Government sworn in with Nehru as

Prime Minister.

October Communal riots in Noakhali and Bihar.

October 14 Muslim League joins the Interim Government.

1947

February 20 Prime Minister Attlee's announcement granting freedom to India.

March 8 Congress Working Committee passes resolution for dividing Punjab on communal basis, foreshadowing the Partition.

March 23-24 Mountbatten replaces Wavell as Viceroy.

May 18 Cabinet approves of Mountbatten's plan of Partition.

June 2-3 Indian leaders approve the Partition Plan.

June 10 Congress Working Committee approves the Partition Plan.

June 14-15 The AICC session at Delhi accepts the Partition Plan, recommended by all important leaders including Gandhi, Nehru and Patel.

August 15 India becomes free.

Part III - Appendixes

Appendix 1:

Eyewitness accounts of the Mopla Rebellion by Annie Beasant and Madhavan Nair

Annie Beasant's report

The following account signed by Annie Beasant under the title 'Malabar's Agony', appeared in New India dated 29 November 1921. It is one of literally hundreds of similar reports that appeared in the press at the time. The account given here is slightly abridged, with some irrelevant history about the Zamorins removed. It has also been organized into smaller paragraphs to

smooth the somewhat awkward writing. In particular, Beasant charged that by making the Non-Cooperation part of the Khilafat movement, his Gandhism was also part of the violence that it gave rise to, and he could escape responsibility. Here is her report.

It would be well if Mr. Gandhi could be taken into Malabar to see with his own eyes the ghastly horrors which have been created by the preaching of himself and his "loved brothers" Mohammad and Shaukat Ali. The Khilafat Raj is established there; on August 1, 1921, *sharp to the date first announced by Mr. Gandhi for the beginning of Swaraj and the Vanishing of the British Rule*, a police inspector was surrounded by Moplas, revolting against that rule. From that date onwards thousands of the forbidden war-knives were secretly made and hidden away, and on August 20, the rebellion broke out, Khilafat flags were hoisted on police stations and Government offices. ...

Our correspondent has sent accounts of the public functions connected with my hurried visit to Calicut and Palghat, and that which I wish to put on record here is the ghastly misery which prevails, the heart-breaking wretchedness which has been caused by the Mopla outbreak, directly due to the direct and unscrupulous attacks on the Government made by the Non-Co-operators and the Khilafatists and the statements scattered broadcast, predicting the speedy disappearance of British Rule, and the establishment of Swaraj as proclaimed by the N.C.O. and Khilafat Raj as understood by the Moplas from the declaration of the Khilafatists. On that there is no doubt whatever, so far as Malabar is concerned. The message of the Khilafatists, of England as the enemy of Islam, of her coming downfall, and the triumph of the Muslims, had spread, to every Mopla home. The harangues in the Mosques spread it everywhere, and Muslim hearts were glad. They saw the N.C.O. [Non-Co-Operators] preachers appealing for help to their religious leaders, and naturally identified the two. The

Government was Satanic, and Eblis [English], to the good Muslim, is to be fought to the death.

Mr. Gandhi may talk as he pleases about N.C.O.'s accepting no responsibility. It is not what they accept; it is what facts demonstrate. He accepted responsibility for the trifling bloodshed of Bombay. The slaughter in Malabar cries out his responsibility. N.C.O. is dead in Malabar. But bitter hatred has arisen there, as fighting men from the dragon's teeth of Theseus. That is the ghastly result of the preaching of Gandhism, of N.C.O. of Khalifatism. Everyone speaks of the Khilafat Raj, and the one hope of the masses is its crushing by the strong arm of the Government. Mr. Gandhi asks the Moderates [of the Congress] to compel the Government to suspend hostilities, i.e., to let loose the wolves to destroy what lives are left. The sympathy of the Moderates is not, I make bold to say, with the murderers, the ravishers, who put into practice the teachings of paralyzing the Government of the N.C.O.s, who have made "war on the Government" in their own way?

How does Mr. Gandhi like the Mopla spirit, as shown by one of the prisoners in the hospital, who was dying from asphyxiation? He asked the surgeon, if he was going to die, and the surgeon answered that he feared that he would not recover. "Well, I'm glad that I killed fourteen infidels," said the Brave, God-fearing Mopla whom Mr. Gandhi so much admires, who "are fighting for what they consider religion, and in a manner they consider as religious." Men who consider it "religious" to murder, rape, loot, to kill women and children, cutting down whole families, have to be put under restraint in any civilized society.

Mr. Gandhi was shocked when some Parsi ladies had their saris torn off, and very properly, yet the God-fearing hooligans had been taught that it was sinful to wear foreign cloth, and doubtless felt they were doing a righteous act; can he not feel a little sympathy for thousands of women left

only with rags, driven from home, for little children born of the flying mothers on roads in refugee camps? The misery is beyond description. Girl wives, pretty and sweet, with eyes half blind with weeping, distraught with terror; women who have seen their husbands hacked to pieces before their eye, in the way "Moplas consider religious", old women tottering, whose faces become written with anguish and who cry at a gentle touch and a kind look, waking out of a stupor of misery only to weep, men who have lost all, hopeless, crushed, desperate.

I have walked among thousands of them in refugee camps, and sometimes heavy eyes would lift as a cloth was laid gently on the bare shoulder, and a faint watery smile of surprise would make the face even more piteous than the stupor. Eyes full of appeal, of agonized despair, of hopeless entreaty of helpless anguish, thousands of them camp after camp.

"Shameful inhumanity proceeding in Malabar," says Mr. Gandhi. Shameful inhumanity indeed, wrought by the Moplas, and these are the victims saved from extermination by British and Indian swords. For be it remembered, the Moplas began the whole horrible business; the Government intervened to save their victims and these thousands have been saved. Mr. Gandhi would have "hostilities suspended" - so that the Moplas may sweep down on the refugee camps, and finish their work?

I visited in Calicut three huge Committee camps, two Christian, and the Congress building and compound where doles of rice are given daily from 7 AM to noon. In all the arrangements were good. Big thatched sheds and some buildings shelter the women and children; the men sleep outside. They are all managed by Indians, the Zamorini Committee [set up by Zamorin, the Maharaja of Cochin] distributing cloths and money to all, except the Congress committee, which independently gives food from its own

resources. At Palghat, similar arrangements are made by the Zamorini Committee, and the order and care in feeding are good to see.

Let me finish with a beautiful story told to me. Two Pulayas, lowest of the submerged classes were captured with others and were given the choice between Islam and Death. These, the outcaste of Hinduism, the untouchables, so loved the Hinduism which had been so unkind a step-mother to them, that they chose to die Hindus rather than to live Muslim. May the God of both, Muslim and Hindus send His messengers to these heroic souls, and give them rebirth into the Faith for which they died.

Report by Madhavan Nair, Secretary, Calicut District Congress Committee

Maulana Mohani justified the looting of Hindus by the Moplas as lawful by way of commandeering in a war between the latter and the Government or as a matter of necessity when the Moplas were forced to live in jungles. The Maulana perhaps does not know that in the majority of cases, the almost wholesale looting of Hindu houses in portions of Ernad, Valluvanad and Ponani Taluques [counties] was perpetrated on the 21st , 22nd and the 23rd of August [1921] *before the military had arrived in the affected area to arrest or to fight the rebels even before Martial Law had been declared [in Malabar].*

The Moplas had not betaken themselves to the jungles as the as the Maulana supposes nor had the Hindus as a class done anything to them to deserve their hostility. The outbreak commenced on the 20th of August [1921], the police and the District Magistrate withdrew from Tirunangadi to Calicut on the 21st and the policemen throughout the affected area had taken to their heels. *There was no adversary to the Moplas at the time whom the Hindus could possibly have helped or invited, and the attack on them was most wanton and unprovoked.*

Comment: Maulana Mohani, like a hundred other Khilafat leaders, well knew the truth but arrogantly justified the Mopla atrocities as a 'military necessity' driven by self-defense. But these reports clearly show that the Mopla Rebellion was a planned uprising that began immediately after the expiry of Gandhi's promise of 'Swaraj within the year' and not a sporadic outbreak. According to Annie Beasant, it began on the day of expiry, and soon spread to the whole region - becoming a full-blown rebellion on or about August 20. (This is confirmed by other sources.) The district authorities, including the police, were caught unawares and also not equipped to handle a large-scale rebellion. Chaos reigned in Malabar for several months, forcing the Government to declare Martial Law. The Army had to be called in and it was months before the rebellion was put down after the loss of several thousand lives and unspeakable atrocities. The Congress historians like to pretend that all this never happened, while the Marxist glorify the Moplas as 'freedom fighters'!

Madhavan Nair sent several other reports, a few of which are included in the Appendix to Sankaran Nair's *Gandhi and Anarchy*. Murders, rapes and forcible conversions were the order of the day. I find most of them too gruesome to be included here, but the following except should give an idea: "Can you conceive of a more ghastly and inhuman crime than the murder of babies and pregnant women? ... A pregnant woman carrying 7 months was cut through the abdomen by a rebel and she was seen lying dead with on the way with the dead child projecting out ... Another baby of six months was snatched away from the breast of the mother and cut into two pieces. ... Are these rebels human beings or monsters?"

These are by no means the most gruesome of the accounts described, but enough to give an idea of the atrocities committed by the "God-fearing" Moplas acting "in a manner

they consider as religious." To those familiar with this history, the barbarism of their modern counterparts in Afghanistan - the Taliban also following the dictates of their 'religion' - will come as no surprise.

Appendix 2:

Petition of Malabar Ladies to Lady Reading, wife of the Viceroy, Lord Reading (excerpt)

To:

Her Gracious Excellency,
The Countess of Reading,
Delhi.

The humble memorial of the bereaved and sorrow stricken women of Malabar.

May it please your gracious and compassionate ladyship!

We, the Hindu women of Malabar of varying ranks and stations in life who have recently been overwhelmed by the tremendous catastrophe known as the Mopla Rebellion, take the liberty to supplicate your Ladyship for sympathy and succor.

Your Ladyship is doubtless aware that though our unhappy district has witnessed many Mopla outbreaks in the course of the last one hundred years, the present rebellion is unexampled in its magnitude as well as unprecedented in its ferocity. But it is possible that your Ladyship is not fully apprised of all the horrors and atrocities perpetrated by the fiendish rebels; of the many wells and tanks filled up with mutilated, but only half dead bodies of our nearest and dearest ones who refused to abandon the faith of our fathers; or pregnant women cut to pieces and left on the roadside in the jungles with the unborn babe protruding from the mangled corpse; of our

innocent and helpless children torn from our arms and done to death before our eyes and of our husbands and fathers tortured, flayed and burnt alive; of our hapless sisters forcibly carried away from the midst of our kith and kin and subjected to every shame and outrage which the vile and brutal imagination of these inhuman hell-hounds can conceive of; of thousands of our homesteads reduced to cinder-mounds out of sheer savagery and a wanton spirit of destruction; of our places of worship desecrated and destroyed and of the images of the deity shamefully insulted by putting the entrails of slaughtered cows where flower garlands used to lie or else smashed to pieces; of the wholesale looting of hard earned wealth of generations reducing men who were formerly rich and prosperous to publicly beg for a piece or two in the streets of Calicut... These are not fables.

The wells full of rotting skeletons, the ruins which once were our dear homes, the heaps of stones which once were our places of worship - these are still here to attest to the truth. The cries of murdered children in their death agonies are still ringing in our ears and will continue to haunt our memory till death brings us peace. We remember how driven out of our native hamlets we wandered starving and naked in the jungles and forests; we remember how we choked and stifled our babies' cries lest the sound should betray our hiding places to our relentless pursuers. We still vividly realize the moral and spiritual agony that thousands of us passed through when we were forcibly converted into the faith professed by these bloodthirsty miscreants; we still have before us the sight of unendurable and life-long misery of these - fortunately few - of our most unhappy sisters, who born and brought up in respectable families have been forcibly converted and then married to convict coolies. For five long months, not a day has passed without its dread tale of horror to unfold.

Your gracious Ladyship's distracted memorialsts have endeavored without exaggeration, without setting down aught in malice, to convey at least some idea of the indescribably terrible agonies which they and thousands more of their sisters have been enduring for over five months through this reign of inhuman frightfulness inaugurated and carried out in the name of the Khilafat...

We, your Ladyship's humble and sorrow-stricken memorialists, do not seek vengeance. Our misery will not be rendered less by inflicting similar misery upon this barbarous and savage race; our dead will not return to us if their slayers are slaughtered. We would not be human, however, if could ever forget the cruel and shameful outrages and indignities perpetrated upon us by a race to whom we have always endeavored to be friendly and neighborly, we would be hypocritical if, robbed of all our possessions, we did not plead for some measure of compensation to help us out of the pauperism now forced upon us; we would be imbecile, if knowing the ungovernable, anti-social propensities and the deadly religious fanaticism of the Mopla race we did not entreat the just and powerful Government to protect the lives and honors of your humble sisters who have to live in the rebel ravaged zone. ...

Appendix 3:

Communist treachery, 'sophists with sponges'

"Every villain" said Lord Acton of the 'power corrupts' fame, "is followed by a sophist with a sponge." This was surpassed by the Indian Communists. They brought not one sponge but a cartload of them, and put them to use in whitewashing atrocities from the Mopla Rebellion to the Partition to the Rape of Tibet to the Chinese attack in 1962, and now all the way to the nuclear tests of Pokharan II.

The period covered in this volume is not lacking in examples that bring to the fore dark side of human nature. But for sheer venality, the behavior of the Communists is in a class by itself. The gullibility and self-deception of Gandhi, the spinelessness of Nehru, the cunning of the Ali brothers and even the savagery of the Moplas - none of these can match the record of the Communists in this regard. A single example will suffice. The Moplas, who perpetrated some of the worst atrocities in history, especially on women, are heroes to Communists. Eminent scholars of Marxist leanings at respectable academic institutions extol these barbarians as heroic freedom fighters! There is another difference. Where these villains of yesteryears have departed from the world, the successors of these Communist 'sophists with sponges' are still around - sometimes in respectable professions like politics, academia and journalism. One is hard pressed to decide which is the greater evil - the Mopla marauders or their modern Marxist glorifiers.

To begin to understand the twists and turns of the Indian Communists, their passage from 'anti-imperialists' opposed to Britain and France, to British spies and collaborators, to being Soviet and Chinese fifth column, to their present state when they have combined with the most reactionary forces of Islam and become virtually a dependency of the Vatican agent Sonia Gandhi, one has to go to the early years of the Second World War.

When the War broke out in September 1939, the Communists found themselves in an awkward position - on the same side as Hitler - because of the Hitler-Stalin pact of August 1939. But they had to obey their masters in Moscow and support him. So Hitler was no longer a Fascist menace but a messenger of peace fighting against the imperialist warmongers, Britain and France. But when Hitler attacked Russia on 22 June 1941, the Indian Communists executed a complete flip-flop and started supporting Britain in the war

against Hitler. The Imperialist's War became overnight the People's War. They were now in a highly advantageous position *vis a vis* the British Government. They were used to serving their Soviet masters, so it entailed no great adjustment when opportunity called to serve the British. The Indian Communist leaders made the best of a good bargain.

For the rest of the War, the Indian Communists were, for all practical purposes, hired agents of the British. Majumdar tells us (Volume III, pp 569):

"During the great national upsurge of 1942, the Communists acted as stooges and spies of the British Government, and helped them against their own countrymen fighting for freedom. The part played by the Communists can be best understood from confidential correspondence during the years 1942, 1943 and 1944 between P.C. Joshi, the General Secretary of the Communist Party of India and Sir Reginald Maxwell, Home Member of the Government of India. ... it is quite clear from the correspondence that "an alliance existed between the Politburo of the Communist Party and the Home Department of the Government of India, by which Mr. Joshi was placing at the disposal of the Government of India the services of his Party members;" that the "various political drives undertaken by the Party in the name of anti-Fascist campaigns were a part of the arrangement which helped the Government of India to tide over certain crises;" ...

But of course this did not come cheap, and Communist leaders like Joshi, Dange and others were generously paid by the British for their services. One well-known Communist intellectual was paid as much as rupees 16,000 a month! This allowed many of them to maintain lavish lifestyles - much in the manner of many 'Gandhians' today. But spying on the nationalists was only the beginning of this sordid if profitable enterprise. Majumdar tells us (Volume III, p 570):

"... Joshi had, as General Secretary to the Party, written a letter in which he offered 'unconditional help' to the then Government of India and the Army GHQ to fight the 1942 underground workers

and the Azad Hind Fauz (Indian National Army) of Subhas Chandra Bose, even to the point of getting them arrested. ... Joshi's letter also revealed that the CPI was receiving financial aid from the Government, had a secret pact with the Muslim League, and was undermining Congress activity in various ways."

It is no secret that at the time of independence, the Communists openly supported the formation of Pakistan. "Not only did the Communists support the demand for Pakistan but went much further by saying that every linguistic group in India had a distinct nationality and was therefore entitled, as they claimed was the case in the USSR, to the right to secede." (*ibid*)

Independence did not put a stop to Communist treachery. On the heels of independence, the new Indian Government was faced with the problem of the integration of the princely states numbering over five hundred. Here was fertile ground for the Communists, especially Hyderabad, then at the mercy of Kasim Rizvi and his fanatical band of terrorists known as the Razakars. In February 1948, the Second Congress of the Communist Party of India proclaimed that India's independence was a sham and decided to support the Razakars. They struck a deal with the Nizam's Government and joined hands with the Nizam's forces - the Razakars - to fight Hyderabad's accession to India with the help of Pakistan. As with most terrorists, the forte of the Razakars was committing atrocities on unarmed civilians, not fighting a professional army. When Sardar Patel sent troops into Hyderabad, the Razakars crumbled before the advance of the Indian Army. Kasim Rizvi ran away to Pakistan, handing over the bulk of his guns and other armaments to the Communists. The Communists kept up an armed insurrection in the Telengana region for a few years until ordered to stop by the Soviet Dictator Stalin.

But now, Marxist historians claim that the Communists

joined the Congress in their fight against the Razakars who represented feudal interests! So the action in Hyderabad was a 'class struggle' against the oppressors, except that the Communists sided with the Razakars! So Rizvi and the Razakars were not Muslim fundamentalists but feudal exploiters of the people! To explain away the fact that the Communists joined hands with these 'feudal exploiters', their historians simply reverse the truth; they now claim that they fought against them. This way, they hope they can have it both ways.

This trail of treachery continued unabated. When China attacked India in 1962, the Communists were on the Chinese side. In 1964, when China exploded its first nuclear bomb, the Indian Communists greeted it with glee. But recently when India conducted nuclear tests the Indian Communists and their allies in the Congress - including their new found object of adoration Sonia Gandhi - vociferously condemned the Indian tests. The more things change, the more they remain the same.

And now, there is an interesting new twist. With the fortunes of the Indian Communist at the lowest ebb since 1947, they are making a desperate effort to subvert the Congress by offering 'support' to the staunchly Catholic Sonia Gandhi on whom the Vatican also, with its base eroding in Europe, is pinning its hopes. "A great new harvest of faith will be reaped on this vast and vital continent," said Pope John Paul II at the Asian Bishops' Conference in Manila.

So the great Congress party, once the home of Lokamanya Tilak, Sri Aurobindo and Mahatma Gandhi, finds itself being pulled by three alien ideologies - Communism, Christianity and Islam. Only future will tell whether this once great party can shake off these predators and return to its home - as the Indian National Congress.