Hind Swaraj

INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF MOHANDAS K. GANDHI

Mohandas K. Gandhi, the most celebrated leader of India's independence movement, was born and raised in a humble Hindu family in what is now the state of Gujarat. As was usual in his time, he married very young, at the age of 13. After finishing high school, he went on to study law in London, where he learned public speaking and became a vegetarian activist. He then spent 21 formative years of his life in South Africa, where he was shocked and infuriated at the racist prejudice he faced. He dedicated his energy to organizing the local Indian community and began formulating his *satyagraha* (passive resistance) protest method. It was during this period that he wrote *Hind Swaraj*. He gained a reputation in India, where he returned in 1915 and dedicated himself to leading the Indian National Congress and its struggle for independence. Based on his teachings in *Hind Swaraj*, he began leading a nationwide movement of non-cooperation, *satyagraha*, and *swadeshi* (or the boycott of English goods). He was imprisoned multiple times for his activism, which gained widespread support over the next three decades, until India finally won its independence after World War II. However, Gandhi was dismayed to see the country partitioned into India and Pakistan, a move he never supported. In 1948, shortly after independence, Gandhi was assassinated by Nathuram Godse, a Hindu nationalist and member of the RSS paramilitary.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The English colonization of India began with the formation of the East India Company in the early 1600s and took off in the mid-1700s, when the Company fought a series of wars and allied itself with several existing Indian rulers in order to control the subcontinent. The Company's sole purpose was to extract all the resources it possibly could from India's land and population—historians have estimated the cost of this plunder in the tens of trillions of dollars. After the enormous Indian Rebellion of 1857—which is often considered India's first revolution for independence—the British government nationalized the East India Company and took direct control over India during the period conventionally known as the British Raj (or British Rule). Over the next 50 years, British policy accelerated a series of devastating famines that killed tens of millions of people. Funded by Indian capital and labor, the industrial revolution also transformed Britain into the world's economic powerhouse. One famous example of Britain's vicious economic policy was the way it exploited cotton markets: the British bought Indian cotton at incredibly cheap prices but then manufactured cloth back in Britain and forced Indians to pay sky-high prices for textiles. This is the context to which Gandhi was responding when he condemned "modern civilization" as the disease afflicting India and famously proposed that Indians boycott British goods and weave their own textiles. Of course, he was also responding to a growing pro-independence sentiment during this period. Through the creation of the Indian National Congress in 1885 and the enormous popular backlash to the Partition of Bengal in 1905, questions of Indian nationhood and identity were at the forefront of many Indians' minds. Gandhi belonged to and specifically hoped to address the emerging class of educated, politically radical Indian professionals who lived in places like South Africa and London and generally favored a violent overthrow of the British Raj. In particular, the assassination of British army officer Curzon Wyllie by the Indian revolutionary Madan Lal Dhingra in 1909 certainly made an impact on Gandhi—he wrote *Hind Swaraj* just a few months later. Although this book did not become popular for roughly a decade after its publication, it soon became one of the cornerstones of the Indian Independence Movement, which Gandhi went on to lead. India won its independence in 1947, but not as the unified secular democracy that Gandhi hoped for. Indeed, despite Gandhi's hopes, communal and religious divisions remain a driving force in Indian politics today.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

Besides *Hind Swaraj*, Gandhi's most important work is his famous autobiography, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth* (1948), which covers his early life. Although Gandhi argues for a specifically Indian philosophy of life and society in *Hind Swaraj*, this vision is deeply influenced by Western writers as well as Indian ones. The most significant of Gandhi's Western influences is probably the famed Russian novelist Leo Tolstoy, whose nonfiction works—including *The Kingdom of God Is Within You* (1894), *The Slavery of Our Times* (1900), and "A Letter to a Hindu" (1908)—Gandhi read voraciously during his time in South Africa. (They began corresponding after the publication of *Hind Swaraj*.) Gandhi was also an avid reader of the American transcendentalist thinker Henry David Thoreau (especially the 1849 *Civil Disobedience*) and the English critic John Ruskin (including the 1860 book on political economy *Unto This Last*). Beyond seminal texts of ancient Indian philosophy like the *Bhagavad Gita*, *Ramayana*, and *Upanishads*, Gandhi's Indian influences particularly include the Jain philosophy of Shrimad Rajchandra and the historical work of scholars like Dadabhai Naoroji (*Poverty and Un-British Rule in India*, 1901). Other crucial texts of the Indian independence movement include Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's *The*

Discovery of India (1946) and the Hindu nationalist V.D. Savarkar's *The Indian War of Independence* (1909), with which Gandhi sharply disagreed. Among the numerous books on Gandhi's life and impact, a few significant works include Dennis Dalton's *Mahatma Gandhi: Nonviolent Power in Action* (1995), the edited volume *Gandhi's 'Hind Swaraj': A Fresh Look* (1985), and contemporary historian Ramachandra Guha's two-part biography: *Gandhi Before India* (2013) and *Gandhi: The Years That Changed the World, 1914-1948* (2018).

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** Hind Swaraj, or Indian Home Rule
- **When Written:** November 13–22, 1909
- **Where Written:** Aboard the *S.S. Kildonan Castle*, en route from London, England, to Durban, South Africa
- **When Published:** December 1909 (Gujarati edition); March 1910 (Gandhi's English translation)
- **Literary Period:** Modern/Late Colonial Indian Philosophy
- **Genre:** Philosophical Dialogue, Political Philosophy, Revolutionary Manifesto, South Asian Economic and Social History
- **Setting:** Early 20th-century India, under British rule
- **Climax:** The editor convinces the reader that a popular campaign of passive resistance is the best way to transform India morally, spiritually, economically, and politically.
- **Antagonist:** Modern civilization, the British Empire, violent rebellion, communal divisions, the elevation of material goals over spiritual ones
- **Point of View:** Dialogue

EXTRA CREDIT

Burst of Inspiration. Gandhi famously wrote *Hind Swaraj* in only 10 days, while aboard a ship from London to South Africa, and barely edited his first draft.

PLOT SUMMARY

Hind Swaraj takes the form of a dialogue, in which a character called the editor—heavily implied to be Gandhi himself—answers the reader's questions about British colonialism, the emerging Indian nationalist movement, the kind of civilization that Indians should try to build, and the means they should use to do so. Gandhi translated *Hind Swaraj* into English after the British authorities banned and seized the original Gujarati version, which was first published in the newspaper *Indian Opinion*.

Gandhi begins by defending the Indian National Congress, the national party that first brought elite Indians together to demand independence from the British. After the British split Bengal in half in 1905, Gandhi explains, Indians began seeing themselves as a unified nation and rising up to demand political change. Now, Indians are demanding Swaraj. The reader mistakenly thinks that this just means kicking out the English, but the editor clarifies that, unless Indians learn to govern themselves fairly and sustainably, India will simply have "English rule without the Englishman." England's Parliament is stagnant and its politicians are corrupt, which leaves the English people relatively powerless to shape the policies that structure their lives.

According to the editor, the problem with England is modern civilization, the way of life that prioritizes "bodily welfare," or people's material desires, above everything else. So while Europeans obsessively build new technologies and produce more and more wealth, they have plundered and enslaved the world in order to do so. Worst of all, Europeans have lost sight of their moral and spiritual needs, and their material desires are insatiable: the more luxuries they have, the more they want. This traps them and their colonies in an unsustainable cycle of constant economic expansion.

Even though the English brought modern civilization to India, the editor argues that Indians are responsible for giving up India. This is because they wrongly chose to trade with and fight alongside the English. As a result, Indians have lost their own distinctive way of life, which is grounded in the common beliefs that underlie all their various religions. Meanwhile, the modern railway network is a dangerous tool for plundering India's resources and forcing its people into slavery: rather than living self-sufficiently in their village communities, farmers now have to sell everything to the British, which has created devastating famines.

Similarly, while Hindus and Muslims lived in harmony for centuries, now they have fallen victim to the English strategy of divide and conquer. In reality, the editor argues, Hindus and Muslims are part of the same family, worship the same God, and belong to the same Indian nation—which has always been and will always be religiously diverse. But now, the Hindu majority foolishly persecutes Muslims, who respond by building separate protected institutions. Gandhi also rejects Hindu cow-protection activists who attack Muslims for slaughtering cows because he thinks violence against others is never justified, even in response to other forms of violence.

Next, Gandhi explains why lawyers and doctors are also responsible for impoverishing India. Lawyers profit by exacerbating conflict and division, and they help the rich much more than the poor. Western-trained doctors treat the symptoms of disease rather than addressing its root causes, which are usually about "negligence or indulgence."

Having summarized the dangers of modern civilization, the editor next argues that true Indian civilization is the set of political, personal, and spiritual practices that help people fulfill their moral duties. He argues that true happiness comes from

the mind, not the body, so moral people learn to master their minds and passions. Such people also live materially humble but spiritually rich lives, as Indians traditionally did for centuries, before the English arrived. But the editor clarifies that he is not defending certain oppressive practices from Indian tradition, like child marriage and animal sacrifice.

The editor goes on to argue that the real meaning of *Swaraj* is achieving freedom and reinstating true civilization. This requires completely transforming society, not just expelling the English. He uses the Italian reunification led by Garibaldi and Mazzini as an example of why violent revolt doesn't fundamentally change the system. Brute force, the editor concludes, cannot establish a just government—it would only lead to an escalating cycle of war and vengeance. But petitions are also insufficient for creating a just government, unless they're backed by action. Rather, only moral means can establish a moral government, and the only solution to India's condition is passive resistance—or refusing to follow the government's demands or recognize it as legitimate. This passive resistance is grounded in the fundamental force of love (or truth, or the soul), which binds people and nations together in peaceful harmony. In passively resisting an unjust government, people must accept suffering and be willing to sacrifice themselves for the greater good. And they must not inflict violence on anyone else. Rather, they follow the true moral law, even when it conflicts with the government's law. It takes greater courage and mental strength than fighting a war, but it allows people to liberate both their conscience and their country at the same time.

The reader asks about the role that education and technology pay in the independence struggle. The editor argues that Western education just teaches people facts without giving them a moral framework for understanding those facts, so it is mostly useless. Similarly, while European machines like mills lead to great wealth, that wealth all flows to Europeans, while the Indians who actually produce the wealth are forced off their land and reduced to poverty in the process. Accordingly, the editor concludes that Indians should embrace moral education and reject most Western machinery, with some exceptions (like the printing press, which can help the independence movement spread).

In his conclusion, Gandhi summarizes his political platform. While moderates try in vain to petition the British and extremists propose a dangerous armed rebellion, Gandhi argues that passive resistance offers is the only effective response to tyranny. True home rule requires Indians to rule themselves and embrace traditional Indian practices, not just kick out the British. He instructs Indians to weave their own cloth by hand, boycott British goods, and be willing to suffer imprisonment, exile, or even death in order to achieve *Swaraj*.

CHARACTERS

The Editor – The editor, who represents Gandhi, presents his views on Swaraj, passive resistance, modern civilization, and Indian nationhood to a character called the reader. Despite his strong views, the editor carefully accommodates the reader's general confusion and frequent misunderstandings. The editor's patience, dedication, and moral clarity reflect the values that Gandhi thinks all Indians must cultivate within themselves in order to build a more humane and self-sufficient society. In most traditional Indian literature, a guru or spiritual leader would take the editor's role in a philosophical dialogue. Instead, Gandhi gives his central character a distinctly modern profession. This is in part because Ganhi was the actual editor of the newspaper in which he published *Hind Swaraj*, but it's also because this shows his readers—largely educated professionals—how Indians can use some Western technology and education without completely giving in to modern civilization.

The Reader – In *Hind Swaraj*, the reader refers to the character who dialogues with the editor (Gandhi), primarily by asking questions to clarify and challenge the editor's views on home rule. The reader represents various facets of Gandhi's Indian audience, including expatriate Indians who favored political violence, educated Indian professionals who sought to emulate the British, and members of the Indian National Congress. In general, the reader defends the extremist position that Indians should fight an armed revolutionary war against the English, but also celebrates English technology, education, and medicine. Gandhi uses this as evidence that the reader actually internalizes the values of modern civilization and turns his back on the wisdom of traditional Indian civilization and religion. But Gandhi thinks that he can convince people like the reader to fight for Indian independence through passive resistance by showing them the value of ancient Indian civilization and moral philosophy.

Giuseppe Garibaldi – Giuseppe Garibaldi was an Italian general and revolutionary who led a successful military campaign to reunify Italy in the mid-1800s. The editor sees Garibaldi's military tactics as a version of the reader's extremist idea that Indians should achieve home rule by taking up arms and forcing the English out of India. The editor argues that Garibaldi's revolution merely gave power to an Italian elite, without truly freeing the population from tyranny. From the editor's perspective, this shows that Giuseppe Mazzini's view of independence as moral autonomy or self-rule is a better goal for India.

Giuseppe Mazzini – Giuseppe Mazzini was an Italian activist, philosopher, and journalist who helped lead the reunification of Italy in the mid-1800s. Although he did participate in military campaigns alongside leaders like Giuseppe Garibaldi, Mazzini was primarily a theorist. Mazzini's vision of Italian nationhood,

which involved citizens morally developing themselves to become truly independent, is similar to the editor's view of Swaraj (or home rule) in India. However, the editor points out that the armed reunification campaign did not achieve Mazzini's vision, which demonstrates why India should opt for as strategy of passive resistance instead.

TERMS

Indian National Congress – The Indian National Congress is the nationalist political party, founded by both Indian and English elites in 1885, that spearheaded the push for Indian independence. During the early 1900s, when Gandhi wrote *Hind Swaraj*, the Indian National Congress became increasingly divided between a moderate faction, which proposed petitioning the English government for change through its legal system, and an extremist faction, which favored violent rebellion. After independence, the Congress went on to rule India for many decades, and it remains one of the nation's dominant political parties to this day.

Modern civilization – Gandhi defines modern civilization as a way of life that prioritizes material welfare over spiritual welfare. Although a just society must meet its citizens' material *needs*, modern civilization focuses on endlessly satisfying people's material *wants*. In the process, it enslaves and impoverishes most of humanity (like Indians under the British Empire) and spiritually impoverishes everyone. While the English introduced modern civilization to India, Gandhi believes it's Indians' responsibility to eradicate it.

Passive resistance – Passive resistance is a very rough English translation of *satyagraha* ("truth-force" or, more accurately, "the force that comes from holding onto truth"). Gandhi presents civil disobedience through nonviolent *satyagraha* as the best way to challenge and overthrow unjust power. Concretely, *satyagraha* means refusing to obey unjust government laws and accepting the punishment associated with this disobedience. In other words, *satyagraha* is following the laws of morality instead of the laws of the state.

Swaraj – *Swarj* literally means "self-rule," which refers to both individuals' moral autonomy over their own lives and India's ability to govern itself independently. In the book, *Swaraj* is translated as both "self-rule" and "home-rule," but these are the same concept. Gandhi argues that these two goals are one and the same: he thinks that Indians must morally transform themselves as individuals and communities in order to successfully govern themselves as a nation.

THEMES

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PASSIVE RESISTANCE AND INDIAN INDEPENDENCE

Hind Swaraj is Gandhi's political, philosophical, and economic manifesto for the Indian Independence Movement. When he first wrote this book in 1909, Gandhi had been living in South Africa for more than 15 years and was virtually unknown in his native India. However, this would all change over the next decade, as his ideas became the driving philosophy behind the massive popular campaign to free India from British rule. In *Hind Swaraj*, Gandhi lays out these ideas through a dialogue between two characters: the editor, who represents Gandhi, and the reader, who represents Gandhi's audience—mainly politically active, educated Indian professionals. Gandhi's key message is that achieving independence, or Swaraj (home-rule), is not as simple as taking up arms and forcing the British out of India. Rather, he argues that Indians must win their independence through a method he calls *satyagraha*—which literally means "the force that comes from holding onto truth," but is usually translated as "passive resistance" or "nonviolent civil disobedience." Gandhi believes that *satyagraha* is the best way to overthrow the British colonial government because it draws its strength from morality, not weapons, and builds a democratic community through the very process of protest.

Gandhi first argues that armed rebellion, as proposed by extremists in the Indian National Congress, is not a viable strategy for Indians to win independence. Like many of these extremists, the reader argues that the British conquered India with military force, so Indians are justified in using the same to kick the British out. But Gandhi disagrees. First of all, Indians aren't armed and simply don't have the resources to fight a war. Notwithstanding these limits, Gandhi thinks that revenge is never an adequate reason to fight a war because it creates an endless cycle of escalation. If the Indians retaliate to British aggression by taking up arms, the British would retaliate disproportionately and become even more repressive. This means that taking up arms would likely only worsen Indians' situation.

Similarly, when the reader proposes that a group of mercenaries should try to assassinate British officials and launch a coup, Gandhi points out that these mercenaries will then take over India's government—at which point they are likely to be just as repressive and self-interested as the British. So Gandhi concludes that in India, armed revolution or guerrilla war would lead to "English rule without the Englishman." In practical terms, he means that a revolution would just replace the repressive English government with a repressive Indian one. At its core, Gandhi's argument against brute force is moral,

not just practical: he thinks there is always an inherent connection between the means of action and the ends that those means produce. He compares this to the connection between a seed and the tree that grows from it. That means that using violence only breeds more violence. Therefore, to create a free and just society, Indians must fight with freedom and justice.

To meet this challenge, Gandhi proposes *satyagraha*—passive resistance, or nonviolent civil disobedience. He argues that passive resistance is the only free and just tool for protest, which means it's the only legitimate strategy Indians can use to fight for independence from the repressive English government. Gandhi defines *satyagraha* as making the decision to follow moral laws rather than human ones. This means disobeying unjust laws imposed by the government. *Satyagraha* requires activists to accept the consequences the government imposes on them—even if they have to suffer or die for their beliefs. In the context of 20th-century colonial India, this means that Indians should live by the rules of their own religions and communities, while refusing to follow English laws. Although passive resistance is a simple concept, creating a *satyagraha* movement is not easy, because it requires deep moral courage. Violent resistance only requires bodily strength, Gandhi argues, but passive resistance requires the bodily strength to withstand physical violence, as well as an even greater mental and spiritual strength.

Passive resistance works, according to Gandhi, because it shows that the people consider the government illegitimate. Practically speaking, laws only constrain people if everybody follows them—either because they agree with them, or because they fear the consequences of breaking the law. But when people accept the consequences of unjust laws, these laws lose their power. This forces unjust governments into a moral dilemma: they either attack nonviolent protestors and further lose their legitimacy, or they acquiesce to the people's demands. As a result, the *satyagraha* movement either proves the government's illegitimacy—and wins even more support—or achieves its demands.

Ultimately, for Gandhi, *satyagraha* is not only an effective political strategy: it is also the deepest expression of human morality. Gandhi argues that the power behind *satyagraha* is the force of truth, love, and the soul—the same force that holds together the universe and the human race. When people protest nonviolently, they are declaring their commitment to building a better society—one that truly upholds their moral duties to one another. In fact, through passive resistance, they are actually *fulfilling* their moral duties to the community, because they choose to follow moral laws rather than the government's laws. This means that passive resistance isn't just a call for a more humane society: it's also the means through which people build it. In other words, the organized community of nonviolent protestors *is* the new, humane, democratic society that will eventually replace the oppressive government.

Today, Gandhi's concept of nonviolent civil disobedience is virtually synonymous with popular protest. But it can be easy to forget that this idea only gained widespread acceptance in the 20th century, in large part through the successful Indian Independence Movement. Ever since, Gandhi's ideas have left an unmistakable mark on people's struggles for democracy around the world, ranging from the American Civil Rights Movement and the South African Anti-Apartheid Movement to the Arab Spring.

MODERN CIVILIZATION AND COLONIALISM

In *Hind Swaraj*, Gandhi emphasizes that Indians will not become truly independent—or achieve Swaraj (home-rule)—by simply overthrowing the British. This is because he blames India's misery on modern civilization, not colonialism. This distinction is essential for understanding Gandhi's argument: the Western way of life is responsible for India's oppression, not just the British government. Because Gandhi thinks that modern civilization's focus on material goods is the root cause of Indians' poverty and misery, he concludes that Indians must replace this modern way of life with one based on ancient Indian civilization's traditions and values.

Gandhi argues that modern civilization and its technologies are evil because they lead people to prioritize material goals over spiritual ones. For Gandhi, a civilization is essentially a way of life, which is based on a society's specific cultural values, social structures, and religious traditions. Gandhi argues that the best (or truest) way of life is the one that "points out to man the path of duty," or teaches people to behave morally. Following this "path of duty" requires learning to control "our mind and our passions," which Gandhi considers the source of true happiness. In other words, a good civilization makes people happy by teaching them morality and self-control. This allows them to fulfill all their needs, both material and spiritual.

In contrast to true civilization, Gandhi argues, modern Western civilization "make[s] bodily welfare the object of life." In other words, it encourages people to prioritize wealth, power, and pleasure over their moral, social, and spiritual well-being. Gandhi notes that Europeans define success and progress as buying bigger houses, wearing finer clothing, and developing new technologies. He ironically suggests that, in the future, people will be able to meet all their needs simply by pressing a button—but he points out that this would not make these people's lives good or meaningful. On the contrary: the richer people get, the more miserable, greedy, and evil they become, according to Gandhi. So focusing excessively on "bodily welfare" is actually likely to make people's lives *worse*. Once people meet their basic bodily needs, having more stuff does

not make them any happier. Instead, they need to focus on their spiritual development, which modern civilization totally ignores.

Gandhi blames this modern civilization for the degradation of India. In fact, he argues that the English invaded India precisely because of a barbaric thirst for wealth. For more than 300 years, the English stole Indians' land and material resources, enslaved them in factories and mines, and turned them against one another. In the process, the English committed many of the worst crimes against humanity in recorded history. But the culprit isn't just colonialism: it's the modern way of life that led to colonialism. If Indians cast off colonialism but do not overcome modern civilization, they will end up worse than before.

To underline his point, Gandhi looks at three key examples: railways, Western-trained doctors and lawyers, and industrial machinery. While some Indians view these developments as a silver lining to English colonialism, Gandhi believes that they have actually worsened and impoverished India. For instance, he argues that the railways were built to expedite the theft of Indian resources. Similarly, while traditional Indian doctors and village lawyers prevent illnesses and legal disputes, Western-trained doctors and lawyers profit by prolonging them. These developments show that many Indians have accepted modern civilization, too, so need to reform themselves in order to live happy and ethical lives. In fact, Gandhi thinks Indians—not the English—are responsible for letting modern civilization take over India. From his perspective, this is because greedy Indians agreed to trade with and fight alongside the English and then gradually let themselves be modernized. If the English leave India, therefore, modern civilization won't go away—so the struggle for Indian independence is really about replacing modern civilization with true civilization, not replacing the English government with an Indian one.

To build a free society based on true civilization, Gandhi thinks that Indians must turn to their traditional past. Gandhi justifiably thinks that Indians lived far better and happier lives in the distant past than they did under British colonialism. Although they didn't have machines, money, or railroads, they lived in small, self-sufficient village communities. They had doctors and courts, but their doctors addressed the root causes of illness ("negligence" and "indulgence"), and their courts resolved conflicts rather than extending them. In other words, Indian civilization was superior because it met people's material needs while also providing for their spiritual ones. That said, Gandhi emphasizes that ancient Indian civilization was not perfect—for instance, many Indians had some oppressive traditions like child marriage, ritualized prostitution, and animal sacrifice, which he thinks they should absolutely reject. At the same time, Indians can integrate certain Western practices into their civilization. For example, he thinks India should create a universal education system, implement public health policies, and guarantee human rights to all its citizens. This makes it all the more clear that the conflict between ancient and modern civilization is *not* just a conflict between Indian traditions and Western ones: rather, it is a conflict between a balanced way of life and an unbalanced one that puts wealth, power, and technology above community, morality, and human well-being.

Gandhi doesn't want India to turn its back on England and try to return to the past: rather, he envisions the India of the future as a democratic federation of villages, which largely govern themselves in traditional ways, but also work together on a national scale, through shared democratic institutions. If India can transform itself in this way, Gandhi thinks the English can even stay in India and "become Indianised." There's no contradiction between rejecting English technology while embracing English people, or living traditional lifestyles under a national democratic government. Rather, Gandhi believes that India should revitalize its ancient civilization precisely by becoming a democratic nation.

THE PERSONAL AND THE POLITICAL

Although *Hind Swaraj* is generally considered a political manifesto, Gandhi's plan for Indian independence depends directly on his philosophy of individual discipline and moral transformation. In fact, he believes that politics is always personal because he sees individuals, families, and small communities as the source of a nation's political life. Accordingly, Gandhi argues that effective social change has to come from the bottom up: people have to personally transform themselves and their ways of life in order to build more equitable and just relationships, communities, and nations.

Speaking as a character called the editor, Gandhi argues that Indians must spiritually transform themselves before India can become independent. In line with this, he stresses that the term Swaraj actually means *both* home-rule and self-rule. Self-rule really means autonomy, or an individual's ability to govern their own actions and beliefs. So for a nation, *Swaraj* is a people ruling itself—which means democracy, or home-rule. In other words, a society achieves home-rule when all its members achieve self-rule. Just like "one drowning man will never save another," he argues, "swaraj has to be experienced by each one for himself" before society as a whole can be truly free. What he means is that individuals must take control of their own lives to achieve *Swaraj* over themselves, and then they can apply what they learn in order to emancipate the nation as a whole.

Because self-rule and home-rule are so inextricably linked, Gandhi believes that personal transformation is the most important step that individuals can take in their fight for independence. At the end of *Hind Swaraj*, Gandhi outlines 19 steps that his readers should follow. For instance, he asks

lawyers and doctors to quit their jobs and dedicate themselves to educating others, and he asks wealthy people to invest their money in hand-looms so that Indians can weave their own cloth and become economically independent from the British. Similarly, Gandhi believes that *satyagraha* (passive resistance) expresses the moral force of the universe, so he argues that Indians have to become morally virtuous before they can effectively make a case for political reform. Specifically, he argues that, before joining the independence movement, Indians have to first practice the key moral virtues of celibacy, courage, truthfulness, and an indifference to material wealth. In other words, unless Indians focus on personal transformation first, their efforts at political transformation will never succeed.

In fact, Gandhi's political program is organized around his fundamental belief that that all politics is bottom-up. This means that individuals' personal lives and practices are the driving force behind a nation's political health and culture. It's impossible to create a free society by merely switching out rulers and reforming institutions, Gandhi argues, particularly in a colonized country where the native population has virtually no power over their own land, livelihoods, or laws. Rather, he argues, Indians must take matters into their own hands to hold the government accountable and show that an alternative way of organizing society is possible. Gandhi thinks that, by helping people live morally, the Indian Independence Movement can give people true *Swaraj* even before India formally becomes independent. Essentially, rather petitioning the government for freedom, he believes that Indians should organize themselves and start living free lives on their own, and *then* demand that the political system reflect the new society they have already established. This is most clear in Gandhi's call for *swadeshi*, the practice of boycotting British goods and exclusively buying Indian products. Because the primary motivation for English colonialism is the opportunity to profit by economically exploiting India, Indians can undermine Britain's profit margins by refusing to sell to or buy from them. A mass boycott would form a separate economy outside the English's reach, and an independent India can directly inherit this economy, rather than having to build a new one from scratch after the English withdraw. This shows how, by building a political movement from the bottom up, activists don't have to wait for the powerful to make concessions: instead, they immediately start building the free, just, and equal society that they are fighting for.

Gandhi's belief that politics reflects a society's underlying moral values—rather than determining them—is still as widespread as it is controversial. However, its success in driving mass democratic movements throughout history is undeniable. In short, Gandhi reminds his readers that morality and democracy won't establish themselves: instead, the future of our lives and our governments are always in our own hands.

INDIAN NATIONHOOD AND IDENTITY

In *Hind Swaraj*, Gandhi speaks to a profoundly fractured population. Largely because of English colonialism's divide-and-conquer strategy, Indians have started to define themselves as separate groups based on differing religious, linguistic, regional, political, caste, class, and cultural identities. When they start turning against each other instead of working together to fight for independence, Gandhi thinks, Indians are letting these artificial divisions get the best of them and indirectly helping the English maintain power. While Indians bicker about who should belong to the future Indian nation, Gandhi argues that India has always been—and will always be—a single unified nation. He declares that Hindus and Muslims, North Indians and South Indians, and moderates and extremists in the Indian National Congress are really all like quarreling brothers: their conflicts are temporary, but their familial bonds are eternal. In fact, Gandhi emphasizes India's historical, cultural, and spiritual unity precisely in order to help Indians learn to view themselves as a single nation and demand independence with a single, unified voice.

When he wrote *Hind Swaraj* in 1909, Gandhi was confronting a profoundly divided India, and he worried that these divisions would weaken the movement for independence. The first division Gandhi notes in his book is the bitter political divide between extremist and the moderate independence activists in the Indian National Congress. He also talks about the militant activists he recently met in London, who call themselves the Young India Party—the reader initially appears to be one of them. The moderates and extremists are divided by their tactics: the moderates want to petition the colonial government for independence, while the extremists want to start an armed rebellion and assassinate British officials. But because the moderates and extremists can't agree on anything, they aren't making any progress towards actually liberating India from British rule.

The other crucial division that Gandhi addresses is the growing animosity between Hindus and Muslims in India. Indeed, the reader—who is clearly a Hindu—argues that there is an "inborn enmity" between Hindus and Muslims. He considers Muslims to be violent, unclean, and immoral—especially because many Muslims eat meat. These beliefs were common, and they particularly disturbed Gandhi. As a result of the religious split, India's Muslim minority had begun advocating for a separate state. Gandhi strongly disagreed with this idea, which threatened the prospect of a unified fight for independence.

Gandhi argues that Indians are divided not because of their differing political or religious beliefs, but because of colonialism and modern civilization. In reality, he concludes that India always has been—and always will be—a single, unified nation. Although moderates and extremists disagree on how to achieve Indian independence, Gandhi emphasizes that this is only a superficial division: they want the same thing and belong to the

same party. Even though the reader looks down on the leaders of the Indian National Congress, Gandhi carefully emphasizes that they—like several generations of Indian activists and revolutionaries before them—have dedicated their lives to the cause of Indian independence. In other words, while the extremist revolutionaries think they stand alone against the British, Gandhi reminds them that they are actually part of a long tradition of Indian nationalists and independence fighters. This long tradition only exists because Indians have long seen themselves as a unified national community.

Gandhi also insists that Hindus and Muslims can and should live in harmony. They did so for many centuries before the British arrived, and they only became rivals because of Britain's divide-and-conquer strategy. While the reader subscribes to the common misconception that India was a unified Hindu nation until Muslims invaded and took over the Indian Subcontinent, the editor corrects him: India has always been ethnically, culturally, and religiously mixed. Hindus lived peacefully under Muslim rulers and vice-versa. Most importantly, Gandhi emphasizes that Hindus and Muslims fundamentally believe the same things. They worship the same God, their scriptures are very similar, and they subscribe to the same fundamental moral values—specifically, they are humble with regards to material things, but strive ambitiously for spiritual improvement. Gandhi argues that Indians should unite around these shared values, which he calls ancient civilization, or the "religion which underlies all religions." Because they share the values of ancient civilization, Hindus and Muslims also follow a common social structure: they traditionally live in rural, relatively egalitarian village communities. He believes that these shared values and traditional social structures should form the basis for Indians' demand for independence.

The implications of Gandhi's argument are clear: if India has and will always be a single nation, then the Indian people should look past their superficial differences and demand independence with a unified voice. As a result, Indians could form a single, democratic, and pluralistic nation—not a patchwork of different ones based on divisions of religion or ideology. This is why Gandhi wanted India to be a secular democracy, even though he thinks its people should be traditional and deeply religious. The government shouldn't follow any particular religion, but rather the "religion which underlines all religions" and therefore unifies all Indians, whether Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Buddhist, Sikh, Jain, Jewish, Baha'i, or Parsi.

Ultimately, the British ultimately partitioned India into two, against Gandhi's wishes. Pakistan became an officially Muslim state, but India was founded to be an inclusive, secular democracy. However, Gandhi would likely see this as a limited victory, because in practice the Hindu nationalist movement—which was responsible for Gandhi's assassination and has fought to oppress Muslims since independence—remains powerful to this day.

SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.

THE UPAS TREE

Speaking as the editor, Gandhi compares modern civilization to the highly toxic Upas tree (*antiaris toxicaria*) and uses the tree to demonstrate how moral, cultural, and political life are inherently tied together. Essentially, Gandhi believes that people's moral values are like the root of a tree because everything else in society grows out from them, including people's individual and family lives, the professions they choose, and the governments they build.

According to Gandhi, modern civilization is toxic, like the Upas tree, because its roots are toxic: modern civilization's relationship to the world is unbalanced and it fundamentally misunderstands human nature. Specifically, modern people value bodily and material things, while ignoring their mental and spiritual well-being. If the Upas tree's roots are toxic, Gandhi suggests, its branches are like the "parasitical professions" of law and medicine, which are really just symptoms of the underlying problem.

Gandhi insists that, if activists want to reform the government or "parasitical professions," they have to start at the root of the problem: modern civilization's unbalanced values. Otherwise, they will simply create a new version of the same oppressive society they are fighting. So while many independence activists see the fight for Swaraj (home-rule) as a merely political battle, Gandhi argues that it actually requires a complete transformation of *all* aspects of Indian society. "True religion," he concludes, is like an axe that can cut down the Upas tree. Then, Indians can plant the seeds of a new civilization—or advance a new set of values—and grow a new, ethical kind of society from the bottom up. But this requires individual and collective moral reform, including passive resistance, voluntary poverty and celibacy, and a commitment to economic self-sufficiency.

QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Cambridge University Press edition of *Gandhi: 'Hind Swaraj' and Other Writings* published in 2011.

Preface Quotes

❝ I do not know why *Hind Swaraj* has been seized in India. To me, the seizure constitutes further condemnation of the civilisation represented by the British Government. There is in the book not a trace of approval of violence in any shape or form. The methods of the British Government are, undoubtedly, severely condemned. To do otherwise would be for me to be a traitor to Truth, to India, and to the Empire to which I own allegiance.

Related Themes:

Page Number: 7

Explanation and Analysis

In the preface to his English version of *Hind Swaraj*, Gandhi explains why he has decided to translate the book: the English government banned the original version, written in his native language of Gujarati, as potentially seditious (or likely to cause insurrection). Gandhi points out that this is somewhat ironic, because his book argues *against* an armed revolution. Of course, he nevertheless insists that Indians should disobey the government through passive resistance, and the English government clearly saw this as undermining its authority.

In this preface, Gandhi specifically uses the seizure of his book as further evidence of the government's oppressiveness and immorality, but also as evidence that passive resistance is a powerful tool for political change. While Gandhi believes in ethical self-defense—using force to prevent worse violence—the government was clearly acting out of bare self-interest when it banned his book. This reflects Britain's general ruling philosophy over the centuries it colonized India: it did whatever it considered necessary to make money, while ignoring Indians' welfare and painting them as subhuman. At the same time, if Gandhi's book weren't likely to encourage Indians to take matters into their own hands and resist the government, it's unlikely that the government would have ever seized it. In fact, Gandhi shows that this was just a temporary move that would inevitably fail: he got out the English translation and his ideas still spread. They likely attracted even more attention than they ever would have if his book were never banned.

Curiously, Gandhi declares that he is committed to Truth, India, *and* the British Empire. It's possible to make sense of this by remembering that he sees individuals' moral values, collective identities, and governments as all interconnected. He conceived his book as a way of speaking and holding onto the Truth (in fact, "holding onto truth" is a literal translation of *satyagraha*, or passive resistance). And he thought that this commitment to Truth was the fundamental moral force that held humanity together, creating peace and harmony in human communities throughout history. Therefore, by serving the Truth, Gandhi believes he is serving the interests of humanity—including those of all British subjects, not just Indians. In *Hind Swaraj*, he makes it clear that Indians aren't the only ones who would benefit from a new, democratic, ethical government: so would the people of South Africa, which Gandhi called home while writing the book, and the poor and working people of England, who were also oppressed by the British Crown.

Chapter 1 Quotes

❝ You are impatient. I cannot afford to be likewise. If you will bear with me for a while, I think you will find that you will obtain what you want. Remember the old proverb that the tree does not grow in one day. The fact that you have checked me, and that you do not want to hear about the well-wishers of India, shows that, for you at any rate, Home Rule is yet far away. If we had many like you, we would never make any advance. This thought is worthy of your attention.

Related Characters: The Editor (speaker), The Reader

Related Themes:

Page Number: 14-15

Explanation and Analysis

In the first chapter of their lengthy dialogue, the reader insists that the editor (Gandhi) take a side in the ongoing debate between the moderates and extremists in the Indian National Congress. The reader is eager to start a revolution and looks down on the Congress, which he views as a tool of the colonial government because some of its founders were English. He also looks down on the editor for praising the Congress's leaders. In response, the editor declares that the reader is too hotheaded, and he underestimates his predecessors and his opposition alike. Because he lacks respect for history and has not learned to control his own emotions, his activism might even turn out to be counterproductive.

In addition to defending the legacies of earlier independence activists, in this passage, Gandhi is introducing one of his book's central claims: individuals have to transform themselves before they can transform society. Specifically, Gandhi thinks that both nations and individuals

have to learn to control themselves in the same way—this is why he uses the word *Swaraj* to refer to both an individual's self-rule and a nation's home-rule. Individuals can become truly free and independent by learning to discipline themselves and their emotions, act responsibly, and balance themselves mentally and spiritually. Similarly, India will truly rule itself not when Indians control the levers of power, but rather when Indians can collectively govern themselves wisely and ethically. But people have to be wise and ethical in order to govern wisely and ethically, so Gandhi thinks activists should work on themselves before they try to recruit others for the cause of independence.

Indeed, Gandhi already knows that it will take decades of mass mobilization to achieve true independence, so he hopes activists throughout India and the world will take his advice seriously. Instead of trying to launch a violent revolution and take power immediately, they should see that building an independent and well-governed India will be a life-long (or even intergenerational) project. Moreover, they must understand that this project will be completely intertwined with their personal lives and qualities, which will largely determine whether or not it proves successful.

> The same rule holds good for the English as for the Indians. I can never subscribe to the statement that all Englishmen are bad. Many Englishmen desire Home Rule for India. That the English people are somewhat more selfish than others is true, but that does not prove that every Englishman is bad. We who seek justice will have to do justice to others. Sir William does not wish ill to India—that should be enough for us. As we proceed, you will see that, if we act justly, India will be sooner free. You will see, too, that, if we shun every Englishman as an enemy, Home Rule will be delayed. But if we are just to them, we shall receive their support in our progress towards the goal.

Related Characters: The Editor (speaker), The Reader

Related Themes:

Page Number: 17

Explanation and Analysis

When the reader argues that all Englishmen are the enemy and should therefore be kicked out of India, Gandhi's editor firmly disagrees. In fact, numerous English writers have profoundly influenced his thinking, and many of the earliest activists for Indian independence were English.

Of course, Gandhi is not just trying to redeem individual Englishmen's reputations in this passage: his goal is really to help his readers distinguish between the English *people* and the English *government*. It's overly simplistic to say that all Englishmen are evil because the English government has plundered India. (In fact, this is remarkably similar to the racist logic that some Englishmen use to say that Indians are inherently inferior to white people.) Gandhi by no means denies that colonialism has devastated India—in fact, he sees its effects as far more wide-ranging and sinister than even the character of the reader does. Rather, Gandhi just accurately identifies its true perpetrator.

As he later points out, the majority of English people benefitted relatively little from England's colonialism in India—the government oppresses them, kind of like it oppresses Indians, and they are not responsible for its actions in India. Indeed, like all human beings, Englishmen have moral consciences and are capable of following them, so many favor the cause of independence. Therefore, Indians must learn to blame the English government for colonialism, not the English people. Gandhi later takes this argument even further and blames India's woes on *modern civilization*. The English may have brought this new way of life, but Indians eagerly adopted it and continue to lust for it. This means that hating the English will not fix their predicament; rather, Indians need to first reform themselves.

Chapter 3 Quotes

> This discontent is a very useful thing. So 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. Such discontent has been produced among us after reading the great works of Indians and Englishmen. Discontent has led to unrest, and the latter has brought about many deaths, many imprisonments, many banishments. Such a state of things will still continue. It must be so. All these may be considered good signs, but they may also lead to bad results.

Related Characters: The Editor (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 23-24

Explanation and Analysis

In the third chapter of their dialogue, the reader asks the editor about the spreading nationalist unrest in India. The editor clarifies that this unrest is really the first phase in a

broader political awakening, which he compares to "a man ris[ing] from sleep." And while this is a necessary phase, the editor continues, eventually Indians must find a more unified and effective way to voice their discontent with the English. But their strategies for doing so will determine the outcome of the independence movement. Therefore, Gandhi thinks it's essential that Indians continue to wake up and start voicing their discontent—which might require some unrest along the way. Nevertheless, the truly important question for these discontented Indians is not what England has done to them, but rather what they can do to build a new, better society in place of the colonial one they are living in. Of course, through this book, Gandhi aims to answer this question and help channel discontented Indians towards building a passive resistance movement.

Chapter 4 Quotes

❝ You have well drawn the picture. In effect it means this: that we want English rule without the Englishman. You want the tiger's nature, but not the tiger; that is to say, you would make India English, and, when it becomes English, it will be called not Hindustan but Englistan. This is not the Swaraj that I want.

Related Characters: The Editor (speaker), The Reader

Related Themes:

Page Number: 27

Explanation and Analysis

The reader has just presented his vision for the revolution. In his estimation, India should take up arms, build up a military, and reconquer its land from the English invaders. The editor's response, reflected in this passage, points out that this is essentially trying to beat the English at their own game. Even if it could work, this idea suggests a profound lack of imagination: even when they fight the English, Indians seem stuck in an English mindset. If Indians build a government based on domination, conquest, and violence, Gandhi asks, what would make India any different from England? Its rulers would be Indian, but its soul would be the same as the British Empire's.

In this passage, Gandhi makes it clear that he views Englishness and Indianness not in terms of who runs the government, but rather in terms of the values that lie at society's foundation. These values are far more important because they shape every dimension of people's lives. In the quest for independence, Indians must choose between the values of English modern civilization—violence and economic extraction—and those of India's historical civilization, which celebrated community, wisdom, and spiritual fulfillment. So to Gandhi, a wise people living under an oppressive government is probably better off than a foolish people living under a benevolent one. But the reader seems to be proposing something even worse: an oppressive government led by fools that gradually shapes the people in its own image. To build a benevolent and wise society, Gandhi goes on to argue, passive resistance is India's only true and moral option.

Chapter 6 Quotes

❝ Let us first consider what state of things is described by the word "civilisation." Its true test lies in the fact that people living in it make bodily welfare the object of life.

Related Characters: The Editor (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 34

Explanation and Analysis

Gandhi's critique of modern civilization, which takes up roughly the middle third of *Hind Swaraj*, begins with this passage, in which Gandhi looks at the way industrialized societies like the English seem to define the concept of "civilization." In his view, of course, this definition is profoundly misguided, and English and Indian people's misunderstanding of true civilization is largely responsible for India's woes.

When Gandhi talks about civilization, he's not talking about a society's achievements or history; rather, he's talking about the way its people live and the philosophy of human existence that this way of life reflects. Gandhi identifies modern or industrial civilization's key feature as the sole focus on "bodily welfare," which basically means physical things like sensory pleasure, the accumulation of wealth, and the exercise of power.

To understand why it's counterproductive to focus entirely on promoting "bodily welfare," it's necessary to first understand Gandhi's idea of a good human life. His view is largely grounded in ancient Indian philosophy, but essentially his point is that living well, or being happy, depends on a balance of physical, psychological, and spiritual factors. Of course, it's important for people to meet certain basic material needs: it's difficult to live well while also starving or homeless. But it's also difficult for many rich

people to be happy because of their greed and gluttony, Gandhi suggests, and people are unlikely to live well if they have no greater sense of purpose in their life. Therefore, modern civilization's problem is that it's out of balance, and Gandhi is calling for a moral revolution in order to reset that balance.

❝ It has been stated that, as men progress, they shall be able to travel in airships and reach any part of the world in a few hours. Men will not need the use of their hands and feet. They will press a button and they will have their clothing by their side. They will press another button and they will have their newspaper. A third, and a motorcar will be in waiting for them. They will have a variety of delicately dished-up food. Everything will be done by machinery.

Related Characters: The Editor (speaker)

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 35

Explanation and Analysis

In his critique of modern civilization, Gandhi imagines what seems to be the logical conclusion of an industrial society like England: a world where people can fulfill their every wish at the touch of a button, and live lives of pure leisure as a result. This is industrial England's vision of a technological utopia, but to Gandhi it looks like an unhealthy and superficial society of excess. European countries have forced much of the world's population into slavery and poverty while they chase after such a society, and in this imaginary utopia, nobody even seems to know what to do with themselves anymore.

In other words, Gandhi thinks that people become spiritually sick the more they rely on technology: as they automate things away and structure their lives around consumption, he suggests, they lose track of morality, relationships, and their very humanity. While Gandhi certainly has no problem with people meeting their bodily needs, in practice, he thinks that a healthy society needs to balance a focus on these needs with an emphasis on people's moral and social well-being.

Chapter 7 Quotes

❝ The English have not taken India; we have given it to them. They are not in India because of their strength, but because we keep them.

Related Characters: The Editor (speaker)

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 38

Explanation and Analysis

Although it may seem perplexing, Gandhi says that Indians—not the English—are responsible for colonization and the violence it inflicted on India. Of course, he's not saying that Indians were the ones who sailed halfway around the world to conquer and enslave a foreign nation—rather, he's saying that certain Indians actively cooperated with the English because of greed and self-interest. The English never would have conquered India without these collaborators, and modern civilization would never have taken hold in India if so many Indians hadn't adopted it and started to put bodily welfare above all other human needs.

Gandhi blames the victim in the passage, but he's not doing this in an effort to justify what the English have done. Instead, he blames Indians in order to point out how much power they have. If the English are in India because Indians "keep them," then Indians can decide to stop. They can end colonialism—and, more importantly, transition away from modern civilization—without violent revolutions or assassinations. They just need to fully grasp the problem and make a firm collective decision to live in a different way, one aligned with Indian traditions rather than modern English capitalism. Of course, Gandhi believes that the way to do this is *satyagraha*—passive resistance, or insisting on the truth even in the face of unjust authority.

Chapter 8 Quotes

❝ Religion is dear to me, and my first complaint is that India is becoming irreligious. Here I am not thinking of the Hindu, the Mahomedan, or the Zoroastrian religion, but of that religion which underlies all religions. We are turning away from God. [...] Hinduism, Islamism, Zoroastrianism, Christianity and all other religions teach that we should remain passive about worldly pursuits and active about godly pursuits, that we should set a limit to our worldly ambition, and that our religious ambition should be illimitable.

Related Characters: The Editor (speaker)

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 41-42

Explanation and Analysis

When the reader asks the editor what he thinks of India's present condition, this is the editor's initial response. His emphasis on "that religion which underlies all religions" exemplifies Gandhi's complex, often-misunderstood commitment to both secularism and religion. Gandhi thinks that all religions fundamentally teach the same values, encourage people to live the same kind of ethical lives, and believe in the same God. As he later puts it, the various "religions are different roads converging to the same point." They converge by teaching people to correctly balance their bodily and mental (or material and spiritual) needs. This proper balance is the essence of Indian ancient civilization and the reason that India has and will always be one unified nation.

Therefore, while Gandhi thinks it's essential for people to have religious values, he also thinks that which religion they happen to follow is irrelevant. All of them will lead people to a properly balanced way of life, if said religions are followed with the proper devotion and discipline. By extension, he argues, people and the government should promote religious values as the centerpiece of a healthy society—but never prioritize any religion above any other. Doing so would encourage division, violence, and inequality. This is why Gandhi manages to be both a great advocate and great opponent of religion: he praises the "religion which underlies all religions," but opposes any attempt to divide people based on the various doctrines they happen to follow.

Chapter 9 Quotes

❝ The English have taught us that we were not one nation before, and that it will require centuries before we become one nation. This is without foundation. We were one nation before they came to India. One thought inspired us. Our mode of life was the same. It was because we were one nation that they were able to establish one kingdom. Subsequently they divided us.

Related Characters: The Editor (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 47

Explanation and Analysis

In calling for independence, Gandhi and his contemporaries faced a tremendous challenge: how could a democratic government effectively rule India's religiously and linguistically diverse population? The English ruled through force, but home-rule—or democracy—would require Indians to collaborate across increasingly divisive boundaries. By looking to history, Gandhi seeks to show not just that India's different groups can live in harmony, but actually that this has been the norm rather than the exception.

In fact, Gandhi points out that England's divide-and-rule strategy has been so successful that it has affected Indians' sense of identity: under colonialism, they started identifying with specific religious and linguistic groups, and then they began fighting with other groups over resources. This greatly benefited England because it prevented Indians from uniting to demand independence. But by rediscovering a united identity, Indians can form a free and sovereign democracy. In a sense, Gandhi implies that Indians would not be creating a new nation as much as fulfilling their ancient destiny. But, crucially, he views Indian identity as inherently diverse and inclusive: it has no specific religion, language, or ethnicity, so nobody can be excluded from it based on these characteristics—including any English people who choose to stay.

Chapter 10 Quotes

❝ If two brothers want to live in peace, is it possible for a third party to separate them? If they were to listen to evil counsels, we would consider them to be foolish. Similarly, we Hindus and Mahomedans would have to blame our folly rather than the English, if we allowed them to put us asunder. A clay-pot would break through impact; if not with one stone, then with another. The way to save the pot is not to keep it away from the danger point, but to bake it so that no stone would break it. We have then to make our hearts of perfectly baked clay. Then we shall be steeled against all danger. This can be easily done by the Hindus. They are superior in numbers, they pretend that they are more educated, they are, therefore, better able to shield themselves from attack on their amicable relations with the Mahomedans.

Related Characters: The Editor (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 55

Explanation and Analysis

After presenting his vision of India as one unified nation, Gandhi tackles the controversial question of Hindu-Muslim relations. He argues that India's historical unity has always been the result of its diversity and points out that Hindus and Muslims lived in relative harmony until the beginning of

English colonialism. As a result, Gandhi concludes that it would be inappropriate and contrary to the national spirit to create separate states for Hindus and Muslims—even if this did ultimately end up happening.

But one crucial question remains: whose responsibility is it to heal the divide? Just as with Indians' turn away from their ancient civilization and toward modern civilization, Gandhi agrees that the English played an important part in creating religious divisions in India (as well as spreading the lie that Hindus and Muslims had fought extensively in the past). However, just as he thinks Indians should take the initiative to reinvigorate their civilization, he argues that Hindus and Muslims are responsible for healing the divide. This is entirely within their power and would allow them to present a united front in the fight for independence. He specifically asks Hindus to take on this burden because they significantly outnumber Muslims and are therefore much less threatened by the religious divide. Of course, he attempts to take the first step by explicitly reaching out to India's Muslim minority in this book.

Chapter 13 Quotes

❝ Civilisation is that mode of conduct which points out to man the path of duty. Performance of duty and observance of morality are convertible terms. To observe morality is to attain mastery over our mind and our passions. So doing, we know ourselves. The Gujarati equivalent for civilisation means "good conduct."

Related Characters: The Editor (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 65

Explanation and Analysis

After finishing his moral and historical case against modern civilization, Gandhi starts to take a more in-depth look at the alternative: ancient Indian civilization. He hopes the independence movement will help reinvigorate this civilization and the democratic Indian government will adopt its basic principles. Whereas modern civilization sees bodily welfare as the goal of life, ancient civilization sees morality as the goal of life. Gandhi's concept of morality is distinctively Indian and based on ancient philosophy, which is why he clarifies the fact that "civilization" just means "good conduct" in his native Gujarati (in which he wrote the first version of *Hind Swaraj*).

Curiously, Gandhi defines two other concepts as equivalent to morality: performing one's duties and mastering the mind and passions. These concepts help show how Gandhi views individual actions as tied to politics. First, people don't have moral duties in a vacuum: they have those duties to someone, or some entity (like the nation, or humanity). Accordingly, performing one's duty is really about taking responsibility for one's actions towards others, or fulfilling one's role in a collective. So when Gandhi argues that individuals should learn to fulfill their duties, he's also saying that people should be responsible neighbors, family members, and citizens—which helps explain why he thinks individuals' moral improvement is an important part of their service to the Indian nation.

Similarly, Gandhi views mastering the mind and passions (or self-rule) as the most important step not only toward wisdom and happiness, but also toward effectively participating in satyagraha (passive resistance). It's also no coincidence that he views passive resistance as the choice to follow morality over the law when they conflict: in the context of the independence struggle, he sees self-control as a means to morality and passive resistance as an expression of it.

Indeed, Gandhi clearly thinks that Indians have a moral duty to train their minds and control their emotions, so that they can effectively fulfill their moral duty to join the fight for independence. Accordingly, these three dimensions of ancient civilization's way of life—morality, duty, and self-rule—come together in Gandhi's call for Indians to undertake personal and political reform: individuals should morally strive to achieve self-rule, which is part of their duty to society, and if Indians undertake this reform as a collective, so will India itself.

❝ A nation with a constitution like this is fitter to teach others than to learn from others. This nation had courts, lawyers and doctors, but they were all within bounds. Everybody knew that these professions were not particularly superior; moreover, these vakils and vaids did not rob people; they were considered people's dependants, not their masters. Justice was tolerably fair. The ordinary rule was to avoid courts. There were no touts to lure people into them. This evil, too, was noticeable only in and around capitals. The common people lived independently, and followed their agricultural occupation. They enjoyed true Home Rule.

Related Characters: The Editor (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 67-68

Explanation and Analysis

In Gandhi's eyes, it wouldn't be right to talk about achieving home-rule in the future; rather, he thinks Indians will be *returning* to home-rule by building a democracy. This is because he sees the key political unit of ancient Indian civilization, the village, as a morally balanced and self-sufficient community. To return to this condition of home rule in a modern age, of course, Indians will have to make some changes: it's possible to advance the values of the past but never to fully return to it. Accordingly, to some extent, Gandhi thinks that ancient versions of medicine and law need to be transplanted into modern, national political institutions.

Indeed, ancient Indian civilization had its own kinds of informal political, legal, and medical institutions, which Gandhi thinks can provide legitimate a roadmap for shaping modern institutions. While modern doctors and lawyers react to illnesses after they are already present and prolong legal disputes so that they can make more money, Gandhi argues, ancient doctors and lawyers were focused on preventing issues and preserving the integrity of the communities where they worked and lived. As a result, Gandhi thinks they were more effective, even if they lacked modern technology. By implementing the same medical and legal principles in a robust national system, Gandhi imagines, India could have strong *and* morally upstanding institutions, which promote health and fairness on the widest possible scale.

Chapter 14 Quotes

❝ If we become free, India is free. And in this thought you have a definition of Swaraj. It is Swaraj when we learn to rule ourselves.

Related Characters: The Editor (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 71

Explanation and Analysis

Throughout *Hind Swaraj*, Gandhi uses the word *Swaraj* to refer to the autonomy of both individuals (as self-rule) and nations (as home-rule). In case his use of the same term weren't clear enough, in this passage, he explicitly makes the connection between the individual and the nation: freeing India also means freeing its people. This isn't just freedom from foreign rule, but rather the active freedom of self-realization—choosing and fulfilling one's own destiny, which comes with self-control and wisdom. Therefore, Gandhi insists that India will only be a truly free, healthy, fair democracy when it can make wise, deliberate, moral decisions. In turn, this will only be possible once all Indians learn to make wise, deliberate, moral decisions. And this becomes the basis of Gandhi's call to action: people have to achieve self-rule before they can meaningfully contribute to the fight for home-rule, and conversely, the most meaningful way they can contribute to the fight for home-rule is precisely by achieving self-rule.

Chapter 15 Quotes

❝ By patriotism I mean the welfare of the whole people, and, if I could secure it at the hands of the English, I should bow down my head to them. If any Englishman dedicated his life to securing the freedom of India, resisting tyranny and serving the land, I should welcome that Englishman as an Indian.

Related Characters: The Editor (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 75

Explanation and Analysis

After completing the comparison between ancient and modern civilization and then explaining why true home-rule requires a return to ancient civilization's values, Gandhi again emphasizes that this doesn't just mean replacing English rulers with Indians. Even if ancient civilization came from India and modern civilization from Europe, this does not mean that Indians automatically align with ancient civilization's values or Europeans with modern civilization's. Rather, because people ultimately choose their actions and values, it's perfectly possible for Indians to choose modern civilization over ancient civilization (according to Gandhi, many do) and it's also possible for Englishmen to choose to live by the tenets of ancient Indian civilization.

This is why Gandhi concludes that Englishmen are welcome to take up ancient civilization and establish a new government on its basis, or even become Indians, if they wish. Building a nation isn't about regulating which people can live in a territory based on linguistic, ethnic, or religious characteristics; rather, Gandhi sees the nation as inherently open-ended. Dedication to the nation and its best interests is the key criterion for joining it, so Gandhi is willing to welcome English freedom fighters as Indians. Such Englishmen are not just honorary Indians; they would truly

be just as Indian as people whose ancestors have lived on the subcontinent for centuries.

Chapter 16 Quotes

❝ Your belief that there is no connection between the means and the end is a great mistake. Through that mistake even men who have been considered religious have committed grievous crimes. Your reasoning is the same as saying that we can get a rose through planting a noxious weed.

Related Characters: The Editor (speaker), The Reader

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 79

Explanation and Analysis

Although Gandhi initially presents his argument against violent revolution in terms of India's history and competing forms of civilization, in this chapter, he explains the fundamental point behind this conclusion: the form that an action takes will always influence the results of that action. In other words, the means shape the ends. This means that a society founded on violence will inevitably perpetuate violence on some level. For instance, the British government's institutions in India were originally created to help the East India Company profit through enslavement, invasion, and robbery, so it's no surprise that the government continues to oppress Indians into the 20th century.

In contrast, Gandhi thinks that if they want to build a just and peaceful country, Indians have to use justice and peace in order to establish it. This means that they have to use passive resistance, rather than launching a violent revolution. Even if force can be justified in some situations, Gandhi asserts, it is never the morally best or most effective strategy. While violence escalates conflicts, especially against institutions that don't care about morality, nonviolence disincentivizes the use of violence and makes it clear that a protest movement is based on principle, not a desire for power. The connection between means and ends also helps explain why Gandhi thinks individuals have to reform themselves (or achieve self-rule) before they can effectively build a democracy (or a home-rule government): only moral people cannot build the foundation of a moral system.

❝ Real rights are a result of performance of duty; these rights they have not obtained. We, therefore, have before us in England the farce of everybody wanting and insisting on his rights, nobody thinking of his duty. And, where everybody wants rights, who shall give them to whom?

Related Characters: The Editor (speaker)

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 79-80

Explanation and Analysis

In addition to arguing that violence will never liberate human societies because the means of action affect the ends (or outcomes) of that action, Gandhi also contends that violence is the wrong solution because it's impossible to take human rights by force. This relies on his concept of moral duties (which he first mentioned in Chapter 13, but does not expand upon at length in this book). Namely, Gandhi argues that one definition of morality is obeying our moral duties to other people. These duties make it possible to live in a harmonious society—in fact, they're the source of our rights. For instance, citizens have a duty or responsibility to respect others' lives and property, and this duty confers on them the right to have their own life and property protected.

Gandhi considers England's political situation a farce because everyone wants the benefits of citizenship, while nobody wants the responsibilities of it. But these are two sides of the same coin: unless citizens take responsibility for one another—or perform their moral duties to each other as members of a shared community—then nobody will have their rights protected in the first place. A violent revolution would look a lot like this farce: people would be attacking each other, which violates their moral duty to respect life, while trying to build a nation that respects their own lives. In Gandhi's view, this is fundamentally hypocritical and misguided. To justify its actions, a government built on a revolution has to believe that violence is sometimes acceptable, but the government also gets to decide when it is acceptable, so in practice it just gives itself license to use violence whenever it wants. Gandhi believes something like this might happen if Indians launch a violent revolution rather than a campaign of nonviolent passive resistance.

Therefore, Gandhi argues that the new government must emerge through people freely consenting to perform their moral duties to their fellow citizens, in exchange for rights to be protected by those fellow citizens. This is what would make India truly democratic, but brute force would create an illegitimate government without the people's consent. Such a country would likely have no democratic principles at

all, but Gandhi's proposal for a passive resistance struggle would build a civic culture that could become the foundation for a vibrant Indian democracy in the future.

Chapter 17 Quotes

❝ History is really a record of every interruption of the even working of the force of love or of the soul. Two brothers quarrel; one of them repents and reawakens the love that was lying dormant in him; the two again begin to live in peace; nobody takes note of this. But, if the two brothers, through the intervention of solicitors or some other reason, take up arms or go to law—which is another form of the exhibition of brute force—their doings would be immediately noticed in the press, they would be the talk of their neighbours, and would probably go down to history. And what is true of families and communities is true of nations. There is no reason to believe that there is one law for families and another for nations. History, then, is a record of an interruption of the course of nature. Soul-force, being natural, is not noted in history.

Related Characters: The Editor (speaker), The Reader

Related Themes:

Page Number: 88

Explanation and Analysis

When Gandhi argues that passive resistance is Indians' only legitimate tactic for establishing a free, just, and democratic society, the character referred to as the reader challenges him by asking for any evidence of its success from history. This is Gandhi's response. But to make sense of his argument, it's essential to understand two principles. First, "passive resistance" is a rough and somewhat misleading translation of the word *satyagraha*, which really means "holding firmly to truth." Secondly, Gandhi thinks that the force of truth is the same as the force of love and that of the human soul. Therefore, *satyagraha* derives its power from what Gandhi calls soul-force, love-force, or truth-force. (The three terms are synonymous.) Essentially, this can be imagined as the force of attraction or magnetism that makes people stick together rather than drifting apart. Soul-force is what holds people together in harmonious and mutually caring relationships, communities, and nations. When conflict pushes people apart, love encourages them to work through their differences and come back together.

In response to the reader's question, Gandhi simply explains that soul-force does not show up in history because people record stories about conflict, not peacetime. When all is well and everyone is happy, there is nothing to recount. History books, epics, and even most novels focus on rupture and change, not continuity and harmony. This is why Gandhi defines history as "a record of an interruption of the course of nature"—it is humanity's archive of its problems, but the solutions to these problems are always motivated by soul-force, or people's fundamental desire to reconcile and restore harmony in the world.

Because their soul-force is strong, the first pair of quarreling brothers never enters into history. But the other brothers escalate their conflict because their love for one another was not strong enough to overcome their self-interest. Indeed, Gandhi points out how modern institutions like the court system make it easier for people to prioritize their self-interest and fight rather than work together—the second pair of brothers enters into history because they lacked the strong sense of love or soul-force that would have maintained a harmonious relationship. Therefore, Gandhi concludes that soul-force's absence from recorded history is actually further proof of its importance, not a strike against it.

❝ Passive resistance is a method of securing rights by personal suffering; it is the reverse of resistance by arms. When I refuse to do a thing that is repugnant to my conscience, I use soul-force. For instance, the government of the day has passed a law which is applicable to me. I do not like it. If, by using violence, I force the government to repeal the law, I am employing what may be termed body-force. If I do not obey the law, and accept the penalty for its breach, I use soul-force. It involves sacrifice of self.

Related Characters: The Editor (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 88-89

Explanation and Analysis

This is how Gandhi defines *satyagraha* (passive resistance or, more precisely, "holding firmly to truth"). It essentially means acting morally, regardless of the consequences. Alternatively, it means following moral laws rather than human ones. Of course, since Gandhi thinks physical force against another is not morally justifiable, this means *satyagraha* must always be nonviolent. In turn, this nonviolent dimension of *satyagraha* is key because it means that passive resisters will always take responsibility for their own moral errors—in case they happen to misunderstand

what is truly moral, they do not harm anyone else in the process. Gandhi views passive resistance as liberating because it allows people to fully live out their moral principles, even when living in an oppressive society that does not recognize morality.

Gandhi envisions this practice of passive resistance as the key tactic in India's fight for independence. In fact, this vision became reality: for decades, thousands of Indians organized themselves, held nonviolent marches and sit-ins, and refused to do business with the English. They were beaten, arrested, and sometimes even killed, but over time their movement gained strength and helped India transition to a democracy.

> But a passive resister will say he will not obey a law that is against his conscience, even though he may be blown to pieces at the mouth of a cannon. What do you think? Wherein is courage required—in blowing others to pieces from behind a cannon or with a smiling face to approach a cannon and to be blown to pieces? Who is the true warrior—he who keeps death always as a bosom-friend or he who controls the death of others? Believe me that a man devoid of courage and manhood can never be a passive resister.

Related Characters: The Editor (speaker), The Reader

Related Themes:

Page Number: 91-92

Explanation and Analysis

In response to the editor's description of passive resistance, the reader complains that it's not powerful or masculine enough: he wants to fight the British to death, not sit passively and suffer while they unjustly attack him. But the editor insists that passive resistance actually requires greater strength and courage, both in body and mind, than fighting a revolution. In fact, he suggests that it takes a coward to harm others because only a coward would be too afraid to see the humanity in their enemies and respect the sanctity of their lives.

In contrast, it's much more difficult to face injury, arrest, or even death in order to defend and spread one's moral principles. Passive resisters have to be patient and confident in the righteousness of their cause, so that they can learn to view their suffering in the present as meaningful as part of the longer struggle. And they have to be physically strong to withstand physical violence—much more than someone who inflicts it, especially from behind the barrel of a gun or cannon. In fact, Gandhi thinks people need to train themselves for passive resistance precisely because it is so difficult.

Chapter 20 Quotes

> What, then, would you say to both the parties?

Related Characters: The Reader (speaker), The Editor

Related Themes:

Page Number: 110

Explanation and Analysis

In the book's concluding chapter, the character called the reader asks this question to the editor character, who represents Gandhi. This question refocuses the conversation on Gandhi's immediate goal in writing *Hind Swaraj*: convincing the extremist and moderate factions of the growing nationalist movement to stop quarreling and come together. He believes that his central proposal—using passive resistance as a strategy for political change—will facilitate this reconciliation. Essentially, moderates and the extremists can cooperate on a passive resistance campaign without having to admit defeat and give in to the other side. It's therefore an ideal compromise for the two warring factions. And it's also the most effective strategy for replacing the oppressive British government with a new and democratic one.

When the reader asks this question, then, he gives Gandhi an opportunity to make his final pitch to the moderates and extremists. Gandhi tells the extremists that a violent revolution will create a violent government, so Indians should instead claim their rights for themselves by learning to identify and fulfill their duties to one another as members of a national community. Then he tells the moderates that India's unrest reflects a real, fundamental problem with the modern civilization that has been imposed on it. The unrest won't go away with reforms because it is the symptom of a real disease.

Gandhi also emphasizes that passive resistance isn't a middle ground between the moderates' and extremists' ideas: it's a totally new third way that moderates and extremists alike can adopt without having to sacrifice key underlying beliefs. Namely, extremists are right to think that Indians must dedicate their lives to an impassioned, courageous campaign for change, and moderates are right to think that this campaign must be nonviolent and ethically

sound in order to be successful.

Notably, Gandhi's desire to bring the moderates and extremists together isn't just a practical consideration. It's also a way of showing the power in soul-force, the desire for harmony and unity that drives people to morally improve themselves and engage in passive resistance. He repeatedly argues that activists have to morally reform themselves before they can morally reform society, and for India's moderate and extremist nationalists, coming together to mount a uniform campaign for independence will be the first sign of their moral fitness to establish a new society.

> 1. Real home-rule is self-rule or self-control.
> 2. The way to it is passive resistance: that is soul-force or love-force.
> 3. In order to exert this force, Swadeshi in every sense is necessary.
> 4. What we want to do should be done, not because we object to the English or that we want to retaliate, but because it is our duty to do so. Thus, supposing that the English remove the salt-tax, restore our money, give the highest posts to Indians, withdraw the English troops, we shall certainly not use their machine-made goods, nor use the English language, nor many of their industries. It is worth noting that these things are, in their nature, harmful; hence we do not want them. I bear no enmity towards the English, but I do towards their civilisation.

Related Characters: The Editor (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 116-117

Explanation and Analysis

At the very end of *Hind Swaraj*, Gandhi briefly summarizes the central arguments of his book. This makes it plain to see how his different concepts fit together into a total philosophy of human life and politics.

Gandhi's first rule speaks to the inherent connection between the two forms of *Swaraj*: individuals' self-rule (or self-control) and a nation's home-rule. He sees them as one and the same because he believes an individual governs themselves in much the same way as a nation: by making wise, informed, and patient decisions that help them (or their populations) fulfill the fundamental bodily and spiritual goals in life. In Gandhi's view, moral transformation on an individual level is both a prerequisite and a model for social transformation. Gandhi's second rule links this transformation to *satyagraha*, or the practice of passive resistance, which is how the masses can morally discipline the nation as a whole. Indeed, passive resistance isn't just a means to home-rule: it's also a way for people to become stronger and more courageous, discipline themselves, and work towards self-rule.

Gandhi's third rule speaks to the concept of *Swadeshi*, which he seldom discusses elsewhere in this book, but which was the basis of the powerful and prominent nationalist movement that formed in response to the Partition of Bengal and endured from 1906 to 1911. *Swadeshi* means "of one's own country," and the movement encouraged Indians to boycott and burn British goods, while only buying goods made in India. Even after this movement dissolved, *Swadeshi* became a central concept in Gandhi's much larger and longer nationalist movement. In particular, Gandhi saw *Swadeshi* as a powerful form of passive resistance to economic exploitation, which was Britain's primary motive for being in India. By refusing to participate in the globalized economy of the British Empire, Indians made it less and less profitable for Britain to stay in India, as well as building a sense of national identity and living more sustainably.

Gandhi's final rule is, in many ways, his most important: he reminds Indians that they must act out of duty and remain committed to morality, rather than acting out of emotions or using brute force. Acting in passion or for revenge is dangerous because, as Gandhi points out, the English could easily make some concessions and manipulate Indians into turning back against the cause of independence. In order to win full independence, Gandhi reiterates, Indians have to demand full independence on moral grounds and clearly identify their enemy: modern civilization (which does not mean all English people).

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

PREFACE

Gandhi writes that his English translation of *Hind Swaraj* is imperfect but mostly preserves his intended meaning. When the British seized all copies of the original Gujarati version, he rushed to get the English edition printed and distributed. Still, the dialogue format that Gandhi chose is much more natural in Gujarati than in English.

Although Gandhi translated the book himself, it's important to note that this English version of Hind Swaraj *is still derivative of the Gujarati original. Gandhi's decision to write in his native Gujarati reflects his belief that Indians should promote and prioritize their native languages. However, his willingness to publish a translation in English reflects his insistence that Indians should be willing to use English to communicate when it's necessary or advantageous—especially when communicating across linguistic boundaries or speaking directly to the English (including English pro-independence activists). The English government's decision to ban Gandhi's original text shows how threatened they felt by his revolutionary ideology, but in fact this ultimately only gave him a higher profile and helped him gain a wider following.*

Gandhi explains that his thinking is influenced by "Tolstoy, Ruskin, Thoreau, Emerson," and "the masters of Indian philosophy." But the British Government has seized his book because he defends truth, morality, and the ancient Indian civilization that Britain wants to crush with its modern civilization. But where others call for violence, Gandhi insists on nonviolence. His perspective is influenced by his participation in the Transvaal Passive Resistance campaign in South Africa. But he is publishing independently so that the British do not persecute other South African activists over his work.

While Gandhi is opposed to modern civilization, he does not oppose everything *English or European—on the contrary, he thinks that European writers and activists have plenty of valuable ideas that can contribute to the struggle for Indian independence. Besides helping him form his philosophy, Gandhi's work in South Africa shows how he views India's independence struggle as linked with those of other colonized peoples and nations around the world.*


FOREWORD

After going to London as part of the Indian delegation to represent the South African Transvaal Passive Resistance struggle, Gandhi decided to write this book in order to help curious Indian readers think about India's colonial status. He explains that, while he intensely believes in the views he presents in this book, they are not wholly original, but rather based on his own extensive reading. He emphasizes that thousands of people, both Indian and European, have expressed these same views. He asks his readers to send him constructive criticism, because his only true goal is to discover and follow the Truth.

By emphasizing his debt to other thinkers and activists, Gandhi further bolsters his belief that the fight for independence has to be a collaborative and bottom-up movement: it has to start with people reflecting on society and choosing to join the fight for justice. To fight an oppressive government and create a free society, the independence movement must be based on participants' free choice, not coercive force. This is why Gandhi emphasizes that he is seeking the truth, even if this eventually requires him to repudiate some of the arguments he presents here. He wants to help guide people towards truth, not *to make them blindly follow his teachings. In fact, he doesn't want them to view him as a genius or original thinker—rather, he wants them to investigate things for themselves. This makes it clear that he views publishing this book as part of* satyagraha*—which literally means "holding onto truth"—in order to create popular movement that establishes a more just society.*

CHAPTER 1: THE CONGRESS AND ITS OFFICIALS

The reader asks the editor what he thinks about the call for Indian home-rule. The editor replies that this question involves all three of his goals as a newspaper editor: to express, change, and critique popular sentiment. He explains that the Indian National Congress formed out of a desire for home-rule, but the reader points out that a group of London activists who call themselves the Young India Party view the Congress as a puppet for the British. The editor replies that the Congress's founders, both Indian and English, dedicated their lives to the cause of home-rule. But the reader angrily replies that this is irrelevant—especially the part about Englishmen.

*Literate Indians would have been generally familiar with the debate around home-rule (*Swaraj*) in 1909, which is why Gandhi can jump straight in. While the reader tries to fight and discredit the moderates who disagree with him, the editor (who represents Gandhi) focuses on uniting the dissenting sides by helping the reader see the moderates' important contributions to the struggle for independence. Just like Gandhi emphasizes his own debt to earlier thinkers in the Foreword, he wants his readers to see that the Independence Movement is an inclusive movement fighting to create an equally inclusive India. Most importantly, he wants them to see that not all Englishmen are automatic enemies to the independence struggle, and not all Indians are its automatic allies. Gandhi's comment on the role of newspapers shows how he thinks certain English institutions can still play an important role in Indian society—although he later argues that newspapers will eventually become obsolete in India. Finally, Gandhi specifically addresses the views of the Young India Party because one of its members, an activist named Madan Lal Dhingra, had just assassinated a prominent English official a few months before in London. In fact, the Young India Party turned out to be a short-lived and loosely organized group rather than a real political party, and its members are now more closely associated with India House (the residence where most of them lived).*

The editor suggests that the reader may lack the patience and maturity necessary to properly rule himself as an individual. In fact, he argues, Indians should respect the Congress's founders. These include the influential scholar and statesman Dadabhai Naoroji, who seriously advanced the idea of home-rule (Swaraj), even though he was working for the English government. Persuaded, the reader asks about Professor Gokhale, who thinks that Indians can learn from British politics. But the editor also thinks that Gokhale is a respectable authority. This doesn't mean people should blindly agree with everything he says, but they should be able to respect his dedication and wisdom even when they disagree.

Gandhi begins with a discussion of the reader's personal qualities in order to foreshadow his idea that individuals have to first achieve control over themselves (self-rule, or Swaraj*) in order to effectively fight in the independence struggle and achieve home-rule (which is also called* Swaraj*) for India. Most importantly, he thinks activists need to tolerate disagreement and work together despite their differences in order to achieve any meaningful change. This is why Gandhi emphasizes the importance of respecting authority but never blindly following it: the independence movement should guide itself by truth and a common goal, not an absolute commitment to a charismatic leader or specific set of beliefs.*

The reader doesn't understand why the editor defends some English writers and statesmen, like A. O. Hume and Sir William Wedderburn. But the editor points out that not all Englishmen are inherently evil. Many, like these two men, are on India's side. And Indians should accept their help. The reader doesn't understand and admits that he's already prejudiced against the editor's views, but the editor knows that it's his duty to convince the reader.

Here, Gandhi is careful to separate the English people *from the English* government. *By wrongly viewing the struggle for independence as a fight against the English people, Indians not only alienate possible allies, but also play into the harmful us-versus-them politics that the English government has used to divide Indians and prevent them from working together. Instead, Gandhi thinks that people should decide for themselves which side they are on—anyone can fight for or against independence, whether they're Indian or English.*

The reader asks how the Congress created the foundation for home-rule. The editor explains that the Congress brought all different kinds of Indians together and developed the idea of a truly unified, independent, self-governing Indian nation. The home-rule movement is an attempt to fulfill the Congress's vision.

Again, Gandhi envisions India as a nation founded on inclusiveness and diversity. While many Indians seek sovereignty for their particular religious, linguistic, or ethnic group, Gandhi thinks that the nation should be a completely separate and independent source of identity. This would help Indians work together rather than fight over resources.

CHAPTER 2: THE PARTITION OF BENGAL

The reader asks what sparked the existing home-rule movement, and the editor replies that it was the Partition of Bengal, which the English split up by religion in 1905. Indian leaders began demanding a reunited Bengal and starting to conceive of India as a single united nation. Realizing that they have to organize and demand change from the government, Indians began forming the *Swadeshi* movement for independence. Protest is grueling and difficult, often requiring self-sacrifice, but Indians are learning to confront the British with courage. Indeed, the nationalist spirit is spreading fast, all over India. However, the Congress is also growing divided between moderate and extremist groups.

The backlash to the Partition of Bengal is significant because it suggests that Indians agree with Gandhi's perception that they're a single nation who should govern themselves through a unified democratic system. The spread of nationalist sentiment also shows how protest movements naturally build momentum over time: the more the government represses the people, the more people recognize this and join the movement for independence. However, the Congress's divisions threaten to erode this growing momentum, and this is why Gandhi intervenes in the conversation to propose structuring the independence movement around passive resistance.

CHAPTER 3: DISCONTENT AND UNREST

The reader asks if the editor condones the unrest that followed the Partition of Bengal. The editor compares the awakening now occurring in India to someone waking up from sleep: they will stretch and shake their limbs so that they can fully wake up. The current unrest is an expression of Indians' discontent with English rule, and it will continue as long as that discontent does.

Gandhi emphasizes that civic unrest is a symptom of the underlying problem—English rule—and not the problem itself. The unrest will only end when Indians are able to fully wake up, or build the independent democracy they've finally realized they ought to have. Notably, although the reader previously voiced more extreme opinions and called for an armed rebellion, here he represents the moderates' view by asking about popular unrest. This shows how Gandhi uses the reader as a stand-in for all the possible questions his audience might have, no matter what their political affiliation.

CHAPTER 4: WHAT IS SWARAJ?

The reader and editor discuss Swaraj, which people define in various ways. The editor asks if the reader thinks of Swaraj as just "driv[ing] the English out of India," and the reader says yes: the English should leave and hand over the government to Indians. The reason is obvious: England steals India's money and resources, while enslaving its people and treating them like animals. The editor asks what would happen if the English stopped being so vicious, but the reader says they never will.

The reader and editor agree that English rule is brutal and unsustainable. However, while the reader focuses entirely on the problem, the editor is thinking about solutions. By pointing out that the problem is England's viciousness, *not its mere presence in India, he signals to the reader that a deeper transformation in Indian life is necessary, as opposed to just a change of leadership. He also suggests that people—even the English—are capable of change. This is central to Gandhi's political vision because he argues that people must morally transform themselves in order to effectively join the fight for independence and become responsible citizens.*

Next, the editor asks whether India should follow after Canada or South Africa, but the reader says this doesn't matter: India just needs a strong army. The editor concludes that the reader is asking for "English rule without the Englishman." Actually, the reader replies, Indians *should* copy England, which is strong and self-reliant. The editor explains that he definitely disagrees but needs some time to fully explain his view of Swaraj.

The editor points out the reader's hypocrisy: even though the reader hates the English and wants them out of India, he has internalized English ideas about how a government should be run. Clearly, the editor thinks that the principles behind government are what makes it effective or ineffective, not the people who run the government. Therefore, if Indians try to be just like the English, they will just reproduce the same problems they already suffer.

CHAPTER 5: THE CONDITION OF ENGLAND

The editor argues that India shouldn't copy England, which is in a pitiable state. Its Parliament is "like a sterile woman and a prostitute." Like a sterile woman, it doesn't produce anything. While parliamentarians should follow public pressure in theory, in reality, they act out of self-interest and don't follow through on their promises. They vote based on party, not reason, and it's always been this way. The Parliament is like a prostitute because it constantly changes its allegiances and aims. Its Prime Ministers are dishonest and bribe others with power and status.

Gandhi has been often criticized for these misogynistic metaphors, and later in his life he explicitly apologized for the degrading language he used in this passage. Metaphors aside, Gandhi's critique of the English government—that it is corrupt, inconsistent, and ineffective—speaks to why he thinks Indians shouldn't follow the English model of government. This model rewards politicians by helping them accumulate money and power, and it is top-down, unlike the bottom-up participatory democracy he envisions for India. While England might pretend to be a democracy, in Gandhi's view, the English government abuses the English people almost like it does the Indian people. In fact, this also explains why Gandhi doesn't blame ordinary English people for the outlandish crimes their government has committed in India: he knows that officials were acting for their own self-interest, not at the people's behest.

The reader asks what the editor thinks of the English *people*. The editor replies that they read newspapers religiously, but these newspapers are politically biased and dishonest, so public opinion constantly goes back and forth between opposing parties. The English people's main virtue is that they'd never let anyone conquer them. But otherwise, England is not worth emulating—if it did try to emulate England, India would ruin itself. The editor blames England's failures on modern civilization.

Gandhi writes Hind Swaraj *as a dialogue between a newspaper editor and reader in part because he believes it's essential for the public to be informed about the political affairs that affect their lives. But this passage shows that he is also well aware of the way that popular media can distort public opinion and make democracies less effective. On another note, Gandhi does not stop at blaming the English for looting India—he is interested in the root causes behind England's viciousness, because he fears that India might fall victim to the same structural and cultural issues. This is why he identifies modern civilization as the root cause behind England's problems.*

CHAPTER 6: CIVILIZATION

The reader asks the editor about civilization. The editor points out that even many English writers see the barbaric qualities in their civilization, even if most people instinctively defend it. The defining feature of industrial or modern civilization is that it sees "bodily welfare" as the main goal in life. Europeans constantly try to build better houses, clothes, weapons, and technology than before. Now, they have steam-engines, printing presses, and airplanes. And in the future, machines might even make the human body obsolete: people could just press a button and have all their needs met.

When Gandhi talks about civilization, he's primarily referring to a society's way of life, which is rooted in its fundamental values. Therefore, he thinks the people must transform their values in order to build a better kind of civilization. Notably, he is not against all technology or any pursuit of "bodily welfare"—rather, he rejects England's insistence on valuing material pursuits at the expense of spiritual ones. In other words, he's concerned about the balance among different values.

But modern civilization's technology also enslaves people: the wealthy now force everyone else to work for them in factories and mines. And the more technologies and luxury goods people have, the more they *want*. Meanwhile, civilization rejects religion and ignores morality. Ultimately, civilization has made Europeans isolated, exhausted, and miserable. But the editor believes that they can cure it.

Gandhi's critique of modern civilization is essentially a critique of capitalism: when Indians choose to enter the global economy and work for wages (rather than continuing to live self-sufficiently in small agricultural communities), they soon become dependent *on this economy for work. Similarly, there is no purpose in accumulating wealth and technology, which are frivolous distractions rather than meaningful goals for human life.*

CHAPTER 7: WHY WAS INDIA LOST?

If the English have been afflicted by the disease of civilization, the reader asks, how did they manage to conquer and rule India? The editor explains that, actually, Indians gave India to the English. They agreed to trade with the East India Company and fought for its support in their own internal conflicts. And while the Indians continue to do so, the English retain power. Indeed, the English only care about commerce—they worship money like a God and will do anything for it.

For Gandhi, Indians collaborated with the British for the same reason as the British came to India: greed for wealth and power, coupled with a lack of compassion for other people. When he blames Indians for inviting the British in, he's actually suggesting that, if Indians have the power to accept modern civilization, they also have the power to reject it. In fact, achieving true independence is also within their power: it requires them to actively choose the better, more balanced form of civilization that Gandhi will soon describe.

CHAPTER 8: THE CONDITION OF INDIA

When the reader asks about India's condition, the editor admits that it saddens and exhausts him. India is suffering from all the vices of modern civilization. Worst of all, Indians are rejecting religion—not any particular religion, but the common beliefs that underlie all Indian religion. While Indian religion collectively preaches a life of worldly humility and spiritual ambition, civilization preaches the opposite.

Although he was a Hindu, Gandhi is careful not to declare any single religious doctrine truer than or superior to any other. Rather, by emphasizing the common values that underlie all religions, Gandhi encourages his readers to think of themselves as united across religious lines, not divided by them. Of course, the common feature he sees in all Indian religions is a proper balance between material and spiritual goals. (In contrast, he thinks that modern civilization focuses on the material to the expense of the spiritual.) This means that Indian religions can be the foundation for a more just and humane society—but also that such a society should not prioritize any of these religious groups' beliefs over the others'.

The reader has some doubts about the editor's argument. He suggests that tricksters use similar arguments to defraud people, but the editor points out that fraudsters will distort *any* teachings and are much more common among defenders of modern civilization. The reader notes that religious conflicts kill many people. The editor replies that true religion would actually reject such conflict, even when mistakenly waged in its name. Meanwhile, civilization actively fosters conflict in order to spread itself.

The editor continues to insist on differentiating between the hatred and division that pass for religion from the love and solidarity he associates with true religion. This allows him to point Indians toward areas of agreement—like their shared spiritual values—and help them form a common identity, on which they can in turn base an Indian democracy. Moreover, by explicitly disavowing the teachings of dishonest teachers and clerics, he reminds his readers that they are ultimately responsible for their own beliefs. They have the power to reject immoral authority and choose to uphold morality instead—which is actually his definition of passive resistance. The obvious way for Gandhi to choose morality over blind obedience to authority is to join the independence movement.

The reader next asks about the *Pax Britannica*, or the idea that British power has brought peace to the world, but the editor says he doesn't see any world peace. The reader argues that the English have pacified various groups of Indian thieves and bandits (the Thugs, Pindaris, and Bhils). But the editor says that these groups were not very dangerous, and the English are turning others into unmanly cowards by suggesting that they need protection. Plus, these bandit groups are Indians, too, and other Indians should win them over through persuasion in a democratic system.

With this set of questions, the reader recites many of the outlandish and contradictory stories that the English used to rationalize their plunder in India. They are all based on the dehumanizing idea that Indians—and other non-Europeans—are incapable of defending themselves and thus need to be protected and civilized by Europeans. Of course, Gandhi's critique of English colonialism is a direct response to this idea: he argues that "modern civilization" was the worst thing to ever happen to India, not a benevolent gift from Europe.

CHAPTER 9: THE CONDITION OF INDIA (CONT.): RAILWAYS

The reader explains that the editor is starting to convince him, and the editor replies that he has much more evidence to present. Modern civilization is like a hidden disease, whose dangers aren't clear until it's too late. In fact, the railways literally spread disease around India. They also lead people to sell their grain to centralized markets, which creates famines. And they help bandits and scammers reach pilgrimage sites, where they rip off true pilgrims. The reader suggests that the railways also help good people travel, but the editor replies that good always spreads more slowly than evil, just as building a house takes longer than destroying one.

Gandhi first criticizes the railways because they are often cited as a great English contribution to India and used to excuse centuries of slavery and theft. In reality, Gandhi points out, the English created railways to transport material resources out *of India, and this disrupted the self-sufficient, sustainable local economies that used to exist all around India. The railways did create new markets, but this is exactly why they are reprehensible. For instance, the centralization of grain markets created vicious famines that killed tens of millions throughout the 19th century.*

Next, the reader suggests that the railways are helping nationalism spread, but the editor believes that Indians actually thought of themselves as one nation until the English took over. India's diverse people intermingled and made pilgrimages across the whole subcontinent, which they viewed as one unified land. The railways led them to see their *differences*, not their unity. The reader is intrigued but asks how the editor accounts for religious differences, especially between Hindus and Mahomedans (Muslims).

Gandhi's idea that Indians are inherently unified as a result of some primordial shared past, is controversial and difficult to prove or disprove historically. But it's easy to see how it makes it easier for Indians to view themselves as a unified nation moving forwards, as they fight for independence. When he argues that the railways have turned pilgrimages from a source of unity to a source of division, he appears to be specifically blaming their speed, which allows people to view others superficially in passing, rather than really interact with them and appreciate their shared humanity.

CHAPTER 10: THE CONDITION OF INDIA (CONT.): THE HINDUS AND THE MAHOMEDANS

The editor repeats that railways, lawyers, and doctors are responsible for India's corruption. By God's design, he argues, people can naturally only travel by walking. By creating transportation technologies like railways, people abuse their intelligence and forget God. As they travel, they encounter others with different religious beliefs and come into conflict.

When Gandhi portrays technology as an affront against God, what he really means is that it leads people to forget their spiritual needs and lose touch with their own humanity. In particular, by becoming too obsessed with technology and bodily needs, they risk forgetting the inner unity of all people and religions. This is why they may begin to see other religious groups as threatening outsiders, rather than moral and political equals. In turn, Gandhi clearly thinks that such technology has made it easier and easier for Indians to forget their unified national identity.

The reader argues that Mahomedan (Muslim) invaders and rulers destroyed India's previous national unity. But the editor disagrees: foreigners have always assimilated into India throughout the ages. Now, Muslims are Indians. Nationality and religion are separate: Indians must respect each other's religious beliefs. India is not a Hindu nation, and anyone who thinks it is cannot truly be Indian. The reader thinks there's an "inborn enmity" dividing Hindus and Muslims, but the editor says this is a myth: Hindus and Muslims lived together peacefully for centuries, until the English divided them in order to conquer India. Hindus and Muslims are related, both by blood and because they ultimately worship the same God.

Animosity between Hindus and Muslims was growing in the early 1900s, so it was essential for Gandhi to explicitly say that Hindus and Muslims are equal in every way, and that Indian identity is not *the same as Hindu identity. Where the reader sees an unchangeable "inborn enmity"—which would imply that Hindus and Muslims can't live together harmoniously or belong to the same nation—the editor insists that this enmity is the temporary product of historical factors. This means that people can overcome it, if they commit themselves to doing so—and, in fact, Gandhi thinks the formation of an independent and unified India is the most important step towards reconciliation. Unfortunately, these wishes have not been fulfilled.*

The reader asks about cow protection, or Hindu-led activism to prevent the slaughter of cows. The editor explains that, while he respects cows, he also respects other people. Killing a person to save a cow is just as evil as killing a cow in the first place. To stop cow-killing, people must use persuasion, not violence. If persuasion fails, people can sacrifice *themselves* to save cows, but never kill *another person*.

Although he was a militant vegetarian, Gandhi insists on seeing the value in both cows' and humans' lives. In other words, he does not think that a person's life ceases to be valuable becuase they commit a crime. Here, he is introducing an idea that eventually comes to play an important role in his theory of satyagraha, *or passive resistance: vengeance is never morally acceptable because it leads to a downward spiral of resentment and violence. Just like passive resistance is the solution to English tyranny, persuasion and self-sacrifice are the proper solutions to violence against animals.*

The editor strongly rejects the communal politics around cow-killing. Hindu cow-protection groups encourage social division, which actually leads to *more* cow-killing. Plus, many Hindus also badly mistreat cows. Some argue that Hindus follow *Ahinsa* (nonviolence), while Muslims don't. But this is a myth. For instance, some Hindus attack Muslims, and many Hindus eat meat. In reality, "selfish and false" religious leaders use this idea to divide people. So do the English, who foolishly pretend to know everything about other groups of people. Anyone who actually reads Hindu and Muslim scripture would see that the groups agree on most things.

By logically showing that nonviolence is the best way to maintain nonviolence and preserve life, Gandhi makes it clear that many cow-protection groups are acting out of spite, and just using moral principles as an excuse to commit violence and persecute Muslims. In reality, they are violating morality, or following a "selfish and false" distortion of it. This hypocrisy supports Gandhi's belief that people have to morally improve themselves before they can call upon others to do the same.

The reader asks if the English will ever let Hindus and Muslims get along, but the editor argues that Hindus and Muslims are *themselves* responsible for letting the English foster divisions. As the majority, Hindus have more power to heal divisions. After all, Muslims only want separate political institutions because the Hindus and the English are trampling on their rights. In reality, Hindus only stand to gain by treating Muslims fairly. Like foolish brothers, the two groups constantly fight, when they would accomplish much more by working together.

While the English might have largely caused India's religious divisions (like its economic and religious problems), Gandhi emphasizes, Indians have to take collective responsibility themselves for becoming corrupt and failing to improve the situation. When he insists that the English must force Hindus and Muslims to get along, the reader is really denying Indians' own power to change the situation. By comparing Hindus and Muslims to brothers, Gandhi again reinforces the idea that Indians are inherently a unified nation that has temporarily forgotten its unity.

CHAPTER 11: THE CONDITION OF INDIA (CONT.): LAWYERS

The reader is surprised to hear the editor say that quarreling parties should settle their differences by themselves, not in court. The editor accuses lawyers of supporting the English and worsening communal divisions. But the reader points out that lawyers have fought for independence, defended the poor, and supported the Indian National Congress. The editor agrees that many lawyers have done good, but argues that this is not *because* they are lawyers.

Gandhi's criticism of lawyers is all the more striking because he was a lawyer himself. However, he separates his criticism of the profession from his firm belief that everybody can freely choose to act morally. Accordingly, even though the legal profession inhumanely pits lawyers' self-interest against the self-interest of the community as a whole, lawyers can still choose to go against the grain and use their positions of power for good.

Generally, the editor argues, lawyers profit by making arguments longer and more vicious. Even though they don't benefit society, they charge ridiculous fees, which the poor can't afford. Lawyers have worsened Hindu-Muslim disputes and secured English domination in India. Now, Indians shamefully pay courts to resolve their problems, rather than doing it themselves. But without lawyers, there are no courts, and without courts, there is no English rule in India. If people shamed lawyers like they do prostitutes, then India would instantly become free.

Although he opposes the court system, Gandhi does not believe in lawlessness: rather, he believes that villages and similar small communities naturally govern themselves, but political institutions like the courts have usurped this power. As people increasingly rely on such institutions to hold one another accountable, his reasoning continues, they lose the ability to control and govern themselves. Of course, this ability is the same as self-rule, which Gandhi considers as the foundation of a truly independent political community.

CHAPTER 12: THE CONDITION OF INDIA (CONT.): DOCTORS

The reader asks why the editor also blames doctors for corrupting India. Noting that Western writers have strongly influenced his view, the editor compares modern civilization to the toxic **Upas tree**, which poisons everything around it. The tree's branches represent "parasitical professions" like medicine and law, "the axe of true religion" can cut it down, and its root is immorality.

Gandhi's metaphor of the Upas tree points to how he sees India's impoverishment, communal divisions, loss of sovereignty, and moral values as all inherently connected. Essentially, he sees people's values and way of life—or their civilization—as the key determiner of how their society functions. He therefore sees problems with the medical and legal professions as symptoms of a deeper, moral problem. In this way, he again suggests that cultural and moral reform are the only way to save India.

The editor admits that he used to admire doctors and even want to be one. But now he sees that the English use medicine to oppress India. Doctors treat diseases but not their real cause, which is usually "negligence or indulgence." They give people medicine that cures them, and this encourages people to repeat their sinful behaviors. Doctors therefore heal the body but weaken the mind. European doctors constantly vivisect animals to test their theories, and the medicines they prescribe often contain animal products banned by Hindu and Muslim law. Now, people become doctors to get rich, not to serve others.

Ultimately, Gandhi's critique of doctors parallels his critique of lawyers: they have a financial incentive to create problems, rather than preventing them. While his criticism of specific medical treatments might no longer seem reasonable in the 21sta century, his driving belief is that people should fight "negligence [and] indulgence" rather than popping pills. Specifically, he thinks this is part of modern civilization's dangerous tendency: it further indulges the body while overlooking the mind. Accordingly, Gandhi isn't arguing for a world without doctors: rather, he's arguing that an effective medical system should prioritize prevention and behavior change, not reactive treatment to preventable illnesses.

CHAPTER 13: WHAT IS TRUE CIVILISATION?

Since that the editor rejects modern civilization, the reader asks what true civilization means. The editor replies that Indian civilization is special because Indians keep their ancient values alive. He defines true civilization as "that mode of conduct which points out to man the path of duty." Performing duty, or acting morally, means mastering the mind and passions, which gives people self-knowledge. This means that, to be happy, people don't need to keep expanding their minds and material possessions: rather, they need to better focus them. Happiness is purely about the mind, which luxury and indulgence corrupt.

Gandhi identifies a certain set of values with ancient civilization in order to bolster his argument for the inherent unity of India as a nation. While Gandhi has argued that modern civilization wrongly prioritizes bodily goods over mental ones, he clearly thinks that India's ancient civilization strikes a proper balance between them. If happiness comes from the mind and not the body, as he argues here, then it's clear that ancient civilization provides a surer path to happiness—not to mention morality. Just as Gandhi views individual morality as based on self-control and responsibility, he views the morality of a nation—or the quality of its government—as based on its capacity to regulate itself and make wise decisions.

Indians have peacefully lived the same lifestyle for thousands of years; they never needed machinery, big cities, or powerful rulers. In the past, there were doctors and lawyers, but they were not allowed to rob people blind. In other words, India used to have true home-rule (and still does, in some remote villages). The reader points out that ancient Indian culture is full of violent traditions like child marriage, ritualized prostitution, and animal sacrifice. But the editor replies that these evil practices are not part of the civilization he's defending. No civilization is perfect, he concludes, but Indian civilization is *generally* superior to Western civilization because it cultivates the soul instead of the body.

Although Gandhi thinks Indians should establish an independent and sovereign government, he does not think that this is the only (or even the best) path to achieving genuine home-rule. In fact, he thinks India will be returning *to home-rule by building an independent government, not achieving it for the first time. While he lauds the greatness of the past, he does not pretend that it will be possible to totally return to it. Indeed, he carefully takes a stand against idealizing that past, which he considers valuable for its emphasis on humility, community, and spirituality, not its rigid social hierarchies and oppression of women.*

CHAPTER 14: HOW CAN INDIA BECOME FREE?

The editor says that freeing India requires removing the root cause of its slavery: modern civilization. If Indians can achieve Swaraj (self-rule) then India as a whole will overcome its slavery and achieve Swaraj (self-rule for the nation, or home-rule). People can educate others about Swaraj, but ultimately everyone has to achieve it individually. Swaraj doesn't require expelling the English, who can be Indianized instead. The reader still thinks this is impossible and wants to remove the English with force. He suggests imitating the Italian revolutionaries Garibaldi and Mazzini.

Having defined and critiqued modern civilization, Gandhi returns to the book's central question: what is real Swaraj, *and what does achieving it require? Rather than focusing on who holds power (like the reader and the extremists in the Congress), he focuses on the question of how those people wield their power. He makes it clear that* Swaraj *for the nation—which is translated into English as "home-rule"—is really just an expanded version of* Swaraj *for individuals, which is translated in this book as "self-rule." Just as an individual must learn to control their emotions, make wise decisions, and balance their bodily and spiritual needs in order to live a happy life, to be truly independent and sovereign, the nation has to control its passionate quarreling factions, enact wise policies, and fulfill both the bodily and spiritual needs of its people. Accordingly, Gandhi believes that moral reform will bring Indian people to self-rule and thereby create home-rule for the nation as a whole (which is just the aggregate of its individuals and communities).*

CHAPTER 15: ITALY AND INDIA

The editor looks at the reader's example of Garibaldi and Mazzini from Italy. The editor praises Mazzini for calling on individuals to morally improve and rule themselves, and he praises Garibaldi for leading a successful war for independence. But Italy is now run by a small elite, and the people have not achieved the freedom Mazzini hoped for. In fact, Italians' lives have barely improved at all. This underlines why Indians must achieve true self-rule or Swaraj, rather than simply replacing the English government with tyrannical Indian princes.

The 19th-century Italian revolutionaries Giuseppe Garibaldi and Giuseppe Mazzini might be obscure references to contemporary readers, but they were an important reference for Indian nationalists, so Gandhi's audience would have been very familiar with them. While Mazzini was primarily a theorist and argued that Italians had to reform themselves in order to build a functioning and free society, Garibaldi was a military leader who primarily cared about seizing control of the government. Therefore, Mazzini's approach was similar to Gandhi's, while Garibaldi's was similar to the reader's. Again, Gandhi argues that switching out rulers is meaningless until the entire political system is reformed from the bottom up.

Moreover, the editor points out that Indians aren't armed, so can't fight a war. The reader suggests a few armed men can assassinate English officials and fight a guerrilla war, but the editor thinks this is suicidal: it would mean giving ruthless assassins control over the government. While some assassinations have led to reforms, the editor suggests that the English will undo them as soon as their fear passes.

Although the editor's arguments against an armed rebellion are primarily ethical and theoretical, here he points out one very practical limit that would make war a poor political choice. The reader's proposal is also significant because many Young India Party (or India House) activists in London were agitating for this kind of guerrilla war. But Gandhi reminds the reader that whoever fights the revolution then takes over the government. To establish a democratic and self-governing nation, he implies, the people must lead the revolution.

CHAPTER 16: BRUTE FORCE

The editor argues that force is an ineffective strategy to prevent evildoing because people do evil again as soon as the threat of force disappears. But the reader replies that the English have obviously been successful with brute force, so Indians should use it, too. He gives three examples of when force seems appropriate: a homeowner can kick a thief out of their house, people can use force in politics when the government ignores their petitions, and a parent should forcibly prevent their child from stepping into a fire. Before responding to these examples, the editor argues that there's always a connection between means and ends, so force cannot lead to liberation. Moreover, we can't take human rights by force because true human rights come from performing our duties to others.

Although he has already made specific arguments against launching a violent revolution, now, Gandhi makes the same argument on the level of universal principle: he thinks force and revenge are never *justifiable ways for activists to get what they want. Because the ends follow the means, if they want freedom, justice, and equality, activists have to achieve them with free, just, and equal means. Again, this returns to the connection between the two forms of Swaraj: (individual) self-rule and (national) home-rule. Gandhi argues that people and countries can only truly rule themselves if they actively fulfill their moral duties, which has to be a free choice. Therefore, no country can be forced into self-rule—people and nations have to freely choose self-rule. The reader's examples all point to situations in which people feel justified in using force after* someone else *has violated their moral duties. However, Gandhi thinks that this use of force will never right the wrong that was committed, precisely because he thinks nobody can force anyone else to act morally.*

The editor now responds to the reader's three examples. First, it is *not always* justified for someone to kick a thief out of their home by force. For instance, force is inappropriate if the thief is one's father, or a heavily armed stranger. By retaliating against the robber with force, the victim invites further violence, which would ruin their own peace and happiness. Instead, the victim should consider the robber's motives, take pity on them, and try to reason with them. This could even mean leaving one's things out in the open to advertise their generosity to the robber and help him quit his antisocial habits. This illustrates the principle that the means determine the results. The editor concludes that pity and love are stronger than brute physical force.

The case of a homeowner responding to a thief is a clear metaphor for Indians responding to British colonialism. By pointing out that the homeowner's course of action should depend on his relationship to the robber, Gandhi reminds the reader that people's moral duties to one another as humans are far more important than any duties we may have to our property. In fact, by empathizing with the robber and trying to change their ways—rather than taking things personally and lashing out—the homeowner is fulfilling his own moral duty towards the robber. In other words, the homeowner sees humanity in the robber and views the robbery as an opportunity to do good, not an excuse for doing evil.

The editor next looks at the reader's second example: petitioning for social change. Petitions can serve to educate others or announce a group's understanding of their situation. But the reader is right that, to create change, some kind of force must back a petition. But brute force is a much weaker option than passive resistance—which means refusing to follow the government's orders or recognize it as legitimate.

Gandhi finally introduces the concept of passive resistance, or satyagraha, *which he sees as the only effective and ethical way to confront injustice. If the example of the robber and the homeowner stood in for the extremist activists' plan for a revolution, this example stands in for the moderate activists' plan to ask the English government to change. Because the government is clearly not ruling morally, it will not respond to citizens' moral pleas. But since the citizens want to build a new, moral society, they cannot use the same tools as the existing government. Rather, the only solution is for them to start living morally and give other Indians the opportunity to join them.*

Finally, the editor considers the reader's third example, of a child who steps into a fire. If the child is too physically strong for the parent to stop them, then the child will inevitably die in the fire. But if the parent can forcibly stop the child, then this does not count as true physical force, because it is done solely for the child's own benefit—the parent is resisting evil, not using force to advance their own interests. In contrast, if Indians use force against the English, they would do so because of their own national interest, not because of love or pity for the English.

Even if his views are often portrayed otherwise, Gandhi emphatically agrees that it's legitimate to use force to stop greater violence—which includes necessary self-defense. In this situation, the parent is decreasing the overall amount of violence by saving their child from the fire, even if this requires using a small amount of force. So passive resistance in no way means non-interference: on the contrary, it means actively interfering with the workings of evil forces, people, and institutions.

CHAPTER 17: PASSIVE RESISTANCE

The reader asks if the soul-force of passive resistance (or *satyagraha*) has ever changed a society. The editor cites the poet Tulsidas, who said that pity and love are the root of religion. This means that the force of truth, love, and the soul is the fundamental force of the universe. There is ample evidence of this in the past, but not in what Westerners call "history," which is really just the story of kings, wars, and mass murder. And despite all these atrocities, humanity survives because of love-, truth-, or soul-force. Through this force, families naturally reconcile and nations naturally maintain peace. But historians only talk about *interruptions* in this natural peace.

Gandhi views human history as a battle between two forces: the truth-, love-, or soul-force that brings people together to live in harmony, on the one hand, and the brute force of self-interest and violence, on the other. He sees these forces of good and evil, or peace and war, as inherent parts of human nature. But he is remarkably optimistic about the power of unity, forgiveness, and reconciliation, which he thinks must be the driving force behind the independence movement. If English colonialism made history by rupturing India's harmonious way of life, then the struggle for an independent India must strive to heal this rupture and be fundamentally driven by soul-force.

The reader asks the editor to explain passive resistance. The editor replies that it means refusing to obey unjust laws. Because passive resisters only put themselves on the line, if their beliefs are mistaken, nobody else has to suffer for it. But when it is truly right to disobey the law, passive resisters do so, and they suffer the consequences of doing so. Passive resisters follow the only true laws—God's laws. In fact, achieving self-rule (Swaraj) requires doing precisely this: obeying just laws and rejecting unjust laws. But by using brute force, protestors justify the other side doing the same, and this makes it difficult for them to reach an agreement with their opponent.

"Passive resistance" is an imprecise translation of satyagraha, *which really refers to the power that comes from holding onto the truth, so is anything but passive. In theory, it sounds simple to follow morality while rejecting unjust laws. In practice, however, this means actively disobeying the government based on moral principles and often putting oneself in harm's way. Like the homeowner who invites a robber into their home, passive resisters refuse to give up their own commitment to morality just because others have done so. This can be an effective way of declaring a government illegitimate and forcing it to change.*

The reader thinks that passive resistance is for the weak, but the editor explains that it is actually stronger than physical force. It takes more courage to sacrifice oneself for justice than to attack others for self-interest. But passive resistance specifically requires a strength of the *mind*, not the body. The editor compares it to a sword that fights for justice without spilling blood. And he says it's especially powerful in India, which has a tradition of noncooperation with unjust rulers. This is the only way to achieve true home-rule.

It's significant that passive resistance requires strength of the mind, because Gandhi's main critique of modern civilization is that it prioritizes physical power while totally forgetting the mind and soul. In other words, passive resistance is both a sign of people's commitment to a spiritually healthy civilization and a way for them to strengthen their own minds. Through collective passive resistance, nonviolent protestors actually start building the responsible, disciplined, and ethical society that they seek to eventually establish in place of the existing repressive government.

Still, the editor clarifies that it's still important for passive resisters to strengthen their bodies, because this helps them strengthen their minds. He outlines what else people must do to learn passive resistance: they should be chaste, live in voluntary poverty, always seek after the truth, and be as fearless as possible. These virtues are heroic for anyone, not just passive resisters—they are even important for warriors. But warriors are weak and hateful if they choose violence over peace, as "one who is free from hatred requires no sword."

Crucially, Gandhi thinks that personal change is a necessary prerequisite to political change: people should become models of virtue if they want others to follow in their footsteps and hope to build a virtuous society. In Gandhi's eyes, people must choose self-discipline and humility for themselves, and society will only change once enough individuals do. This is consistent with what Gandhi argued in earlier chapters: the means and ends of action are always connected, and all societies' strengths and weaknesses ultimately come down to their fundamental values.

CHAPTER 18: EDUCATION

The reader asks the editor about education, which has become a major political issue. The editor replies that modern English education is useless—it's just knowledge, which can be used for either good or evil. A farmer doesn't need literacy and arithmetic, just morality. While Englishmen like professor Thomas Huxley say that education should strengthen people's rationality, will, and sense of morality, English education doesn't actually do so in India. The reader suggests that the editor is wise because of his education, but the editor disagrees: he learned nothing about morality in school, and he doesn't need his modern education to communicate with most Indians. He concludes that true education must emphasize morality and character.

Education is a significant issue for the independence movement because it speaks to the kinds of values that Indians want to pass down to future generations. It's also significant to Gandhi's audience, who were generally well-off professionals who could attribute their success to their education. Therefore, Gandhi takes a bold step by calling English education valueless: he wants these readers to see that morality and spiritual awareness are the rightful measures of their success in life, not wealth and status. However, Gandhi does not reject the principle of having a school system: rather, he thinks that it's far more important to teach children morality than math.

The reader asks whether Indians should learn English. The editor says both yes and no. The English language has enslaved India—Indians must write in English to reach a wide audience, and India's government, newspapers, and courts are all in English. Nevertheless, English can also help Indians educate themselves, communicate with English people, and build a resistance movement across linguistic boundaries. Still, Indians should strive to communicate, read, and learn in their native languages whenever possible. Their education system should focus on ethics, and all Indians should learn multiple Indian languages. Hindi should be the national language, but it should use both the Persian and Nagari scripts. And truly ethical teachers should replace the charlatans who currently teach religion.

Linguistic policy has always been a hot topic in India: the population speaks more than 1,500 different languages, of which more than 20 are official today. This linguistic situation represents a vast cultural wealth, but also presents a practical challenge for governing the nation. Accordingly, Gandhi tries to address both halves of this equation in his proposal for a limited use of English, which he views as both a relic of colonialism and a valuable tool for intercultural and international communication. But he also sees the chance for Indians to study and teach in their own native languages as a chance for the country to reinvigorate its ancient civilization. Similarly, he views the chance for Indians to learn other Indian languages as a way for India's diverse regional groups to strengthen their common identify as Indians. To promote religious harmony, he proposes using Hindi in both the Persian (or Arabic) script and the Nagari (or Sanskrit-based) one. This is a way of explicitly giving equal standing to Muslims and Hindus,

CHAPTER 19: MACHINERY

The editor believes that machinery has impoverished India and is starting to impoverish Europe, too. Because of machinery, people leave their land. They work like slaves in mills and factories, which just produce wealth for the elite. It would be better for India to remain poor than to grow rich through capitalism and machinery. In fact, he thinks money and sex are the two worst human vices.

Gandhi's critique of machinery, or technology, is based on the way it helps the powerful extract more from workers and deepen economic and political inequalities in the process. Notably, Gandhi does not have an issue with inequality per se—he thinks the poor can be just as happy as the rich. Rather, he takes issue with poor people being forced to work in order to survive, and he sees that technology and the centralization of power continually worsen this tendency.

But the editor thinks that people should persuade mill owners to close down, rather than forcing them to do so. Indians should refuse to buy anything machine-made or produce anything by machine. This will help them stay independent of the English. Giving up machinery and returning to older forms of production would be a slow process, but over years it could become a norm.

Gandhi responds to machinery with the same passive resistance strategies as he uses to respond to English colonialism: by taking the moral high ground and refusing to participate in unjust systems, Indians can eventually force business owners to do what's right and shut down their mills. Indeed, his belief in boycotting machine-produced goods eventually became a centerpiece of the Indian Independence Movement and helped make it more profitable for the English to leave India than to stay.

The reader asks if the editor also rejects electricity and tram-cars, and the editor says yes: they are both harmful results of modern civilization. But the editor admits that printing machines are useful. "Sometimes poison is used to kill poison," he explains, and Indians would have to be willing to get rid of printing machines once they've served their purpose.

Again, Gandhi refuses to deal in absolutes: technology is generally evil, he thinks, but because it gives people greater power, they can turn it around, put it in service of morality, and use "poison […] to kill poison." Of course, the printing press was an absolutely necessary technology for the formation of India's national identity and independence movement, because it's what allowed ideas like Gandhi's to spread (including this book). That said, Gandhi also clearly saw the danger of mass media as a propaganda tool (which he explained in his chapter on the English system of government).

CHAPTER 20: CONCLUSION

The reader concludes that the editor's beliefs are a middle ground between the extremists and moderates in the Congress. But the editor rejects this simplistic division and says that anyone can listen to and learn from his arguments. Still, the reader asks if the editor has a message for each side. The editor would tell the extremists that home-rule is something people create for themselves, not something that anyone can give to anyone else. This means that brute force can never achieve it; only nonviolent soul-force (or passive resistance) can. And he would tell moderates that Indians must take political change into their own hands, rather than suppressing and avoiding conflict. The dueling sides must resolve their problems directly and remember that they are fighting tyranny, not just the English.

Rather than claiming to be halfway between the extremists and moderates—and therefore asking each group to make concessions to the other side—Gandhi proposes a paradigm shift in the way Indians think about national independence. Namely, he explicitly distinguishes between the existing English government—which is based on the exercise of brute force without popular consent—and the future Indian government, which will base itself on the moral principles and active participation of everyone in society. Through this distinction, he shows extremists that brute force cannot establish a moral society, but also tells moderates that it's futile to sit around and hope the English will eventually decide to do what's morally right.

The reader then asks what the editor would tell the British. The editor says that he would invite them to remain in India, but only "as servants of the people." They would have to stop plundering and start respecting India's ancient civilization and religions. In India, beef and pork should be banned, the court and school systems should be traditional (not modern), and Hindi should be the national language. Indians must reject railways, the formation of a military, the purchase of European goods and the manufacture of Indian goods with modern machinery.

As he summarizes what he believes should be the independence movement's key policy demands, Gandhi again emphasizes that the struggle for independence is a fight against modern civilization, not a fight against the British. In fact, Gandhi suggests that the English can assimilate into India just as so many other groups of people have done throughout history.

Most importantly, the editor concludes, Indians must choose passive resistance over armed struggle against the English. The English might kill them and delight in their superior power at first, but eventually they will realize that the Indians have the moral high ground and see how their own actions bring shame upon England. Indians must believe in the superiority of their ancient civilization and find the spiritual force necessary to passively resist England's brute force.

Gandhi specifically calls for his followers to launch a campaign of passive resistance. But he also reminds them that, because passive resistance is a bottom-up strategy that starts with the people, it may take a very long time to build up real momentum. Nevertheless, he continues to believe that the moral power of passive resistance will always defeat the brute force of arms, and the campaign he helped launch in the decades after writing this book ultimately did prove successful.

The editor offers a list of 19 rules that Indians should follow. Indians should avoid using English. Lawyers and doctors should quit their jobs to instead weave cloth and educate others. Rather than hoarding money, wealthy people should donate hand-looms and invest in handmade Indian goods. Finally, Indians should mourn for their country and recognize that personally blaming the English will not help them achieve freedom. They should refuse indulgence and be willing to suffer imprisonment, suffering, or exile as punishment for passive resistance. Indeed, they should see the value in suffering, which is what truly makes a person or nation strong, and they should insist on doing what is right even when others disagree.

Gandhi's long list of rules is specifically targeted at the kind of professionals who he believes are likely to read Hind Swaraj. *Their wealth and power are built on unjust institutions and a tragic colonial history, but doctors, lawyers, and businessmen can turn this wealth and power against these institutions. However, this requires the same kind of personal discipline, moral reform, and political sacrifice that Gandhi demands of all Indians. Ultimately, then, while Gandhi's educated professional readers might have initially considered themselves the natural leaders of the revolution due to their wealth and power, Gandhi is actually telling them that they have to give up their wealth and power if they want to help build a truly independent India.*

The reader asks the editor to condense his program, and the editor narrows it down to four main points. First, home-rule truly means "self-rule or self-control." Second, passive resistance is the means to home-rule. Third, Indians will practice passive resistance through Swadeshi—boycotting English goods and buying Indian goods. And fourth, Indians are pursuing self-rule because it is their duty, and not because they hate the English. In closing, the editor says that he hopes he has helped clarify the true nature of Swaraj and affirms that achieving Swaraj is his life's goal.

In his brief conclusion, Gandhi summarizes his central arguments and shows how they fit together into a comprehensive theory of individual, moral, and political life. He again insists that the independence movement is more than just a fight for power: it's an opportunity to build a completely new kind of human society from the ground-up. But independence activists risk wasting this opportunity if they fail to see that political life is really just an extension of the moral decisions people make about what to prioritize in their lives. Indeed, if they fail to start from moral principles, Gandhi thinks, they will also fail to restore the proper balance between spiritual and bodily pursuits that is necessary to achieve true home-rule.

HOW TO CITE

To cite this LitChart:

MLA

Jennings, Rohan. "*Hind Swaraj*." *LitCharts*. LitCharts LLC, 29 Sep 2020. Web. 29 Sep 2020.

CHICAGO MANUAL

Jennings, Rohan. "*Hind Swaraj*." LitCharts LLC, September 29, 2020. Retrieved September 29, 2020. https://www.litcharts.com/lit/hind-swaraj.

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Gandhi, Mohandas K.. Hind Swaraj. Cambridge University Press. 2011.

CHICAGO MANUAL

Gandhi, Mohandas K.. Hind Swaraj. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2011.