‘HALF-NAKED FAKIR’

The story of Gandhi’s personal search for sartorial integrity

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ABSTRACT

‘Half-naked Fakir’ – the story of Gandhi’s personal search for sartorial integrity, is a three-part historico-biographical essay that brings toge*ther M. K. Gandhi’s essential thoughts and anecdotes on his exploration of truth via attire. The reader is invited to grasp the nuances of Gandhi’s progressive journey towards* personal and sartorial authenticity, from imitating the English in London, to searching for an Indian identity in South Africa, to becoming the dhoti-*clad Mahatma of India’s millions*.

Winston Churchill disparagingly referred to Mohandas Gandhi as the ‘half-naked fakir’.[1] Gandhi regarded the expression as a compliment. He felt unworthy of being called “a fakir and that (too) naked – a more difficult task.”[2] He then implored Churchill: “[T]rust and use me for the sake of your people and mine and through them those of the world.”[3]

A recent collection of visual images from around the world reveals Gandhi’s impact on popular culture as ‘the conscience of humanity’[4]. But it also demonstrates how globally identifiable the man in the loincloth[5] is. What may not be common knowledge, however, are the reasons that spurred him on to dress the way he did.

This essay is an attempt to fill that lacuna. It presents autobiographical details of the choice of attire from the perspective of Gandhi’s ‘experiments with truth’.[6] It traces Gandhi’s journey towards sartorial integrity.[7]

By ‘integrity’ is meant the quality of wholeness, completeness, moral soundness, honesty, genuineness, freedom from corrupting motives.[8] By ‘sartorial integrity’ I mean a state in which one’s moral well-being affects the way one dresses and presents oneself to others. It is a state of perfect symmetry between one’s identity and appearance, between one’s substance and form. To be a sartorially integrated person means to reflect the honesty of character through the dignity of bodily decorum in the face of all costs, difficulties, and imperative urges.[9]

It is common knowledge that clothing is an important way through which one’s personality is communicated. Yet, how does dress add credibility to the wearer? To an external observer, sartorial consistency with the values one lives by can only be measured holistically, that is, within the broader framework of other verbal and nonverbal signals.[10] The quality of ‘completeness’ is natural to a well integrated life and a strong indication of its credibility. In the presence of sartorially integrated individuals one is aware of their genuineness, that they are not merely playing a role or dressing solely to impress.

For most of us, attire is a given datum, a product of our culture and context. We usually follow the status quo or the dominant trends in fashion promoted by our peers and associates. Gandhi, too, began his clothing experiments in similar circumstances. But he gradually evolved, thanks to his habitual soul-searching in pursuit of deeper significance. He interpreted and reinterpreted the personal and social meanings of his sartorial identity through nearly sixty years of his life: from a shy and impressionable adolescent eager to imitate the English dress code, he learned to discover his Indian identity and its implications amidst the rabid racism of South Africa, until, on his return to India, he dared to choose the loincloth as a powerful political statement before the imperial world. Each of these three phases will be elaborated from a historico-

biographical perspective in this essay. The focus is strictly on Gandhi's personal experience, not on the social revolution it spawned. The conclusion briefly rearticulates his salient insights on the road to becoming sartorially integrated.

1. The passion to be an 'English Gentleman': 1869 –1891

The earliest photograph of Mohandas, probably taken at seven years of age, shows him elegantly attired in a dark coloured coat, wearing a dhoti with a shining necklace and a velvet Kathiawad cap. It is a testament to the political and economic advantages he enjoyed as a descendent of a prominent official in the princely courts of Kathiawad.[11]

At school he did not stand out from his classmates in any exceptional way. He avoided the limelight and did not socialise with his companions for fear of being ridiculed. He jealously guarded his reputation and the slightest aspersion on it would draw tears.[12]

After his marriage and the death of his father, he decided to leave for London. The customary blessing of his uncle was accompanied by a stern warning to preserve the Hindu faith and to resist the European lifestyle that easily attracted many Indian youth who had gone to England for their education.[13]

With the help of a knowledgeable friend he was able to acquire clothes, some of which he disliked: the necktie seemed abhorrent and the short jacket immodest. But these were petty choices before his great yearning to go to "the very centre of civilization"[14]. He even removed the shika[15] on the eve of his departure, lest it make him look like a "barbarian in the eyes of the Englishmen"[16].

Gandhi's acute shyness, fear of ridicule and touchiness in matters of clothing initially impeded him from adapting to English customs. While on board the ship, he refrained from speaking and mixing with the English passengers. His only Indian companion urged him to associate freely but in vain. On reaching Southampton he was exceedingly ashamed of his attire. His Indian host who came to receive him smiled at his being in flannels.[17]

It took some time to adjust to the new climate and culture. He struggled to maintain a strictly vegetarian diet – a promise he had made to his mother, but a great embarrassment to his friends. To compensate for this social disadvantage, he strove to dress like the perfect English gentleman. He recalls:

> The clothes after the Bombay cut that I was wearing were, I thought, unsuitable for English society, and I got new ones at the Army and Navy stores. I also went in for a chimney-pot hat costing nineteen shillings an excessive price in those days. Not content with this, I wasted ten pounds on an evening suit made in Bond Street, the centre of fashionable life in London; and got my good and noble-hearted brother to send me a double watch-chain of gold. It was not correct to wear a ready-made tie and I learnt the art of tying one for myself. While in India, the mirror had been a luxury permitted on the days when the family barber gave me a shave. Here I wasted ten minutes every day before a huge mirror, watching myself arranging my tie and parting my hair in the correct fashion. My hair was by no means soft, and every day it meant a regular struggle with the brush to keep it in position. Each time the hat was put on and off, the hand would automatically move towards the head to adjust the hair, not to mention the other civilized habit of the hand every now and then operating for the same purpose when sitting in polished society […]. As if all this were not enough to make me look the thing, I directed my attention to other details that were supposed to go towards the making of an English gentleman.[18]

He took lessons in elocution, dancing and playing the violin. The infatuation lasted barely three months. In contrast, he admitted that "the punctiliousness in dress persisted for years."[19]

In his unpublished handbook entitled Guide to London[20] which was meant to help Indian students desirous of travelling to England, Gandhi reserved a section on the importance of dressing correctly. It included a list of

'necessary things' to carry along from India. Although an inconsequential work, it reflects Gandhi's meticulous observation of English clothing etiquette. The advice he provides his readers may be summed up as follows: Attention to clothing is important. It gives oneself respect in the company of others. It distinguishes one's ability to blend with accepted standards of culture, which must be respected, although without exaggeration and extravagance. One must conform to the prevalent fashion with discretion. Choosing to be a non-conformist, however, runs the risk of creating a 'violent break' from culture. Being tidy in one's dress is all important.[21]

Gandhi's concern for conforming to English sartorial standards can also be seen in his remarks on the attire of a certain Gujarati visitor called Narayan Hemachandra, who visited England without knowing English.

> His dress was queer, a clumsy pair of trousers, a wrinkled, dirty, brown coat after the Parsi fashion, no necktie or collar, and a tasselled woollen cap. He grew a long beard. […] Such a queer-looking and queerly dressed person was bound to be singled out in fashionable society.[22]

A few days later, Gandhi accompanied him on a visit to Cardinal Manning and was surprised to find Hemchandra in the same clothes. Gandhi tried to apprise him of the need for appropriate attire. Hemchandra replied, "You civilized fellows are all cowards. Great men never look at a person's exterior. They think of his heart."[23] On another day, Gandhi spotted him in a shirt and dhoti. The landlady was frightened. Gandhi himself was shocked. Much later he learned that on visiting the United States, Hemchandra was prosecuted for being indecently dressed since he went about in a shirt and a dhoti.[24]

It is worth noting here that almost sixty years later, Gandhi himself would effect the 'violent break' by visiting England dressed in a dhoti, and without a shirt!

By 1890, Gandhi had almost turned into the English gentleman of his dreams. It boosted his self-image and seemed to give him the respectability he was seeking from his English friends. Sachidananda Sinha, a future liberal leader of the Indian Independence Movement who saw him at Piccadilly Circus in February that year, described his attire as follows:

> He was wearing a high silk top hat burnished bright, a Gladstonian collar, stiff and starched, a rather flashy tie displaying almost all the colours of the rainbow under which there was a fine striped silk shirt. He wore as his outer clothes a morning coat, a double-breasted vest, and dark-striped trousers to match and not only patent leather boots, but spats over them. He carried leather gloves, and a silver mounted stick, but wore no spectacles. He was to use the contemporary slang, a nut, a masher, a blood – a student more interested in fashion frivolities than in his studies.[25]

On his return to India in July, 1891, Gandhi's elder brother, Laxmidas, spent much money to create an English atmosphere in the home to make his brother feel comfortable in his newly appropriated English identity. All this added to the mounting expenses of Laxmidas's household. Gandhi "put the finishing touch"[26] by introducing oatmeal porridge and cocoa, even though he contributed little to the financial resources. He recalls: "Boots and shoes were already there. I completed the Europeanization by adding the European dress."[27]

Clearly, Gandhi was forcing a standard of living on his dear ones, fully convinced that the foreign culture he was imposing was for their own good. As the new England-returned barrister-at-law in an ordinary Kathiawadi neighbourhood, he saw himself as the pride of his family.

2. The search for sartorial significance: 1892-1913

Gandhi reached Durban in South Africa as a well-attired, twenty-four year old advocate 'with a due sense of his importance'[28]. His conviction that the English dress code would give Indians social respectability was in for a rude shock. People looked at him curiously. His clothes marked him out from other Indians. He had a frock-coat and a turban, an imitation of the Bengal pugree.[29] Even his client, Abdulla Sheth, thought his style of dressing "expensive like that of the Europeans."[30]

Not only was an Indian attired in European clothes a strange site in Durban, Gandhi had to learn that an Indian in decent Indian dress was also unacceptable. On his first visit to the court the Magistrate kept staring at him and finally asked him to take off his turban, which he refused to do and left the court.[31] This incident was reported in the The Natal Mercury on 26 May 1893. The very same day, Gandhi explained to the editor of the newspaper that retaining his Indian headgear was a sign of respect according to Indian custom and that he did not mean to offend the Magistrate by retaining a trivial sign of his Indian identity.

The question of Indian identity in South Africa was complex. The indentured Indians or contract workers were of Tamil, Telugu and North Indian origin. The white races of South Africa called them 'coolies',[32] a term that was often used in a disparaging manner for all Indians. It was a term that the so-called free Indians (non indentured Indians) in South Africa resented. The latter were the majority, and were mainly merchants and businessmen.[33] The Muslims among them preferred to be called Arabs, and the Parsis among them wished to be recognized as Persians. In so doing, these two groups abjured any identification with the indentured Indians.

Most Indians were required to take their turbans off on entering the court, except Muslims who wore the turban as part of their Muslim costume. Since Gandhi was to frequent the courts due to his profession, he thought of discarding the use of the turban altogether and decided to use an English hat instead. He was immediately warned by his host Abdulla Sheth that such a move would pass him off as a waiter.[34] He decided to keep the turban – a choice he 'practically' maintained till the end of his stay in South Africa.[35]

There were deeper lessons in the significance of clothing in store. Gandhi was accustomed to a way of living typical of a barrister. He travelled first class, used European dress and expected to receive the same courtesies that he received back in England. But life in South Africa was starkly prejudiced against the coloured races. He had to swallow this bitter pill on a wintry night in 1893 when he was thrown out of the train at Maritzburg station. Neither his first class ticket nor his European attire could convince the white constable that he, an Indian, was worthy to travel as he liked.[36] This truth was made even clearer as he continued to suffer more hardships for the rest of the journey to Pretoria. He was made to sit on a dirty sackcloth laid out on the footboard of the coach despite the fact that he had a valid ticket to sit along with other (white) passengers. When he protested, he received a volley of blows and a storm of insults. He reached Johannesburg and was refused admittance in a hotel. He stayed with Sheth Abdul Gani who advised him to continue his journey to Pretoria by travelling third class, like every other Indian, because "[c]onditions in the Transvaal are worse than in Natal. First and second class tickets are never issued to Indians."[37] Gandhi sent for the railway regulations and after reading them insisted on travelling first class or by taxi all the thirty-seven miles to Pretoria:

> Sheth Abdul Gani drew my attention to the extra time and money this would mean, but agreed to my proposal to travel first, and accordingly we sent a note to the Station Master. I mentioned in my note that I was a barrister and that I always travelled first. I also stated in the letter that I needed to reach Pretoria as early as possible, that as there was no time to await his reply I would receive it in person at the station, and that I should expect to get a first class ticket. There was of course a purpose behind asking for the reply in person. I thought that if the Station master gave a written reply, he would certainly say 'No', especially because he would have his own notion of a 'coolie' barrister. I would therefore appear before him in faultless English dress, talk to him and possibly persuade him to issue a first class ticket. So I went to the station in a frock-coat and necktie, placed a sovereign for my fare on the counter and asked for a first class ticket.[38]

While in the train, the same fate would have befallen Gandhi as at Maritzburg station, had it not been for the concession made by the only other passenger who insisted with the guard that he did not mind Gandhi's presence in the same first class compartment. But before taking leave, the guard, speaking to the Englishman, issued his final salvo directed at Gandhi: "If you want to travel with a coolie, what do I care?"[39]

On reaching Pretoria, he lost no time in gathering together the Indians settled there.

> I thus made an intimate study of the hard condition of the Indian settlers, not only by reading and hearing about it, but by personal experience. I saw that South Africa was no country for self-respecting Indians, and my mind became more and more occupied with the question as to how this state of things might be improved.[40]

Initially, it was precisely this group, the 'self-respecting' business and merchant Indians, that he was concerned about. He had left the shores of Bombay to defend a businessman's interests, after all. He wrote out a petition to the railway authorities asking that certain Indians be given permission to travel first and second class instead of consigning all of them to the "tin compartment reserved for natives and other coloured people in which we are literally packed like sheep, without regard to our dress, our behaviour or our position."[41]

The reply he received declared that "first and second class tickets would be issued to Indians who were properly dressed."[42] Gandhi was quick to discover the catch: "This was far from giving adequate relief, as it rested with the Station Master to decide who was 'properly dressed.'"[43] Gandhi felt that at the bottom of the law was a deep prejudice against all Indians. He believed that the whites did not wish to make a distinction between well-dressed Indians and indentured Indians and the railway law was merely an articulation of this point of view.

> But (they) ask how they are to distinguish between an indentured Indian and a free Indian. We, on the other hand, submit that nothing can be easier. The indentured Indian is never dressed in a fashionable dress. The presumption should be in favour of, not against, the Indian, especially an Indian of the type I am referring to.[44]

It appears that, at this stage of his life, Gandhi approves of discrimination. He is surprised at the inability of the Government to discriminate between Indians who are well-dressed from those who are not. He resents the Government's method of treating all Indians as underdogs: "the Asian dirt to be heartily cursed".[45]

Gandhi's bourgeois slant in favour of wealthier Indians was suddenly challenged in 1884 when he met Balasundaram, an indentured labourer.

> I had put in scarcely three or four months' practice […], when a Tamil man in tattered clothes, head-gear in hand, two front teeth broken and his mouth bleeding, stood before me trembling and weeping. He had been heavily belaboured by his master.[46]

For the first time Gandhi was confronted with the sad plight of indentured Indians. His understanding of Indian identity began to change. He began to see himself as a servant-leader of all Indians, not merely the elite. He started his own newspaper called Indian Opinion 'to serve'[47] the community. He made a detailed study of the condition of indentured labourers and began a campaign to free them from an unjust tax which gave birth to an unprecedented phenomenon in South Africa: the unity of indentured and free Indians who fought for their rights on one platform.[48]

During this period, we are not told of major alterations in his attire till 1912. Photographs between 1894 and 1912 continue to show him wearing English clothes and a turban.[49] Interiorly, however, there were stirrings of change. He felt dissatisfied with limiting his activity to legal practice alone and sensed the urge for selfless social work. Contrarily, he found it difficult to compromise the dignity of his profession or to exchange his European attire for something more simple. This dilemma is best expressed by Gandhi himself when he brought his family to South Africa for the first time in 1896:

> I believed, at the time of which I am writing, that in order to look civilized, our dress and manners had as far as possible to approximate to the European standard. Because I thought only thus could we have some influence, and without influence it would not be possible to serve the community.
>
> I, therefore, determined the style of dress for my wife and children. How could I like them to be known as Kathiawad Banias? The Parsis used then to be regarded as the most civilized people amongst Indians, and so, when the complete European style seemed to be unsuited, we adopted the

> Parsi style. Accordingly my wife wore the Parsi sari, and the boys the Parsi coat and trousers. Of course no one could be without shoes and stockings. It was long before my wife and children could get used to them. The shoes cramped their feet and the stockings stank with perspiration. The toes often got sore, I always had my answers ready to all these objections. But I have an impression that it was not so much the answers as the force of authority that carried conviction. They agreed to the changes in dress as there was no alternative. In the same spirit and with even more reluctance they adopted the use of knives and forks.[50]

Gradually, the burden of settling the family in South Africa in a well-furnished house was beginning to take its toll. He realized he could not live in comfort anymore. He began to cut down on expenses. He started to wash his own clothes, shave himself and cut his own hair – his first experiences of the practice of 'self-reliance' which would later develop into the concept of swadeshi. Determined to choose the simple life, he surrendered nonessential things and found the experience liberating.[51] A remark he made in reference to the difficult task of cleaning his own shirt collars is noteworthy: "The result was that, though the collar was fairly stiff, the superfluous starch continually dropped off it. I went to court with the collar on, thus inviting the ridicule of brother barristers, but even in those days I could be impervious to ridicule."[52]

This attitude – standing up to ridicule – was an indication of how much he had matured from the once shy schoolboy who fled his companions for fear of being teased. He was now beginning to see the importance of placing personal integrity above social acceptability. This perspective developed into an attitude that paved the way for a wide variety of courageous sartorial experiments. But before we venture to examine them, it is important to look briefly at eight key experiences that steeled his character and prepared him for the challenges ahead.[53]

Gandhi's longing for **humanitarian work** of a permanent nature led him to Dr. Booth, the head of the St. Aidan's Mission. Here he served for some time as a nurse in the hospital. He made time from office work to spend one to two hours daily. It brought him some peace and deeper contact with human suffering.[54]

The mission hospital trained him for the more difficult task of nursing the wounded soldiers during the **Boer War** of 1899. He collected together as many friends as possible and "with great difficulty got their services accepted as an ambulance corps"[55]. His group of volunteers consisted of "300 free Indians and 800 indentured labourers"[56].

Inspired by John Ruskin's Unto This Last,[57] Gandhi founded the **Phoenix Settlement** in 1904. It was situated a few miles north of Durban and was the locus for a series of experiments in communal living, simplicity of lifestyle, ethical behaviour, service-oriented education, agricultural work, handicrafts and dietetics. The members included Indian and English friends ready to cast in their lot with Gandhi who was the undisputed leader and mentor.[58]

In June 1910, he received 1100 acres of farm land as a gift from his friend and admirer Hermann Kallenbach.[59] It was called **Tolstoy Farm**.[60] Here Gandhi, his family and Kallenbach lived and worked with the families of jailed satyagrahis in Spartan simplicity and discipline. They cut down expenses to the barest minimum, changed their dress from European clothes to labourers' attire, such as "workingmen's trousers and shirts, which were imitated from prisoners' uniform."[61] For footwear they learned to make sandals from a neighbouring monastery. Self-sufficiency through self-reliance was the key. It extended to other aspects of living a common life.[62]

In February 1906, the so-called '**Zulu Rebellion**' broke out. Gandhi's loyalty to the British Empire and his sympathies for the Zulu cause spurred him once again to form the Indian Ambulance Corps. Through this experience he saw the excruciating pain of the hunted Zulus who were mercilessly flogged, and whose lacerated flesh no white nurses were willing to tend. Exposure to this horrible spectacle of man's cruelty to man brought about a deep anguish. Krishna Kripalani presents this extremely delicate moment in Gandhi's life as follows:

> "[I]n the heat of this painfully vivid experience of human misery what had been slowly incubating burst through the shell of indecision and took shape as a firm resolve […]. If life was to be dedicated to the service of his fellowmen, if spiritual enlightenment was to be the goal of his striving, he must for ever abjure the lust of flesh and observe strict celibacy or what Hindu scriptures called **brahmacharya**."[63]

He took the vow "after full discussion and mature deliberation" and after consulting his wife who, he claims, had no objection.[64] After some years of practice he described the experience of living the vow as "a matter of ever-increasing joy"[65], a condition that was indispensable for self-realization: "I clearly saw that one aspiring to serve humanity with his whole soul could not do without it."[66]

Gandhi could see the self-purification and the choice for simplicity leading him to a very special way of life, and he invited like-minded seekers of truth to join him. The principle underpinning their commitment he called **Satyagraha**, which means 'soul force' or 'truth force'. In Satyagraha in South Africa he distinguishes it from passive resistance:

> The power of suggestion is such, that a man at last becomes what he believes himself to be […]. If we are Satyagrahis and offer Satyagraha believing ourselves to be strong, two clear consequences result from it. Fostering the idea of strength, we grow stronger and stronger every day. With the increase in our strength, our Satyagraha too becomes more effective and we would never be casting about for an opportunity to give it up. Again, while there is no scope for love in passive resistance, on the other hand not only has hatred no place in Satyagraha but is a positive breach of its ruling principle [...]. Satyagraha postulates the conquest of the adversary by suffering in one's own person.[67]

The profound interior transformation caused by his adoption of brahmacharya and satyagraha motivated Gandhi to symbolise the change through a new form of dress. He called it the 'mourning robe'. It consisted of a white kurta and dhoti.[68] Although this transition was not definitive, he considered it sufficiently important to actually pose alone for a photograph. The Satyagraha he began in 1906 reached its climax in 1913 with the epic march of 5,000 workers indentured in the coal mines of Natal. It consisted of acts of civil disobedience that included courting arrest and imprisonment. Gandhi discovered the symbolic power of such non-violent action and encouraged it among his satyagrahis. Prison-going was an integral part of living from the well-springs of 'soul-force'.

In 1909, on his return from London to South Africa, Gandhi wrote **Hind Swaraj.**[69] It is a "compendious political manifesto"[70], the "quintessence of Gandhian thought at its purest, its fiercest and its crudest"[71], the crystallization of his most radical ideas directed at young Indian anarchists who sought to violently retaliate against British subjugation. In it he fiercely criticizes Western civilization as being one that feeds on bodily rather than spiritual needs. He criticizes the view that the European dress would have a civilizing effect on Indians. He criticizes India's dependence on Manchester for cloth requirements as well as India's use of mills and machinery.

The impact of the above experiences on Gandhi's personal life began to be reflected in his sartorial choices. They were less an expression of European culture and more a symbol of satyagraha in solidarity with suffering humanity. On 21 December 1913, he appeared at a mass gathering in Durban dressed as an indentured Indian and for the first time explained his motives for dressing differently before a crowd of about seven thousand persons including some prominent Europeans. His chronicler notes:

> They [the Indians] would notice he had changed his dress from that he had formerly adopted for the last 20 years, and he had decided on the change when he heard of the shooting of their fellow-countrymen. No matter whether the shooting was found to be justified or not, the fact was that they were shot, and those bullets shot him (Mr. Gandhi) through the heart also […]. He felt that he should go into mourning at least for a period [...]. He was not prepared himself to accept the European mourning dress for this purpose, and, with some modification in deference to the feelings of his European friends, he had adopted the dress similar to that of an indentured Indian. He asked his fellow-countrymen to adopt some sign of mourning […], and further to adopt some inward observance also.[72]

It was probably the first of many public speeches in which Gandhi would appeal for a change of dress as a symbol, as a collaborative sign of solidarity for a worthy cause. In it he explained the Hindu philosophical principles underlying the penitential life of the satyagrahi through the correction of wrong-doing by an act of atonement. The mere change to simple clothes was not enough, he told them. Those who chose to display

their sorrow through dress should also conform their inner selves to their outer appearance, by suffering, self-sacrifice, renunciation of physical comfort and, eventually, preparation to embrace death whenever and however it comes.[73]

Gandhi had come a long way in his discovery of the significance of attire. He had begun to value the semiotic properties of clothing for personal integrity as an extension and expression of one's moral and political convictions in social and political spaces. It was a realisation he would exploit fully in India.

3. The 'unclothing' of the Mahatma: **1914-1948**

On 19 December 1914, Gandhi and Kasturba sailed for India on board the S S Arabia. Four days later, to the surprise of his fellow passengers, he suddenly made his appearance in Indian dress. On disembarking at Bombay, Gandhi's unexpected attire startled the elite crowd of admirers and well-wishers who had thronged to welcome him.[74] He wore a "Kathiawadi suit of clothes consisting of a shirt, a dhoti, a cloak and a white scarf, all made of Indian mill cloth." [75]

He was immediately honoured at a reception in Bombay, held at Mr. Jehangir Petit's place. It was, according to him, "an occasion for offering what might be called a little Satyagraha"[76]. Gandhi was embarrassed to find himself in "palatial surroundings of dazzling splendour"[77]. Dressed in his simple Indian attire amidst Mr. Petit's Westernised guests, he recalls: "I, who had lived my best life among the indentured labourers, felt myself a complete rustic […] the pomp and splendour of Mr. Petit's mansion made me feel absolutely out of my element."[78]

Before he entered into public service he took Gokhale's advice and travelled the length and breadth of India in order to deepen his experience of the complex Indian reality. He went a step further than the advice he received by choosing to travel third class, intending to expose himself to the terrible conditions of the poor and to view life from their perspective.[79] He believed that "no reform is possible unless some of the educated and the rich voluntarily accept the status of the poor, travel third class, refuse to enjoy the hardships, discourtesies and injustice as a matter of course, fight for their removal."[80]

The experience profoundly disturbed him. He became aware that political enslavement from British rule was not the only evil to be eradicated. India needed to be set free from many more constraints such as untouchability, poverty, communalism, lack of sanitation, selfishness and even religious hypocrisy.[81]

In May 1915, he set up the Satyagraha Ashram on the outskirts of the city of Ahmedabad at a place called Kochrab. He chose Ahmedabad due to his familiarity with the Gujarati language, but more especially because it was an ancient centre of hand-spinning and weaving – a most favourable place to realize one of his dreams: the revival of India's ancient cottage industry through the charkha.[82] He also hoped that Ahmedabad, being the capital of Gujarat, would have wealthy citizens to assist him in his work.

The first ashram inmates were about twenty-five, of both sexes and of varying age. Together they took the nine vows: satya (truth), ahimsa (non-violence), aswad (control of palate), asteya (non-stealing), aparigraha (non-possession), swadeshi (self-sufficiency), abhaya (fearlessness) and non-observance of untouchability. All had their meals in a common kitchen and strove to live as one family.[83]

On 16 February 1916, Gandhi was invited to speak at the inauguration of the Benares Hindu University. His speech was a searing condemnation of the ostentatious display of wealth:

> But what did we witness in the great pandal in which the foundation ceremony was performed by the Viceroy? Certainly a most gorgeous show, an exhibition of jewellery which made a splendid feast for the eyes of the greatest jeweller who chose to come from Paris. I compare with the richly bedecked noblemen the millions of the poor. And I feel like saying to these noblemen: "There is no salvation for India unless you strip yourselves of this jewellery and hold it in trust for your countrymen […]."[84]

An outbreak of plague at Kochrab that same year led him to relocate the Satyagraha Ashram to a solitary place on the banks of the Sabarmati river. It was near the Central Jail, a position Gandhi saw as an advantage since "jail-going was understood to be the normal lot of Satyagrahis."[85] The number of inmates at the Ashram grew to forty.

Meanwhile, Gandhi's legal expertise was solicited in the struggle of the Champaran peasants of Bihar.[86] Here he wore khadi, as was his custom even at the Sabarmati Ashram. A certain journalist named Irwin, who was accustomed to seeing the Indian educated elite take pride in their superiority over the illiterate masses through a Western lifestyle, considered Gandhi's manner of dress a ploy to impress the exploited peasants of the indigo plantations.[87] He wrote an article in The Pioneer accusing Gandhi of hypocrisy.

Despite his hectic schedule and the trivial nature of the article, Gandhi thought that the issue warranted a reply. His letter to the same newspaper, dated 30 June 1917, effectively summarises the lessons he had learned on the significance of clothing.

> Having taken to the occupation of weaving and agriculture and having taken the vow of swadeshi, my clothing is now entirely hand-woven and hand-sewn and made by me or my fellow-workers. Mr. Irwin's letter suggests that I appear before the ryots in a dress I have temporarily and specially adopted in Champaran to produce an effect. The fact is that I wear the national dress because it is the most natural and the most becoming for an Indian. I believe that our copying of the European dress is a sign of our degradation, humiliation and our weakness; and that we are committing a national sin in discarding a dress which is best suited to the Indian climate and which, for its simplicity, art and cheapness, is not to be beaten on the face of the earth and which answers hygienic requirements. Had it not been for a false pride and equally false notions of prestige, Englishmen here would long ago have adopted the Indian costume […]. I may mention incidentally that I do not go about Champaran bare-headed. I do avoid shoes for sacred reasons, but I find too that it is more natural and healthier to avoid them whenever possible.[88]

After Champaran, Gandhi was involved in the Ahmedabad Textile Mill-workers Strike on the banks of the Sabarmati. It dragged on for twenty-one days. He sought a way of keeping alive the energies of the restless workers. Together with members of the ashram he engaged them in digging the foundation for a weaving shed. An expert was invited to give lessons in weaving. "The object that we set before ourselves was to be able to clothe ourselves entirely in cloth manufactured by our own hands."[89] Many ashramites gradually picked up the art. They experienced for the first time the difficult conditions weavers were subjected to, the extent of their production, the handicaps they faced, their susceptibility to trickery and their ever-growing indebtedness.

Gandhi further learned, to his dismay, that all the fine cloth was woven from yarn made in England. The inmates became impatient to use swadeshi yarn. Spinning of Indian yarn, which was once the work of many village women in India had been exterminated. It was with some difficulty that he found a widow called Gangabehn Majmudar who offered to help.[90] She encouraged a group of villagers, who had consigned their spinning wheels to their lofts, to begin spinning yarn once again. When they did so, the ashram inmates found it difficult to cope with the quantity of yarn produced. In course of time, the spinning wheel became a part of ashram life and so was the manufacture of khadi. From then on, Gandhi adopted only khadi for his clothing.[91]

A third agitation that Gandhi was drawn into was the Kheda Peasants' Struggle in March 1918. Like the previous two campaigns at Champaran and Ahmedabad, he was exposed to the pitiful plight of peasants and labourers. These campaigns helped him test the resilience of the satyagraha method which he had ingeniously created in South Africa. They steeled him for the greatest all-India satyagraha campaign that would soon follow. But there were still unexpected obstacles before he would put his ideas to the severest test.

A month later, he left for Delhi to attend the War Conference.[92] The Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford, was eager that Gandhi recruit Indian candidates for joining hands with the British in the war going on in Europe. He gave his consent and immediately set to work. He began recruiting from Kheda. But his optimism received a

rude shock when he saw that the same people who had actively participated in the Kheda agitation now turned a deaf ear to his appeal. As he moved from house to house in search of recruits, he felt the urgency of wearing the sola topi[93] to avoid a sun stroke. The consternation of fellow Indians surprised him. They thought he was compromising his stand on swadeshi. One letter even called him a 'traitor'[94]. This sudden reaction to a harmless cap opened Gandhi's eyes to the advantages of headwear as a pan-Indian symbol of unity. He designed what came to be called the Gandhi topi. It rapidly gained prominence among Indian men as a powerful visual acknowledgement of his leadership.

Due to the string of campaigns and much travelling in third class compartments, Gandhi's health broke down in the second half of 1918. A strong bout of dysentery brought him to death's door. Unfortunately, his tireless zeal for supporting the British war effort and his consequent ill-health did nothing to soften the Government's relations with Indians. In the spring of 1919, the Rowlatt Committee Report made its appearance. It sought to withdraw all civil liberties for crimes that were deemed seditious by the Government. On reading the Report, Gandhi was on his feet again. He was driven by the strong desire to prevent it from becoming a law. He formulated the satyagraha pledge, formed the satyagraha committee and set in motion the first all-India satyagraha campaign beginning with a country-wide hartal.[95] The well-disciplined, nonviolent protest of millions across the subcontinent moved Gandhi to call it "a most wonderful spectacle"[96].

In response to the escalation of protests, the Government began its "reign of repression"[97] in Delhi, Lahore and Amritsar. It prohibited seditious literature and ordered the registration of all newspapers. In defiance, the Satyagraha Sabha of Bombay issued notices and published banned literature like Hind Swaraj and other writings. Gandhi was arrested on his way to Delhi and was brought back to Bombay where he was set free. News of his arrest spread like wild fire and resulted in sporadic violence. Gandhi was dismayed. He suspended satyagraha and decided to go on a three-day fast. On 13 April, the day he announced his fast, Brigadier-General Reginald Dyer fired on an unarmed crowd at Jallianwala Bagh, Amritsar. The public inquiry conducted by Gandhi estimated 1,200 killed and 3,600 wounded.[98]

Gandhi's faith in the British Empire was steadily giving way to great disappointment and to a recognition of its sinister designs. This was not the 'civilization' that he had trusted with his loyal support. He enunciated "the right recognized from time immemorial of the subject to refuse to assist a ruler who misrules."[99] He was now fully determined that such a state of affairs should change.

On 31 August 1920, Gandhi took the khadi vow: "From today for life I declare that I shall purchase for my (wear) only khaddar cloth hand-made of hand-spun yarn, cap or head-dress and socks excepted."[100] The following year he began the promotion of swadeshi and the boycott of British goods which sent ripples of energy across the subcontinent. He organized bonfires of foreign cloth as an act of self-purification for the sin of compliance to imperial rule: "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."[101] He suggested steps to boycott celebrations in honour of the Prince of Wales who was to visit India on 17 November the same year. When the Prince arrived he was greeted by a complete hartal and bonfires of foreign cloth. Wherever he went, the roads and streets were deserted. The Government retaliated by arresting all important Congress leaders.

Gandhi's insistence on using khadi instead of foreign cloth began to take effect. It was for him "the symbol of unity of Indian humanity, of its economic freedom and equality."[102] Public gatherings were impressively bathed in a sea of white khadi. The psychological effect this visual scenario had on the millions who participated was electrifying. Even Congress members who once preferred western garb were now proudly attired in khadi and the Gandhi topi.

Those who did not conform felt socially ostracized. These were chiefly the educated elite and those who were open to the process of Europeanization.[103] However, there were the poor who could not participate in wearing khadi nor in burning foreign cloth simply because they could not afford either. The abject misery of this latter section of the population put Gandhi in a dilemma. On the one hand, he preached the importance of khadi for purna swaraj, which, by its very meaning, included the emancipation of the poor as well. On the other hand, the khadi revolution as the means to obtaining swaraj was too expensive to include the poverty stricken. Yet, Gandhi felt they could not be left out of the freedom struggle. They had to participate, even if

they were reduced to wearing loincloths![104] He found it difficult to communicate these thoughts because he did not want to demand obedience to a precept that he himself had not practised. Disturbed by the dilemma and struck by the abject poverty he saw in the state of Madras on his visit there, he took his boldest sartorial decision at a meeting in Madura on 22 September 1921. He decided "to discard at least up to the 31st of October my topi and vest and to content myself with only a loin-cloth and a chaddar whenever found necessary for the protection of the body."[105]

His decision was motivated by his deep longing for authenticity, the urge to practise what he preached, to lead the way so that others too would accept some external sign of mourning because India was still without swaraj even though the end of the year was approaching. He also made it clear that he did not expect his co-workers to blindly imitate him.

A few days later he wrote an article entitled, "My Loin-cloth"[106]. He elaborately explained the reasons behind his decision to reduce his clothes to the bare minimum. He admitted that the change of dress was the result of 'deep deliberation' and the mark of a 'momentous occasion' in his life which 'he could not help doing'.[107] He also confessed that he had restrained himself from taking the plunge on two previous occasions;[108] that the choice filled him with a legitimate apprehension of how such a public act by the leader of the Indian national movement would be received and interpreted by his contemporaries.

As one reads through the text, one is able to glimpse the anguish of Gandhi's soul – a political leader at the head of a 300 million population yearning for maximum honesty to self and to the poorest of his people.

> The masses in Madras watch me with bewilderment. But if India calls me a lunatic, what then? […] Unless I went about with a loin-cloth, how might I advise others to do likewise? What should I do where millions have to go naked? […] The dress of the millions of agriculturists in India is really only the loin-cloth, and nothing more. […] I want the reader to measure from this the agony of my soul. I do not want either my co-workers or readers to adopt the loincloth. But I do wish that they should thoroughly realize the meaning of the boycott of foreign cloth and put forth their best effort to get it boycotted, and to get khadi manufactured. I do wish that they may understand that swadeshi means everything.[109]

The agony of his soul to 'reduce himself to zero'[110], not just in words but in the physicality of his public presentation was excruciatingly painful. On being asked at a conference to share his views on this manifestation of voluntary poverty he replied: "To possess nothing is, at first, not like taking your clothes off your body but like taking your flesh off your bones."[111]

In September-December, 1931, Gandhi attended the Second Round Table Conference[112] in London wearing open-strapped slippers notwithstanding the changes in the autumnal climate and the onset of winter.[113] He insisted on wearing the loincloth because it was the 'symbol of his mission'.[114] It was a symbol in two senses: to reveal his sincere solidarity with the poor of India whom he represented, and to show how imperialism had impoverished his country. "Millions of Indians own nothing in the world but that little strip of cloth which preserves them from disgrace. I am not leading a 'back to the loin cloth' movement. We have been in these straits ever since the British have ruled India."[115]

In his desire for sartorial consistency with his values he even refused to compromise his attire for King George V at Buckingham Palace: "In any other dress I should be most discourteous to him because I should be artificial."[116]

Regarding footwear, Gandhi often used sandals while in India. There were certain times he walked barefooted while travelling through the provinces of India.[117] Barely two years before his assassination, he decided to atone for the carnage caused by the communal riots between Hindus and Muslims at Noakhali. On being dissuaded to undertake such a dangerous mission he replied: "I do not know what I shall be able to do there. All that I know is that I won't be at peace unless I go."[118] At Noakhali, Gandhi started his walk from village to village, crossing mud roads and unbeaten pathways, strewn with stones, twigs and sometimes even thorns. He walked barefooted, literally and symbolically, as a pilgrim of peace.[119]

Gandhi was assassinated on 30 January 1948 while on his way to his evening prayer meeting. Three shots were fired at point-blank range. With the second bullet, "blood began to stain his white clothes."[120] As his limp body fell to the ground he murmured: "Hey Ram".[121]

Conclusion:

Mohandas Gandhi's personal search for sartorial integrity is a remarkable story without parallel in the political history of the world. To him, clothing was not merely a means to a cultural or political revolution. Clothing was an essential part of his inner quest for truth. From the biographical details elaborated above, one can abstract the important insights that shaped the various stages on this solitary journey towards greater authenticity.

In England he believed that conformity to prevailing fashions was the quickest way to social acceptance. He considered the appropriation of imperial culture essential to an Indian's self-esteem. In South Africa he was surprised to discover that all Indians were objects of scorn. Notwithstanding their position as subjects of the British Empire they could only imitate the English dress but not expect to be treated like the English. One way for a 'self-respecting Indian' to redeem himself from this stigma was to disassociate himself from the shabbily dressed 'coolie'.

After his close encounter with a maltreated Indian labourer, Gandhi was suddenly struck by the shallowness of his life based on prestige and appearances. He began to value simplicity, selfless service, self-reliance and community living. His exposure to war and its consequences, convinced him that human hate and misery could only be won by the power of truth and non-violence. To achieve both, one had to aim for spiritual strength through self-discipline – even to the point of renouncing the lust of the flesh by embracing celibacy. A sober costume was needed to symbolise this life-changing commitment.

On his arrival in India, he believed that Indians needed to fully appropriate their Indian attire because of its climatic, pragmatic and aesthetic advantages. They had to reject stereotypical imitations of Western clothing in the craze for social approval. With the focus clearly on swaraj through ahimsa, the most appropriate choice before all Indians was to regain the dignity of self-reliance through the manufacture of home-spun khadi. Foreign cloth had to be consigned to flames as a symbol of atonement for the sin of complicity in their own servitude to foreign rule.

Finally, the fully clothed leader had no moral right to solicit participation in the freedom struggle from those who were too poor to be fully clothed. He needed to divest himself first to make his solicitation credible. Such an act demanded extreme humility and the fortitude to be "impervious to ridicule"[122]. It was an act in pursuance of truth at all costs, the will to be sartorially integrated, the determination to make one's personal morality transparent to the whole world, even through one's dress.

These insights transformed Gandhi from an English dandy to India's Mahatma. He did not expect his followers to imitate his radical clothing choices but desired that all Indians manifest their commitment to swaraj through khadi attire.[123] This option for a special garb, per se, was not new. He was merely following India's long and sublime tradition of yogis, sadhus and fakirs who divest themselves, in the quest for enlightenment, sometimes even beyond accepted sartorial standards.

It is therefore unlikely that Churchill – at the head of a government determined to safeguard and propagate the 'greatest empire on earth'[124] – understood the full significance of his own remark. He was inadvertently stating, albeit sarcastically, what Gandhi was already striving hard to be: a 'half-naked fakir' intent on becoming a perfectly integrated human being.

Notes and References

[1] Churchill said: "It is […] alarming and also nauseating to see Mr. Gandhi, a seditious middle temple lawyer, now posing as a fakir of a type well known in the East, striding half-naked up the steps of the Vice-regal palace, while he is still organizing and conducting a defiant campaign of civil disobedience, to parley on equal terms with the representative of the King-Emperor." R. R. James (ed.), Winston S. Churchill: His complete speeches, 1897-1963, vol. 5, New York, Chelsea House, 1974, p. 4985.
[2] Krishna Kripalani, Gandhi: a Life, New Delhi, National Book Trust, 1982, p. 155.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Vijay Rana, Mahatma Gandhi: Images and Ideas for Non-Violence, NRIfm, 2007. Gandhi was regarded as the 'conscience of humanity' in the "Manifesto of Nobel Prize Recipients" signed by 53 Nobel Laureates in 1981. Cf. Glenn D. Paige, "Gandhi's Contribution to Global Non-violent Awakening" in Richard L. Johnson (ed.), *Gandhi's Experiments with Truth*, Lexington Books, New York, 2005, p. 356.
[5] The western media used the word 'loin-cloth' to refer to Gandhi's dress, which was, in fact, a dhoti that covered his waist up to his knees. When speaking and writing about his dress in English, Gandhi continued to use the word 'loin-cloth'. In this article I retain the popular English term without the hyphen.
[6] Cf. M. K. Gandhi, An Autobiography or the Story of my Experiments with Truth, Ahmedabad, Navajivan, (1927) 2005. (Henceforth Autobiography)
[7] Although the term 'sartorial integrity' is my own, I am influenced by nonverbal theories of communication and the dramaturgical analysis of Erving Goffman.
[8] Cf. www.dictionary.com.
[9] Cf. Erving Goffman, Interaction Ritual, Chicago, Aldine Publishing, 1967, p. 149.
[10] Mark L. Knapp, Nonverbal Communication in Human Interaction, New York, Hold, Rinehart and Winston INC., 1972., pp. 82-83.
[11] For three generations Gandhi's forefathers were prime ministers in states that did not form part of the British Empire. In 1876 his father became Dewan or Prime Minister and a member of the Rajasthanik court in Rajkot – a very influential body for settling disputes between the chiefs and their fellow clansmen.
[12] Autobiography, pp. 5-6.
[13] Ibid., p. 35.
[14] He recalls how the members of his caste considered his going to England an affront to their dignity, since no one from his caste had been to England before. They declared him an 'outcaste' with a fine imposed on anyone who helped him. Despite these warnings, he set sail for England on 4 September 1888, thanks to his determination and the help of his brother. Cf. Ibid., pp. 37, 39.
[15] The shika is a small knotted tuft of hair worn by Hindu men at the back of their head. It is a symbol of their observance of Hindu religious beliefs.
[16] Autobiography, p. 361.
[17] Ibid., p. 40.
[18] Ibid., p. 47.
[19] Ibid., p. 48 (italics mine). J. B. Kripalani, a contemporary of Gandhi, corroborates: "The fastidiousness in dress persisted throughout his life, even when he was wearing a loin cloth and a chaddar." Cf. J. B. Kripalani, Gandhi, His Life and Thought, Delhi, Publications Division, Government of India, 1970, p. 6.
[20] M. K. Gandhi, The Complete Works of Mahatma Gandhi, vol. 1, Publications Division, Government of India, 1994, p. 66. (Henceforth CWMG). The exact date of this entry is not available. It was probably written between 1893 and 1894.
[21] A summary of the following pages: CWMG, vol. 1, pp. 73-77.
[22] Autobiography, p. 67.
[23] Autobiography, p. 70.
[24] Ibid.
[25] B. R. Nanda, In Search of Gandhi, Essays and Reflections, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2002, p. 52.
[26] Autobiography, p. 85.
[27] Ibid.
[28] M. K. Gandhi, Satyagraha in South Africa, (original publisher: Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1928) online version by Yann Forget, 2003, p. 33. Cf. http://www.forget-me.net/en/Gandhi/satyagraha.pdf (retrieved: 12-4-2007).
[29] Autobiography, p. 98 (italics mine).
[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid., p. 99. This incident was reported in the The Natal Mercury, 26-5-1893: "An Indian entered the Court House yesterday afternoon and took a seat at the horseshoe. He was well-dressed and it was understood that he was an English barrister, on his way to Pretoria, where he is reported to be engaged in an Indian case. He entered the Court without removing his head-covering or salaaming, and the Magistrate looked at him with disapproval."
[32] A 'coolie' is a menial labourer.
[33] "According to the Report of the Protector of Immigrants for 1895, out of 46,343 Indians in the Colony, only 30,303 are free Indians. To that may be added the trading Indian population of, say, 5,000. Thus there are only 35,000 Indians, as against over 45,000 Europeans, who can at all compete with the latter. The 16,000 indentured Indians, it is easy to see, never can vote, while they are under indenture. But a large majority of the 30,303 are only a stage higher than the indentured Indians." Cf. CWMG, vol. 1, p. 325.
[34] Autobiography, p. 100.
[35] Cf. Ibid, p. 101.
[36] Cf. Ibid., p. 103.
[37] Ibid., p. 107.
[38] Ibid., p. 108 (italics mine). In this episode Gandhi's intentional and ostentatious use of English dress to his own advantage reveals a noteworthy change in his perception of the political significance of clothing.
[39] Ibid., p. 109.

[40] Ibid., p. 121 (italics mine).
[41] CWMG, vol. 2, p. 30.
[42] Ibid., p. 118.
[43] Ibid.
[44] CWMG, vol. 2, p. 12 (italics mine).
[45] Ibid. (italics mine).
[46] CWMG, vol. 2, p. 30.
[47] "In the very first month of Indian Opinion, I realized that the soul aim of journalism should be service." Autobiography, p. 263.
[48] For details of the story of this campaign see: Autobiography, pp. 143-146.
[49] Ibid., p. 98.
[50] Autobiography, pp.171-172.
[51] This spirit of simplicity motivated him to declare, "I can see today that we feel all the freer and lighter for having cast off the tinsel of 'civilization'." Ibid., p. 172.
[52] Ibid., p. 196 (italics mine).
[53] The time-fame of these experiences is from 1897 to 1914.
[54] Ibid., p.186.
[55] Ibid., p. 198. 'With great difficulty' because, in Gandhi's words, "the average Englishman believed that the Indian was a coward, incapable of taking risks or looking beyond his immediate self-interest."
[56] Peter Rühe, Gandhi: A Photo Biography, London, Phaidon Press, 2001, p. 29.
[57] Unto This Last is a series of essays on social economy and simple living that was first published as a book in 1862.
[58] Cf. Autobiography, pp. 275-277.
[59] Hermann Kallenbach was a gifted Jewish architect who was born and trained in Germany.
[60] The Tolstoy Farm was Gandhi's second experiment in simple living after the Phoenix Settlement. He called it the "cooperative commonwealth…(where) families of Satyagrahis would be trained to live a new and simple life in harmony with one another." Gandhi, Satyagraha in South Africa, p. 145.
[61] Ibid., pp.151-152.
[62] Cf. Surendra Bhana, "The Tolstoy Farm: Gandhi's experiment in 'cooperative commonwealth'", in South African Historical Journal, No. 7, November 1975, online version African National Congress website: http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/people/gandhi/bhana.html (retrieved: 27-5-2006).
[63] Krishna Kripalani, Gandhi: A Life, New Delhi, National Book Trust, 1982, p. 66.
[64] Autobiography, p. 191.
[65] Ibid., p. 192.
[66] Ibid., p. 290.
[67] Gandhi, Satyagraha in South Africa, pp. 74-75.
[68] The combination of a kurta and a dhoti is common among men in India. The kurta is a loose long-sleeve shirt that extends beyond the waist and hangs loose over the lower garment. The dhoti is a lower garment that consists of cloth wrapped around the waist. It reaches down to the knees or to the ankles in such a way that the feet are left unimpeded for free movement.
[69] M. K. Gandhi, Hind Swaraj and Other Writings, Anthony J. Parel (ed.), New Delhi, Foundation Books, 2004. (Henceforth Hind Swaraj)
[70] Cf. B. R. Nanda, Mahatma Gandhi - A Biography, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2002. p. 124.
[71] K. Kripalani, Gandhi: A Life, p. 83.
[72] CWMG, vol. 12, p. 274-276. Gandhi disclosed that his inner mourning would be to restrict himself to one meal a day.
[73] "Now is the time for thinking, and having made up your minds, stick to it, even unto death." CWMG, vol. 12, p. 276.
[74] "For landing in Bombay I had a Kathiawadi suit of clothes consisting of a shirt, a dhoti, a cloak and a white scarf, all made of Indian mill cloth. But as I was to travel third from Bombay, I regarded the scarf and the cloak as too much of an incumbrance, so I shed them, and invested in an eight-to-ten-annas Kashmiri cap. One dressed in that fashion was sure to pass muster as a poor man." Autobiography, p. 346.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Ibid., p. 343.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Ibid., p. 344.
[79] Ibid., p. 348.
[80] Ibid.
[81] See, for example, his visit to the Kumbha Mela at Hardvar and his decision to atone for the excesses he witnessed there. Autobiography, p. 359.
[82] "In South Africa, I discovered that if India was to survive and progress non-violently, it could only be through the charkha—the charkha alone can be a symbol of non-violence." CWMG, vol. 78, p. 63.
[83] Cf. Autobiography, p. 364.
[84] CWMG, vol. 13, p. 213.
[85] Autobiography, p. 394.
[86] The full detail of this campaign is described in, Rajendraprasad, Satyagraha in Champaran, Ahmedabad, Navajivan, (1928) 1949.
[87] In a letter to Esther Faering dated, 26 May 1917, Gandhi described the condition of Champaran raiyats as "no better than that of slaves." Cf. "Chronology", CWMG, vol.13, p. 619.
[88] CWMG, vol. 13, pp. 450-451 (italics mine).
[89] Ibid., p. 450.
[90] Ibid., p. 451.
[91] Ibid., p. 453.

[92] The War Conference to recruit Indian soldiers for World War I was convened by the Viceroy on 27 April 1918. The objectives were "to bring about the cessation of the political propaganda; the active support of all classes for war measures, especially man power measures, and the development of India's resources; the cheerful endurance of the sacrifices necessary to achieve victory." The Times, Friday, April 26, 1918, p. 5.
[93] The sola topi, also called the 'pith helmet', was a hat made from the pith of the sola plant. It was designed by the British to suit the hot Indian climate.
[94] Cf. Millie Graham Polak, Mr. Gandhi: The Man, Bombay, Vora & Co., 1950, p. 142-3.
[95] A hartal is a general strike. Autobiography, p. 423.
[96] Ibid.
[97] Ibid., p. 424.
[98] Cf. K. Kripalani, Gandhi: A Life, p. 110.
[99] CWMG, vol. 20, p. 502 (italics mine).
[100] CWMG, vol. 18, p. 215.
[101] Hind Swaraj, p. 39.
[102] M. K. Gandhi, The Constructive Programme, Its Meaning and Place, Ahmedabad, Navajivan Publishing House, 1941, p. 9.
[103] Cf. CWMG, vol. 28, p. 133.
[104] CWMG, vol. 21, p. 180.
[105] CWMG, vol. 21, p. 180. A chaddar is a cloth to cover the upper part of the body.
[106] Cf. CWMG, vol. 21, pp. 225-227. The article was first published in Gujarati in Navajivan, 2-10-1921. Its translation in The Hindu (15-10-1921) was reproduced from the Independent.
[107] Ibid.
[108] The first occasion was on behalf of the famine stricken people at Khulna, the second was to protest the arrest of his friend Maulana Mahomed Ali. Cf. Ibid.
[109] CWMG, vol. 21, p. 350 (italics mine). In a letter dated 23-9-1921 to his personal secretary Mahadev Desai, Gandhi wrote: "You must have noticed the great change I have introduced in my dress – I could bear the pain no longer."
[110] CWMG, vol. 48, p. 406.
[111] Maude Royden, "An Englishwoman's faith" in Radhakrishnan, Mahatma Gandhi – Essays and Reflections, Mumbai, Jaico Publishing House, 2004, p. 258.
[112] From November 1930 to December 1932 three Round Table Conferences were held by the British to meet the increasing demand of the Indians for self-rule.
[113] Gandhi visited Europe from August to December 1931.
[114] The complete quotation is: "My dress, which is described in the newspapers as a loin-cloth, is criticized, made fun of. I am asked why I wear it. Some seem to resent me wearing it […]. But I am here on a great and special mission and my loin-cloth […] is the dress of my principles, the people of India. Into my keeping a sacred trust has been put […]. I must therefore wear the symbol of my mission." CWMG, vol. 48, pp. 79-80.
[115] Cf. Time, 29-6-1931, "Loin cloth logic", http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,741901,00.html (12-2-2008)
[116] Interview with a US-American Journalist, Summer 1931: http://www.gandhiserve.org/information/listen_to_gandhi/lec_8_usjournalist_france/augven_interview_US_journalist.html
[117] CWMG, vol, 13, p. 352.
[118] Ibid.
[119] K. Kripalani, Gandhi: A Life, p. 168.
[120] P. Goswami, Mahtama Gandhi, A Chronology, Delhi, Publications Division, Government of India, 1971, p. 239 (date: 30-1-1948).
[121] Ibid. 'Hey Ram' or as stated in other accounts, 'He Rama'. Gandhi being a vaishnavite from birth was a devotee of Lord Rama, the seventh incarnation of Lord Vishnu.
[122] Autobiography, p. 196.
[123] This focus can be seen in Gandhi's enumeration of essential traits of a satyagrahi. The fourth criteria on the list (after faith in God, belief in satya - ahimsa, and chastity) was habitual dressing in khadi. CWMG, vol. 69, pp, 69-70. At the Dandi march he insisted that all participants be dressed exclusively in khadi. CWMG, vol. 43, pp. 178, 182-183.
[124] In 1901 England was in control of over one-quarter of the surface area of the world, and of most of the seas as well. Its colonies spanned the globe from East to West, such that it was often said: "The sun never sets on the British Empire." Learn History, http://learnhistory.org.uk/course/view.php?id=13 (23-12-2008)

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