Critical Nation

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Gandhi's philosophy appears most clearly enunciated in *Hind Swaraj*, a book written during his days in South Africa. The book in many ways offers an exposition of Gandhi's moral conception of truth, but several aspects of his notions and ideas as they evolved and were enunciated early on in *Hind Swaraj* are only now being analysed. This essay looks at the conception of "speed", including its relational notion to time, and which, according to philosophers of the Enlightenment, separated the modern from the ancient or the old. In Gandhi's exploration, however, speed also denotes and evokes a comparison between the civilisational ethos that marks out the east from the west.

This paper is an expansion of a note on *Hind Swaraj* presented in the Philosophical Society of St Stephen's College on August 18, 2006. We are grateful to Nirmalangshu Mukherjee for discussions on language. We thank Udaya Kumar and V Sanil for providing extensive bibliographies.

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… speed is the hope of the West… – Virilio
At the beginning there will have been speed – Derrida

Gandhi said in 1947, "I wrote a book called *Hind Swaraj* when I was in South Africa. That was in 1909, that is, 40 years ago. In those days I held the same views as I do now".[1] Gandhi scholarship continues to debate how to read him: did he change much since *Hind Swaraj?* Did his writings remain "undeveloped and unsystematised"?[2] Is there a "well-grounded ontology"?[3] The situation decisively changed with Akeel Bilgrami's 'Gandhi, The Philosopher' establishing the integrity of Gandhi's writings as the opening towards his moral conception of truth.[4] This project is complemented by R C Pradhan's 'Making Sense of Gandhi's Idea of Truth' where a further integrity between Gandhi's spiritual, moral, and epistemic notions of truth is revealed. There is yet another complex relation to Gandhi, symptomatic of the atmosphere of theoretical practice in India: Gandhi is recalled to demonstrate a theory that is current, either to establish his relevance or to demonstrate his "unthought". But, our study commences from Nizar Ahmad's observation that Gandhi never "worked out his principles of swaraj and swadeshi to its logical limits, in order to appreciate either its strength or weakness".[5]

Hind Swaraj is, to Gandhi, the book where all his thinking attained to unity and completion, teaching the gospel of love, severely condemning modern civilisation. For Partha Chatterjee it contains "the first and perhaps the fullest" systematic exposition of Gandhian ideas and "a statement of most of the fundamental elements of Gandhi's politics",[6] which establishes the methodological priority of *Hind Swaraj* and expels any myth about indeterminateness of Gandhi's political acts; rather, they can be shown to follow rigorously from *Hind Swaraj*. According to Robert Payne, in July 1947, to the would-be prime minister Nehru, Gandhi presented a copy of the book, which Nehru had rejected earlier.[7] The remarkable consistency of *Hind Swaraj* is to perform various functions: a whole theory of life; a higher weapon for self-protection for Indian civilisation; the book of redemption for all, even the west. It is our task to determine that which holds together such an array of themes in a little book.

Gandhi wrote *Hind Swaraj* in a dialogical form "to make it easy reading".[8] But it is the necessity of *Hind Swaraj* that there be such a couple, reader-editor. To be precise, two differently thought paces – the reader who takes values to be relative and the editor. This necessity of having a scale within us maintains *Hind Swaraj* insofar as it is the internal dialogue of the nation, the wrestling of two speeds – "Our leaders are divided into two parties (…) the slow party and the impatient party" (p 13).[9] We grasp everything

in accordance with speed: "Good travels at snail's pace" and "evil has wings"; everything is a matter of speed (p 27). Speed is a scalar quantity, unlike vector, without direction. This could be confounding since it is conventional to see a "binary opposition" operating in Gandhi, namely west/east, where west is the major term marginalising the lower term east, and to see *Hind Swaraj* as an attempt at overturning this opposition. That, of course, is far from the case. Even the west is defined in terms of speed, as that which speeds more than nature, east being that which maintains the good speed; one spun by machines, the other the spinner of the wheel – speed is the compass. The power of the west is its greater speed, including its power to colonise – "but for railways the English could not have such a hold on India as they have" (p 26). The scalology of speed is derived from hypophysics,[10] a term borrowed from Kant's *The Groundwork for a Metaphysics of Morals*. Nature is value: So we define hypophysics, or as Bilgrami says, nature "not as brute but as *suffused with value*".[11] Bilgrami also suggests an equation between hypophysics and "Spinoza's pantheism". We need to distinguish Spinoza's "metaphysics" from Gandhi's "hypophysics" in order to apprehend the uniqueness of *Hind Swaraj*. This occasions another important clarification. Ajay Skaria has examined *Hind Swaraj*, its sexism, and its "unthought" with respect to Heidegger's concept of ontotheology,[12] which has to be defined in order to make it clear that Gandhi is neither a metaphysician nor a theologian as per that concept.

1

Firstly, Spinoza's metaphysics, which is included in Heidegger's ontotheology: there is only one substance whose infinite attributes express its infinite essence; modes are determinate expressions of these attributes; thought, an attribute, has modes "such as love, desire, or whatever emotions of the mind".[13] The attribution of modes to substance will be hypophysics, as a result of which, for Spinoza, people have "linked the name 'god' to the images of things that they are accustomed to see".[14] Secondly, Heidegger's concept of ontotheology: This concept of metaphysics is simultaneously a diagnosis of the history of the west and the history of metaphysics (not a rejection of "modern thought", indeed, ontotheology begins with Plato), and at the same time the decryption key to the encrypted destinality in that history, its "unthought". Ontology is the discipline that accomplishes the ground for everything and theology is the discipline that gives an account of all beings with respect to the highest being. Their essential unity is metaphysics. "The ontotheological essential constitution of metaphysics cannot be explained in terms of either theologic or ontologic (…) For it still remains unthought by what unity ontologic and theologic belong together, what the origin of this unity is, and what the difference of the differentiated which this unity unifies".[15] Skaria's description of ontotheology[16] provides an inadvertent example for the distinction between the nominal and the conceptual; by "abstracting from presence" and "concept" what is understood therein is what Kant calls "empirical concept" – from all the wristwatches that you have seen you figure out that wristwatches are smaller than the person wearing them and by that, for Skaria, you have turned "the thing" into "object" – which has little to do with metaphysics. On the other hand the disciplines of the abstract – including number theory – are indifferent to what Skaria calls measure, but are about internal consistency, which he calls "muscle".[17] In fact, Descartes, the figure of modern thought, defined *Mathesis Universalis* as the science of quantities regardless of objects. Anyway, for us, metaphysics is the guerrilla transmission of thought hijacking all frequencies. *Hind Swaraj* does not pertain to metaphysics or to the difference that Heidegger pursued, but to speed's variation. Indeed, there is no "unthought" in Gandhi's systematic, for there are only well thought, badly thought, and some other thoughts.

Tagore understood Gandhi best, although as mistaken, and told him, "A mistake in geometry may make a road too long, or a foundation weak, or a bridge dangerous. But mathematical mistakes cannot be cured by moral maxims *(*emphasis ours)".[18] Here Tagore understands the mathematical in the Cartesian sense. But, for hypophysics *nature is value*, it is moral nature, which is why in that world earthquakes carry out judgments. Physics and metaphysics from the viewpoint of hypophysics denature nature. However, hypophysics is neither superior nor inferior to them. Values are gauged in accordance with scales such as speed, loudness and size, since values are nothing other than nature. Scalology is the adoption of scales to gauge nature. Gandhi adopts the scalology of speed. There were thinkers of speed before (*Fallacy of Speed* by Taylor is recommended at the end of *Hind Swaraj*[19]) and after Gandhi (Virilio and Derrida). But it is Gandhi's resistance to speeding, which alone is resistance that sets him apart. To learn what resistance is for Gandhi we follow his hypophysics.

Set of Limits

God sets limits and nature is a set of limits – "man is so made by nature as to require him to restrict his movements as far as his hands and feet will take him (…) God set a limit to man's locomotive ambition in the construction of his body" (p 28). But there seems to be in man a nature counter to nature, which upsets the set limits – "Man immediately proceeded to discover means of overriding the limit. God gifted man with intellect so that he might know his maker. Man abused it so that he might forget his Maker" (p 28). To know the Maker, who made the whole of nature, is to know the speed at which each and every thing is made, for which He has granted us variability of speed, precisely overriding; without the throttle one does not know speed, which Derrida calls a "speed race".[20] Override refers to the intellect (and the body), whereby all speeds are known, and in possessing the intellect man knows the whole of nature. Employing the override man proceeds to speeds which are beyond "his hand and feet" or natural speed. "The mind is a restless bird; the more it gets the more it wants, and still remains unsatisfied" (p 37). Nature has two senses: firstly, the god set speed at which whatever takes place is good; secondly, human nature as that which can counteroperate nature in the first sense, that is, all speeds are natural to man, hence knowledge of good and evil is possible. Good and evil are gauged by marking the deviation from the set limits, that is, scalologically: "Good travels at snail's pace (...) evil has wings"; there is an inverse relation between speed and the good, and a direct relation between speed and suffering.

Railways are one such means by which man overrides his locomotive limits, and therefore "are a most dangerous institution" (p 28). Since hands and feet, which are limits, are themselves building these confounded machines there must be evil in human nature, precisely, in the override; "Railways *accentuate* the evil nature of man. Bad men fulfil their evil designs with *greater rapidity*" (p 26). Railways disrupt the unity of the nation, firstly, by introducing variability and upsetting the boundaries – "It was after the advent of railways that we began to believe in distinctions" (p 27). Secondly, by the mixing of masses – "Without them, masses could not move from place to place" (p 26). Speed makes many venture into those places where only a few deserve to be. Earlier, only true devotees visited pilgrim sites enduring great difficulties, but with railways anyone could travel anywhere, "nowadays rogues visit them in order to practice their roguery" (p 26). This increase of speed renders ineffective the test to detect "real devotees", and as a result now "(t) he holy places of India have become unholy" – the holy and the unholy are determined by speed (p 26). Here the reader has a question, why do the good men not take the fullest advantage of the railways? The answer is quite obvious, "Good travells at a snail's pace – it can, therefore, have little to do with railways" (p 27). Good is never a body in hurry, it knows that "to impregnate people's mind with good requires a long time". Whether the mind gets impregnated with good or evil is determined by the speed of that impregnation – today, postal services aided by railways and printing; "now anybody writes and *prints* anything he likes and poisons people's minds" (p 20). The effect of the speed of railways is the disruption of the "One thought that inspired us" and held us as one nation; due to railways "man comes in contact with different natures, different religions and is utterly confounded" and "Owing to them man has gone further away from his Maker" (pp 27, 28). That is, the "One thought" of the nation is the thought corresponding to the speed pre-existing the advent of railways.

Speeding Civilisations

The increase of speed covers every field of life in the west. The plough's slowness replaced by steam engines, wagons by trains soon to be replaced by airships, all this is considered the height of civilisation. Bhikhu Parekh writes that in modern civilisation "no one asked why one needed to travel so fast and what one intended to do with the time saved".[21] All that is speeding meets with their "natural destruction". Only that which is slow remains. All those speeding civilisations are "ephemeral".[22] The west will meet the end proper to all that is speeding, the apocalypse of the west; the slow survives the apocalypse. Gandhi calls it the black-age, the age of the end without finality. Speeding is what has possessed England, a disease "eating into the vitals of the English nation"; the cure is the end, natural destruction, "one has only to be patient and it will be self destroyed" (p 21). Apocalypse is autolysis, which is natural, of the unnatural speed, leaving the slow safely behind. Gandhi never was in doubt regarding the spell of apocalypse. He wrote to Nehru in 1945, "It does not at all frighten me that the world seems to be going in the opposite direction…when the moth approaches its doom it whirls round faster and faster till it is burnt up".[23] *Hind Swaraj* is the book to end such repetitions of suffering.

In the same letter Gandhi confirms to Nehru, "you are my *heir*", that is to say the quick is the heir of the slow, speed begets speedier progenies. Madhu Limaye writes, "Many western writers have been puzzled by Gandhi's passionately held beliefs and his naming as heir a person who was the champion of science, technology and industrialisation".[24] To comprehend this relation between the predecessor and the heir we need to follow the workings of the dialogue of speeds in *Hind Swaraj*, the editor-reader, instantiated in the couple Gandhi-Nehru. The reader, representative of young India, would rather see the old men out and would not like to listen to the editor's discourse on such figures, which is to say that the battle of speeds takes place within the reader himself. The editor chides him, "We believe that those, who are discontented with the slowness of their parents and are angry because the parents would not run with their children, are considered disrespectful to their parents (…) What does it matter if they cannot run with us?" (p 10). That is, the quick inherits the slow,[25] but treating the predecessor as "inimical to our growth as a nation would disable us from using that body" (p 11). Speed will inherit greater speeds and it must make an effort to carry the slow ones along, for it is from the slow that the quick comes. Gandhi does not wish to slow down to be with the Grand Old men, but he respects them. Therefore it is the reader who mistakes in the editor a desire for slowing down. This dialogue of speeds continues with the couple Gandhi-Nehru in 1934 where Gandhi is now the "Grand Old Man of India" and the socialists the young guns, "But I have found them as a body to be in a hurry (…). If I cannot march quite as quick, I must ask them to halt and take me along with them".[26] Those who have obtained a greater pace must carry along the slow ones. Regarding the Congress Working Committee composed of old men, who can no longer keep up with the young socialists, Gandhi writes in the same letter, "it is wrong to blame them for their inability to undergo the sufferings that some others have gone through". Here again we find the battle of speeds taking place within the reader, Nehru. It is the reader who is troubled by the weight of the slowness of his elders and who demands unimpeded quickness. Hence, it will be a mistake to consider this scalology to be a determination of slowness relative to the fast and the editor to be a mere conserver of slowness demanding a relative slowness in every age; whereas it is the reader who has this comparative scale as his operative procedure to oppose a relative slowness.

2

"Religion is dear to me and my first complaint is that India is becoming irreligious" (p 24). By religion Gandhi does not mean any particular religion, but that which underlies all religions, the knowledge of the maker and of the god set speed of each thing; "In reality there are as many religions as there are individuals; but those who are conscious of the spirit of national unity do not interfere with one another's religion" (p 29). R C Pradhan explains: "Gandhi's God is free from the theological frameworks which relativise God to their particular conceptions".[27] We have earlier noted that the holy and the unholy are determined by the scalology of speed. In turn religion determines geographical boundaries. *Hind Swaraj* is the land of the free god; all that is religious, or the

land held together by religion, the spirit of national unity. Each man is defined by individual coefficients of speed, an intellect – "We do not all think alike" (p 60). Hence individual praxis; which is the reason for Gandhi's perplexingly different postcards of cure for different people. These coefficients are not constants, but they are parametric since each of us are compounds or alloys. Compoundings can weaken you and invite sufferings, such as East-West. But if individual religions are mistaken for Religion there can be no nation. Hindu nationalists, too, demanded a religious nation, but on the basis of one coefficient or a confined God. The prophet of the free god asks, "Is the God of the Mahomedan different from the God of the Hindu? Religions are different roads converging to the same point. What does it matter if we take different roads so long as we reach the same goal?" (p 29). This goal is *Hind Swaraj*, the geographic extension of the god set speed. The reader is convinced that the British united the nation and the railways abolished distinctions. The editor thinks otherwise, it is our forefathers who united the nation by conceiving that unity as *religious*.

Religious Discipline

Religious discipline defines India's uniqueness and prevents the nation from being fully taken over. The difference between reader and editor here is of the speeds of survey of the bounds of nation; for the reader as fast as railways and for the editor as slow as pilgrimage, the journey at the speed of limbs and not relatively slower than railways. The editor says, "our leading men travelled throughout India either on foot or in bullock carts" (p 27). The ancestors, knowing well that god can be worshipped anywhere, established places of pilgrimage in the south, east, and north – Rameshwar, Jagannath, and Hardwar – to ensure that we care to survey the land that is our nation.[28] This is the nation of those who, having Ganges in their own homes, surveyed its land by way of pilgrimage (p 27). This survey is re-enacted by Gandhi as the Salt March. Railways disrupted the ancient unity by mixing peoples, which introduced confounding distinctions, and has little to do with the "making of Hindustan into an object",[29] since the west has already lost its objectivity by ignoring the negative relation between speed and good. Indeed, Gandhi never aimed at destroying railways or hospitals; for him it is natural that the railways be the progeny of the bullock cart. But this nation is not lost out to the west,[30] which is godlessness, since "Rank atheism cannot flourish in this land" (p 57). In this nation religion maintains the natural speed and the ancestors' law, the legacy of their wisdom (p 36). Religion gives the cue for living life through.

The code of physico-spiritual health is found in religion, which is, therefore, nothing but the body of the prime laws, the god-given law. To be religious is to remain what god has made, to maintain our locomotive ambition at the limit which god has set; all religions teach one thing, "remain passive about worldly pursuits and active about godly pursuits" (p 24). Performance of duty and observance of morality are in accordance with religion.

Being well and ill involve being religious or otherwise. *Hind Swaraj* contains the diagnosis of an illness and its cure, it is also a manual of aetiology: "a true physician is he who probes the cause of the disease, and if you pose as physician for the disease of India, you will have to find out its true cause" (p 22). The cause of indigestion is overeating, exceeding the speed of digestion set by nature. The doctor's pills augment that speed while alleviating the distress and inducing further indulgence, which is a violation of our religious instincts. This causes the speeding up of the weakening of mind. Pills are not the cure, but the illness itself: "Had I not taken the pills in the first instance, I would have suffered the punishment deserved by me and I would not have overeaten again" (p 35). Nature's punishment is discontent and it urges us to gain self-mastery. Those dishonest doctors who practice supplementation of nature do not perform aetiology but set man up for the speed that is the west: "To study European medicine is to deepen our slavery" (p 36). The disease, including its army of doctors that has taken over India is modern civilisation and it is deceptive, "it even produces a seductive colour about a patient's face so as to induce the belief that all is well" (p 26). Each increment of speed is the seductive colour which is in fact the symptom of a grave illness, western civilisation: "Honest physicians will tell you that where means of artificial locomotion have increased, the health of the people has suffered" (p 59). The aetiologist does not approach the suffragette movement as a problem requiring a solution, but as a symptom. Pace determines the place; women who should reign in households are now "labouring under trying circumstances in factories or similar institutions" and this is "one of the causes of the daily growing suffragette movement" (p 21). Caused by irreligion, western civilisation is an illness which has afflicted India, whereas Indian civilisation is godly, which alone can be the cure. Every institution of the former propagates immorality with rapidity – lawyers, doctors, railways, cities, and parliament. The English to India are like the doctors' pills, supplementing our *locomotive ambitions*: "Then it follows that we keep the English in India for our base self-interest" (p 23). Decolonisation is the cure of this illness, the removal of its cause, and not a treatment of pain while keeping the thorn in the flesh.

Parliament

Of these fast institutions Parliament deserves special attention since it is in accordance with the speed of the institution of governance that we realise the kind of rule we are to give ourselves – parliamentary swaraj or *Hind Swaraj*. The institution of parliament is artificial; it is an extension of machinery, a speed-machine desolating Europe. We will follow Gandhi's explanation of its mechanism. Parliament is an institution labouring towards decisions, and finality defines a decision. Parliament has many ministers and is without a real master since prime ministers change periodically. As ministers get replaced frequently decisions too have a fast change. Every decision dwells restlessly under the threat of being overturned by another before it obtains finality. If you have decided to go from *a* to *b*, and in fact completed the journey, then you did make that decision. But with parliament, half way from *a* to *b* you decide to go to *c* and then midway to *d* and so on; you end up getting nowhere. This institution obtains a speed of decisions at which no decision can be made; it is a speed-machine. Parliament does not deliver "a single good thing"– "It is not possible to recall a single instance in which finality can be predicted for its work" (p 17). Parliament, an

institution of irreligion, indicates the critical state of the western civilisation, the transit point to apocalypse.[31] Its speed renders it impossible for it to be completely critical, that is, evaluative. The redeeming institution shall be *Hind Swaraj*, for both the west and the east, since the only compass is speed.[32] The editor says, "Real Home Rule is possible only where passive resistance is the guiding force of the people. Any other rule is foreign rule" (p 51). From which we understand that passive resistance defines the real home or "swa". *Hind Swaraj* is the nation of passive resisters.

3

Skaria derives the meaning of swaraj from the etymological root "swa" leading to the word proper and its "questioning nature". Giorgio Agamben's pioneering pursuit of "the Indo- European theme **se* (**swe*)", is illuminating: "In Indo-European languages, the group of the reflexive **se* (Greek *he*, Latin *se*, Sanskrit *sva*-) indicates what is proper (cf the Latin *suus*) and exists autonomously […] Insofar as it contains both a relation that unites and a relation that separates, the proper – that which characterises everything as a **se* – is therefore nothing simple".[33] Agamben draws our attention to the turn in Heidegger's philosophy with respect to this theme: "The fact that the term *Ereignis*, "event", with which Heidegger designates the supreme problem of his thought after *Being and Time*, can be semantically linked to this sphere is shown by the (etymologically arbitrary) relation Heidegger suggests between *Ereignis* and both the verb *eignen*, 'to appropriate', and the adjective '*eigen*', 'proper' or 'own'".[34] Heidegger did not always hide the arbitrariness of his etymologies. Agamben points out this fact: Heidegger's "etymologically arbitrary" operations are semantically justified (etymologically the name *Kamalanayana* traces to lotus-eyed but its bearer could be blind). In Skaria's register, Heidegger's robust mind muscles on to the argument, brushing past the word. Indeed, Heidegger's metaphysics is to establish a transcendental composition of the *is not* ('*Is Being at all?*'[35] asks Heidegger, whereas for Skaria it is a question of permitting two different speeds, which are, to vary, which Gandhi's theory anyhow permits), unthinkable for western metaphysics as such, since it is not a process that can be forked by its nominal norms.

Therefore, Skaria evidently confuses the transcendental with what Heidegger termed the ontic and applies it to extract Gandhi's unthought, a situation described best by the Heidegger commentator Jacques Derrida's phrase "the effect of the obvious".[36] Even if this particular card is overlooked, its deployment to establish that in *Hind Swaraj* "two heterogeneous and even antithetical (heterogeneous and antithetical are two different categories, the former of different genetic orders and the latter of an identical genetic order, and contrary to Skaria's belief the latter is not a stronger version of the former) ways of thinking the swa or the proper clash" and make the text tremble fails definitively. This is because he cannot distinguish at all, as he offers to, the ontotheological concept of violence as measure of that "which is heterogeneous to measure and is therefore nonviolent", from the purportedly proper one of "*Hind Swaraj*'s unthought" where violence is "the measure of what can only be given without measure". The identical operation of "measuring the immeasurable" characterises both the thought (allegedly ontotheological) and the unthought (allegedly of *Hind Swaraj*) although Skaria would have us believe that it constitutes an abyss where *Hind Swaraj* "remains profoundly fractured in its thinking of the proper, and of swaraj".[37]

For Skaria, Gandhi's naming of Parliament as "prostitute" and the supposed desire to remove that name while keeping the argument (whereas he omits names to prevent violence to Gandhi's thought[38]) makes the whole book "tremble". Skaria thinks what Gandhi the conservative could not – the questioning nature of proper, unthinkable for Gandhi, will permit the parliament (prostitute) and "*theekana*" (home) variation of speed; the "*veshya*" and the "*theekana*" will be permitted exchange with one another. Skaria is practising the postmodern trend of identifying "binary oppositions" – the conservative Gandhi/home vs the liberal parliament/prostitute – and finding the "third term" which annoys and, in certain cases, sources the opposition. But Gandhi had explicitly thought about this problem in *Hind Swaraj*. The reader says, "From your views I gather that you would form a third party. You are neither an extremist nor a moderate." The editor responds, "That is a mistake. I do not think of a third party at all…I would serve both the moderates and the extremists. Where I differ from them, I would respectfully place my position before them and continue my service" (p 60). The variation of speeds, the inheritance of the slow by the fast, is never thwarted by Gandhi, who wrote in 1921 – "But today my corporate activity is undoubtedly devoted to the attainment of Parliamentary Swaraj in accordance with the wishes of the people of India".[39]

That is, what Gandhi thought explicitly has been thought by Skaria as Gandhi's unthought.

Brute Force

Passive resistance is opposed to brute force. A force is defined by what it delivers. For example, the difference between free hands combat and that with machine guns; the former is at the speed of the hands and limbs, and can harm only from close, while with the latter "now it is possible to take away thousands of lives by one man working behind a gun from a hill" (p 20). With brute force what you get is brutal, and it characterises the west and its laws. To expel the English, the extremists, who believe in obedience to law, will employ brute force and their own law. Law has two senses: law that is of nature in the first sense, defining each at the locomotion of limbs and determining the end proper to all that speeds beyond it (autolysis); and law that is manmade, controlling and aiding increments of speed (for an army to succeed there should be obedience in its ranks and for factories to mass produce efficiently workers should be punctual and coordinated). "Charkha" is the instrument of Gandhian politics, where self-rule alone spins its wheel; Gandhi's postcard-cure in 1947 – "Take to spinning …The charkha is the symbol of non-violence on which all life, if it is to be real life, must be based".[40] When backed by brute force, disobedience of a law will retain legality; by opposing brute force with brute force you offer no resistance, but augmentation. All those speeding entities whirl faster until they perish and so will their force; "Those people who have been warred against have disappeared, as for instance, the natives of Australia of whom hardly a man was left alive by the intruders. Mark, please, that these natives did not use soul-force in self- defence, and it does not require much foresight to know that the Australians will share the same fate as their victims" (pp 46, 47-48). The slow alone remain and the force corresponding to them is passive resistance, which resists brute force – "This force is indestructible".

Discontent

Brute force, the force of gunpowder, cannot be the initiation of a passive resister. The nation of passive resisters cannot be brought about forcibly since "Swaraj has to be experienced, by each one for himself" (p 39) Discontent is his encounter in the desert, and unrest his baptism of fire: "This discontent is a very useful thing. As long as a man is contented with his present lot, so long is it difficult to persuade him to come out of it. Therefore it is that every reform must be preceded by discontent. We throw away things we have only when we cease to like them" (pp 13-14). Civilisation is discontent but it soothes while gnawing at you. Discontent can persuade one to come out of it and reform only when it effects unrest, the whisper of chaos at the twilight of sleep or wakefulness – "Unrest is, in reality, discontent…a necessary and, therefore, a proper state". Unrest is a knowledge that enables us to outgrow it (p 13).[41]

To know is to know that speed varies, that all things have their assigned speed, and that a deviation brings about suffering; it is to suffer your suffering, to reawaken the dormant love, to taste blood and wine in water. Gandhi writes in 'Who Can Offer Satyagraha?': "He who has sacrificed everything for satyagraha has gained everything, for he lives in contentment";[42] he has known all speeds. Intellect is the organ of locomotive ambition, yet civilisation is understood to be the quest for bodily comfort, an enterprise that is increasingly falling short of even that task (p 21). In fact, for Gandhi there is no mind body problem: they both are designations of the perpetually increasing speed of civilisation; as intellect builds faster locomotives, the body, just as the body of the nation, experiences the allocation of newer speeds and seeks further supplements to accommodate itself in it, like the doctors' pills and the lawyers' ruses; we experience body as the appendage of demand and the intellect as that of supply, and the crack between them widens to the point of dislodgment in the event of apocalypse. Partha Chatterjee explains it as "the system of social production (…with) the limitless desire for ever-increased production and ever-greater consumption, and the spirit of ruthless competitiveness which keeps the entire system going", that is, speed-race.[43] Therefore, the force of passive resistance is neither bodily nor mental, but soul-force, which is the enjoinment of the god-set limit, the unity of mind and body upon deviation, working everywhere as the mute prayer of the soul in agony[44] – "The universe would disappear without the existence of that force" (p 47). Yet, this force is not recorded in history; history is natural, but only as nature in the second sense breaking with the loop of nature in the first sense – "History is really a record of every interruption of the even working of the force of love or soul" (p 48).

History of Speed

The theorist of speed, Virilio, conceives of a single geopolitical history of speed comprised of "three proximities" – metabolic, mechanical, and electromagnetic – which has reached its absolute in electromagnetic-communication-systems and its war-machinery (he served military generals with his theory).[45] Speeding is history for Gandhi as well, but there is no division of it into regimes, nor is there an absolute speed; speeding or history is an interruption of what remains always; there have been many histories, such as of Greece and Rome; histories are like torso-less heads swallowing the sun and the moon without ever being able to digest them. Virilio's history would be one such ephemeral shadow, of the west, which is critical, nearing autolysis. As we speed on we hear our souls faintly, growing fragile. In chaos, the soul's candlelight falls on the tear that we are.

"It is difficult to become a passive resister unless the body is trained. As a rule, the mind, residing in a body that has become weakened by pampering, is also weak, and where there is no strength of the mind there can be no strength of soul" (pp 51-52). Civilisation understands will to be the propensity to higher speed, the intellect chasing the demands of the body, which drives them apart. The passive resister grasps the meaning of will correctly – it is the identity of body and mind. An offspring is a greater speed, giving rise to the speed-race of civilisations, and, therefore, a passive resister "can have no desire for progeny" (p 52).[46] He trains his body and mind such that the force of his soul is able to reach closer, until he could say "accomplished". Any one can become a passive resister irrespective of their physique – men, women, children, the sick, the rich, the poor – indeed, those who believe in the superiority of physical force are incapable of it, for they wish to battle law with law. Passive resister is always ready to take leave

from laws that constrain; "Man-made laws are not necessarily binding on him" (p 49). Majority is what is bound by brute force, and reform is always initiated by the minority, the unbound.

Man-made laws, even if endorsed by the majority, enforce one particular coefficient of speed upon a populace, ignoring that each is an individual coefficient; which is one of the humbugs of religions – superstition. Passive resister is always found on the other side of man-made laws; he is not the lawbreaker, but the maker of unrest. When a prince enforced an unjust law on his subjects, finding their petitions to be ineffective they moved out of the village, ceasing to be his petitioners. The prince became restless and apologised, and would be a passive resister if he chooses to guard this blessing. It is the same force that blessed Angulimaala.

Passive resistance is a critical blessing to everyone, even the English. It is an all-sided sword, blessing the wielder and the wounded (p 51). As he treks the land of his forefathers, the passive resister is the sword that blesses both its bearer and the bearer of its cut, and he is the guardian of the cut. He is not passive, but passion defines him. He is the zero hero "I must reduce myself to zero."[47] He is not the one who runs from the sound of a gun, but "he who keeps death always as a bosom friend" and his nation "rests its head upon death as its pillow" (p 50). Here we see that the passive resister is critical in two senses, unlike the parliament. Firstly, as a point of transition from the first sense of law to the second; his passion, involving self-sacrifice, does not submit to the legal and the medical system from whose point of view he is critical, whereas for him it is those systems that are the sick running to their end (p 48). Secondly, as the guardian of the wound who evaluates, his life exposes the civilised to their own passion. Now we can define *Hind Swaraj* as critical nation. "The Swaraj that I wish to picture is such that, after we have once realised it, we shall endeavour to the end of our life-time to persuade others to do likewise" (p 39). That is, there will be only one critical nation.

4

Bilgrami recognises the importance of speed in Gandhi's thought. He conceives the passive resister as an exemplar, and sets the slowness of village life as the condition of exemplarity – "(Gandhi) was fully aware that the smaller the community of individuals, the more likelihood there is of setting examples".[48] The speed of "global economies" is non-conducive for an exemplar – "In such places and such forms of life, there is no scope for exemplary action to take hold (…). To find a basis for tolerance and non-violence under circumstances such as these, we are compelled to turn to arguments of the sort Mill tried to provide".[49] Towards the accomplishment of the critical nation Gandhi did not seek an interlude of village life as condition, nor did he believe that the villages of India were already critical nation. Gandhi knew the narrow-mindedness of villages, which priests hold together by brute force – "Our religious teachers are hypocritical and selfish" (p 57). He wrote to Nehru in 1945, "You will not be able to understand me if you think that I am talking about the villages of today".[50] Shahid Amin's *Event, Memory, Metaphor* is the history of Gandhi's strenuous relationship with contemporary village and its hypophysics; the historian, trailing the outside of *Hind Swaraj*, gives a most insightful reading. He describes Gandhi and the crowds of villagers seeking "darshan", which made Gandhi beat his own head in anger, "It was these mobs

that Gandhi wanted disciplined by trained volunteers".[51] Yet the village is what critical nation would look like when attained, since swadeshi would be its conduct.

Swadeshi

Swadeshi, the conduct of passive resister, is at the speed of what always remains, of the ancients who "after due deliberation decided that we should only do what we would with our hands and feet" (p 37). Gandhi writes in 1919 regarding the swadeshi vow, "For a proper observance of the pledge, it is really necessary to use only hand-woven cloth made out of hand-spun yarn".[52] The speed of the village is the nearest to critical nation; a place where there is no machinery to cause *override* will be undemanding on the passive resister when he endeavours to undeceive them. If critical nation is near then there is no need to burden the villager with the enslaving English education, which is a flood of great speed that could carry them away as it had urban Indians. It is a false education, incapable of carrying out the critical act to completion (pp 54-55).

Derrida, the Other-thinker of speed, says about global-nuclear-war, "it is a non-event", if it takes place there will not be anything left as evidence, of any event.[53] The decisive speed race is the nuclear arms race, which speeds on to the apocalypse, as its deterrence. Absolute speed will be that event, and it alone can judge all other speeds, which are (straining to hear) the faintest of the loudest of all sounds, of judgment. Derrida explains his proto-ontology: "The hypothesis of this total destruction watches over (judges) deconstruction, it guides its footsteps".[54] For Derrida the world is the summing up or the speeding up of the world, where there can be only one apocalypse, one night without mercury and no dawn to follow – the summary "non-event"; every other speed is speeding onto the other speed. While for Gandhi, speedings are histories interrupting the formation of the critical nation and apocalypses are autolyses, ends of histories, which are always survived by the slow, from which progenies would arise again – "We, therefore, say that the non-beginning of a thing is supreme wisdom" (p 58).

[For S Gopalakrishnan]

NOTES

1 *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol 87, p 357.
2 Parekh, p 6.
3 Alam, p 2.
4 Bilgrami also proposed a comparison between Heidegger and Gandhi on technology.
5 Ahmad, p 65.
6 Chatterjee, p 156.
7 On October 9, 1945, Nehru wrote to Gandhi, "It is many years ago since I read *Hind Swaraj* and I have only a vague picture in my mind. But even when I read it 20 or more years ago it seemed to me completely unreal", Limaye, p 392.
8 Preface to *Hind Swaraj* in *CWMG*, Vol 10, p 7. Further references to this text alone will be made in parenthesis.
9 All italicisations to Gandhi are ours unless indicated.
10 Paul Virilio calls his own scalology of speed dromology, where speed of light is absolute and has been reached; *Speed and Politics*; 'The Art of the Motor' and 'The Continental Drift' in *The Virilio Reader* (Oxford, UK).
11 Bilgrami, 2006; Bilgrami correctly uses world, matter, and nature interchangeably, since their separation entails a notion of brute matter.
12 Skaria, 2006; it needs to be mentioned that neither the proper name Heidegger, who conceived this term, nor any other metaphysicians who deploys it, figure in Skaria's text. We assume that it is the Heideggerian concept that Skaria has in mind and applies, from the semblance to the hermeneutico-etymological method and several of the words of Heidegger's metaphysics such as proper, the thing, home, gift, the unthought, letting, and propriation.
13 Spinoza, pp 154-55.
14 Ibid.
15 1969, p 60.
16 "It is surely a striking feature of modern thought – or more precisely of the ontotheological tradition – that its concept of violence is that of abstraction from presence (and the even more impoverished statist one, derived from this concept, of violence as the wrong measure). To the extent that the concept is inseparable from measure, violence is thought of as constitutive of the order of the concept. This is why ontotheological tradition has regarded measure itself as the primary violence (…) Concomitantly, violence here (what Gandhi was incapable of thinking, his "unthought") comes to be thought (…) as the measure of what can only be given without measure, the swa or proper, as the measure which itself organises the ontotheological opposition of abstraction and presence"; Skaria, p 5066.
17 "(…) robust minds would muscle on to the argument, brushing past the word"; ibid, p 5065.
18 Tagore, p 225.
19 Gandhi urged Manilal Gandhi to translate this book in 1910. "The book is commonplace, but it will serve our purpose", *CWMG*, Vol 10, p 379.
20 1984, p 20.
21 P 23.
22 "Indian civilisation is the best and that the European is a nine days wonder. Such ephemeral civilisations have come and gone and will continue to do so" (p 62).
23 Limaye, p 388.
24 Ibid, p 310.
25 This is why Gandhi writes in 1921, "I am not aiming at destroying railways or hospitals, though I would certainly welcome their natural destruction"; *Hind Swaraj,* p16.
26 Limaye, p 386.
27 Pradhan, p 39.
28 "But they (our ancestors) saw that India was one undivided land so made by nature. They, therefore, argued that it must be one nation. Arguing thus, they established holy places in various parts of India, and fired people with an idea of nationality in a manner unknown in other parts of the world" (p 27).
29 Skaria, p 5070.
30 "India is being ground down, not under the English heel, but that of modern civilisation", p 24.
31 "One of the members of that parliament recently said that a true Christian could not become a member of it", p 17.
32 We are grateful to J Reghu for letting us consult his unpublished research on the idea of "nation of redemption" and India's independence struggle.
33 Pp 116-17.
34 Ibid.
35 1972, p 3.
36 1995, pp 181-87. Though one may not agree with Derrida's interpretation of Heidegger, this interview is an essential introduction to the difficulties caused by "the effect of the obvious" involved in applying Heidegger.
37 P 5065.
38 "I have not explicitly footnoted these obligations [to all Gandhi scholars and especially to those philosophers whose work is being applied on Gandhi to violate his thought to bring about his unthought]…such footnoting would involve a violence towards Gandhi's thought, which would then even more likely to be understood by analogy [that is, Skaria's originality will be compromised] to these thinkers", Skaria, fn 6, p 5072.
39 *Hind Swaraj*, p 16.
40 *CWMG*, Vol 87, p 262.
41 The partition of Bengal is a great event that results in resurgence of nationalism. Until this event Indians were using the English as an instrument to fulfill their demand for speed. But partition, though unwise on the part of the English, created restlessness (p 12).
42 *CWMG*, Vol 9, p 227.
43 P 159.
44 *CWMG*, Vol 75, p 305.
45 1998, p 186.
46 "A satyagrahi is obliged to break away from family attachments", *CWMG*, Vol 9, p 226; Gandhi wrote in 1946, "I should like the girls to remain unmarried, but they cannot be forced to do so", *CWMG*, Vol 85, p 169. David Hardiman's study of Gandhi orients his thought along marriage, women and, children. Hardiman writes "At one wedding, he blessed the couple with words: 'May you have no children'".
47 Autobiography, p 454.
48 2003, p 4163.
49 Ibid, p 4164.
50 Limaye, p 389.
51 Amin, p 189.
52 *CWMG*, Vol 15, p 198.
53 P 23.
54 P 27.

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