

MAHATMA GANDHI and LEO TOLSTOY LETTERS

*edited with introduction and notes
by B. Srinivasa Murthy*



Dear friend,

*I just received your
letter and your good
Indian friend's letter.
I read your letter
with great interest because
I think that the question
you touch in it, the ques-
tion of non-violence - is a
question of the greatest
importance not only for
India but for the whole
humanity.*

*I could not find your
name in the list of names.*

*rendering in your
forthcoming volume.
I think this is a way of
the rendering he was
visiting me. It was
unfortunate that
I had not the physical
article before me. If
your translator also*



Mahatma Gandhi and Leo Tolstoy Letters

Edited with Introduction and Notes by
B. Srinivasa Murthy

Foreword by
Virginia Hartt Ringer

Long Beach Publications

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FOREWORD

In bringing *Mahatma Gandhi and Leo Tolstoy - Letters* to publication at this precise time, B. Srinivasa Murthy has performed an invaluable service for a world caught on the rack of terrorism and violence. He turns our attention back to the end of the first decade of this bloody century and presents here for the first time in readily available form a translation of one of Leo Tolstoy's last significant expressions of his philosophic remedy for the troubles and terrors of our lives. Tolstoy's *A Letter To A Hindu* written shortly before his death, was given only newspaper publication at the time and is here reprinted together with a most enlightening accompaniment of correspondence between M.K. Gandhi and Leo Tolstoy concerning their respective philosophies, the content of the *Tolstoy Letter* and Gandhi's part in its preservation and initial distribution through the press.

The foregoing materials alone would be of more than sufficient value to justify this volume, but Murthy has included as well a two part sketch by Mahatma Gandhi of life on the Tolstoy Farm. The Farm was an ethical/social experiment in communal living and economic self-sufficiency on the part of Gandhi and a number of men, women and children of varying ages, religious backgrounds, classes and values. Gandhi also considered it an exceptionally daring experiment in philosophy of education. Ultimately the Tolstoy Farm was in Gandhi's view "a centre of spiritual purification and penance for the final campaign" — a campaign Gandhi feared might never have carried the day were it not for the Tolstoy Farm equipment preceding it. We have here Gandhi's own detailed sketch of its workings.

The correspondence between Gandhi and Tolstoy concerning the publication of *A Letter To A Hindu* also contains an interesting exchange between the two on their differing views on reincarnation and the causal consequences of such belief. Murthy shows that the foundation of Gandhi's religious and political philosophy was rooted in his South African experience where his thoughts on these matters were first matured and launched into practice under the marked influence of Tolstoy.

With the publication of this volume Srinivasa Murthy has made a singularly important contribution to the study of Indian history, Russian literature and the disciplines of social and political philosophy.

Virginia Hartt Ringer
Professor of Philosophy
California State University, Long Beach
April 7, 1987

PREFACE

There is always an aura of mystery and curiosity when we open a book of letters. The correspondence between great minds are landmarks in the development of the history of ideas. The letters of Mohandas K. Gandhi and Count Leo Tolstoy are no exception. The general public is seldom aware of the correspondence between Gandhi and Tolstoy are no exception. The general public is seldom aware of the correspondence between Gandhi and Tolstoy, their admiration for each other's philosophy of life, and the profound influence Tolstoy had upon Gandhi. These letters, few though they are, testify to that relationship.

In 1908, when Gandhi was pioneering his passive resistance experiments in South Africa, Tolstoy wrote *A Letter To A Hindu*. *A Letter To A Hindu* was a reply to C.R. Das, a revolutionary representative of Indians in Europe, who had challenged Tolstoy's philosophy of non-resistance. Gandhi read *A Letter To A Hindu* and was so intrigued by it that he sought Tolstoy's permission to publish the letter in South Africa. Tolstoy wholeheartedly approved the project and also consented to have his writings translated into Indian dialects.

To read the correspondence between Mahatma Gandhi and Leo Tolstoy and fathom the thinking of these two literary giants is to capture the common threads running through Eastern and Western thought. Too often, we forget the fundamental unity of all religions as we plumb for their differences.

I would like to thank Sri. Jitendra Desai, the Managing Trustee of Navajivan House, for his invaluable help. I would also like to thank Professors Jeffrey Broughton, and Peter Lowentrout, of California State University, Long Beach, as

well as Professor Gary Baran of Los Angeles City College for having read the proofs and made valuable comments. Last but not least, I owe a deep debt of gratitude to Professor Katherine Wolkonsky of the Tolstoy Foundation in New York, who was the personal secretary to the late Alexandra Tolstoy, for her help.

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INTRODUCTION

South Africa has been “the nerve center of the world’s clash of color,”¹ ever since the European whites settled there. The predicament of the Native Africans and immigrant Asians has been bleak. To quote an editorial in the *Cape times* on 5.7.1891, “the Indian is the most despised of creatures; he may not ride in tram cars, nor sit in the compartments of a railway carriage with the Europeans, hotel-keepers refuse food or shelter and he is denied the privilege of public bath.”²

All Indians in South Africa were labeled “coolies” (labourers). Every Indian without exception was a coolie, regardless of education or profession ... a coolie barrister, a coolie merchant, a coolie doctor. The popular idea of the Indian was hardly human. “A thing black and lean and a long way from clean which they call the accursed Hindoo ... he is chockfull of lice and he lives upon rice ... I heartily cuss the Hindoo ... he is a black man.”³

How did a promising young lawyer named M.K. Gandhi come to live in this hostile land, the South Africa of the 1890’s? Ironically, he was not drawn by the passion for political reform but by the hard economics of earning a living. Gandhi returned to India in 1891 after he had completed his studies in England. He began practicing law in Bombay, with disastrous results. Gandhi could barely survive on the pittance he earned as an unknown lawyer. Consequently, he became excited when he received an offer to join the law firm of Dada Abdulla & Co. in South Africa and quickly accepted the opportunity.

Reverend Doke, an English Baptist minister and the first biographer of Gandhi in South Africa, has written; “Gandhi’s first day in Natal disillusioned him. He said ‘I have made a mistake in coming. My clients misled me, there was no welcome for an Indian.’ Evidences of a radical treatment between white and coloured people startled the new arrival and cut him to the quick.”⁴

The first bitter experience Gandhi underwent was in Pietermaritzburg, as he travelled from Durban to Pretoria. Just as the train was about to start, a fellow passenger called the guard and complained that a coloured man was in the first class compartment. Gandhi was asked to go to the van compartment but he refused. “A constable was brought, and the Indian stranger was forcibly ejected, his bundles pitched out after him, and with the train gone, he was left to shiver in the waiting room all night.”⁵ Gandhi resumed his journey the next morning, only to experience another humiliation. “Gandhi was seated on the box when the guard, a big Dutchman, wishing to smoke, laid claim to this place, telling the Indian passenger to sit down at his feet. ‘No’ said Mr. Gandhi quietly, ‘I shall not do so.’ The result was a brutal blow in the face. The victim held on to the rail, when another blow nearly knocked him down. Then the passengers interfered, much to the guard’s disgust. ‘Let the poor beggar alone,’ they said, and the man, threatening to ‘do for him’ at the next stage, desisted.”⁶

Apart from his personal experiences, Gandhi witnessed racial discrimination against Indians in the Transvaal under the legal guise of the “disability laws.” In 1888, a special bill was passed in the Orange Free State which denied all “coloureds” the right to take any job except menial, low paid labor. Indians could only own property in designated and segregated areas in the Transvaal. They were not allowed

to vote, were forced to pay exorbitant taxes, and could not even legally be allowed to walk on public sidewalks after 9 p.m., unless they had business with a white man, in which case a special pass was issued. Gandhi was literally kicked off a footpath without warning by a policeman for walking after 9 in the evening.

The tragic situation in South Africa is not much different today. Black Africans have few legal rights and are expected to maintain and serve the affluent white population. The country's economic wealth is tightly controlled by the South African white minority. In the eloquent words of John Webster: "While black workers are required to live in townships near their place of work, their wives and children are deemed to be 'superfluous appendages,' and have to live many miles away in the 'homelands.' Consequently, South Africa is the only country in the world to have brought charges against people for 'illegally harbouring wives and children.'"⁷

Gandhi took up the challenge to fight injustice and racial prejudice. This decision inaugurated his political career. "I began to think of my duty. Should I fight for my rights or go back to India. It would be cowardice to run back to India without fulfilling my obligation."⁸ It was at the time of Gandhi's crucial decision to stay in South Africa and fight discrimination that he first read the previously unpublished *A Letter To A Hindu*. Gandhi was so impressed by Count Leo Tolstoy's message of love and non-resistance to evil that he decided to write to Tolstoy and ask his permission to reprint the letter. This accidental meeting through the printed word was to change Gandhi's life.

The fascinating correspondence between these two towering literary figures has been collected in this small book. The letters exchanged by Gandhi and Tolstoy illustrate the similarities in their thinking and ideals and the profound influence

Tolstoy had on Gandhi's life and thought. They became such good friends that Tolstoy struggled to continue their correspondence even during his last days of illness and pain.

Mahatma Gandhi's political career can be divided into two phases. The early phase consists of his life and work in South Africa and the later phase consists of his return to India to become a freedom fighter. Most of the books on Gandhi emphasize his return to India, his experiments in search of truth, and his efforts to free his homeland from British rule. However, the foundation of Gandhi's religious and political thought can be traced to his experiences in South Africa. The intellectual, moral and spiritual nourishment he received from friends, admirers and supporters played a vital role in shaping his convictions and values. Gandhi clarified his thoughts and began to put his principles into practice.

The writings of John Ruskin, particularly his *Unto This Last*, provided a powerful creative impetus for both Gandhi and Tolstoy. Ruskin refuted the classical economic thought of the day that the basis of society is wealth; rather, he contended that the wealth of society is human companionship. Social inequality and injustice are due to the possession of wealth and power, which is selfish in nature. Ruskin advocated the renunciation of wealth so that everyone should share equally in prosperity.

Luxury is indeed possible in the future — innocent and exquisite; luxury for all, and by the help of all, but luxury at present can only be enjoyed by the ignorant; the cruellest man living could not sit at his feast, unless he sat blindfold. ... If, as yet, the light of the eye can only be through tears, and the light of the eye can only be through tears, and the light of the body through sackcloth, go thou forth weeping ... until the time come, and

the kingdom, when Christ's gift of bread, and bequest of peace, shall be
'Unto this last as unto thee.'⁹

Gandhi read *Unto This Last*, during a train journey from Johannesburg to Durban. He later wrote: "The book was impossible to lay aside, once I had begun it. It gripped me, Johannesburg to Durban was a twenty-four hour's journey. The train reached there in the evening. I could not get any sleep at night. I determined to change my life in accordance with the ideals of the book.'¹⁰ Gandhi continued:

The teachings of *Unto This Last* I understood to be:

1. That the good of the individual is contained in the good of all.
2. That a lawyer's work has the same value as the barber's inasmuch as all have the same right of earning their livelihood from their work.
3. That a life of labour, i.e., the life of the tiller of the soil and the handicraftsman is the life worth living. The first of these I knew. The second I had dimly realized. The third had never occurred to me. *Unto This Last* made it clear as daylight for me that the second and the third were contained in the first. I arose with the dawn, ready to reduce these principles to practice.¹¹

It is fascinating to observe how two men, a young Indian lawyer and an aged Russian writer, so far apart in geography, culture and age, met on common intellectual ground. Gandhi enthusiastically became a disciple of Leo Tolstoy and inherited the difficult "search for Truth" which had preoccupied Tolstoy for much of his life. Gandhi was particularly interested in Tolstoy's writings on non-resistance. Reverend Doke writes in his biography of Gandhi: "Undoubtedly Tolstoy has profoundly influenced him. The old Russian reformer, in the simplicity of his life, the

fearlessness of his utterances, and the nature of his teachings on war and work, has found a warm-hearted disciple in Mr. Gandhi.”¹²

Tolstoy’s famous religious book, *The Kingdom of God is Within You*, intrigued Gandhi, as his autobiography attests. “Three moderns have left a deep impression on my life and captivated me; Raychand Bhai — by his living contact, Tolstoy — by his book *The Kingdom of God is Within You* and Ruskin — by his book *Unto This Last*.”¹³ The Gandhian principles of love, truth, non-violence, non-possession and bread LABOUR GREW OUT OF Gandhi’s unique merger of Western ideas, traditional Hinduism and Indian philosophy. Both Gandhi and Tolstoy possessed vast intellectual knowledge. They strove to prove their theories about life through concrete action. There are certain similarities in their thinking patterns, as well as their outlook on life. Both drew inspiration from the classic religious thinkers, such as Confucius, Buddha, Socrates, Mohammed, Zoroaster, and Jesus, as well as from the world’s great religious texts, particularly the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads*, the *Bhagavad Gita* and the *Bible*. Both visionaries epounded a higher meaning in religion beyond individual salvation. As Tolstoy puts it, “The heroine of my writings is She, whom I love with all the forces of my being, She who always was, is and will be beautiful, is Truth,”¹⁴ Gandhi echoes the same idea, “I am devoted to nothing but truth and I owe no discipline to anybody but Truth.”¹⁵

The fundamental unity of all religions is another common theme. Gandhi said, “I believe in the fundamental truth of all great religions of the world. ... They were at bottom all one and were all helpful to one another.”¹⁶ Tolstoy upheld the same idea: “Religions differ in their external forms but they are all alike in their fundamental principles. And it is just these fundamental principles of all religions which constitute

that true religion which alone today is natural to all men, and the acceptance of which can alone save men from their calamities.”¹⁷

Tolstoy and Gandhi were staunch advocates of human brotherhood and the unity of all creation. Tolstoy often wrote that brotherhood extends to the lowest and the poorest of creation. Gandhi mirrors the same idea, “My religion has no geographic limits, I have a living faith in it, it will transcend my love for India herself.”¹⁸ For Tolstoy, religion encompasses one’s relation with the whole universe, of which man constitutes only a part. Religion is a relationship man sets up between himself and the infinite universe. In the same vein Gandhi states, “I am a part and parcel of the whole and I cannot find Him apart from the rest of humanity.”¹⁹ The core of religion for both Tolstoy and Gandhi was primarily love. Love is the channel through which humanness, mutual trust, and non-violence pave the way for world brotherhood and unity.

Tolstoy emphasized love as the highest path to God. “He who lives in love, lives in God and God in him, for God is love.”²⁰ In his book, *The Law of Violence and the Law of Love*, and in his essay, “The only Commandment,” written a few years before his death, Tolstoy discusses the reasons why educated people, and even those who claim to be religious, ignore this eternal, all embracing law of love. Tolstoy asserts that love purifies the individual and is the essence of life. The fruit of love is happiness. Happiness comes not because man loves his fellowmen but because he loves the source of all, namely God. God dwells in all of us and therefore man recognizes God in himself through love and extends this love to all men. Man needs to let love in and squeeze out hatred, guile and vengeance from his being.

For Gandhi, love is crystallized in non-violence or *Ahimsa*. Gandhi distinguished two meanings of *Ahimsa*, the positive and the negative. 'In its negative form it means not injuring any living being whether by body or mind. I may not, therefore, hurt the person of any wrong-doer or bear any ill-will to him and so cause him mental suffering. ... In its positive form, *Ahimsa* means the largest love, the greatest charity. If I am a follower of *Ahimsa*, must love my enemy or a stranger to me as I would my wrong-doing father or son. This active *Ahimsa* necessarily includes truth and fearlessness."²¹ Gandhi did not translate *Ahimsa* as love, for the word 'love' has different meanings in the English language. Gandhi says: "*Ahimsa* is love in the Pauline sense and something more than the love defined by St. Paul, although I know St. Paul's beautiful definition is good enough for all practical purposes."²²

An important intellectual trait of Tolstoy, which can be clearly seen in his writings, was that of a free thinker and non-conformist. He never hesitated to express his views, whether in his letters to the Tsar, to the orthodox Bishops, or to his friends. By his own definition, "I divide men into two lots. They re free thinkers, or they are not free thinkers. Free thinkers are those who are willing to use their minds without prejudice and without fearing to understand things that clash with their own customs, privileges or beliefs. This state of mind is not common, but it is essential for right thinking; where it is absent, discussion is apt to become worse than useless."²³

This concept of free thinking reinforced Gandhi's belief that the truth should always be spoken, no matter how unpopular or dangerous free speech maybe. Gandhi's approach to social and political change was far less radical than the anarchist philosophy of Tolstoy. Gandhi was a conservative Hindu who practiced asceticism as a dynamic political force. The Gandhian method of non-violence and

non-cooperation contributed to driving the British out of India. Gandhi was a practical politician and he used the technique of *Ahimsa* to fight for justice and truth. C.F. Andrews, after meeting Gandhi for the first time in 1915, pointed out that Gandhi “was a saint of action rather than of contemplation.”

Tolstoy vehemently criticized the traditional Church and its bureaucracy. “Take away the church, the traditions, the Bible and even Christ himself — the ultimate fact of man’s knowledge of goodness, that is of God, directly through reason and conscience, will be as clear and certain as ever; and it will be seen that we are dealing with truths that can never perish — truths humanity can never afford to part with.”²⁴ Tolstoy summarized the commandments of Jesus as:

1. Do not be angry without a cause.
2. Do not commit adultery.
3. Do not swear.
4. Do not resist evil by violence.
5. Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you.²⁵

Tolstoy had a great impact upon Gandhi’s views on Christianity. There are two trends in Gandhi’s understanding of Christianity, namely, the traditional interpretation of the message of Jesus and the uniquely Gandhian understanding of a true Christian life. Gandhi could not accept traditional Christianity. He says, “the orthodox books on Christianity do not give me satisfctin.”²⁶ But Gandhi found the Sermon on the Mount to be the essence of Christ’s teaching. ‘If then I had to face only the Sermon on the Mount and my own interpretation of it, I should not hesitate to say, ‘Oh yes, I am a Christian’.’²⁷ Talking to the missionaries in Calcutta, Gandhi commented:

I do not experience spiritual consciousness in my life through that Jesus (the historical Jesus). But if by Jesus you mean the eternal Jesus, if by Jesus you understand the religion of Universal love that dwells in the heart, then that Jesus lives in my heart—to the same extent that Krishna lives, that Rama lives. If I did not feel the presence of that living God, at the painful sights I see in the world, I would be a raving maniac and my destination would be the Hoogli (river). As, however, that In-dweller shines in the heart, I have not been a pessimist now or ever before.²⁸

Tolstoy passionately sought a practical way of life based on reason and conscience in his quest for truth. As Gandhi puts it, "His life was a constant endeavour, an unbroken tide of strivings to seek the truth, and to practice it as he found it. He never tried to hide or tone it down but set it before the world in its entirety without equivocation or compromise, undeterred by the fear of any earthly power."²⁹

Through his doctrines of non-resistance and love, Tolstoy proposed to reconstruct society so as to wipe out economic and social inequality. He believed that the abolition of the State as an institution was necessary to realize this idea. The State would automatically be dissolved when the people followed the maxim, "each according to his ability, to each according to his needs." Violence and bloodshed played no part in Tolstoy's vision. "No feats of heroism are needed to bring about the greatest and most important changes in the life of humanity; neither the arming of millions of men, nor the construction of new railways and machines, nor the organization of exhibitions or trade unions nor dynamite outrages, nor perfection of aerial navigation, and so forth. All that is necessary is a change of public opinion."³⁰

Tolstoy popularised the concept of "bread labour." Bread labour was a phrase originally coined by the Russian peasant, Boudaref, who held that physical labour is necessary to earn one's food. No one has the right to eat without doing his share of physical work. Furthermore, the whole aim of life is to perform self-sacrificing labour for others. Tolstoy enthusiastically put the ideal of bread labour into practice. He tilled the soil and made his own boots. In his own words:

In proportion as I accustomed myself to and assimilated habits of work, my drop of physical labour became more noticeable, and in proportion as my work became more productive, my demands on the labour of others became less and less, and my life naturally, without effort or deprivation, approximated to a simplicity of which I could not have dreamt had I not fulfilled the law of labour.³¹

Another important precept, non-possession, is closely related to the bread labour concept in Tolstoy's writing. Only when the wealthy renounce their riches and cease to exploit the poor would economic equality be established. By giving up their wealth, the upper class would also benefit by discarding a life of inactivity and idleness, which was supported by the economic slavery of the peasants. Class distinctions would disappear and everyone would benefit from the ideal society.

Gandhi also practiced the traditional Hindu ideal of non-possession, for it was his firm conviction that where there is perfect love, there must be perfect non-possession. Gandhi was profoundly impressed by Tolstoy's doctrines of non-resistance, bread labour, and non-possession. Gandhi coined the word, *Satyagraha*, in 1906 in South Africa. He incorporated the ideals of passive resistance into its definition. *Satyagraha* means "truth force or soul force." Gandhi writes, "I do not like the term 'passive resistance,' it fails to convey all I mean. It describes a method, but

gives no hint of the system of which it is only a part. Real beauty, and that is my aim, is in doing good against evil."³² Gandhi set up a monastic *ashram* near Johannesburg, named Tolstoy Farm, to experiment with putting his beliefs into practice. Gandhi and his followers lived according to the ideals of *Satyagraha*, bread labour, and non-possession. Gandhi later continued the ideals of Tolstoy Farm at Sabaramati Ashram near Ahmedabad, India, where the members took vows of truth, non-violence, non-possession and fearlessness. Many Christian missionaries were influenced by the ideals which Gandhi and his followers put into practice. Stanley Jones, an American missionary and friend of Gandhi, wrote: "I am still an evangelist. I bow to Mahatma Gandhi, but I kneel at the feet of Christ and give him my full and final allegiance. And yet a little man, who fought a system in the framework of which I stand, has taught me more of the spirit of Christ than perhaps any other man in the East or West."³³

The spiritual discipline and moral strength which Gandhi nurtured at Tolstoy Farm gave him the dauntless courage to keep up the difficult struggle for truth and justice in the years to come. After Gandhi returned to India to join the fight for independence from the British, he formulated a more sophisticated social philosophy, known as *Sarvodaya* (the well-being of all). *Sarvodaya* incorporates the negative aspect of non-resistance to evil and the positive aspect of the assimilation of the good. This integrated social ideal aims at "the reform of the individual as the reform of society."³⁴ Gandhi emphasized a village-oriented, agrarian economy and a simplicity of life based upon a cooperative socio- economic structure. *Sarvodaya* provided the ideals for a non-violent society. "In such a state, everyone is his own ruler. He rules himself in such a manner that he is never a hindrance to his neighbours. In the ideal state, therefore, there is no political power because there is no state."³⁵ According to

Gandhi, decentralization was the key to peace in the world. "Centralization as a system is inconsistent with the non-violent structure of society.... It (the State) cannot be sustained and defended without an adequate force."³⁶

Tolstoy, Gandhi, Karl Marx and Lenin, all sought to alleviate the poverty of the masses by establishing a classless society, based upon economic equality. However, Marx and Lenin vehemently disagreed with the non-violent methods of Tolstoy, contending that entrenched economic ills can only be overcome by violent revolutionary methods. Another significant difference between Tolstoy, on the one hand, and Marx and Lenin, on the other, is that Tolstoy taught that people should purge themselves of the lust for possessions, whereas Marx and Lenin advocated the abolition of private property, with the State taking over proprietorship.

Tolstoy passionately and sympathetically defended the peasants, who had no voice in Russian society. "Everyone who has eyes and a heart sees that you working men are obliged to pass your lives in want and in hard labour, which is useless to you, while other men, who do not work, enjoy all that you accomplish—that you are slaves of men, and that ought not to be."³⁷ Tolstoy's solution was based upon his moral principles, as well as his political vision. "The only sure, indubitable means for improving the conditions of the working men, which, at the same time is consistent with God's will, consists in the emancipation of the land from its seizure by the proprietors. This emancipation of the land is attained, not only through the working man's refusal to take part in the army, when the army is directed against the working people, but also by abstaining from working on the proprietor's lands and from renting them."³⁸

Lenin commented on his predecessor:

Tolstoy aimed solely at a moral and not at a violent revolution, which was to carry out this leveling immediately, thus sparing humanity of the other bloody revolution. It was to be a revolution through voluntary renunciation of their riches by the rich, of their inactivity by the idle, and an immediate new division of labour in the natural, God-given sense, that no one should have an excessive share in the labour of another and that all should have the same needs.³⁹

Lenin briefly acknowledged Tolstoy's contribution to the Russian revolution of 1905: "Belonging mainly to the epoch of 1891-1904, Tolstoy in his works brought out— as an artist and as a thinker and preacher—the specific historical features of the whole of the first Russian Revolution, its strengths and its weakness."⁴⁰

Mahatma Gandhi thoroughly opposed the Russian Revolution because it was based upon bloodshed and violent external changes to society. Gandhi firmly believed that improvements in the human condition would be brought about only through personal moral transformation and commitment to truth and justice. In his own words; "Bolshevism is nothing but an extension of the present method of forcibly imposing one's doctrine or will upon others ... Civil resistance is, therefore, a most powerful antidote against Bolshevism and those who are trying to crush the spirit of civil resistance are but fanning the fire of Bolshevism."⁴¹

The message of Tolstoy and Gandhi is as pertinent to today's world problems as it was during their lifetime. Hunger, social injustice, and political and economic oppression still plague the human race. Communist countries have successfully expanded their influence in the Third World through coercion, through propaganda, and through the exploitation of those who live in poverty, despair and bitterness. The

poor are promised heaven on earth, which will be brought about solely by changes in external circumstances. Lenin clearly stated that any means justified the ends of revolution. He advised that one should negotiate if necessary, be peaceful if necessary, and upon discovery of the opponent's weakness, trample him and seize power. Lenin never foresaw that the non-violent resistance which he belittled would be effective today even in Russia. Russian Jews have used the methods of passive resistance and non-violent protest to win government concessions on artistic and intellectual freedom, as well as to obtain the right to immigrate. Neither threats, social isolation, nor torturous confinement in Siberian labor camps can suffocate a just cause.

The history of the civil rights movement in the United States has again demonstrated the effectiveness of non-violence as a practical philosophy of life. Under the Gandhi-inspired leadership of Martin Luther King, Jr., American Black people successfully asserted their democratic rights.

Gandhi and Tolstoy have shown that the search for truth and the practice of non-violence and love can transcend political and cultural boundaries, purify the spirit, and bring forth visionary, creative solutions to the most complex of problems.

LETTERS

Westminster Place Hotel
4, Victoria Street,
London, S.W.
1st, October, 1909.

To Count Leo Tolstoy

Sir,

I take the liberty of inviting your attention to what has been going on in the Transvaal (South Africa) for nearly three years.

“There is in that colony a British Indian population of nearly 13,000. These Indians have for several years laboured under the various legal disabilities. The prejudice against colour and in some respect against Asiatics is intense in that colony. It is largely due, so far as Asiatics are concerned, to trade jealousy. The climax was reached three years ago, with a law which I and many others considered to be degrading and calculated to unman those to whom it was applicable. I felt that submission to law of this nature was inconsistent with the spirit of true religion. I and some of my friends were and still are firm believers in the doctrine of non-resistance to evil. I had the privilege of studying your writings also, which left a deep impression on my mind. British Indians, before whom the position was fully explained, accepted the advice that we should not submit to the legislation, but that we should suffer imprisonment, or whatever other penalties the law may impose for its breach. The result has been that nearly one-half of the Indian population, that was unable to stand the heat of the struggle, to suffer the hardships of imprisonment, have withdrawn from the Transvaal rather than submit to law which they have considered degrading. Of the other half, nearly 2,500 have for conscience's sake allowed themselves to be imprisoned, some as many as five times. The imprisonments have varied from four days to six months; in the majority of cases with hard labour. Many have been financially

ruined. At present there are over one hundred passive resisters in the Transvaal gaols. Some of these have been very poor men, earning their livelihood from day to day. The result has been that their wives and children have had to be supported out of public contributions, also largely raised from passive resisters. This has put a severe strain upon British Indians, but in my opinion they have risen to the occasion. The struggle still continues and one does not know when the end will come. This, however, some of us at least have seen most clearly, that passive resistance will and can succeed where brute force must fail. We also notice that in so far as the struggle has been prolonged, it has been due largely to our weakness, and hence to a belief having been engendered in the mind of the Government that we would not be able to stand continued suffering.

Together with a friend, I have come here to see the imperial authorities and to place before them the position, with a view to seeking redress. Passive resisters have recognised that they should have nothing to do with pleading with the Government, but the deputation has come at the instance of the weaker members of the community, and it therefore represents their weakness rather than their strength. But in the course of my observation here, I have felt that if a general competition for an essay on the Ethics and Efficacy of Passive Resistance were invited, it would popularise the movement and make people think. A friend has raised the question of morality in connection with the proposed competition. He thinks that such an invitation would be inconsistent with the true spirit of passive resistance, and that it would amount to buying opinion. May I ask you to favour me with your opinion on the subject of morality? And if you consider that there is nothing wrong in inviting contributions, I would ask you also to give me the names of those whom I should specially approach to write upon the subject.

There is one thing more, with reference to which I would trespass upon your time. A copy of your letter addressed to a Hindu on the present unrest in India has been placed in my hands by a friend. On the face of it, it appears to represent your views. It is the intention of my friend, at his own expense, to have 20,000 copies printed and distributed and to have it translated also. We have, however, not been able to secure the original, and we do not feel justified in printing it, unless we are sure of the accuracy of the copy and of the fact that it is your letter. I venture to enclose herewith a copy of the copy, and should esteem it a favour if you kindly let me know whether it is your letter, whether it is an accurate copy and whether you approve of its publication in the above manner. If you will add anything further to the letter please do so. I would also venture to make a suggestion. In the concluding paragraph you seem to dissuade the reader from a belief in reincarnation. I do not know whether (if it is not impertinent on my part to mention this) you have specially studied the question. Reincarnation or transmigration is a cherished belief with millions in India, indeed in China also. With many one might almost say it is a matter of experience, no longer a matter of academic acceptance. It explains reasonably the many mysteries of life. With some of the passive resisters who have gone through the gaols of the Transvaal, it has been their solace. My object in writing this is not to convince you of the truth of the doctrine, but to ask you if you will please remove the word "reincarnation" from the other things you have dissuaded your reader from. In the letter in question you have quoted largely from Krishna and given references to passages. I should thank you to give me the title of the book from which the quotations have been made.

I have wearied you with this letter. I am aware that those who honour you and endeavour to follow you have no right to trespass upon your time, but it is rather their duty to refrain from giving you trouble, so far as possible. I have, however, who am

an utter stranger to you, taken the liberty of addressing this communication in the interests of truth, and in order to have your advice on problems, the solution of which you have made your life work.

With respects, I remain,
Your obedient servant,
M.K. Gandhi

Yasnaya Polyana
Oct. 7, 1909

M. K. Gandhi
Transvaal

Just now I have received your very interesting letter, which gives me great pleasure. May God help all our dear brothers and co-workers in the Transvaal. This fight between gentleness and brutality, between humility and love on one side, and conceit and violence on the other, makes itself ever more strongly felt here to us also—especially in the sharp conflicts between religious obligations and the laws of the State—expressed by the conscientious objection to render military service. Such objections are taking place very frequently.

I have written *A Letter to a Hindu* and am very pleased to have it translated (into English). The title of the book on Krishna will be communicated to you from Moscow. As regards re-birth I, for my part, shall leave out nothing; for, as it appears to me, the belief in a re-birth will never be able to strike such deep roots in and restrain mankind as the belief in the immortality of the soul and the faith in divine truth and love; of course I would accommodate you, if you so desire, to delete those passages in question. It will give me great pleasure to help your edition. Publication and circulation of my writings, translated into Indian dialects, can only be a matter of pleasure to me.

The question regarding monetary payment of Royalty should not at all be allowed to appear in religious undertakings.

I give my fraternal greetings and am glad to have come into personal contact with you.

Leo Tolstoi

Westminster Palace Hotel,
4, Victoria Street,
London W.C.
10-11-1909.

Dear Sir,

I beg to tender my thanks for your registered letter in connection with the letter addressed to a Hindu, and with the matters that I dealt with in my letter to you.

Having heard about your failing health I refrained, in order to save you the trouble from sending an acknowledgment, knowing that a written expression of my thanks was a superfluous formality; but Mr. Aylmer Maude whom I have now been able to meet reassured me that you are keeping good health indeed and that unfailingly and regularly you attend to your correspondence every morning. It was a very gladsome news to me and it encourages me to write to you further about matters which are, I know, of the greatest importance according to your teaching.

I beg to send you herewith a copy of a book written by a friend—an Englishman—who is at present in South Africa, in connection with my life, in so far it has a bearing on the struggle with which I am so connected and to which my life is dedicated. As I am very anxious to engage your active interest and sympathy I thought that it would not be considered by you as out of the way for me to send you the book.

In my opinion, this struggle of the Indians in the Transvaal is the greatest of modern times, inasmuch as it has been idealised both as to the goal as also to the methods adopted to reach the goal. I am not aware of a struggle in which the participators are not to derive any personal advantage at the end of it and in which 50 per cent of the persons affected have undergone great suffering and trial for the sake

of a principle. It has not been possible for me to advertise the struggle as much as I should like. You command, possibly, the widest public today. If you are satisfied as to the facts you will find set forth in Mr. Doke's book, and if you consider that the conclusions I have arrived at are justified by the facts, may I ask you to use your influence in any manner you think fit to popularise the movement? If it succeeds, it will be not only a triumph of religion, love and truth over irreligion, hatred, and falsehood but it is highly likely to serve as an example to the millions in India and to people in other parts of the world, who may be downtrodden and will certainly go a great way towards breaking up the party of violence, at least in India. If we hold out to the end, as I think we would, I entertain not the slightest doubt as to its ultimate success and your encouragement in the way suggested by you can only strengthen us in our resolve.

The negotiations that are going on for a settlement of the question have practically fallen through, and together with my colleagues I return to South Africa this week and invite imprisonment. I may add that my son has happily joined me in the struggle and is now undergoing imprisonment with hard labour for six months. This is his fourth imprisonment in the course of the struggle.

If you would be so good as to reply to this letter, may I ask you to address your reply to me at Johannesburg, S.A. Box 6522.

Hoping that this will find you in good health.

I remain,
Your obedient servant
M. K. Gandhi

Johannesburg,
4th April, 1910

Dear Sir,

You may remember that I have written to you from London where I stopped temporarily. As your devoted follower, I send you herewith a brief booklet which I have written. I have translated my own writings from Gujarati (my own language). What is remarkable is that my original book was confiscated by the Government of India. Therefore I was in a hurry to publish this translation. I am afraid I am burdening you; but if your health permits and you have time to go through my booklet, then I need not express how greatly I shall value your criticism of it. I am sending also a few copies of your *A Letter to a Hindu* which you allowed me to publish. This letter will also be translated into an Indian dialect.

Yours respectfully,
M. K. Gandhi.

8th May, 1910

Dear Friend,

Just now I have received your letter and your book, *Indian Home Rule*.

I have read your book with great interest, because I think the question you have therein dealt with is important not only for Indians, but for the whole of mankind.

I cannot find your first letter, but by discovering your biography by Doke, I happen to know you through that Biography which gripped me and it gave me a chance to know and understand you better.

I am not very well at present. So I am unable to write to you on all the questions which are interconnected with your book and also with your activities in general, which I value very much. But I shall write to you as soon as I recover.

Your friend and brother,
Leo Tolstoi.

21-24, Court Chambers,
Johannesburg.
15th August, 1910

M. K. Gandhi,
Attorney.

To Count Leo Tolstoy.

Dear Sir,

I am much obliged to you for your encouraging and cordial letter of the 8th May last. I very much value your general approval of my booklet, *Indian Home Rule*. And if you have the time, I shall look forward to your detailed criticism of the work which you have been so good as to promise in your letter.

Mr. Kallenbach has written to you about Tolstoy Farm. Mr. Kallenbach and I have been friends for many years. I may state that he has gone through most of the experiences that you have so graphically described in your work *My Confession*. No writing has so deeply touched Mr. Kallenbach as yours; and, as a spur to further effort in living up to the ideals held before the world by you, he has taken the liberty, after consultation with me, of naming his farm after you.

Of his generous action in giving the use of the farm for passive resisters, the numbers of *Indian Opinion* I am sending herewith will give you full information.

I should not have burdened you with these details but for the fact of your taking a personal interest in the passive resistance struggle that is going on in the Transvaal.

I remain,
Your faithful servant,
M. K. Gandhi.

7th September, 1910.
"KOTCHETY."

To

M. K. Gandhi,
Johannesburg,
Transvaal, South Africa

I have received your Journal *Indian Opinion* and I am happy to know all that is written on non-resistance. I wish to communicate to you the thoughts which are aroused in me by the reading of those articles.

The more I live—and specially now that I am approaching death, the more I feel inclined to express to others the feelings which so strongly move my being, and which, according to my opinion, are of great importance. That is, what one calls non-resistance, is in reality nothing else but the discipline of love undeformed by false interpretation. Love is the aspiration for communion and solidarity with other souls, and that aspiration always liberates the source of noble activities. That love is the supreme and unique law of human life which everyone feels in the depth of one's soul. We find it manifested most clearly in the soul of the infants. Man feels it so long as he is not blinded by the false doctrines of the world.

That law of love has been promulgated by all the philosophies—Indian, Chinese, Hebrew, Greek and Roman. I think that it had been most clearly expressed by Christ, who said that in that law is contained both the law and the Prophets. But he has done more; anticipating the deformation to which that law is exposed, he indicated directly the danger of such deformation which is natural to people who live only for worldly interests. The danger consists precisely in permitting one's self to defend those interests by violence; that is to say, as he has expressed, returning blow by

blows, and taking back by force things that have been taken from us, and so forth. Christ knew also, just as all reasonable human beings must know, that the employment of violence is incompatible with love, which is the fundamental law of life. He knew that once violence is admitted—it doesn't matter in even a single case—the law of love is thereby rendered futile. That is to say that the law of love ceases to exist. The whole Christian civilisation, so brilliant in the exterior, has grown up on this misunderstanding and this flagrant and strange contradiction, sometimes conscious but mostly unconscious.

In reality as soon as resistance is admitted by the side of love, love no longer exists and cannot exist as the law of existence; and if the law of love cannot exist, there remains no other law except that of violence, that is, the right of the mighty. It was thus that the Christian Society has lived during these nineteen centuries. It is a fact that all the time people were following only violence in the organisation of Society. But the difference between the ideals of Christian peoples and that of other nations lies only in this: that in Christianity the law of love had been expressed so clearly and definitely as has never been expressed in any other religious doctrine; that the Christian world had solemnly accepted that law, although at the same time it had permitted the employment of violence and on that violence it had constructed their whole life. Consequently, the life of the Christian peoples is an absolute contradiction between their profession and the basis of their life; contradiction between love recognised as the law of life, and violence recognised as inevitable in different departments of life; like Governments, Tribunals, Army, etc., which are recognised and praised. That contradiction developed with the inner development of the Christian world and has attained its paroxysm in recent days.

At present the question poses itself evidently in the following manner: either it must be admitted that we do not recognise any discipline, religious or moral, and that we are guided in the organisation of life only by the law of force, or that all the taxes that we exact by force, the judicial and police organisations and, above all, the army must be abolished.

This Spring in the religious examination of a secondary school for girls in Moscow, the Professor of Catechism as well as the Bishop had questioned the young girls on the Ten Commandments and above all on the sixth "Thou shalt not kill." When the examiner received a good reply, the Bishop generally paused for another question: Is killing proscribed by the sacred Law always and in all cases? And the poor young girls perverted by their teachers must reply: No, not always; killing is permitted during war and for the execution of criminals. However one of those unfortunate girls, (what I relate is not a fiction but a fact that has been transmitted to me by an eyewitness) having been asked the same question, "Is killing always a crime?" was moved deeply, blushed and replied with decision "Yes, always." To all the sophisticated questions habitual to the Bishop she replied with firm conviction: killing is always forbidden in the Old Testament as well as by Christ who not only forbids killing but all wickedness against our neighbours. In spite of all his oratorical talent and all his imposing grandeur, the Bishop was obliged to beat a retreat and the young girl came out victorious.

Yes, we can discuss in our journals the progress in aviation and such other discoveries, the complicated diplomatic relations, the different clubs and alliances, the so-called artistic creations, etc., and pass in silence what was affirmed by the young girl. But silence is futile in such cases, because every one of this Christian world is

feeling the same, more or less vaguely, like that girl. Socialism, Communism, Anarchism, Salvation Army, the growing criminalities, unemployment and absurd luxuries of the rich, augmented without limit, and the awful misery of the poor, the terribly increasing number of suicides—all these are the signs of that inner contradiction which must be there and which cannot be resolved; and without doubt, can only be resolved by acceptance of the law of Love and by the rejection of all sorts of violence. Consequently your work in Transvaal, which seems to be far away from the centre of our world, is yet the most fundamental and the most important to us, supplying the most weighty practical proof in which the world can now share and with which we must participate, not only the Christians but all the peoples of the world.

I think that it would give you pleasure to know that with us in Russia a similar movement is also developing rapidly under the form of the refusal of military services augmenting year after year. However small may be the number of your participators in non-resistance and the number of those in Russia who refuse military service, both the one and the other may assert with audacity that "God is with us" and that "God is more powerful than men."

Between the confession of Christianity, even under the perverted form in which it appears amongst us Christian peoples, and the simultaneous recognition of the necessity of armies and of the preparation for killing on an ever-increasing scale, there exists a contradiction so flagrant and crying that sooner or later, probably very soon, it must invariably manifest itself in utter nakedness; and it will lead us either to renounce the Christian religion, and to maintain the governmental power or to renounce the existence of the army and all the forms of violence which the state

supports and which are more or less necessary to sustain its power. That contradiction is felt by all the governments as well as by our Russian Government; and therefore, by the spirit of conservatism natural to these governments, the opposition is persecuted, as we find in Russia as well as in the articles of your journal, more than any other anti-governmental activity. The governments know from which direction comes the principal danger and try to defend themselves with a great zeal in that trial, not merely to preserve their interests but actually to fight for their very existence.

With my perfect esteem,
Leo Tolstoi.

A LETTER TO A HINDU

A LETTER TO A HINDU

The Subjection of India—Its Cause and Cure

With an Introduction by M. K. Gandhi

INTRODUCTION

The letter printed below is a translation of Tolstoy's letter written in Russian in reply to one from the Editor of *Free Hindustan*. After having passed from hand to hand, this letter at last came into my possession through a friend who asked me, as one much interested in Tolstoy's writings, whether I thought it worth publishing. I at once replied in the affirmative, and told him I should translate it myself into Gujarati and induce others to translate and publish it in various Indian vernaculars.

The letter as received by me was a typewritten copy. It was therefore referred to the author, who confirmed it as his and kindly granted me permission to print it.

To me, as a humble follower of that great teacher whom I have long looked upon as one of my guides, it is a matter of honour to be connected with the publication of his letter, such especially as the one which is now being given to the world.

It is a mere statement of fact to say that every Indian, whether he owns up to it or not, has national aspirations. But there are as many opinions as there are Indian nationalists as to the exact meaning of that aspiration, and more especially as to the methods to be used to attain the end.

One of the accepted and 'time-honoured' methods to attain the end is that of violence. The assassination of Sir Curzon Wylie was an illustration of that method in

its worst and most detestable form. Tolstoy's life has been devoted to replacing the method of violence for removing tyranny or securing reform by the method of non-resistance to evil. He would meet hatred expressed in violence by love expressed in self-suffering. He admits of no exception to whittle down this great and divine law of love. He applies it to all the problems that trouble mankind.

When a man like Tolstoy, one of the clearest thinkers in the Western world, one of the greatest writers, one who as a soldier has known what violence is and what it can do, condemns Japan for having blindly followed the law of modern science, falsely so-called, and fears for that country 'the greatest calamities,' it is for us to pause and consider whether, in our impatience of English rule, we do not want to replace one evil by another and a worse. India, which is the nursery of the great faiths of the world, will cease to be nationalist India, whatever else she may become, when she goes through the process of civilization in the shape of reproduction on that sacred soil of gun factories and the hateful industrialism which has reduced the people of Europe to a state of slavery, and all but stifled among them the best instincts which are the heritage of the human family.

If we do not want the English in India, we must pay the price. Tolstoy indicates it. 'Do not resist evil, but also do not yourselves participate in evil—in the violent deeds of the administration of the law courts, the collection of taxes and, what is more important, of the soldiers, and no one in the world will enslave you,' passionately declares the sage of Yasnaya Polyana. Who can question the truth of what he says in the following: 'A commercial company enslaved a nation comprising two hundred millions. Tell this to a man free from superstition and he will fail to grasp what these words mean. What does it mean that thirty thousand people, not

athletes, but rather weak and ordinary people, have enslaved two hundred millions of vigorous, clever, capable, freedom-loving people? Do not the figures make it clear that not the English, but the Indians, have enslaved themselves?’

One need not accept all that Tolstoy says—some of his facts are not accurately stated—to realize the central truth of his indictment of the present system, which is to understand and act upon the irresistible power of the soul over the body, of love, which is an attribute of the soul, over the brute or body force generated by the stirring up in us of evil passions.

There is no doubt that there is nothing new in what Tolstoy preaches. But his presentation of the old truth is refreshingly forceful. His logic is unassailable. And above all he endeavours to practise what he preaches. He preaches to convince. He is sincere and is earnest. He commands attention.

Johannesburg,
19th November, 1909.
M. K. Gandhi.

A LETTER TO A HINDU

By Leo Tolstoy

All that exists is One. People only call this One by different names.

THE VEDAS.

God is love, and he that abideth in love abideth in God, and God abideth in him.

I JOHN IV. 16.

God is one whole; we are the parts.

Exposition of the teaching of the *Vedas* by Vivekananda.

I

Do not seek quiet and rest in those earthly realms where delusions and desires are engendered, for if thou dost, thou wilt be dragged through the rough wilderness of life, which is far from Me. Whenever thou feelest that thy feet are becoming entangled in the interlaced roots of life, know that thou hast strayed from the path to which I beckon thee: for I have placed thee in broad, smooth paths, which are strewn with flowers. I have put a light before thee, which thou canst follow and thus run without stumbling.

KRISHNA.

I have received your letter and two numbers of your periodical, both of which interest me extremely. The oppression of a majority by a minority, and the demoralization inevitably resulting from it, is a phenomenon that has always occupied me and has done so most particularly of late. I will try to explain to you what I think about that subject in general, and particularly about the cause from which the dreadful evils of which you write in your letter, and in the Hindu periodical you have sent me, have arisen and continue to arise.

The reason for the astonishing fact that a majority of working people submit to a handful of idlers who control their labour and their very lives is always and everywhere the same—whether the oppressors and oppressed are of one race or whether, as in India and elsewhere, the oppressors are of a different nation.

This phenomenon seems particularly strange in India, for there more than two hundred million people, highly gifted both physically and mentally, find themselves in the power of a small group of people quite alien to them in thought, and immeasurably inferior to them in religious morality.

From your letter and the articles in *Free Hindustan* as well as from the very interesting writings of the Hindu Swami Vivekananda and others, it appears that, as in the case in our time with the ills of all nations, the reason lies in the lack of a reasonable religious teaching which, by explaining the meaning of life, would supply a supreme law for the guidance of conduct and would replace the more than dubious precepts of pseudo-religion and pseudo-science with the immoral conclusions deduced from them and commonly called 'civilization.'

Your letter, as well as the articles in *Free Hindustan* and Indian political literature generally, shows that most of the leaders of public opinion among your people no longer attach any significance to the religious teachings that were and are professed by the peoples of India, and recognize no possibility of freeing the people from the oppression they endure except by adopting the irreligious and profoundly immoral social arrangements under which the English and other pseudo-Christian nations live today.

And yet the chief if not the sole cause of the enslavement of the Indian peoples by the English lies in this very absence of a religious consciousness and of the guidance for conduct which should flow from it—a lack common in our day to all nations East and West, from Japan to England and America alike.

II

O ye, who see perplexities over your heads, beneath your feet, and to the right and left of you; you will be an eternal enigma unto yourselves until ye become humble and joyful as children. Then will ye find Me, and having found Me in yourselves, you will rule over worlds, and looking out from the great world within to the little world without, you will bless everything that is, and find all is well with time and with you.

KRISHNA.

To make my thoughts clear to you I must go farther back. We do not, cannot, and I venture to say need not, know how men lived millions of years ago or even ten thousand years ago, but we do know positively that, as far back as we have any knowledge of mankind, it has always lived in special groups of families, tribes, and nations in which the majority, in the conviction that it must be so, submissively and willingly bowed to the rule of one or more persons—that is, to a very small minority. Despite all varieties of circumstances and personalities, these relations manifested themselves among the various people of whose origin we have any knowledge; and the farther back we go the more absolutely necessary did this arrangement appear, both to the ruler and the ruled, to make it possible for people to live peacefully together.

So it was everywhere. But though this external form of life existed for centuries and still exists, very early— thousands of years before our time—amid this life based on coercion, one and the same thought constantly emerged among different nations, namely, that in every individual a spiritual element is manifested that gives life to all that exists, and that this spiritual element strives to unite with everything of a like nature to itself, and attains this aim through love. This thought appeared in most various forms at different times and places, with varying completeness and clarity. It found expression in Brahmanism, Judaism, Mazdaism (the teachings of Zoroaster), in Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, and in the writings of the Greek and Roman sages, as well as in Christianity and Mohammedanism. The mere fact that this thought has sprung up among different nations and at different times indicates that it is inherent in human nature and contains the truth. But this truth was made known to people who considered that a community could only be kept together if some of them restrained others, and so it appeared quite irreconcilable with the existing order of society. Moreover it was at first expressed only fragmentarily, and so obscurely that though people admitted its theoretic truth they could not entirely accept it as guidance for their conduct. Then, too, the dissemination of the truth in a society based on coercion was always hindered in one and the same manner, namely, those in power, feeling that the recognition of this truth would undermine their position, consciously or sometimes unconsciously perverted it by explanations and additions quite foreign to it, and also opposed it by open violence. Thus the truth—that his life should be directed by the spiritual element which is its basis, which manifests itself as love, and which is so natural to man—this truth, in order to force a way to man's consciousness, had to struggle not merely against the obscurity with which it was expressed and the intentional and unintentional distortions surrounding it, but also against deliberate

violence, which by means of persecutions and punishments sought to compel men to accept religious laws authorized by the rulers and conflicting with the truth. Such a hindrance and misrepresentation of the truth—which had not yet achieved complete clarity—occurred everywhere: in Confucianism and Taoism, in Buddhism and in Christianity, in Mohammedanism and in your Brahmanism.

III

My hand has sowed love everywhere, giving unto all that will receive. Blessings are offered unto all My children, but many times in their blindness they fail to see them. How few there are who gather the gifts which lie in profusion at their feet: how many there are, who, in wilful waywardness, turn their eyes away from them and complain with a wail that they have not that which I have given them; many of them defiantly repudiate not only My gifts, but Me also, Me, the source of all blessings and the Author of their being.

KRISHNA

I tarry awhile from the turmoil and strife of the world. I will beautify and quicken thy life with love and with joy, for the light of the soul is Love. Where Love is, there is contentment and peace, and where there is contentment and peace, there am I also in their midst.

KRISHNA

The aim of the sinless One consists in acting without causing sorrow to others, although he could attain to great power by ignoring their feelings.

The aim of the sinless One lies in not doing evil unto those who have done evil unto him.

If a man causes suffering, even to those who hate him without any reason, he will ultimately have grief not to be overcome.

The punishment of evil doers consists in making them feel ashamed of themselves by doing them a great kindness.

Of what use is superior knowledge in the one, if he does not endeavor to relieve his neighbour's want as much as his own?

If, in the morning, a man wishes to do evil unto another, in the evening the evil will return to him.

THE HINDU KURAL.

Thus it went on everywhere. The recognition that love represents the highest morality was nowhere denied or contradicted, but this truth was so interwoven everywhere with all kinds of falsehoods which distorted it, that finally nothing of it remained but words. It was taught that this highest morality was only applicable to private life—for home use, as it were—but that in public life all forms of violence—such as imprisonment, executions, and wars—might be used for the protection of the majority against a minority of evil-doers, though such means were diametrically opposed to any vestige of love. And though common sense indicated that if some men claim to decide who is to be subjected to violence of all kinds for the benefit of others, these men to whom violence is applied may, in turn, arrive at a similar conclusion with regard to those who have employed violence to them, and though the great religious teachers of Brahmanism, Buddhism, and above all of Christianity, foreseeing such a perversion of the law of love, have constantly drawn attention to the one invariable condition of love (namely, the enduring of injuries, insults, and violence of all kinds without resisting evil by evil), people continued—regardless of all that leads man forward—to try to unite the incompatibles: the virtue of love, and what is opposed to love, namely, the restraining of evil by violence. And such a teaching, despite its inner contradiction, was so firmly established that the very people who recognize love as a virtue accept as lawful at the same time an order of life based on violence and allowing men not merely to torture but even to kill one another.

For a long time, people lived in this obvious contradiction without noticing it. But a time arrived when this contradiction became more and more evident to thinkers of various nations. And the old and simple truth that it is natural for men to help and to love one another, but not to torture and to kill one another, became ever clearer, so that fewer and fewer people were able to believe the sophistries by which the distortion of the truth had been made so plausible.

In former times the chief method of justifying the use of violence and thereby infringing the law of love was by claiming a divine right for the rulers: the Tsars, Sultans, Rajahs, Shahs, and other heads of states. But the longer humanity lived, the weaker grew the belief in this peculiar, God-given right of the ruler. That belief withered in the same way and almost simultaneously in the Christian and the Brahman world, as well as in Buddhist and Confucian spheres, and in recent times it has so faded away as to prevail no longer against man's reasonable understanding and the true religious feeling. People saw more and more clearly, and now the majority see quite clearly, the senselessness and immorality of subordinating their wills to those of other people just like themselves, when they are bidden to do what is contrary not only to their interests but also to their moral sense. And so one might suppose that having lost confidence in any religious authority for a belief in the divinity of potentates of various kinds, people would try to free themselves from subjection to it. But unfortunately not only were the rulers, who were considered supernatural beings, benefited by having the peoples in subjection, but as a result of the belief in, and during the rule of, these pseudo-divine beings, ever larger and larger circles of people grouped and established themselves around them, and under an appearance of governing took advantage of the people. And when the old deception of a supernatural and God-appointed authority had dwindled away, these men were only concerned to

devise a new one which, like its predecessor, should make it possible to hold the people in bondage to a limited number of rulers.

IV

Children, do you want to know by what your hearts should be guided? Throw aside your longings and strivings after that which is null and void; get rid of your erroneous thoughts about happiness and wisdom, and your empty and insincere desires. Dispense with these and you will know Love.

KRISHNA.

Be not the destroyers of yourselves. Arise to your true Being, and then you will have nothing to fear.

KRISHNA.

New justifications have now appeared in place of the antiquated, obsolete, religious ones. These new justifications are just as inadequate as the old ones, but as they are new their futility cannot immediately be recognized by the majority of men. Besides this, those who enjoy power propagate these new sophistries and support them so skillfully that they seem irrefutable, even to many of those who suffer from the oppression these theories seek to justify. These new justifications are termed 'scientific' But by the term 'scientific' is understood just what was formerly understood by the term 'religious,' just as formerly everything called 'religious' was held to be unquestionable simply because it was called religious, so now all that is called 'scientific' is held to be unquestionable. In the present case, the obsolete religious justification of violence which consisted in the recognition of the supernatural personality of the God-ordained ruler ('there is no power but of God') has been superseded by the 'scientific' justification which puts forward, first, the assertion that

because the coercion of man by man has existed in all ages, it follows that such coercion must continue to exist. This assertion that people should continue to live as they have done throughout past ages rather than as their reason and conscience indicate, is what 'science' calls 'the historic law.' A further 'scientific' justification lies in the statement that as among plants and wild beasts there is a constant struggle for existence which always results in the survival of the fittest, a similar struggle should be carried on among human beings—beings, that is, who are gifted with intelligence and love; faculties lacking in the creatures subject to the struggle for existence and survival of the fittest. Such is the second 'scientific' justification.

The third, most important, and unfortunately most widespread justification is, at bottom, the age-old religious one just a little altered: that in public life the suppression of some for the protection of the majority cannot be avoided—so that coercion is unavoidable however desirable reliance on love alone might be in human intercourse. The only difference in this justification by pseudo-science consists in the fact that, to the question why such and such people and not others have the right to decide against whom violence may and must be used, pseudo-science now gives a different reply to that given by religion—which declared that the right to decide was valid because it was pronounced by persons possessed of divine power. Science' says that these decisions represent the will of the people, which under a constitutional form of government is supposed to find expression in all the decisions and actions of those who are at the helm at the moment.

Such are the scientific justifications of the principle of coercion. They are not merely weak but absolutely invalid, yet they are so much needed by those who occupy privileged positions that they believe in them as blindly as they formerly

believed in the immaculate conception, and propagate them just as confidently. And the unfortunate majority of men bound to toil is so dazzled by the pomp with which these 'scientific truths' are presented, that under this new influence it accepts these scientific stupidities for holy truth, just as it formerly accepted the pseudo-religious justifications; and it continues to submit to the present holders of power who are just as hard-hearted but rather more numerous than before.

V

Who am I? I am that which thou hast searched for since thy baby eyes gazed wonderingly upon the world, whose horizon hides this real life from thee. I am that which in thy heart thou hast prayed for, demanded as thy birthright, although thou hast not known what it was. I am that which has lain in thy soul for hundreds and thousands of years. Sometimes I lay in thee grieving because thou didst not recognize me; sometimes I raised my head, opened my eyes, and extended my arms calling thee either tenderly and quietly, or strenuously, demanding that thou shouldst rebel against the iron chains which bound thee to the earth.

KRISHNA.

So matters went on, and still go on, in the Christian world. But we might have hope that in the immense Brahman, Buddhist, and Confucian worlds, this new scientific superstition would not establish itself, and that the Chinese, Japanese, and Hindus, once their eyes were opened to the religious fraud justifying violence, would advance directly to a recognition of the law of love inherent in humanity, and which had been so forcibly enunciated by the great Eastern teachers. But what has happened is that the scientific superstition replacing the religious one has been accepted and secured a stronger and stronger hold in the East.

In your periodical you set out as the basic principle which should guide the actions of your people, the maxim that: 'Resistance to aggression is not simply justifiable but imperative, non-resistance hurts both Altruism and Egotism.'

Love is the only way to rescue humanity from all ills, and in it you too have the only method of saving your people from enslavement. In very ancient times love was proclaimed with special strength and clearness among your people to be the religious basis of human life. Love, and forcible resistance to evil-doers, involve such a mutual contradiction as to destroy utterly the whole sense and meaning of the conception of love. And what follows? With a light heart and in the twentieth century you, an adherent of a religious people, deny their law, feeling convinced of your scientific enlightenment and your right to do so, and you repeat {do not take this amiss) the amazing stupidity indoctrinated in you by the advocates of the use of violence—the enemies of truth, the servants first of theology and then of science—your European teachers.

You say that the English have enslaved your people and hold them in subjection because the latter have not resisted resolutely enough and have not met force by force.

But the case is just the opposite. If the English have enslaved the people of India it is just because the latter recognized, and still recognize, force as the fundamental principle of the social order. In accord with that principle, they submitted to their little rajahs, and on their behalf struggled against one another, fought the Europeans, the English, and are now trying to fight with them again.

A commercial company enslaved a nation comprising two hundred millions. Tell this to a man free from superstition and he will fail to grasp what these words mean. What does it mean that thirty thousand men, not athletes but rather weak and ordinary people, have subdued two hundred million vigorous, clever, capable, and freedom-loving people? Do not the figures make it clear that it is not the English who have enslaved the Indians, but the Indians who have enslaved themselves?

When the Indians complain that the English have enslaved them, it is as if drunkards complained that the spirit-dealers who have settled among them have enslaved them. You tell them that they might give up drinking, but they reply that they are so accustomed to it that they cannot abstain, and that they must have alcohol to keep up their energy, is it not the same thing with the millions of people who submit to thousands, or even to hundreds, of others—of their own or other nations?

If the people of India are enslaved by violence, it is only because they themselves live and have lived by violence, and do not recognize the eternal law of love inherent in humanity.

Pitiful and foolish is the man who seeks what he already has, and does not know that he has it. Yes, pitiful and foolish is he who does not know the bliss of love which surrounds him and which I have given him.

KRISHNA.

As soon as men live entirely in accord with the law of love natural to their hearts and now revealed to them, which excludes all resistance by violence, and therefore hold aloof from all participation in violence—as soon as this happens, not only will hundreds be unable to enslave millions, but not even millions will be able to enslave a single individual. Do not resist the evii-doer and take no part in doing so,

either in the violent deeds of the administration, in the law courts, the collection of taxes, or above all in soldiering, and no one in the world will be able to enslave you.

VI

Oh ye who sit in bondage and continually seek and pant for freedom, seek only for love. Love is peace in itself and peace which gives complete satisfaction. I am the key that opens the portal to the rarely discovered land where contentment alone is found.

KRISHNA.

What is now happening to the people of the East as of the West is like what happens to every individual when he passes from childhood to adolescence and from youth to manhood. He loses what had hitherto guided his life and lives without direction, not having found a new standard suitable to his age, and so he invents all sorts of occupations, cares, distractions, and stupefactions to divert his attention from the misery and senselessness of his life. Such a condition may last a long time.

When an individual passes from one period of life to another, a time comes when he cannot go on in senseless activity and excitement as before, but has to understand that although he has outgrown what before used to direct him, this does not mean that he must live without any reasonable guidance, but rather that he must formulate for himself an understanding of life corresponding to his age, and having elucidated it must be guided by it. And in the same way, a similar time must come in the growth and development of humanity. I believe that such a time has now arrived—not in the sense that it has come in the year 1908, but that the inherent contradiction of human life has now reached an extreme degree of tension; on the one side there is the consciousness of the beneficence of the law of love, and on the other the existing order of life which has for centuries occasioned an empty, anxious,

restless, and troubled mode of life, conflicting as it does with the law of love and built on the use of violence. This contradiction must be faced, and the solution will evidently not be favourable to the outlived law of violence, but to the truth which has dwelt in the hearts of men from remote antiquity: the truth that the law of love is in accord with the nature of man.

But men can only recognize this truth to its full extent when they have completely freed themselves from all religious and scientific superstitions and from all the consequent misrepresentations and sophistical distortions by which its recognition has been hindered for centuries.

To save a sinking ship it is necessary to throw overboard the ballast, which though it may once have been needed would not cause the ship to sink. And so it is with the scientific superstition which hides the truth of their welfare from mankind. In order that men should embrace the truth—not in the vague way they did in childhood, nor in the one-sided and perverted way presented to them by their religious and scientific teachers, but embrace it as their highest law—the complete liberation of this truth from all and every superstition (both pseudo-religious and pseudo-scientific) by which it is still obscured is essential: not a partial, timid attempt, reckoning with traditions sanctified by age and with the habits of the people—not such as was effected in the religious sphere by Guru-Nanak, the founder of the sect of the Sikhs, and in the Christian world by Luther, and by similar reformers in other religions—but a fundamental cleansing of religious consciousness from all ancient religious and modern scientific superstitions.

If only people freed themselves from their beliefs in all kinds of Ormuzds, Brahmas, Sabbaoths, and their incarnation as Krishnas and Christs, from beliefs in

Paradises and Hells, in reincarnations and resurrections, from belief in the interference of the Gods in the external affairs of the universe, and above all, if they freed themselves from belief in the infallibility of all the various Vedas, Bibles, Gospels, Tripitakas, Korans, and the like, and also freed themselves from blind belief in a variety of scientific teachings about infinitely small atoms and molecules and in all the infinitely great and infinitely remote worlds, their movements and origin, as well as from faith in the infallibility of the scientific law to which humanity is at present subjected; the historic law, the economic laws, the law of struggle and survival, and so on—if people only freed themselves from this terrible accumulation of futile exercises of our lower capacities of mind and memory called the 'Sciences,' and from the innumerable divisions of all sorts of histories, anthropologies, homiletics, bacteriologies, jurisprudences, cosmographies, strategies—their name is legion—and freed themselves from all this harmful, stupefying ballast—the simple law of love, natural to man, accessible to all and solving all questions and perplexities, would of itself become clear and obligatory.

VII

Children, look at the flowers at your feet; do not trample upon them. Look at the love in your midst and do not repudiate it.

KRISHNA.

There is a higher reason which transcends all human minds. It is far and near. It permeates all the worlds and at the same time is infinitely higher than they.

A man who sees that all things are contained in the higher spirit cannot treat any being with contempt.

For him to whom all spiritual beings are equal to the highest there can be no room for deception or grief.

Those who are ignorant and are devoted to the religious rites only, are in a deep gloom, but those who are given up to fruitless meditations are in a still greater darkness.

UPANISHADS, FROM VEDAS.

Yes, in our time all these things must be cleared away in order that mankind may escape from self-inflicted calamities that have reached an extreme intensity. Whether an Indian seeks liberation from subjection to the English, or anyone else struggles with an oppressor either of his own nationality or of another—whether it be a Negro defending himself against the North Americans; or Persians, Russians, or Turks against the Persian, Russian or Turkish governments, or any man seeking the greatest welfare for himself and for everybody else—they do not need explanations and justifications of old religious superstitions, such as have been formulated by your Vivekanandas, Baba Bharatis, and others, or in the Christian world by a number of similar interpreters and exponents of things that nobody needs; nor the innumerable scientific theories about matters not only unnecessary but for the most part harmful. (In the spiritual realm nothing is indifferent: what is not useful is harmful.)

What are wanted for the Indian as for the Englishman, the Frenchman, the German, and the Russian, are not Constitutions and Revolutions, nor all sorts of Conferences and Congresses, nor the many ingenious devices for submarine navigation and aerial navigation, nor all sorts of conveniences to add to the enjoyment of the rich, ruling classes; nor new schools and universities with innumerable faculties of science, nor an augmentation of papers and books, nor gramophones and cinematographs, nor those childish and for the most part corrupt stupidities termed art—but one thing only is needful: the knowledge of the simple and clear truth which finds place in every soul that is not stupefied by religious and scientific superstitions—the

truth that for our life one law is valid—the law of love, which brings the highest happiness to every individual as well as to all mankind. Free your minds from those overgrown, mountainous imbecilities which hinder your recognition of it, and at once the truth will emerge from amid the pseudo-religious nonsense that has been smothering it: the indubitable, eternal truth inherent in man, which is one and the same in all the great religions of the world. It will in due time emerge and make its way to general recognition, and the nonsense that has obscured it will disappear of itself, and with it will go the evil from which humanity now suffers.

"Children, look upwards with your beclouded eyes, and a world full of joy and love will disclose itself to you, a rational world made by My wisdom, the only real world. Then you will know what love has done with you, what love has bestowed upon you, what love demands from you."

KRISHNA.

YASNAYA POLYANA.
December 14th, 1908.

TOLSTOY FARM

Mahatma Gandhi established Tolstoy Farm in 1910, both as a tribute to Leo Tolstoy and as a practical way of practicing the ideals set forth in Tolstoy's philosophy. The members of this commune, known as *Satyagrahis* (non-violent resisters), lived on an eleven hundred acre, self-sufficient farm. They devoted their bodies to the discipline of hard manual labor and devoted their minds to the ideals of truth, love, non-possession, non-violence, and chastity. Many different religious faiths were honored and practiced by the *Satyagrahis*.

After Gandhi returned to India, he perfected and expounded the *Swadeshi* (the principle of using goods which are made in one's own country) movement, which had its foundation in the Tolstoy Farm experience. Between 1919 and 1948, Gandhi wrote on the beauties of a village-oriented society. The spinning wheel became a popular *Swadeshi* symbol throughout India.

TOLSTOY FARM (A)

By M. K. Gandhi

Upon the Farm, oranges, apricots and plums grew in such abundance that during the season the Satyagrahis could have their fill of the fruit and yet have a surplus besides. The spring was about 500 yards away from our quarters, and the water had to be fetched on carrying poles.

Here we insisted that we should not have any servants; not only for the household work but as far as may be even for the farming and building operations. Everything, therefore, from cooking to scavenging was done with our own hands. As regards accommodating families, we resolved from the first that the men and women should be housed separately. The houses therefore were to be built in two separate blocks each at some distance from the other. For the time it was considered sufficient to provide accommodation for ten women and sixty men. Then again we had to erect a house for Mr. Kallenbach and by its side a school house, as well as a workshop for carpentry, shoemaking, etc.

The settlers hailed from Gujarat, Tamilnad, Andhra Pradesh and North India, and there were Hindus, Musalmans, Parsis and Christians among them. About forty of them were young men, two or three old men, five women and twenty to thirty children of whom four or five were girls.

The Christian and other women were meat-eaters. Mr. Kallenbach and I thought it desirable to exclude them from the farm. But how could we ask people who had no scruples in the matter, who had been habituated to taking meat since childhood, and who were coming over here in their days of adversity, to give up meat

even temporarily? And if they were given meat, would not that swell our cost of living? Again should those who used to take beef be given that too? How many separate kitchens must be run in that case? What was my duty on this point? Having been instrumental in giving monetary help to these families, I had already accorded support to meat-eating as well as beef-eating. If I made a rule that meat-eaters should not be helped, I would have to prosecute the Satyagraha struggle through vegetarians only, which was absurd as the movement had been organised on behalf of all classes of Indians. I did not take long clearly to visualize my duty in these circumstances. If the Christians and Mussalmans asked for even beef, that too must be provided for them. To refuse them admission to the farm was absolutely out of the question.

But where love is, there God is also. The Mussalman friends had already granted me permission to have a purely vegetarian kitchen. I had now to approach Christian sisters whose husbands or sons were in jail. I had often come in such intimate contact with the Christian friends who were now in jail and who had on like occasions consented to having a vegetarian diet. But this was the first time that I had to deal at close quarters with their families in their absence. I represented to the sisters the difficulty of housing accommodation as well as finance and my own deep-rooted sentiment in the matter. At the same time I assured them even beef would be provided for them if they wanted. The sisters kindly consented not to have meat, and the cooking department was placed in their charge. I, with or without another man, was detailed to assist them. My presence acted as a check upon petty bickerings. The food was to be the simplest possible. The time as well as the number of meals was fixed up. There was to be one single kitchen, and all were to dine in a single row. Every one was to see to the cleaning of his own dish and other things. The common pots were to be cleaned by different parties in turn. I must state that Satyagrahis lived on Tolstoy

Farm for a long time, but neither the women nor the men ever asked for meat. Drink, smoking, etc., were of course totally prohibited.

As I have already stated, we wanted to be self-reliant as far as possible even in erecting buildings. Our architect was Mr. Kallenbach, of course, and he got hold of a European mason. A Gujarati carpenter, Narayandas Damania, volunteered his services free of charge and brought other carpenters to work at reduced rates. As regards unskilled labour, the settlers of us who had supple limbs literally worked wonders. A fine Satyagrahi of the name of Vihari did half of the carpenter's work. The lion-like Thambi Naidoo was in charge of sanitation and marketing for which he had to go to Johannesburg.

One of the settlers was Pragji Khandubhai Desai who had never been accustomed to discomfort all his life, but who had here to put up with bitter cold, a hot sun and sharp rains. In the beginning we lived in tents for about two months while the buildings were under construction. The structures were all of corrugated iron and therefore did not take long to raise. The timber too could be had ready made in all sizes required. All we had to do was to cut it to measure. There were not many doors or windows to be prepared. Hence it was that quite a number of buildings could be erected within such a short space of time. But all this labour was a heavy tax on Pragji's physical constitution. The work on the farm was certainly harder than in jail. One day Pragji actually fainted, due to fatigue and heat. But he was not the man to give in. He fully trained up his body here, and in the end he stood abreast as a good worker with the best of us. Then there was Jossep Royeppen, a barrister free from a barrister's pride. He could not undertake very hard work. It was difficult for him to

take down loads from the railway train and to haul them on the cart, but he did it as best as he could.

The weak became strong on Tolstoy Farm and labour proved to be a tonic for all.

Every one had to go to Johannesburg on some errand or other. Children would like to go there just for the fun of it. I also had to go there on business. We therefore made a rule that one could go there by rail only on the public business of our little commonwealth, and then to travel third class. Anyone who wanted to go on a pleasure trip must go on foot and carry homemade provisions with him. None must spend anything on his food in the city. Had it not been for these drastic rules, the money saved by living in a rural locality would have been wasted on railway fares and city picnics. The provisions carried were of the simplest: home-baked bread made from coarse wheat flour ground at home, from which the bran was not removed, groundnut butter, also prepared at home, and home-made marmalade. We had purchased an iron hand mill for grinding wheat. Groundnut butter was made by roasting and then grinding groundnuts, and was four times cheaper than ordinary butter. As for the oranges, we had plenty of them on the farm. We scarcely used cow's milk on the farm and generally managed with condensed milk.

But to return to the trips. Anyone who wished to go to Johannesburg went there on foot once or twice a week and returned the same day. As I have already stated, it was a journey of 21 miles and back. We saved hundreds of rupees by this one rule of going on foot, and those who thus went walking were much benefited. Some newly acquired the habit of walking. The general practice was that the sojourner should rise at two o'clock and start at half past two. He would reach

Johannesburg in six to seven hours. The record for the minimum time taken on the journey was 4 hours 18 minutes.

The reader must not imagine that this discipline operated upon the settlers at all as a hardship. On the other hand it was accepted cheerfully. It would have been impossible to have a single settler if force had been employed. The youngsters thoroughly enjoyed the work on the Farm and the errands to the city. It was difficult to prevent them from playing their pranks while engaged in work. No more work was given to them than they willingly and cheerfully rendered, and I never found that the work thus done was unsatisfactory either in quantity or quality.

A paragraph may be devoted to our sanitary arrangements. In spite of the large number of settlers, one could not find refuse or dirt anywhere on the farm. All rubbish was buried in trenches sunk for the purpose. No water was permitted to be thrown on the roads. All waste water was collected in buckets and used to water the trees. Leavings of food and vegetable refuse were utilised as manure. A square pit one foot and a half deep was sunk near the house to receive the nightsoil, which was fully covered with the excavated earth and which therefore did not give out any smell. There were no flies, and no one would imagine that nightsoil had been buried there. We were thus not only spared a nuisance, but the source of possible nuisance was converted into invaluable manure for the farm. If nightsoil was properly utilised, we would get manure worth lakhs of rupees and also secure immunity from a number of diseases. By our bad habits, we spoil our sacred river banks and furnish excellent breeding grounds for flies with the result that the very flies which, through our criminal negligence, settle upon uncovered nightsoil defile our bodies after we have bathed. A small spade is the means of salvation from a great nuisance. Leaving

nightsoil, cleaning the nose or spitting on the road is a sin against God as well as against humanity, and betrays a sad want of consideration for others. The man who does not cover his waste deserves a heavy penalty even if he lives in a forest.

The work before us was to make the farm a busy hive of industry, thus to save money and in the end to make the families self-supporting. If we achieved this goal, we could battle with the Transvaal Government for an indefinite period. We had to spend some money on shoes. The use of shoes in a hot climate is harmful, as all the perspiration is absorbed by the feet which thus grow tender. No socks were needed in the Transvaal as in India, but we thought that the feet must be protected against thorns, stones and the like. We therefore determined to make sandals. There is at Mariannhill near Pinetown a monastery of German Catholic monks called the Trappists, where industries of this nature are carried on. Mr. Kallenbach went there and acquired the art of making sandals. After he returned he taught it to me and I in my turn to other workers. Thus several young men learnt how to manufacture sandals, and we commenced selling them to friends. I need scarcely say that many of my pupils easily surpassed me in the art. Another handicraft introduced was that of carpentry. Having founded a sort of village, we needed all manner of things large and small from benches to boxes, and we made them all ourselves. The selfless carpenters already referred to helped us for several months. Mr. Kallenbach was the head of the carpentry department, and as such every moment gave us the evidence of his mastery and exactitude.

A school was indispensable for the youngsters and the children. This was the most difficult of our tasks and we never achieved complete success in this matter till the very last. The burden of teaching work was largely borne by Mr. Kallenbach and

myself. The school could be held only in the afternoon, when both of us were thoroughly exhausted by our morning labour, and so were our pupils. The teachers therefore would often be dozing as well as the taught. We would sprinkle water on the eyes, and by playing with the children, try to pull them up and pull up ourselves, but sometimes in vain. The body peremptorily demanded rest and would not take a denial. But this was only one and the least of our many difficulties. For the classes were conducted in spite of these dozings. What were we to teach pupils who spoke three languages, Gujarati, Tamil or Telugu, and how? I was anxious to make the vernaculars the medium of instruction. I knew a little Tamil but no Telugu. What could one teacher do in these circumstances? I tried to use some of the young men as teachers, but the experiment was not quite a success. Pragji's services were requisitioned of course. Some of the youngsters were very lazy and mischievous and were always on bad terms with their books. A teacher could not expect to make much headway with such pupils. Again we could not be regular in our teaching. Business sometimes took Mr. Kallenbach as well as me to Johannesburg.

Religious teaching presented another tough problem. I would like Musalmans to read the Koran, and Parsis the Avesta. There was one Khoja child, whose father had laid upon me the responsibility of teaching him a small *pothi* of that sect. I collected books bearing on Islam and Zoroastrianism. I wrote out the fundamental doctrines of Hinduism according to my lights; I forget now whether it was for my own children or for the Tolstoy Farmers. If this document was now in my possession, I should have inserted it here as a landmark in my spiritual progress. But I have thrown away or burnt many such things in my life. I destroyed such papers as I felt it was not necessary to preserve them or as the scope of my activities was extended. I am not sorry for this, as to have preserved all of them would have been burdensome

and expensive to me. I should have been compelled to keep cabinets and boxes, which would have been an eyesore to one who has taken the vow of poverty. But this teaching experiment was not fruitless. The children were saved from the infection of intolerance, and learnt to view one another's religions and customs with a large-hearted charity. They learnt how to live together like blood-brothers. They imbibed the lessons of mutual service, courtesy and industry. And from what little I know about the later activities of some of the children on Tolstoy Farm, I am certain that the education which they received there has not been in vain. Even if imperfect, it was a thoughtful and religious experiment, and among the sweetest reminiscences of Tolstoy Farm, the reminiscences of this teaching experiment are no less sweet than the rest.

But another chapter must be devoted to these reminiscences.

TOLSTOY FARM (B)

By M. K. Gandhi

In this chapter I propose to string together a number of Tolstoy Farm reminiscences which are rather disjointed and for which therefore I must crave the reader's indulgence.

A teacher hardly ever had to teach the kind of heterogeneous class that fell to my lot, containing as it did pupils of all ages and both sexes, from boys and girls of about 7 years of age to young men of twenty and young girls of 12 or 13 years old. Some of the boys were wild and mischievous.

What was I to teach this ill-assorted group? How was I to be all things to all pupils? Again in what language should I talk to all of them? The Tamil and Telegu children knew their own mother-tongue or English and a little Dutch. I could speak to them only in English. I divided the class into two sections—the Gujarati section talked to in Gujarati and the rest in English. As the principal part of the teaching, I arranged to tell or read to them some interesting stories. I also proposed to bring them into close mutual contact and to lead them to cultivate a spirit of friendship and service. Then there was to be imparted some general knowledge of history and geography and in some cases of arithmetic. Writing was also taught, and so were some which formed part of our prayers, and to which therefore I tried to attract the Tamil children as well.

The boys and girls met freely. My experiment of co-education and Tolstoy Farm was the most fearless of its type. I dare not today allow, or train children to enjoy, the liberty which I had granted the Tolstoy Farm class. I have often felt that my mind then used to be more innocent than it is now, and that was due perhaps to my

ignorance. Since then I have had bitter experiences, and have sometimes burnt my fingers badly. Persons whom I took to be thoroughly innocent have turned out corrupt. I have observed the roots of evil deep down in my own nature; and timidity has claimed me for its own.

I do not repent having made the experiment. My conscience bears witness that it did not do any harm. But as a child who has burnt himself with hot milk blows even into whey, my present attitude is one of extra caution.

A man cannot borrow faith or courage from others. The doubter is marked out for destruction, as the *Gita* puts it. My faith and courage were at their highest at Tolstoy Farm. I have been praying to God to permit me to re-attain that height but the prayer has not yet been heard, for the number of such suppliants before the Great White Throne is legion. The only consolation is that God has as many years as there are suppliants. I therefore repose full faith in Him and know that my prayer will be accepted when I have fitted myself for such grace.

This was my experiment. I sent the boys reputed to be mischievous and the innocent young girls to bathe in the same spot at the same time. I had fully explained the duty of self-restraint to the children, who were all familiar with my Satyagraha doctrine. I knew, and so did the children, that I loved them with a mother's love. The reader will remember the spring at some distance from the kitchen. Was it a folly to let the children meet there for bath and yet to expect them to be innocent? My eye always followed the girls as a mother's eye would follow a daughter. The time was fixed when all the boys and girls went together for a bath. There was an element of safety in the fact that they went in a body. Solitude was always avoided. Generally I also would be at the spring at the same time.

All of us slept on an open verandah. The boys and the girls would spread themselves around me. There was hardly a distance of three feet between any two beds. Some care was exercised in arranging the order of the beds, but any amount of such care would have been futile in the case of a wicked mind. I now see that God alone safeguarded the honour of those boys and girls. I made the experiment from a belief that boys and girls could thus live together without harm, and the parents with their boundless faith in me allowed me to make it. One day one of the young men made fun of two girls, and the girls themselves or some child brought me the information. The news made me tremble. I made inquiries and found that the report was true. I remonstrated with the young men, but that was not enough. I wished the two girls to have some sign on their person as a warning to every young man that no evil eye might be cast upon them, and as a lesson to every girl that no one dare assail their purity. The passionate Ravana could not so much as touch Sita with evil intent while Rama was thousands of miles away. What mark should the girls bear so as to give them a sense of security and at the same time to sterilise the sinner's eye? This question kept me awake for the night. In the morning I gently suggested to the girls that they might let me cut off their fine long hair. On the farm we shaved and cut the hair of one another and we therefore kept scissors and clipping machines. At first the girls would not listen to me. I had already explained the situation to the elderly women who could not bear to think of my suggestion but yet quite understood my motive, and they had finally accorded their support to me. They were both of them noble girls. One of them is alas! now no more. She was very bright and intelligent. The other is living and the mistress of a household of her own. They came round after all, and at once the very hand that is narrating this incident set to cut off their hair. And afterwards I analysed and explained my procedure before my class, with

excellent results. I never heard of a joke again. The girls in question did not lose in any case; goodness knows how much they gained. I hope the young men still remember this incident and keep their eye from sin.

Experiments such as I have placed on record are not meant for imitation. Any teacher who imitates them would be incurring grave risk. I have here taken note of them only to show how far a man can go in certain circumstances and to stress the purity of the Satyagraha struggle. This very purity was a guarantee of its victory. Before launching on such experiment, a teacher has to be both father and mother to his pupils and to be prepared for all eventualities whatever, and only the hardest penance can fit him to conduct them.

This act of mine was not without its effect on the entire life of the settlers on the farm. As we had intended to cut down expenses to the barest minimum, we changed our dress also. In the cities the Indian men including Satyagrahis put on European dress. Such elaborate clothing was not needed on the farm. We had all become labourers and therefore put on labourers' dress but in the European style, viz. workmen's trousers and shirts, which were imitated from prisoners' uniforms. We all used cheap trousers and shirts which could be had ready-made out of coarse blue cloth. Most of the ladies were good hands at sewing and took charge of the tailoring department.

As for food we generally had rice, dal, vegetable and *rotti* with porridge occasionally superadded. All this was served in a single dish which was not really a dish but a kind of bowl such as is supplied to prisoners in jail. We had made wooden spoons on the farm ourselves. There were three meals in the day. We had bread and home-made wheaten coffee at six o'clock in the morning, rice, *dal* and vegetable at

eleven, and wheat pap and milk, or bread and coffee at half past five in the evening. After the evening meal we had prayers at seven or half past seven. At prayers we sang *bhajans* and sometimes had readings from the *Ramayana* or books on Islam. The *bhajans* were in English, Hindi and Gujarati. Sometimes we had one *bhajan* from each of the three languages, and sometimes only one. Everyone retired at 9 o'clock.

Many observed the *Ekadashi* fast on the Farm. We were joined there by Sr. P. K. Kotwal who had much experience of fasting, and some of us followed him to keep the *Chaturmas*. Ramzan also arrived in the mean-while. There were Musalman youngsters among us, and we felt we must encourage them to keep the fasts. We arranged for them to have meals in the evening as well as in the early morning. Porridge, etc., were prepared for them in the evening. There was no meat, of course, nor did any one ask for it. To keep the Mussalman friends' company, the rest of us had only one meal a day in the evening. As a rule we finished our evening meal before sunset; so the only difference was that the others finished their supper about when the Mussalman boys commenced theirs. These boys were so courteous that they did not put any one to extra trouble although they were observing fasts, and the fact that the non-Muslim children supported them in the matter of fasting left a good impression on all. I do not remember that there ever was a quarrel, much less a split, between the Hindu and the Mussalman boys on the score of religion. On the other hand I know that although staunch in their own beliefs, they all treated one another with respect and assisted one another in their respective religious observances.

Although we were living far from the amenities of city life, we did not keep even the commonest appliances against the possible attacks of illness. I had in those days as much faith in the nature cure of disease as I had in the innocence of children. I

felt that there should not be disease as we lived a simple life, but if there was, I was confident of dealing with it. My booklet on health is a note book of my experiments and of my living faith in those days. I was proud enough to believe that illness for me was out of the question. I held that all kinds of diseases could be cured by earth and water treatment, fasting or changes in diet. There was not a single case of illness on the farm in which we used drugs or called in a doctor. There was an old man from North India, 70 years of age, who suffered from asthma cough, but whom I cured simply by changes in diet and water treatment. But I have now lost the courage and, in view of my two serious illnesses, I feel that I have forfeited even the right to make such experiments.

Tolstoy Farm proved to be a centre of spiritual purification and penance for the final campaign. I have serious doubts as to whether the struggle could have been prosecuted for eight years, whether we could have secured larger funds, and whether the thousands of men who participated in the last phase of the struggle would have borne their share in it, if there had been no Tolstoy Farm. Tolstoy Farm was never placed in the limelight, yet an Institution, which deserved it, attracted public sympathy to itself. The Indians saw that the Tolstoy Farmers were doing what they themselves were not prepared to do and what they looked upon in the light of hardship. This public confidence was a great asset to the movement when it was organised afresh on a large scale in 1913, One can never tell whether such assets give an account of themselves, and if yes, when. But I do not entertain and would ask the reader not to entertain a shadow of a doubt that such latent assets do in Gods good time become patent.

OBITUARY OF LEO TOLSTOY

Of the late Count Leo Tolstoy, we can only write with reverence. He was to us more than one of the greatest men of his age. We have endeavoured, so far as possible, and so far as we understood it, to follow his teaching. The end of his bodily life has but put the final touch to the work of humanity that he, in his own inimitable manner, inaugurated. Tolstoy is not dead; he lives through the lives of his innumerable followers throughout the world. We firmly believe that, as time rolls on, his teaching will more and more permeate mankind. Though a devout Christian, he truly interpreted not only Christianity, but he likewise gave a realistic presentation on the substance underlying the great world religions, and he has shown as no other teacher, at any rate in Europe, has shown how present-day civilisation, based as it is on brute force, is a negation of the divinity in man, and how, before man can realise his manhood, he must substitute brute force by love in all his actions.

In the daily walk of life, perhaps his letter to Mr. Gandhi, which we reproduce on the first page, was one of the last, if not the last, writings from his pen. In it he almost foreshadowed his dissolution, and it must be a matter of great encouragement and melancholy satisfaction to Indian passive resisters that the sage of Yasnaya Polyana considered the Transvaal struggle to be one of worldwide importance.

Indian Opinion,
November 26, 1910.

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MAHATMA GANDHI
AND
LEO TOLSTOY LETTERS

Edited with Introduction and Notes by

B. Srinivasa Murthy

Foreword by

Virginia Hartt Ringer.

“With the publication of this volume Srinivasa Murthy has made a singularly important contribution to the study of Indian history, Russian literature and the discipline of social and political philosophy.”

Virginia Hartt Ringer

Professor of Philosophy

California State University, Long Beach

Young Mohandas Gandhi’s discovery of the works of Leo Tolstoy played a crucial role in his conversion to the strategy of non-violence. We owe a debt of much gratitude to Srinivasa Murthy for editing the correspondence between Tolstoy and Gandhi, alongside such documents as Tolstoy’s “Letter to a Hindu” and Gandhi’s reminiscences about his South African ashram, “Tolstoy Farm.” all are conveniently available between the covers of a single volume — which will be of great interest both to the scholarly reader and those involved in the practical strategies of non-violence. An excellent achievement!

Guy de Mallac, *Professor of Russian
Studies & Peace and Conflict Studies
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