



# Thoreau—Tolstoy—Gandhi: The Origin of Satyagraha

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## PROLOGUE

Let us begin by highlighting the fact that it was the eminent 1935 Nobel Peace Laureate, Carl von Ossietzky, Hitler's concentration camp prisoner then, who had already comprehended the global challenge of Mahatma Gandhi when he wrote in his weekly magazine *Die Weltbühne* (The World Stage) in the year 1929, a few weeks before the Wall Street Crash and the Great Depression:

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Gandhi is no political human being in the European sense. He is more. He is the secret force without office and party, yet dominating everyone. He is a defender of the Old and a guide to the unknown, at the same time teacher of wisdom and an elementary school headmaster, thinker and practitioner, dreamer and organizer of American format.

But in everything exemplary: whether he stood up for sanitary reforms or whether he fought the ancient prejudice against the Pariahs or whether he silently entered the British prison.

[...] India can be considered fortunate enough that her new law is not imposed on her by a dictator, does not boast in the relentless command of an Asian Napoleon, but is proclaimed by the gentle voice of Mahatma Gandhi.<sup>1</sup>

Carl von Ossietzky's statement is a historical example of how cross-cultural understanding could have prevented the worst from happening: the rise of fascism. Cultural mediation, as exemplified by Ossietzky, that aims at overcoming antisemitism, colonialism, imperialism, nationalism and racism, strengthens our fundamental roots and values: human dignity and rights and mutual respect for each other, transcultural and transnational.

Why did Gandhi become so significant for his contemporaries? Because his political program meant cultural, economic and social regeneration through constructive work, conviviality<sup>2</sup> and hospitality instead of hostility, instead of brute force: soul force!

## INTRODUCTION

The year 1906 is marked as the year of birth of *Satyagraha* in India, South Africa and the rest of the world. However, an interesting fact to note here is that the term *Satyagraha* was not coined until 1908. So, what happened between those two years? The events that happened between 1906 and 1908 laid the foundation to the most important civil resistance program of the twentieth century that profoundly influenced the later movements for emancipation organized by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and other civil rights activists. Gandhi started his passive resistance movement in 1906 against the South African government, demanding the abolition of discriminatory laws. Particularly, in September 1906, Gandhi delivered a speech in a mass meeting held at Empire Theatre, Johannesburg, which was organized as a protest against the discriminatory bills and laws, for instance the Transvaal Asiatic Law Amendment Ordinance No.

29 of 1906, and later the Transvaal Immigration Restriction Act No. 15 of 1907 (called “The Black Act”). Gandhi introduced and explained the concept of passive resistance to the British Indians, urging everyone to take the pledge of commitment to the resistance movement. These were his words<sup>3</sup>:

It may be that we may not be called upon to suffer at all. But if on the one hand one who takes a pledge must be a robust optimist, on the other hand he must be prepared for the worst. It is therefore that I would give you an idea of the worst that might happen to us in the present struggle. Imagine that all of us present here numbering 3,000 at the most pledge ourselves. Imagine again that the remaining 10,000 Indians take no such pledge. We will only provoke ridicule in the beginning. Again, it is quite possible that in spite of the present warning some or many of those who pledge themselves might weaken at the very first trial. We might have to go to gaol, where we might be insulted. We might have to go hungry and suffer extreme heat or cold. Hard labour might be imposed upon us. We might be flogged by rude warders. We might be fined heavily and our property might be attached and held up to auction if there are only a few resisters left. Opulent today, we might be reduced to abject poverty tomorrow. We might be deported. Suffering from starvation and similar hardships in gaol, some of us might fall ill and even die. In short, therefore, it is not at all impossible that we might have to endure every hardship that we can imagine, and wisdom lies in pledging ourselves on the understanding that we shall have to suffer all that and worse. If someone asks me when and how the struggle may end, I may say that, if the entire community manfully stands the test, the end will be near. If many of us fall back under storm and stress, the struggle will be prolonged. But I can boldly declare, and with certainty, that so long as there is even a handful of men true to their pledge, there can only be one end to the struggle and that is victory.

In the following year, he gradually evolved his resistance method by adopting the ethics of Socrates, Leo Tolstoy and Henry David Thoreau. However, after careful observations on other passive resistance movements that happened around the world—like the Suffragette movement in Britain—Gandhi became dissatisfied with the term “passive resistance”, as he wanted to stress fearlessness and firmness in the good and right cause—instead of conformism and opportunism. Therefore, at the end of 1907, Gandhi began to search for a Gujarati equivalent for passive resistance, and invited suggestions from the readers of the *Indian Opinion*.<sup>4</sup>

After reviewing a series of dissatisfying alternatives to passive resistance, Gandhi himself finally came up with a new term—*Satyagraha*:

But I could not for the life of me find out a new name, and therefore offered a nominal prize through *Indian Opinion* to the reader who made the best suggestion on the subject. As a result Maganlal Gandhi coined the word ‘Sadagraha’ (*sat*-truth, *agraha*-firmness) and won the prize. But in order to make it clearer I changed the word to ‘Satyagraha’ which has since become current in Gujarati as a designation for the struggle.<sup>5</sup>

He continued to shape this new resistance method by deriving influences from various historical instances, most of all Jesus Christ, Socrates and the Russian Doukhobors (Spirit Wrestlers) to name a few. He organized an essay writing competition to his readers, inviting them to write on the ethical principles of *Satyagraha*. However, the subsequent prize-winning essay “The Ethics of Passive Resistance” by M. S. Maurice was not satisfactory to Gandhi, because it did not deliver a political program that could serve as a basis for the Indian resisters. Therefore, he decided to write his first own political program called *Hind Swaraj* (Indian Home Rule). During these formative years of the Mahatma between 1906 and 1914, we discover the renaissance of these four fundamental concepts: *Satyagraha*, *Sarvodaya*, *Swadeshi* and *Swaraj*.

## TRUTH

When recollecting the philosophy of the ancient Indian scriptures, Gandhi always referred to the oriental roots of the key concept of Truth in order to remember the moral virtues of the sages—these following quotes we found in his article “Oriental Ideal of Truth”<sup>6</sup> may give a proof of this method of recollection:

Truth is That which Is, and Untruth is That which Is Not. [Gandhi]

- Speech rests on Truth; everything rests on Truth. Therefore they call Truth the highest. *Mahanarayan Upanishad XXVII. I.*
- Truth weighed heavier than a thousand horse-sacrifices. *Mahabharata, Shanti Parva, clxii, 26.*

- There is no duty higher than Truth and no sin more heinous than untruth. Indeed, Truth is the very foundation of Righteousness. *Mahabharata*
- There is nothing greater than Truth, and Truth should be esteemed the most sacred of all things. *Ramayana*.
- The man who speaks truth in this world attains the highest imperishable state. Men shrink with fear and horror from a liar as from a serpent. In this world the chief element in virtue is truth. It is called the basis of everything. Truth is lord in the world, virtue always rests on truth. All things are founded on truth; nothing is higher than it. *Professor Max Muller's translation [of the Ramayana]*.

The tenfold law, as laid down by Manu, gives some of the qualities needed for the discipline of the mind and reaching the highest Truth, the one Reality [Gandhi]:

- Endurance, patience, self-control, integrity, purity, restraint of the senses, wisdom, learning, truth, absence of anger, are the ten signs of virtue. *Manusmriti*, vi, 92.

The virtues that bring about unity and harmony, secure peace and calm, and enable a man to fulfil his destiny, were thus stated by Shri Krishna [Gandhi]:

- Fearlessness, *sattvic* purity, steadfast pursuit of wisdom, charity, control of the senses, sacrifice, study, austerity, uprightness;
- Harmlessness, truthfulness, absence of anger, resignation, peace of mind, avoidance of calumny, pity for all beings, absence of greed, gentleness, modesty, absence of restlessness;
- Energy, forgiveness, endurance, purity, freedom from hatred and from pride,—these are his who is born to the divine qualities, O Bharata. *Bhagvat Gita*, xvi, 1-3.
- Truthfulness, equability, self-control, absence of self-display, forgiveness, modesty, endurance, absence of envy, charity, a noble well-wishing towards others, self-possession, compassion, and harmlessness—surely these are the thirteen forms of Truth. *Mahabharata, Shanti Parva, clxii, 8, 9*.

When highlighting the legendary role models in history, Gandhi remembers the heroes of his childhood and youth:

Satyagrahis have had to mount the gallows [The reference probably is to the crucifixion of Jesus], embrace a pillar of red-hot iron [Legend of Prahlad], suffer being rolled down a mountain, swim in boiling oil in a big frying pan [Legend of Sudhanva], walk through a blazing forest [Legend of Nala-Damayanti], suffer loss of a kingdom and be sold [as slave] in a low-born family [Legend of Harishchandra] and stay in a lion's den. Thus, satyagrahis have had to pass through different ordeals in different parts of the world.<sup>7</sup>

... most of all, not only the mythological Prahlad:

We have said earlier that he alone is a satyagrahi who gives up everything for the sake of truth—forgoes wealth and property, allows his land to be auctioned, parts from his relatives, from his parents, his children, his wife, and sacrifices dear life itself. He who thus loses for the sake of truth shall gain. By disobeying his father's order for the sake of truth, Prahlad not only remained staunch in satyagraha but also did his duty as a son. Making himself a satyagrahi, he won his own and his father's deliverance from this earthly life. No one lacking the determined spirit of Prahlad can ever hold on to satyagraha to the end.<sup>8</sup>

... but also his contemporary Shrimad Rajchandra (Kavi) (1867–1901) whom he had met for the first time in the year 1891:

By birth I am a Vaishnavite, and was taught ahimsa in my childhood. I have derived much religious benefit from Jain religious works, as I have from scriptures of the other great faiths of the world. I owe much to the living company of the deceased philosopher Raja Chand Kavi who was a Jain by birth.<sup>9</sup>

... and the poet Dayaram (1777–1853) from Gujarat:

Who without utmost suffering has attained to a vision of Krishna?  
Find any, if you can, among the saints of the four ages;  
Rare are the men who have much love for a *Vaishnava*;  
Persecutors all and enemies to *bhakti*.<sup>10</sup>

Truth transcends Death—that is why an ancient Greek philosopher became the champion of Truth:

There was once a wise man, named Socrates, who lived in Athens. His unconventional ideas, which, however, spread love of truth and goodness, displeased the authorities, and he was sentenced to death.<sup>11</sup>

## SOCRATES

As early as 1905, Gandhi searched for historical role models for the Indian resistance movement for emancipation from the discriminatory laws against their community and referred to various independence movements, as e.g. in Egypt (Mustafa Kamil Pasha, 1874–1908),<sup>12</sup> Ireland (Sinn Féin, founded in 1905),<sup>13</sup> Italy (Giuseppe Mazzini, 1805–1872)<sup>14</sup> and the U.S.A. with George Washington (1732–1799)<sup>15</sup> and Abraham Lincoln (1809–1865),<sup>16</sup> but also admirable writers like Maxim Gorky (1868–1936)<sup>17</sup> and humanitarian workers like the Quaker pioneer of prison reform, Elizabeth Fry (1780–1845)<sup>18</sup> and the Crimean War nurse and pioneer of hospital reform, Florence Nightingale (1820–1910).<sup>19</sup> Gandhi repeatedly referred to Charles George Gordon (1833–1885),<sup>20</sup> also known as Gordon of Khartoum who had secured the evacuation of 2,500 civilians in Khartoum during the Mahdist uprising. But in order to gain the sympathy and support of Western citizens in South Africa, Gandhi also referred to the courageous examples of Christopher Columbus (1451–1506), Martin Luther (1483–1546) and Galileo Galilei (1564–1642):

The great Luther defied his people single-handed and it is thanks to him that Germany enjoys freedom today. And there was Galileo who opposed society. The people were resolved to kill him. Undaunted, he told them that they could kill him if they wanted to, but that it was nevertheless true that the earth revolved [round the sun]. Today, we all know that the earth is round and that it rotates round its axis once every 24 hours. Columbus acted like a true satyagrahi when facing his sailors. Exhausted [by the long voyage], they declared, “We will never get to America. Let us turn back, else we will kill you.” Unperturbed, Columbus answered, “I am not afraid of being killed, but I think we ought to go on for a few days more.” They did discover America, and Columbus won everlasting fame.<sup>21</sup>

The occidental pole star among all these, however, had been—in Gandhi’s opinion—Socrates (470–399 BCE), the Greek sage philosopher—“He had no fear of death”—whose Maieutics, a dialectical and elenctic method, became the blueprint for Gandhi’s first political program, *Hind Swaraj* (Indian Home Rule), most of all the legal “Defence of Socrates” (Apology) against accusations, narrated by Plato:

Defence of Socrates or The Story of a True Warrior is a Gujarati rendering of Plato’s immortal work printed in order to illustrate the virtue and the true nature of passive resistance.<sup>22</sup>

In 1908, Gandhi represented the biography and philosophy of “Socrates, the Soldier of Truth”<sup>23</sup> in a six-part serial portrait:

In Athens it was an offence to disregard the traditional religion of the polis or encourage others to do so. The offence, if proved, was punishable with death. Socrates adhered to the traditional religion, but called upon the people to fight the corrupt elements [associated with its observance]. He himself would have nothing to do with them. Under the law of Athens, such offences were tried before a popular assembly. Socrates was charged with violating the religion of the state and teaching others to do likewise and was tried before an assembly of elders. Many members of the assembly had suffered as a result of Socrates’ teaching. Because of this, they bore him a grudge. They wrongfully declared him guilty and condemned him to die by taking poison. A prisoner sentenced might be put to death in anyone of a number of ways. Socrates was condemned to death by poisoning. This brave man took poison by his own hand and died. On the day of his death he discoursed to his friend and companion on the perishable nature of the human body and the immortality of the soul. It is said that up to the very last moment Socrates showed no fear, and that he took the poison smilingly. As he finished the last sentence of his discourse, he drank the poison from the cup as eagerly as we might drink sherbet from a glass.

Today the world cherishes Socrates’ memory. His teaching has benefited millions. His accusers and his judges stand condemned by the world. Socrates has gained immortality and Greece stands in high esteem because of him and others like him.

Socrates’ speech in his own defence was committed to writing by his companion, the celebrated Plato. It has been translated into many languages. The defence is excellent and imbued with moral fervour.



Thus, Socrates became an undeniable point of continuous reference for the Indian Satyagrahi, Mr. Gandhi:

Jesus Christ, Daniel and Socrates represented the purest form of passive resistance or soul force. All these teachers counted their bodies as nothing in comparison to their souls. Tolstoy was the best and brightest exponent of the doctrine. He not only expounded it, but lived according to it.<sup>24</sup>

## TOLSTOY

Count Tolstoy is a Russian nobleman. He was once a very wealthy man. He is a man of about eighty now, with wide experience of the world. He is considered to be the best among the writers of the West. He may be looked upon as the greatest of satyagrahis.<sup>25</sup>

Count Leo Tolstoy, the Russian philosopher and writer of novels and short stories like “God Sees the Truth, But Waits” and “How Much Land a Man Needs”, has been the most eminent critic of the militarized societies of his age. One of his most influential works on Peter Verigin and the Doukhobors (Spirit Wrestlers) as well as on Mahatma Gandhi was “The Kingdom of God Is Within You” (1893), a tract against military conscription which inspired the burning of weapons by the Doukhobors in summer 1895—to declare a new era of peace.

Tolstoy challenged Gandhi in many ways: (a) through his writing “Why Do Men Stupefy Themselves” against alcohol and narcotic drugs and gambling, (b) through his writing “The First Step” as a plea for fasting and vegetarianism, (c) through his propagation of “Bread Labour”: according to the peasant writer and Subbotnik Timofej Bondarev (1820–1898) and his treatise “The Triumph of the Farmer” (1888; 1906), (d) through his concept of nonviolent non-cooperation Tolstoy elaborated (following Laozi’s non-acting (“wuwei”) principle, Étienne de La Boétie’s “Discourse on Voluntary Servitude”, and the U.S. American abolitionist and non-resister William Lloyd Garrison’s “Declaration of Sentiments”):

His writings had a great effect on his own mind. He gave up his wealth and took to a life of poverty. He has lived like a peasant for many years now and earns his needs by his own labour. He has given up all his vices, eats very simple food and has it in him no longer to hurt any living being by

thought, word or deed. He spends all his time in good works and prayer. He believes that:

1. In this world men should not accumulate wealth;
2. no matter how much evil a person does to us, we should always do good to him. Such is the Commandment of God, and also His law;
3. no one should take part in fighting;
4. it is sinful to wield political power, as it leads to many of the evils in the world;
5. man is born to do his duty to his Creator; he should therefore pay more attention to his duties than to his rights;
6. agriculture is the true occupation of man. It is therefore contrary to divine law to establish large cities, to employ hundreds of thousands for minding machines in factories so that a few can wallow in riches by exploiting the helplessness and poverty of the many. These views he has very beautifully supported by examples from various religions and other old texts. There are today thousands of men in Europe who have adopted Tolstoy's way of life. They have given up all their worldly goods and taken to a very simple life.<sup>26</sup>

Tolstoy had crucial experiences with death during his trip to France when he witnessed an execution by guillotine and during his military service during the Crimean War when he collected war experience as described in his Sevastopol Tales. In his prize essay on "The Ethics of Passive Resistance", the Indian Christian M. S. Maurice wrote:

Most men of our day account Count Tolstoy a paradox. By common admission, however, he is a great thinker, if not quite a seer. He has certainly probed into the depths of humanity. He has laid bare many of the human follies and foibles. Upon war as upon capital punishment, he looks with the deepest horror. An extremist he may be, yet he is a realist-a rationalist. Passive resistance is almost a fetish with him.<sup>27</sup>

It was Tolstoy's nonviolent non-cooperation principle called "passive resistance" and Henry David Thoreau's "Civil Disobedience" which paved the floor for Gandhi's Satyagraha, that is why Maurice (who later accompanied Gandhi to Mauritius) summarized:

Tolstoy and Thoreau appear to agree in the matter of civil disobedience: they seem to be at one in regard to the claim of conscience on the individual soul.<sup>28</sup>

## THOREAU

Many years ago, there lived in America a great man named Henry David Thoreau. His writings are read and pondered over by millions of people. Some of them put his ideas into practice. Much importance is attached to his writings because Thoreau himself was a man who practised what he preached. Impelled by a sense of duty, he wrote much against his own country, America. He considered it a great sin that the Americans held many persons in the bonds of slavery. He did not rest content with saying this, but took all other necessary steps to put a stop to this trade. One of those steps consisted in not paying any taxes to the State in which the slave trade was being carried on. He was imprisoned when he stopped paying the taxes due from him.

Historians say that the chief cause of the abolition of slavery in America was Thoreau's imprisonment and the publication by him of the above-mentioned book after his release. Both his example and writings are at present exactly applicable to the Indians in the Transvaal.<sup>29</sup>

The U.S.A. transcendentalist Henry David Thoreau (1817–1862) derived much inspiration for his ecological and pacifist philosophy through Indian sources of wisdom.<sup>30</sup>

In the year 1908, Gandhi represented the basic thought of Thoreau's 1849 essay about "Resistance to Civil Government" or "Civil Disobedience" under the title "Duty of Disobeying Laws"<sup>31</sup>. Gandhi wrote for the Asian passive resisters:

David Thoreau was a great writer, philosopher, poet, and withal a most practical man, that is, he taught nothing he was not prepared to practise in himself. He was one of the greatest and most moral men America has produced. At the time of the abolition of slavery movement, he wrote his famous essay "On the Duty of Civil Disobedience". He went to gaol for the sake of his principles and suffering humanity. His essay has, therefore, been sanctified by suffering. Moreover, it is written for all time. Its incisive logic is unanswerable.<sup>32</sup>

Civil disobedience presupposes the habit of willing obedience to laws without fear of their sanctions. It can therefore be practised only as a last resort and by a select few in the first instance at any rate. Non-co-operation, too, like civil disobedience is a branch of satyagraha which includes all non-violent resistance for the vindication of Truth.<sup>33</sup>

## SATYAGRAHA

Under the influence of Tolstoy's "bread labour" concept and the four essays on the principles of political economy, "Unto This Last" written by John Ruskin (1819–1900), Gandhi created the "Phoenix Settlement" (since 1904) on the northwestern outskirts of Inanda near Durban, close to John and Nokutela Dube's Ohlange High School, created in 1900 after Booker T. Washington's Tuskegee Institute model university. With residences, a clinic, a school and a printing press, Phoenix became home to Gandhi, his family and his followers as they strove to follow a path of social change through passive resistance. *Indian Opinion*, which argued strenuously for the civil rights of Indian South Africans, was published here in four languages (Gujarati, Hindi, Tamil and English). Phoenix Settlement continued to serve as home to a number of residents and activists even after Gandhi's departure to India in 1914, including his son, Manilal Gandhi.

The editor had invited [suggestions from readers for] a Gujarati equivalent for "passive resistance". I have received one which is not bad, though it does not render the original in its full connotation. I shall, however, use it for the present. The word is *sadagraha*. I think *satyagraha* is better than *sadagraha*. "Resistance" means determined opposition to anything. The correspondent has rendered it as *agraha*. *Agraha* in a right cause is *sat* or *satya agraha*. The correspondent therefore has rendered "passive resistance" as firmness in a good cause. Though the phrase does not exhaust the connotation of the word "passive", we shall use *satyagraha* till a word is available which deserves the prize.

Satyagraha, then, is at high tide at present. The Indian *satyagrahi* is getting world-wide publicity.<sup>34</sup>

In March 1908, Gandhi finally decided to choose this term:

Only four persons took the trouble of sending in suggestions [...] One of them says that "passive resistance" can be rendered as *pratyupaya*. He explains the word as connoting [the state of] being passive to whatever happens and taking all possible remedial measures. The word and the explanation are both worthless. *Pratyupaya* means counter-measure. Opposing good to evil will then be *pratyupaya*, but so will be the use of force to solve a problem. Passive resistance means resistance of evil with inner force instead of physical force. The explanation offered betrays ignorance. A passive resister cannot remain passive to everything that happens. In other

words, he will always pit his inner strength against everything evil. Another equivalent that has been received is *kashtadhinprativartan* [*Prativartan* = resistance; *kashtadhinprativartan* = resistance through submission to hardship"]. Here the word *prati* is superfluous and suggestive of antipathy. It betrays an ignorance of language. *Kashtadhinprativartan* has in it a suggestion of the significance of passive resistance. But it is a big word and does not convey the full meaning. The third term is *dridhapratipaksha* [*Dridhapratipaksha* = firmness in resistance"]. Like *pratyupaya*, this too cannot be used to convey the meaning we attach to passive resistance. The person who sent in that word has also sent us an equivalent for "civil disobedience". It appears to have been sent in without much thought. The word suggested is *satyanadar*. The meaning here is the contrary. It means "disobedience to truth", that is, resistance to truth. ["The correspondent may have intended it to mean "truthful disregard" of laws, using (*satya*) as an adjective. Literally, however, it could mean, as Gandhiji assumed, "disobedience to truth"."] Civil disobedience is disobedience to untruth, and it becomes "civil" if it is "truthful" in its manner. The word [civil] also includes the meaning of passive. We have therefore only one word available to us for the present, and that is *satyagraha*.<sup>35</sup>

## PERSPECTIVE

Thus, Gandhi syncretized and complemented the concepts of "civil disobedience", "nonviolent non-cooperation" and "passive resistance" by creating a new term for his civil resistance nonviolent alternative to violence and civil war. In the years between 1909 and 1910, Gandhi corresponded with Tolstoy who had published an open "Letter to an Indian" (Taraknath Das) and Gandhi named, together with his friend and supporter Hermann Kallenbach, his second settlement project "Tolstoy Farm". Gandhi, the Thoreauvian and Tolstoyan, desired to go beyond: to create a massive resistance of *Satyagraha* for the good and right causes of ecology, equality, freedom, justice, nonviolence and peace. His opponents, like General Jan Christiaan Smuts, encountered soul force instead of brute force. Their military weapons of deterrence, intimidation, fear and violence became symbols of capitalism, colonialism, imperialism, militarism and racism. Gandhi and his *Satyagrahi* paved the way for the emancipation from all kinds of mental, physical and psychological slavery, from indentured labour to the superiority complex of nationalism. His message transcends every gun, sword, weapon of mass destruction—will *Satyagraha* originate a new era of a world federation without armies?

Or will we—as human species—fail to find our roots and to transcend borders?

## EPILOGUE

To find our roots means to follow the path of realizing our diverse cultural traditions, and to transcend borders means to realize that we are not prisoners of our ethnic and national identities, as the origins of our traditions have always been cross-cultural or, as Ralph Waldo Emerson mentioned in his essay “The Over-Soul” (1841):

We live in succession, in division, in parts, in particles. Meantime within man is the soul of the whole; the wise silence; the universal beauty, to which every part and particle is equally related [...] We see the world piece by piece, as the sun, the moon, the animal, the tree; but the whole, of which these are shining parts, is the soul.

Gandhi was influenced by Socrates, Emerson, Ruskin, Thoreau and Tolstoy, and Gandhi in turn influenced civil rights activists like Benjamin Mays and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr, who wrote about the reality of inter-dependence:

We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.<sup>36</sup>

When Gandhi discovered his “master-key” of nonviolent resistance, and named it as *Satyagraha*, he publicly expressed his cultural autonomy and independence, heading towards his first political program for “*Hind Swaraj* or Indian Home Rule” in 1909.

The moderns make a key which will open many kinds of locks. They call it the “master-key”. Likewise, satyagraha is the master-key to our innumerable hardships. How much could be achieved if only all the Indians would use that key! Satyagraha is not a difficult term to understand. It only means adherence to truth. Whatever else the ethical life may mean, it cannot be ethical if it is not based on truth. Truth is easy enough to follow once we know its meaning.<sup>37</sup>

Let us continue on this route.

## NOTES

1. Carl von Ossietzky (1889–1938) about Mahatma Gandhi, in: *Die Weltbühne* [The World Stage], vol. 25 (II), no. 41, October 8, 1929—German original:

Gandhi ist kein politischer Mensch im europäischen Sinne. Er ist mehr. Er ist die geheime Gewalt, die ohne Amt und Partei doch alle beherrscht. Er ist Verteidiger des Alten und Führer ins Unbekannte, Weisheitslehrer und Elementarschulmeister zugleich, Denker und Praktiker, Träumer und Organisator von amerikanischem Format.

In allem aber beispielhaft, ob er für sanitäre Reformen eintritt oder das uralte Vorurteil gegen die Parias bekämpft oder schweigend in das Gefängnis der Engländer geht.

[...] Indien ist glücklich zu schätzen, dass ihm sein neues Gesetz nicht von einem Diktator auferlegt wird, nicht in dem unerbitlichen Kommando eines asiatischen Napoleon dröhnt, sondern von der sanften Stimme Mahatma Gandhis verkündet wird.

2. Ref. Ivan Illich: *Tools for Conviviality*. New York, 1973.
3. M. K. Gandhi: *Satyagraha in South Africa*, Chapter XII, Madras, 1928, see: *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (henceforth: CWMG) vol. 5, p. 421.
4. *Indian Opinion*, 18 December 1907, in: CWMG vol. 7, pp. 455.
5. *An Autobiography or The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, Chapter XXVI: The Birth of Satyagraha, 1920, in: CWMG vol. 39, p. 255.
6. *Indian Opinion*, 1 April 1905, in: CWMG vol. 4, pp. 392–394.
7. *Indian Opinion*, 5 June 1909, in: CWMG, vol. 9, pp. 236–238.
8. *Indian Opinion*, 5 November 1910, in: CWMG, vol. 10, p. 346.
9. *The Modern Review*, October 1916, in: CWMG vol. 13, pp. 297 f.
10. Golden Number, *Indian Opinion*, 1914, in: CWMG, vol. 12, p. 510.
11. On February 29, 1932, in: CWMG 49, pp. 169 f.
12. *Indian Opinion*, 28 March 1908 and 4 April 1908, in: CWMG vol. 8, pp. 166 f., 174–176.
13. *Indian Opinion*, 7 September 1907, in: CWMG vol. 7, pp. 213 f.
14. *Indian Opinion*, 22 July 1905, in: CWMG vol. 5, pp. 27 f.
15. *Indian Opinion*, 30 September 1905, in: CWMG vol. 5, pp. 84–86.
16. *Indian Opinion*, 26 August 1905, in: CWMG vol. 5, pp. 50–52.
17. *Indian Opinion*, 1 July 1905, in: CWMG vol. 5, p. 5.
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