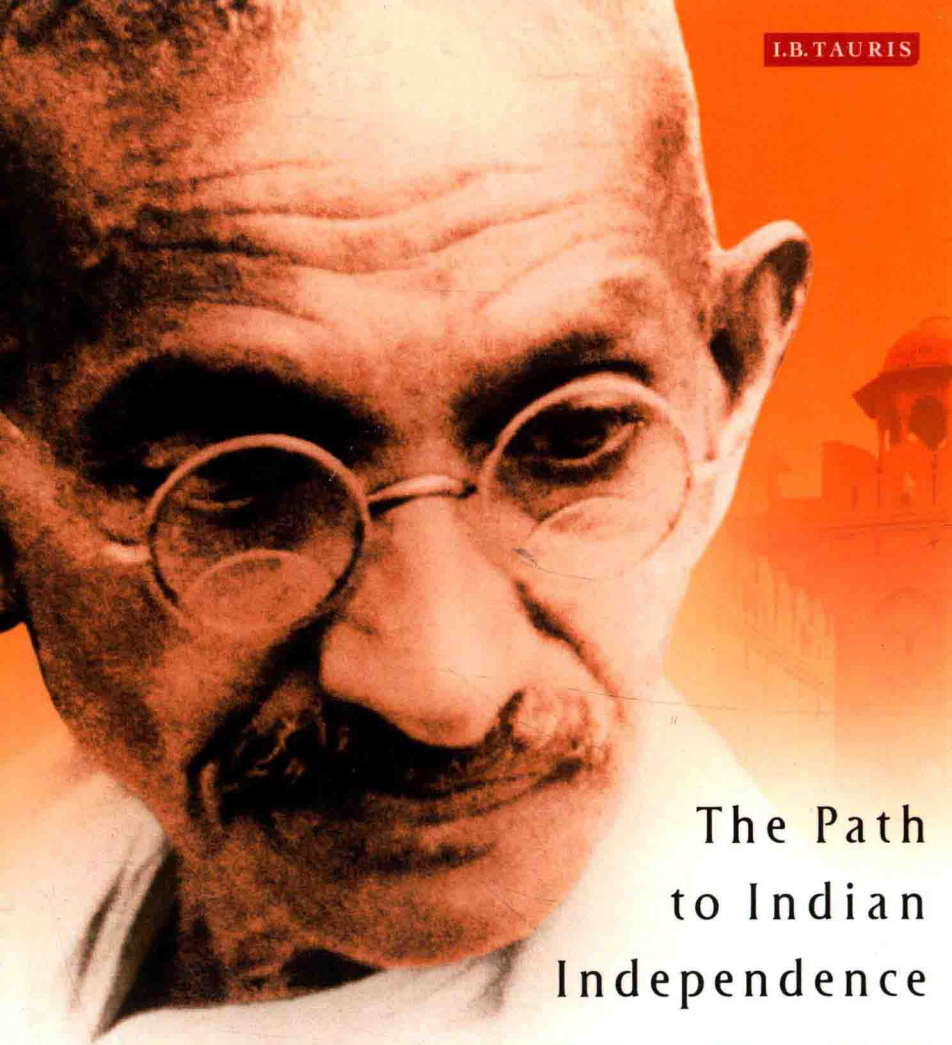

I.B.TAURIS

The Path to Indian Independence

GANDHI and NATIONALISM

SIMONE PANTER-BRICK

Foreword by WM. ROGER LOUIS

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I.B. TAURIS
LONDON · NEW YORK

Published in 2012 by I.B.Tauris & Co Ltd
6 Salem Road, London W2 4BU
175 Fifth Avenue, New York NY 10010
www.ibtauris.com

Distributed in the United States and Canada Exclusively by Palgrave Macmillan
175 Fifth Avenue, New York NY 10010

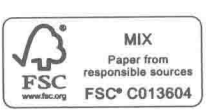
Library of South Asian History and Culture: 3

ISBN 978 1 78076 081 0

A full CIP record for this book is available from the British Library
A full CIP record for this book is available from the Library of Congress

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: available

Printed and bound by CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon, CR0 4YY
from camera-ready copy edited and supplied by the author



Simone Panter-Brick is a renowned expert on Mahatma Gandhi's political thought and action. Her previous publications include *Gandhi and the Middle East: Jews, Arabs and Imperial Interests* (I.B.Tauris) and *Gandhi Against Machiavellism: Non-violence in Politics*. She holds a doctorate in Law and Political Science from the University of Nancy, France.

'Simone Panter-Brick's elegant new study attends to the stages and evolution of Gandhi's nationalism. Brimming with insight and written with a sure and fluid hand, Panter-Brick carefully navigates through and makes sense of the often dramatic turns in Gandhi's political vision and strategies for attaining independence.'

Karuna Mantena,
Associate Professor of Political Science,
Yale University

'Was Gandhi a nationalist? This engrossing and intricate study illuminates the thought and action of Churchill's "half-naked fakir" as he resisted anti-Indian legislation in South Africa in his younger days, accepted separation from the British Empire in middle age, and labored to prevent the partition of the subcontinent late in life. Any reader wishing to fathom just what India meant to Gandhi should read this book, the work of an author who understands "Gandhianity" and "Indianity" almost as well as the Mahatma did himself.'

Paul Jankowski,
Ray Ginger Professor of History,
Brandeis University

To Catherine and Mark

porque el amor da tal vida,
cuando más ciego va siendo

San Juan de la Cruz (1542–1591)

FOREWORD

One of the virtues of Simone Panter-Brick's perceptive study of Gandhi as a nationalist is to make clear Gandhi's own view of nationalism in relation to his priorities. He was a nationalist 'of a sort.' The qualification is important. Nationalism was a subject on which Gandhi held relatively straightforward views. It could be understood, in his own definition, simply as India's quest for freedom. But 'freedom' itself meant different things to Gandhi, and went beyond mere liberation from colonial rule. His sometimes contradictory interpretations of the term and his ideas about the means to achieve freedom changed over time.

In the first period of his life, until his return to India from South Africa at the beginning of the First World War, he believed that equality and eventually independence could be achieved by keeping good faith with the British. He changed tactics in the inter-war years, with the famous non-violent resistance campaign that became known as *Satyagraha*. It is easy to forget how revolutionary Gandhi's strategy appeared to his contemporaries. One of the few Englishmen who came close to recognising the full significance of the spiritual as well as the political dimension of Gandhi's personality, Lord Halifax (or Lord Irwin as he was known at the time) remarked that it seemed as if Gandhi had been dropped off from a different planet. In the last phase of his life, from 1942 to his death in 1948, Gandhi reverted to seeking cooperation with the British as a way to prevent partition.

Keeping India unified was one of his foremost priorities. Ultimately, the national family with a common identity might be legally divided but still remain united on the principle of equality and the resolution of disputes by peaceful means.

Simone Panter-Brick's emphasis on 'his own brand of nationalism' helps to explain Gandhi's erroneous belief that Muslims and Hindus, Sikhs and other minorities, could live harmoniously after the British departure. Gandhi used to say that he was Hindu to his very core, but in fact he differed from most of those of his time in the way he absolutely regarded Muslims and others as equals. Yet neither Gandhi's tolerance, nor, for that matter, the principles of equality proclaimed by the Indian National Congress, could eradicate suspicion among Muslims that British withdrawal would lead to a Hindu Raj. It was this suspicion that in turn helps to explain the insistence of Jinnah and the Muslim League on Pakistan. Gandhi also differed from many of his fellow nationalists in the extent to which he was open to compromise. He rejected the two-nation idea and the demand for parity or the equal sharing of power by the Muslim League and the Indian National Congress. But he was quite prepared to work towards the possibility of a Pakistan province within an all-India federation.

He was even prepared to offer Jinnah the opportunity to become prime minister. The proposal to make Jinnah the head of a new, united federal state never had the remotest chance of being accepted by Gandhi's fellow nationalist leaders including Jawaharlal Nehru and Vallabhbhai Patel. But Simone Panter-Brick provides an historical corrective to many accounts by tracing the antecedents of the idea and the way in which Gandhi remained at the center of the debate. She further reveals a strand in what many have described as Gandhi's Machiavellian thought. Though Jinnah might in theory have become prime minister, he would still have been subject to the will of the Indian National Congress majority. And it is in regard to governance and stability that she makes perhaps her most original point in her account of the period before independence. There were no fixed ideas and no common agreement on the names for the successor states. It was commonly assumed that they would be Hindustan and Pakistan. Although Gandhi was by no means alone in thinking of 'India' as

the successor state, the inspiration coincided with the pattern of his thought. India would inherit the British Raj. There would thus be a continuity of tradition and identity. Pakistan might be partitioned from India, but India itself would preserve the unity, integrity, and identity of the state.

Gandhi's nationalism was larger than the struggle for independence. Thus there is imaginative utility in Simone Panter-Brick's invention of the word *gandhianity* to refer to the whole of the Gandhian vision and the reasons for its enduring inspiration. His example of civil disobedience in the cause of equality motivated future generations, not only in India but also throughout the world. His sense of social conscience and tolerance is now more a global than an Indian phenomenon, above all as a moral shield for vulnerable minorities.

Wm. Roger Louis
Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center
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INTRODUCTION

GANDHIAN NATIONALISM IN ONE SONG AND THREE CARTOONS

This book is about the world of Mahatma Gandhi, and its influence on Indian nationalism. It does not dwell at length on the non-violent campaigns for the liberation of India: it focuses mainly on the interludes and armistices between those campaigns. It observes how, during those periods, Gandhi changed his political opinions about nationalism in the Indian context – for which purpose I coin the word *indianity*, referring to a *prise de conscience* of the identity of the Indian nation. I group these meaningful changes into three periods. His nationalism was at first compatible with allegiance to the British Empire. He later rebelled against it. Last, he sought to save his country from partition – in a way reminiscent of the story of King Solomon judging over two claimants. He was one of these claimants, identifying his soul with the map of India, as illustrated so vividly in Figure 1.

Thus, the emphasis in this book is not on the concept of non-violence – well known to any reader – but on tactics and strategies used to achieve independence, and also on the consistent line of thought in apparently inconsistent decisions. Motives and goals are questioned, Gandhi's and those of his rival Jinnah, the second claimant for his part of India. Nobody is sure about the latter's political game. His nationalism, too, is assessed and scrutinised, especially as it affected Gandhi.

Figure 1: Gandhi as India

In the twenty-first century, nationalism has reverberated in so many traumatic creeds and experiences. The pursuit of nationalism usually begets violence. More rarely is it achieved by means of non-violence. An examination of Gandhi's nationalism shows the global relevance of his path to independence, the constraints on his political actions, the nefarious disruptions of violence, and, through it all, his indomitable faith in a better, Gandhian world: in what I shall call *gandhianity*, namely the world of Mahatma Gandhi.

Nationalism and the Mahatma

'Nationalism' has at least two meanings: 'devotion to one's own nation, patriotic feelings, principles or efforts' and a 'movement favouring political independence in a country that is controlled by another or is part of another.'[1]

The first definition fits the nationalism of Mahatma Gandhi like a glove. Devotion, fervour, patriotism, and a vocation to act accordingly in the political field were qualities that made Gandhi a politician early in his life. And the nation he was devoted to was, of course, India.

But nationalism in the second sense – which, in Gandhi's case, meant demanding India's independence from foreign rule – applied to only half of his political career. As a matter of fact, Gandhi, the leader of the movement that led India to independence, and that initiated the great current of decolonisation in the twentieth century, was not a nationalist in the sense of the second definition for most of his political life. Born in 1869, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi became a nationalist and was dubbed a *mahatma* (great soul) as he was reaching his fifties, leading his first liberation movement in 1920.

Nationalism implies a belief in the *congruence of the nation and the state.* A nationalist movement therefore aims at liberation from a foreign yoke. Its leader, if successful, achieves the independence of all the territory belonging to the nation.

This was not Gandhi's initial objective. Love of his country made him work for the good of his nation as he saw it then. And he saw the good of his nation to lie in remaining part of the British Empire. He therefore identified not only with the Indian nation, but also with the British nation and, moreover, with the British state. As an Indian, he considered himself a citizen of the Empire.

When this allegiance to Britain foundered, Gandhi put his formidable energy in the service of rebellion, becoming a belligerent reformer, a skilled mediator, an advocate of lost causes, a political activist, and a self-made leader of his fellow Indians, in striking contrast to his previously unfailing loyalty to the Crown.

The nationalist dream of the last third of his life – liberation from foreign rule – failed, however, because independence was achieved for two nations, not for one, when Gandhi's India lost territory to new-born Pakistan.

The focus of this book rests on these three successive periods in the evolution of Gandhi's nationalism – loyalty to the British Empire, rebellion against it, and the demand for Pakistan – all of which shaped the evolution of Gandhi's politics in the independence movement.

Devotion, Illustrated in a Revolutionary Song

Devotion was the very marrow of Gandhi's political and religious life – the quintessence of his thoughts and deeds. In this sense, he was a nationalist to the core. Interestingly, the word 'nationalist' dates back to 1830, and the word 'nationalism' to 1798.[2] They were engendered by the political swing of French revolutions, in 1789 and 1830, and the Napoleonic wars in between. No wonder then that Gandhi's command of *do or die* at the start of his last campaign against British rule in 1942 echoed the sentiments of those French revolutionaries who sang poignantly of their burning love for the homeland:

Mourir pour la patrie	To die for one's country
C'est le sort le plus beau	Is the most sublime,
Le plus digne d'envie.	Most enviable destiny.
(Refrain)	(Chorus)
Par la voix du canon d'alarme	Raising the alarm by cannon roar,
La France appelle ses enfants.	France summons her children.
Allons, dit le soldat: aux armes,	Go, take up arms, the soldier calls,
C'est ma Mère, je la défends!	She is my Mother, her I defend.

The essence of nationalism – sacrifice and pride – is fittingly and forcefully conveyed in this revolutionary chant of eighteenth-century Europe. It calls to mind the startling opening sentence in Elie Kedourie's book *Nationalism*: 'Nationalism is a doctrine invented in Europe at the beginning of the nineteenth century.'[3]

If that is true, Gandhi, reared in the British courts of law, inhaled the sweet promise of the freedom of democracy from his days as a law student in London in the late 1880s. He felt exhilarated by the European winds of freedom until the end of his days.

Gandhian Nationalism, Sketched in Three Cartoons

Gandhi's nationalism, in the second meaning of the word, fostered different priorities in his political life. Three of them are selected here as being the most meaningful of his career, the most representative of his successive aims, and the driving force behind his strategy.

Let us invent three nationalistic Gandhis as a way to provide some insight into this exceptional statesman. They will add up to a list of what Judith Brown calls 'invented' Gandhis: 'To historians one of the most interesting aspects of the career of Mahatma Gandhi is the way he was, and still is, continuously "reinvented."'[4]

Let us describe them in a manner that will exaggerate the core of resilient features that compose Gandhi's nationalism. Let us imagine three political sketches that will convey the evolution of Gandhi's political thought – in the same way that a nationalist song can communicate the quality of Gandhi's patriotism. Let us conjure three cartoons of three Gandhis who embody Elie Kedourie's 'invented' doctrine.

The National Anthem Cartoon

The first sketch relates to the period before the end of the First World War, when our 'hero' joined in the singing of the British national anthem. The anthem was sung at the meetings of the Natal Indian Congress (affiliated with the Indian National Congress), which Gandhi had founded in May 1894. In spite of being in those days a keen defender of Indian interests, he never failed to proclaim his allegiance to the Queen – or King – as a citizen of Her Majesty's Empire: 'With careful perseverance I learnt the tune of the "national anthem" and joined in the singing whenever it was sung. Whenever there was an occasion for the expression of loyalty without fuss or ostentation, I readily took part in it.'[5]