

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-14602-9 - Hind Swaraj and Other Writings, Centenary Edition

M. K. Gandhi

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

*Hind Swaraj* is Mahatma Gandhi's fundamental work. It is key to understanding not only his life and thoughts, but also the politics of South Asia in the first half of the twentieth century. Celebrating 100 years since *Hind Swaraj* was first published in a newspaper, this centenary edition includes a new Preface and Editor's Introduction, as well as a new chapter on 'Gandhi and the "Four Canonical Aims of Life"'. The volume presents a critical edition of the 1910 text of *Hind Swaraj*, fully annotated and including Gandhi's own Preface and Foreword (not found in other editions). Anthony J. Parel sets the work in its historical and political contexts and analyses the significance of Gandhi's experiences in England and South Africa. The second part of the volume contains some of Gandhi's other writings, including his correspondence with Tolstoy and Nehru.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-14602-9 - Hind Swaraj and Other Writings, Centenary Edition

M. K. Gandhi

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

CAMBRIDGE TEXTS IN MODERN POLITICS

EDITORS

John Dunn

*King's College, Cambridge*

Geoffrey Hawthorn

*Faculty of Social and Political Science, University of Cambridge*

Political aspirations in the twentieth century are usually expressed in the political languages of Western Europe and North America. In Latin America, Africa and Asia, however, in the movements of 'national liberation' from colonial rule, in the justification of new states, and in the opposition to such states, these aspirations have also drawn on other traditions, and invented new ones. Outside the West, the languages of modern politics and the ideas these languages embody are nowhere simple, and almost nowhere derivatively Western. But for students and scholars access to the relevant texts is not easy.

*Cambridge Texts in Modern Politics* are intended to remedy this by providing editions in English (often for the first time) of texts which have been important in the politics of Latin America, Africa and Asia in the later nineteenth century and twentieth century, and which will continue in importance into the twenty-first. The editions will be authoritative and accessible, and can be used with confidence by students and teachers as a source. Each text will be edited by a specialist in the history and politics of the area concerned, whose introduction will explain its context, provenance and significance. Readers will also be provided with a chronology of events, brief biographies of relevant individuals and guides to further reading.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-14602-9 - Hind Swaraj and Other Writings, Centenary Edition

M. K. Gandhi

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

CAMBRIDGE TEXTS IN MODERN POLITICS

M. K. GANDHI

*Hind Swaraj* and other writings

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-14602-9 - Hind Swaraj and Other Writings, Centenary Edition

M. K. Gandhi

Frontmatter

[More information](#)



Portrait of Mahatma Gandhi in London, 1909

© Dinodia Images / Alamy.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-14602-9 - Hind Swaraj and Other Writings, Centenary Edition

M. K. Gandhi

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

M. K. GANDHI

\*

# *Hind Swaraj*

and other writings

Centenary Edition

edited by

ANTHONY J. PAREL

*University of Calgary, Canada*



**CAMBRIDGE**  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-14602-9 - Hind Swaraj and Other Writings, Centenary Edition

M. K. Gandhi

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi

Cambridge University Press

The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)

Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9780521146029](http://www.cambridge.org/9780521146029)

© in the editorial matter, Anthony J. Parel 2009

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 1997

Centenary edition 2009

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library*

ISBN 978-0-521-19703-8 Hardback

ISBN 978-0-521-14602-9 Paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party Internet websites referred to in this publication, and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-14602-9 - Hind Swaraj and Other Writings, Centenary Edition

M. K. Gandhi

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

*To Rolande*

\*

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-14602-9 - Hind Swaraj and Other Writings, Centenary Edition

M. K. Gandhi

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## Contents

\*

<i>Preface to centenary edition</i>	page [xi]
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	[xii]
<i>Editor's introduction to the centenary edition</i>	[xiv]
<i>Editor's introduction to the 1997 edition</i>	[xxv]
<i>A note on the history of the text</i>	[lxxvi]
<i>Principal events in Gandhi's life</i>	[lxxviii]
<i>Biographical synopses</i>	[lxxxii]
<i>Guide to further reading</i>	[lxxxix]
<i>Glossary and abbreviations</i>	[xc]
<i>HIND SWARAJ</i>	[1]
<i>SUPPLEMENTARY WRITINGS</i>	[125]
<i>Gandhi's letter to H. S. L. Polak</i>	[127]
<i>Gandhi's letter to Lord Ampthill</i>	[132]
<i>Preface to Gandhi's edition of the English translation of Leo Tolstoy's Letter to a Hindoo</i>	[135]
<i>Gandhi-Tolstoy letters</i>	[138]
<i>Gandhi and the 'Four Canonical Aims' of Life (Purusharthas)</i>	[139]
<i>Gandhi-Nehru dialogue</i>	[143]
<i>Economic development and moral development (1916)</i>	[153]

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-14602-9 - Hind Swaraj and Other Writings, Centenary Edition

M. K. Gandhi

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

x \* *Contents*

Gandhi on machinery (1919–47) [162]

Constructive programme: its meaning  
and place (1941, rev. 1945) [169]

Gandhi's political vision: the Pyramid vs the  
Oceanic Circle (1946) [181]

Draft Constitution of Congress (1948) [184]

*Bibliography* [187]

*Index* [193]

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-14602-9 - Hind Swaraj and Other Writings, Centenary Edition

M. K. Gandhi

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## Preface to the centenary edition

\*

The centenary of *Hind Swaraj* and recent developments in Gandhi scholarship have prompted the issuing of a revised centenary edition. The discovery that Gandhi had made the theory of the ‘canonical aims of life’ (*purusharthas*) the framework of his thought is the most significant of these developments (Parel 2006, 2008). The Introduction to this edition takes due note of this. Supporting evidence from Gandhi’s writings has been added. They include the Introduction and ‘Farewell’ to his *Autobiography*, the Introduction to his translation of the *Bhagavad Gita* and his ‘Foreword’ to *Gokhale’s Speeches*. The Gandhi–Nehru dialogue has been updated in view of the new materials that have come to light. Finally, new footnotes on such key topics as ‘civilisation’, ‘technology’ and the place of the English language in India have been added. On the debit side, in the interest of keeping this edition within reasonable length, the Gandhi–Wyberg letters and materials relating to Gandhi’s ‘Quit India’ speech have been dropped.

Anthony J. Parel

Calgary

16 March 2009

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-14602-9 - Hind Swaraj and Other Writings, Centenary Edition

M. K. Gandhi

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## Acknowledgements

\*

In preparing this work for publication I have been very fortunate in receiving generous help from a number of colleagues from different parts of the world – Canada, India, Great Britain, the United States and South Africa – and it gives me great pleasure to express my gratitude to each of them. T. K. N. Unnithan first encouraged me to undertake this project; Christopher A. Bayly, Philip Charrier, Margaret Chatterjee, Dennis Dalton, James Hunt, Bhikhu Parekh and Anil Sethi read various versions of my introduction and notes and suggested ways of improving them. Jayshree Joshi, Nathubhai Joshi, Ramanbhai Modi and C. N. Patel spent many hours with me going over the Gujarati background of Gandhi and *Hind Swaraj*. Umesh Vyas very generously checked the references to the Gujarati text. Richard Bingle, Martin Moir and Edward Moulton helped me find valuable bibliographical data. Irene Joshi of the University of Washington Library found for me the Tolstoy–Taraknath Das material. Hasim Seedat of Durban put at my disposal his private Gandhi library.

I am most grateful to the Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute for a Senior Research Fellowship for the 1990 fall term and to the University of Calgary for a Killam Resident Fellowship for the 1992 winter term. A Visiting Fellowship at Clare Hall, Cambridge, for the 1994 Lent and Easter terms helped me greatly in the final stages of this work. Carolyn Andres of the Department of Political Science, University of Calgary, has been very diligent in getting the typescript ready.

My special thanks go to John Dunn and Geoffrey Hawthorn for inviting me to contribute to their series and for their editorial advice.

John Haslam and Anne Dunbar-Nobes of Cambridge University Press have exercised mahatma-like patience and skill in getting this volume ready for publication. To them my sincere thanks.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-14602-9 - Hind Swaraj and Other Writings, Centenary Edition

M. K. Gandhi

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

*Acknowledgements* \* xiii

It is with great pleasure that I thank the Navajivan Trust and the Nehru Trust for their permission to use materials under their control.

Finally I thank my long-suffering wife Rolande, who, Kasturba-like, endured cheerfully my absences from home on visits to India, South Africa and Cambridge. This work is dedicated to her in partial fulfilment of my family obligations and abiding love.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-14602-9 - Hind Swaraj and Other Writings, Centenary Edition

M. K. Gandhi

Frontmatter

[More information](#)*Editor's introduction to the centenary edition*

\*

The framing of its argument makes *Hind Swaraj* an original work of modern Indian political philosophy. The argument is that India is in need of a systemic transformation – political, economic, ethical, aesthetic and spiritual. Being systemic in nature and affecting key aspects of national life, these transformations, if they are to succeed, should take place more or less simultaneously. Politics, economics, ethics, aesthetics and spirituality, according to Gandhi, should operate interactively and not in isolation from one another.

The argument for this is made in light of the theory of the ‘canonical aims of life’ (*purusharthas*) (see below). The use of this Indian intellectual framework makes *Hind Swaraj* the first text of modern Indian political philosophy. As such, it marks the beginning of the emancipation of the modern Indian political mind from dependency on Western frameworks for understanding India and its problems.

The argument hinges on four major themes – nationalism, civilisation, satyagraha and swaraj (the themes of ‘machinery’ or technology and education being subsumed under civilisation). Before we examine the way they are analysed, we need to mention briefly the book’s dialogue form, and the historical identity of those engaged in the dialogue.

## GANDHI'S INTERLOCUTORS

The dialogue form is integral to Gandhi’s argument, especially since he was seeking to bring about the above-mentioned transformations peacefully, through persuasion, not coercion. He was making his case for dialogue and persuasion at a time when the key thinkers everywhere

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-14602-9 - Hind Swaraj and Other Writings, Centenary Edition

M. K. Gandhi

Frontmatter

[More information](#)*Editor's introduction to the centenary edition* \* xv

else in the world were advocating transformation through violence, whether revolutionary, terrorist, anarchist or nihilist.

Gandhi's interlocutors in *Hind Swaraj* belong to two camps – those opposed to his philosophy and those in favour of it. Among those opposed, are, first, V.D. Savarkar and Shyamji Krishna Varma, the celebrated Indian Spencerian. They want to transform India into a Hindu ethnic state by the use of violence, including terrorist violence. The second group wants to transform India into a Marxist state through revolutionary violence, Virendranath Chattopadhyaya (a brother of Sarojini Naidu) being its chief proponent. Then there are the Muslim separatists (as opposed to the Muslim nationalists) who want to define India along religious lines. Gandhi does not mention by name any specific member of this group, but its position is duly recognised (*HS*, 50). Finally, among those who are open to Gandhi's ideas are Pranjivan Mehta (Mehta 1911) and the later Tarak Nath Das (thanks to whom we have Tolstoy's *Letter to a Hindoo*). Anyone who reads *Hind Swaraj* today would do well to keep in mind the arguments of these interlocutors.

#### INDIA: A CIVIC NATION

Any sensible project seeking the transformation of India should have a clear idea of what India is and who an Indian is. In other words, it should start with a definition of 'Hind' in *Hind Swaraj*. What is 'Hind'? Is it an inchoate collection of castes and tribes professing different religions and speaking a multitude of languages? Or, is it a civic nation or at least one capable of becoming such? Gandhi opts for the latter. A civic nation, a *praja* as he calls it, is a political community whose basic unit is the individual considered as a bearer of fundamental rights and a subject capable of swaraj – i.e., self-determination and self-development. However, in order for India to become such a nation, a transformation in India's consciousness would be needed.

This puts in question the status of the existing religious consciousness. A civic transformation of India can occur only if a transformation in the existing religious consciousness also occurs. Otherwise, there

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-14602-9 - Hind Swaraj and Other Writings, Centenary Edition

M. K. Gandhi

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xvi \* *Editor's introduction to the centenary edition*

would be unresolved tension between the old religious consciousness and the new civic consciousness. It can be resolved, however, only if a change occurs in religious consciousness. Such a change is precisely what Gandhi advocates – a change from the closed concept of religion to a pluralist concept of the same. The following is its basic premise: ‘there is a religion that underlies all religions’ (HS, 41).

That is to say, there is religion in the singular and there are religions in the plural. The first represents the essence of religion, viz., the quest for transcendence and the movement of the individual towards the ultimate source of all that is, however one names it, whether Brahman, God, Allah or Truth. The second represents historical religions, such as Hinduism, Christianity, Islam, etc. They are the subspecies of religion in the singular and paths that converge to the same point (HS, 51). They therefore have equal validity and deserve equal respect. From this arises the new Gandhian ethic: *sarva dharma sama bhav* (equal respect for all historical religions).

Gandhi believed that his theory of religious pluralism could reconcile the religious consciousness of every religious group in India with the new all-India civic or secular consciousness. Such reconciliation would permit religious consciousness to yield to civic consciousness in the limited sphere of politics, without undermining the integrity of religion. If such reconciliation were to take place, it would permit every Indian to transcend his or her particular religious consciousness and develop a common all-India secular national consciousness. *Hind Swaraj* advocates precisely the evolution of such a national consciousness: ‘those who are conscious of the spirit of nationality do not interfere with one another’s religion. If they do, they are not fit to be considered a nation ... The Hindus, the Mahomedans, the Parsees and the Christians who have made India their country are fellow countrymen’ (HS, 50–1).

Thus, Gandhi emerges as the promoter of an all-India secular national consciousness that is capable of protecting the integrity of the religious consciousness of the followers of every religion. The ethic of his religious pluralism has the resources to accommodate the needs of both religion and civic nationalism. Whereas his concept of

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-14602-9 - Hind Swaraj and Other Writings, Centenary Edition

M. K. Gandhi

Frontmatter

[More information](#)*Editor's introduction to the centenary edition* \* xvii

India broadens the vision of humanity in every Indian, Savarkar's concept of India definitely narrows the same. In defining India and Indians in *Hind Swaraj* the way he does, he is responding *in advance* both to Savarkar's *Hindutva: Who is a Hindu?* and to the separatists' theory of India as two nations.

#### A NEW INDIAN CIVILISATION

*Hind Swaraj's* next concern is with the transformation of Indian civilisation. The object of Gandhi's famous attack on modern civilisation (more broadly, modernity) is to warn Indians against it. He is not exalting Indian civilisation in its present state of decline (*HS*, 68–9); he is defending only its foundations (*HS*, 64).

To get Gandhi right here, we have to know what he means by civilisation. He means two things by it. First, civilisation is a mode of life that points to the path of duty (*HS*, 65). Secondly, civilisation is a mode of life that pursues what it regards as 'object of life' (*HS*, 34). The original Gujarati term for 'object of life' is the philosophically loaded term *purushartha*. To understand any civilisation whatsoever, then, we have to understand the 'object of life' that it pursues or does not pursue.

The defect of modern civilisation is that it pursues 'bodily-welfare' (*HS*, 34) at the expense of spiritual welfare. In the language of the theory of 'the canonical aims of life', it pursues *artha* and *kama*, and neglects *dharma* and the pursuit of *moksha*. There is, in other words, a fatal structural imbalance in modernity.

We are reminded here of the body-soul split that occurred in the modern West. Introduced by Descartes, and systematised by Hobbes, this split ultimately presented 'man' as essentially body – an organism moved by voluntary motions, the senses, speech, imagination, science and instrumental reason. Modern science and technology help conquer nature in the interest of 'bodily welfare'. 'He that is to govern a whole nation must see in himself not this man or that particular man but mankind', Hobbes had written (Hobbes 10). By 'mankind' he meant mankind minus the spiritual soul.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-14602-9 - Hind Swaraj and Other Writings, Centenary Edition

M. K. Gandhi

Frontmatter

[More information](#)xviii \* *Editor's introduction to the centenary edition*

Gandhi joins what Hobbes had cut asunder, and restores the soul and its welfare to their rightful place. He wants civilisation – every civilisation – to pay equal attention to the welfare of body and soul.

What is defective in current Indian civilisation is its overemphasis on other-worldliness and asceticism (on moksha) and underemphasis on this worldliness and engagement with the world (on artha). What Indian civilisation needs is a realignment of ‘the canonical aims of life’, and an end to the predominance of the ascetic tradition over culture.

Here Gandhi has a surprise for us. The new civilisation that India needs has to be mediated by the modern type of political and economic institutions and practices, and Western values such as rights, civil liberty, gender equality, economic development, rule of law, civic nationalism, etc. It would also need a major aesthetic facelift of India affecting public health, hygiene, sanitation, the arts, architecture, and village and urban renewal. He watched with horror modern Indian cities becoming ‘the real plague spots’ of India (*CW* 9: 479). His concern for aesthetics – should anyone doubt it – is the reason why he asks the readers of *Hind Swaraj* to read Tolstoy’s *What is Art?* and Ruskin’s *The Political Economy of Art* (*HS*, 118).

What is remarkable in all this is the way Gandhi detaches the Western elements that he takes from their Hobbsean–Benthamite framework and integrates them within the Indian framework of ‘the canonical aims of life’.

#### SATYAGRAHA

Arguably, there is hardly a better example of modern creative Indian political thinking than the thinking that produced satyagraha. Gandhi transforms an existing political practice – civil disobedience – into something new and Indian. He does so in two co-ordinated ways. First, he makes the moral transformation of the civil disobedient a condition for the practice of satyagraha. The four moral virtues – truthfulness, detachment from possessiveness, celibacy and courage – are the means of bringing about the required transformation. Secondly, he makes the

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-14602-9 - Hind Swaraj and Other Writings, Centenary Edition

M. K. Gandhi

Frontmatter

[More information](#)*Editor's introduction to the centenary edition \* xix*

Indian virtue of non-violence (*ahimsa*) a characteristic feature of satyagraha.

Satyagraha established Gandhi's reputation as a political philosopher. What we need to keep in mind, however, is that satyagraha's intellectual framework is Indian, not Western. Its effectiveness depends both on its rational techniques and on the moral transformation of the civil disobedient. Moral praxis and political praxis have to interact with each other.

#### SWARAJ

The establishment of the truth about swaraj was the real reason for writing *Hind Swaraj* (HS, 117). His interlocutors – Savarkar, the Marxists and the separatists – had their own notions of swaraj. By swaraj they meant political swaraj, viz., the replacement of British rule by Indian rule. Gandhi feared this would only result in the continuation of 'English rule without the Englishman' (HS, 27). The swaraj that he wanted required not only the political swaraj of the nation but also the spiritual swaraj of the citizen.

Gandhi's swaraj included political swaraj and economic swaraj (CW 39: 389), and, as noted, aesthetic renewal as well. However, even this would not be enough to have complete swaraj. To have complete swaraj the citizen would need the enjoyment of spiritual swaraj – inward freedom – achieved through spiritual transformation.

Spiritual swaraj has two component elements: self-discipline and self-transcendence. Self-discipline is praxis that contributes to the management of one's antisocial passions such as greed, covetousness, possessive individualism, the desire to dominate others, untruthfulness and egocentrism. Gandhi's ideal of a self-disciplined person is the *sthitaprajna* of *Gita* (II: 54-72). Self-discipline is difficult to achieve: the best one can do is to move towards it through praxis. The underlying assumption is that humans are morally fragile beings, requiring constant self-correction. Gandhi was fully aware of his own moral fragility, which was the reason why from about 1889 till the end of life he recited the famous

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-14602-9 - Hind Swaraj and Other Writings, Centenary Edition

M. K. Gandhi

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xx \* *Editor's introduction to the centenary edition*

*Gita* verses mentioned above, daily, morning and evening, in the form of meditative prayer. Self-discipline as self-correction for Gandhi did not mean the asceticism of the old type. The pursuit of self-discipline was consistent with – indeed, it required – the life-affirming pursuit of the ‘canonical aims of life’.

Self-transcendence is the pursuit of *spiritual* enlightenment or *tattva jnana* – deep experience of the truth of things. Spiritual exercise such as prayer and meditation prepares one for this. The goal here is the orientation of the acting person towards Truth and freedom from egoism. The spiritual capital accumulated in this experience is invested in action in the fields of politics, economics and social reform. Thus, the pursuit of spiritual transcendence promotes the disinterested service (*seva*) of fellow citizens without regard to their gender, religion, caste or class. The pursuit of self-transcendence too is consistent with the life-affirming pursuit of the ‘canonical aims of life’.

The most striking aspect of spiritual swaraj is its *experiential* character. If Indians – especially those aspiring to power – can have an experience of spiritual swaraj, India as a civic nation would be the better for it. Spiritual swaraj is also socially dynamic. Gandhi writes:

And in this you have a definition of Swaraj. It is Swaraj when we learn to rule ourselves. It is, therefore, in the palm of our hands. Do not consider this Swaraj to be a dream. Here there is no idea of sitting still. The Swaraj that I wish to picture before you and me is such that, after we have once realised it, we will endeavor to the end our lifetime to persuade others to do likewise. But such Swaraj has to be experienced by each one for himself. (*HS*, 71)

He returns to the idea of experience later in the text: only those who have experienced ‘the force of the soul within themselves’ would be able to enjoy full swaraj, and liberate themselves completely from the impact of colonialism and modernity (*HS*, 114).

To repeat, the combination of political swaraj and spiritual swaraj should be sought in action. That being the case, swaraj should mean not only the enjoyment of one’s rights but also respect for the rights of

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-14602-9 - Hind Swaraj and Other Writings, Centenary Edition

M. K. Gandhi

Frontmatter

[More information](#)*Editor's introduction to the centenary edition* \* xxi

others. Above all, it should mean national reconciliation of religions, castes, tribes and classes, and the adoption of civic nationalism in place of ethnic nationalism, the Marxist state and the separatist religious state. Gandhi does not present his case for swaraj as an option among many - among the notions of swaraj that his interlocutors propose. He presents his swaraj alone as true swaraj, and rejects the other three as untruthful. There is no ducking or weaving in his response to his interlocutors. He believes he has truth on his side.

This is also Gandhi's response to the followers of modern Western political philosophy, which traces its origin to Machiavelli and Hobbes. Those who rely *only* on this philosophy tend to believe that the split between body and soul is necessary and final, that the pursuit of spiritual transcendence is anti-human and anti-modern, and that the modern state can justify virtually any end that it pursues. *Hind Swaraj* questions the philosophical foundations of all this.

GANDHI'S THEORY OF THE 'CANONICAL AIMS OF LIFE'  
(PURUSHARTHAS)

What gives coherence and originality to the analysis of the four themes discussed above is the updated theory of the 'canonical aims of life' (*purusharthas*). *Purushartha*, as we have seen, means 'aim of life'. Humans are life-affirming, world-accepting, goal-setting and goal-pursuing beings. They pursue ethical integrity (dharma), wealth and political power (artha), pleasure (kama) and spiritual transcendence (moksha). The co-ordinated pursuit of these goals is indispensable for a well-lived life. Each goal has its validity and relative autonomy. At the same time, they, taken together, constitute a system of goals. This means, among other things, that a balance should be maintained in their pursuit. No one goal should be allowed to dominate the system. Their pursuit in unison constitutes the good life.

According to *Hind Swaraj*, the pursuit of 'the canonical aims of life' should inform the lives of individuals, nations and civilisations. Gandhi is being an innovator here: Indian philosophy for centuries had

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-14602-9 - *Hind Swaraj and Other Writings*, Centenary Edition

M. K. Gandhi

Frontmatter

[More information](#)xxii \* *Editor's introduction to the centenary edition*

overemphasised the goal of moksha and underemphasised that of artha. He seeks to bring about a realignment of the 'canonical aims' and restore politics and economics (artha) to their legitimate and honourable place in the system of goals.

The depth of the philosophy of *Hind Swaraj* can be seen only when studied within the framework of his theory of the 'canonical aims of life'. Let us review briefly how it handles the four major themes mentioned above. To take civic nationalism first: it is a secular force. It belongs to the sphere of artha. Yet it is supposed to operate in collaboration with the ethic of religious pluralism, which belongs to the sphere of dharma. Similarly, civilisation, the second theme: it seeks bodily welfare, which belongs to the sphere of artha and kama. At the same time, it should do so in conjunction with the pursuit of the welfare of the soul, which belongs to the spheres of dharma and moksha. Satyagraha is a secular praxis and, as such, it belongs to the sphere of artha. Yet in Gandhi's theory, it relies for its success on the ethics of certain moral virtues, which belong to the sphere of dharma. Finally, swaraj: it comprises political, economic, aesthetic, ethical, and spiritual elements. That is to say, swaraj requires the interactive pursuit of all the great goals of life.

*Hind Swaraj* presents a comprehensive vision of human existence. Critics sometimes tend to emphasise one or other of the component parts of Gandhi's philosophy. This is true especially in the cases of his philosophy of non-violence, philosophy of religion and philosophy of politics. Such approaches are legitimate so long as they do not obscure his overall vision of life, with its emphasis on balance between the spiritual and the secular. His philosophy represents something that is greater than the sum of its parts. Readers of *Hind Swaraj* should aim to capture that 'something'.

#### GANDHI'S CURRENT 'INTERLOCUTORS'

A century on, the intellectual descendents of the original interlocutors of *Hind Swaraj* still challenge its philosophy. The ideological heirs of

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-14602-9 - Hind Swaraj and Other Writings, Centenary Edition

M. K. Gandhi

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

*Editor's introduction to the centenary edition* \* xxiii

Savarkar – the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh, the Vishva Hindu Parishad and the Bajrang Dal – want to turn India into an ethnic state. To this end, they are ready to use open violence against Indian Muslims, Christians, the Tribals and Scheduled Castes. Secondly, there are the Indian Marxists, Maoists and followers of Gramsci, who now dream of transforming India into a pale copy of China. They feel neither embarrassment nor compunction in adding insult to injury to Gandhi. Finally, there are the jihadists, who, in a bid to outflank nationalist Muslims, want to bring India into the orbit of what they call the new universal caliphate. In this, they rely on the teachings of such figures as Abul Ala Maududi (1903–79) and even Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi (1913–99).

Today's readers of *Hind Swaraj*, emulating Gandhi, have an obligation, I believe, to engage their interlocutors in serious intellectual dialogue. It is not enough to say that Gandhi, unlike them, interprets India from within a Gandhian framework. It is necessary to demonstrate that a Gandhian framework is better suited to bring about India's transformation than are their frameworks. And the demonstration has to be both theoretical and practical. It is not enough to know Gandhi's philosophy; it is necessary to put that knowledge to work for the actual transformation of society.

#### HOW TO READ *HIND SWARAJ* TODAY

V. S. Naipaul, the Nobel laureate, makes the startling claim that Indians love to talk about *Hind Swaraj* but not to read it. 'The book would not be read in India not even by scholars (and still hasn't been), but its name would often be taken as a milestone in the independence struggle, and it would be cherished as a holy object' (Naipaul 2008, 166–7). Whether Naipaul is right or not, his observation raises the question of how to read this text today. There are different ways of reading it. First, it should be read in its context and in our context, taking into account the arguments of both his original and current interlocutors. Secondly, it should be read in its Gujarati and English versions. For it is a bilingual and bicultural text that connects Indian thought and Western thought in a

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-14602-9 - Hind Swaraj and Other Writings, Centenary Edition

M. K. Gandhi

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xxiv \* *Editor's introduction to the centenary edition*

very original way. Thirdly, it should be read the way Gandhi read worthwhile books. He tells us in his *Autobiography* that his active life left him little time for reading. That only made him read all the more thoroughly what he did read. Thorough reading meant taking notes, and making even a paraphrase of what he read. We have records of such paraphrases, including those of Plato's *Apology* and Thoreau's *On the Duty of Civil Disobedience*. The most famous of these is of course *Sarvodaya*, his paraphrase of Ruskin's *Unto This Last*. And as the *Autobiography* tells us, he read this last work transformatively. It made him change his life.

Perhaps there is no better way of paying tribute to Gandhi in the centenary year of *Hind Swaraj* than reading it transformatively. If Indians can read it the way he read *Unto This Last*, India's transformation, to which this text is dedicated, is likely to come about peacefully and quickly.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-14602-9 - Hind Swaraj and Other Writings, Centenary Edition

M. K. Gandhi

Frontmatter

[More information](#)*Editor's introduction to the 1997 edition*

\*

*Hind Swaraj* is Gandhi's seminal work. It is also a work which he himself translated from Gujarati into English: no other work of his, not even the *Autobiography* (translated by his secretary), enjoys this distinction. As such, the English text of this work, which is being presented here, possesses an authority all of its own. It was this text that Tolstoy and Romain Rolland, Nehru and Rajaji read and commented upon. It was through this, not the Gujarati text, that he hoped, as he put it, 'to use the British race' for transmitting his 'mighty message of *ahimsa*' to the rest of the world (Watson 1969, 176). And it was to this text that he returned throughout his career as if to the source of his inspiration.

*Hind Swaraj* is the seed from which the tree of Gandhian thought has grown to its full stature. For those interested in Gandhi's thought in a general way, it is the right place to start, for it is here that he presents his basic ideas in their proper relationship to one another. And for those who wish to study his thought more methodically, it remains the norm by which to assess the theoretical significance of his other writings, including the *Autobiography*. It can also save them from the danger of otherwise getting drowned in the vast sea of Gandhian anthologies. No wonder that it has been called 'a very basic document for the study of Gandhi's thought' (M. Chatterjee 1983, 89), his 'confession of faith' (Nanda 1974, 66), 'a rather incendiary manifesto' (Erikson 1969, 217), 'a proclamation of ideological independence' (Dalton 1993, 16) and 'the nearest he came to producing a sustained work of political theory' (Brown 1989, 65). It has been compared to such diverse works as Rousseau's *Social Contract* (Heard 1938, 450), the *Spiritual Exercises* of St Ignatius Loyola (Catlin 1950, 215) and chapter IV of St Matthew or St Luke (*The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (hereafter cited as *CW*)).

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-14602-9 - *Hind Swaraj and Other Writings*, Centenary Edition

M. K. Gandhi

Frontmatter

[More information](#)xxvi \* *Editor's introduction to the 1997 edition*

10: viii). This last comparison, though its allusion to Jesus would have embarrassed Gandhi, still merits attention. Just as it is in these Gospel chapters that we find Jesus first announcing his messianic mission, so it is in *Hind Swaraj* that we find Gandhi first announcing his own life-mission. This is nothing other than showing the way for the moral regeneration of Indians and the political emancipation of India.

The very composition of *Hind Swaraj* has something of the heroic about it. It was written in ten days, between 13 and 22 November 1909, on board the ship *Kildonan Castle* on the author's return trip from England to South Africa, after what proved to be an abortive lobbying mission to London. The whole manuscript was written on the ship's stationery, and the writing went on at such a furious pace that when the right hand got tired, Gandhi continued with the left: forty of the 275 manuscript pages were written by the left hand. And he wrote as if under inspiration. In the entire autograph, only sixteen lines have been scratched out and only a few words changed here and there (Prabhudas Gandhi 1957, 87–8). Critics speak of Gandhi's 'profound experience of illumination' on board the *Kildonan Castle* and compare it to Rousseau's on the road to Vincennes (Murry 1949, 424). At any event, Gandhi himself felt that he had produced 'an original work', for that was how he described it in a letter to his friend Hermann Kallenbach, the first to know about the book's completion (Gandhi 1909–46, 1, 94).

#### GANDHI'S INTENTIONS

The book is addressed to a mixed audience: the expatriate Indians greatly attracted to terrorism and political violence, the Extremists and Moderates of the Indian National Congress, the Indian nation and 'the English' (ch. xx). By the Indian nation Gandhi means ordinary Indians, irrespective of their religious, linguistic, regional or caste differences, as well as the new emerging middle class, referred to in the text as 'doctors', 'lawyers' and 'the wealthy'. And by 'the English' he means both the British ruling class living in India and Britons living in Great Britain.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-14602-9 - Hind Swaraj and Other Writings, Centenary Edition

M. K. Gandhi

Frontmatter

[More information](#)*Editor's introduction to the 1997 edition \* xxvii*

As to why he wrote the book, there was first of all the question of an inner illumination and the consequent urge to communicate. 'The thing was brewing in my mind', he wrote to his friend Henry Polak a month before the actual writing. 'I, therefore feel that I should no longer withhold from you what I call the progressive step I have taken mentally ... After all they [the ideas] are not new but they have only now assumed such a concrete form and taken a violent possession of me.' The Foreword reflected the same sense of urgency: 'I have written because I could not restrain myself.' Years later he recalled the experience: 'Just as one cannot help speaking out when one's heart is full, so also I had been unable to restrain myself from writing the book since my heart was full' (*CW* 32: 489).

Secondly, he wanted to clarify the meaning of swaraj, the concept that provides the theoretical framework of the book. This is done by introducing a distinction between swaraj as self-government or the quest for home rule or the good state, and swaraj as self-rule or the quest for self-improvement.

Thirdly, he felt it necessary to respond specifically to the ideology of political terrorism adopted by the expatriates. The book was written in order to show that they were following 'a suicidal policy'. He recalled in 1921 how on his 1909 visit to London he had come into contact with 'every known Indian anarchist' there, and how he had wanted to write a book 'in answer to the Indian school of violence'. 'I felt that violence was no remedy for India's ills, and that her civilisation required the use of a different and higher weapon for self-protection' (*CW* 19: 277).

Fourthly, Gandhi was anxious to teach the Indians that 'modern civilisation' posed a greater threat to them than did colonialism. They appeared to him to take it for granted that modern civilisation was an unmixed blessing, and colonialism an unmixed evil, forgetting that colonialism itself was a product of modern civilisation. 'My countrymen, therefore, think', states the Preface, 'that they should adopt modern civilisation and modern methods of violence to drive out the English.' This point is further elaborated in the Preface to the second Gujarati edition of 1914: 'it is not the British that are responsible for the

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-14602-9 - Hind Swaraj and Other Writings, Centenary Edition

M. K. Gandhi

Frontmatter

[More information](#)xxviii \* *Editor's introduction to the 1997 edition*

misfortunes of India but we who have succumbed to modern civilisation ... The key to an understanding of *Hind Swaraj* lies in the idea that worldly pursuits should give way to ethical living. This way of life has no room for violence in any form against any human being, black or white' (CW 12: 412). And in 1929 he came back to the same idea: 'The Western civilisation which passes for civilisation is disgusting to me. I have given a rough picture of it in *Hind Swaraj*. Time has brought no change in it' (CW 40: 300). And in 1939: 'The key to understand that incredibly simple (so simple as to be regarded foolish) booklet is to realise that it is not an attempt to go back to the so-called ignorant, dark ages. But it is an attempt to see beauty in voluntary simplicity, [voluntary] poverty and slowness. I have pictured that as my ideal' (CW 70: 242). 'I would ask you to read *Hind Swaraj* with my eyes', he exhorts the reader, 'and see therein the chapter on how to make India non-violent. You cannot build non-violence on a factory civilisation, but it can be built on self-contained villages' (CW 70: 296).

Fifthly, he wanted to contribute towards the reconciliation of Indians and Britons. This is evident from the 'exhortation' to 'the English' in chapter xx. Modern civilisation posed as much a problem for them as it did for the Indians. 'At heart you belong to a religious nation', he tells them. And the desire for reconciliation can come about 'only when the root of our relationship is sunk in a religious soil' (ch. xx).

Finally, Gandhi believed that through *Hind Swaraj* he would be able to give Indians a practical philosophy, an updated conception of dharma, that would fit them for life in the modern world. In the past dharma was tied to a hierarchical system of duties and obligations and to the preservation of status. It gave little or no attention to the idea of democratic citizenship. Gandhi felt that the time had come to redefine the scope of dharma to include notions of citizenship, equality, liberty, fraternity and mutual assistance. And in *Hind Swaraj* he presents in simple language his notion of such a redefined dharma, the vision of a new Indian or Gandhian civic humanism, one that the *Gita* and the *Ramayana* had always contained *in potentia*, but something which Indian civilisation had not actualised fully in practice. In *Hind Swaraj* a conscious attempt is

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-14602-9 - Hind Swaraj and Other Writings, Centenary Edition

M. K. Gandhi

Frontmatter

[More information](#)*Editor's introduction to the 1997 edition \* xxix*

being made to actualise that potential. 'This is not a mere political book', he writes. 'I have used the language of politics, but I have really tried to offer a glimpse of dharma. What is the meaning of *Hind Swaraj*? It means rule of dharma or *Ramarajya*' (*CW* 32: 489). 'We may read the *Gita* or the *Ramayana* or *Hind Swaraj*. But what we have to learn from them is desire for the welfare of others' (*CW* 32: 496).

These are the exalted aims of the book. Yet on a casual reading the book may strike the reader as being a rather simple one. This would not be an unwarranted reaction, since Gandhi sought simplicity in all things, including the way he presented his ideas. But first impressions in this case can be, and are, deceptive, for the book contains in compressed form the author's conception of what modern India ought to become and how politics may be made into the highest form of the active life. It is therefore a book that needs to be read reflectively, the way one would read, for example, a dialogue of Plato. Such a reading can be made easier if the reader keeps in view the historical and intellectual contexts within which the book was written.

#### HISTORICAL CONTEXT: MODERN CIVILISATION

Modern civilisation forms the broad historical context of *Hind Swaraj*. Its critique of that civilisation is one of its main contributions to modern political thought. In historical terms, it is Gandhi's apprehensions about certain tendencies in modern civilisation that made him the thinker and the political innovator that he is. The tone of his criticism is sometimes harsh and intemperate and is likely to mislead the reader. It is all the more necessary therefore to say at once that his attitude towards modern civilisation, though critical, is not wholly negative. Being critical implies the desire to improve the object criticised. So it is with Gandhi and modern civilisation. Thus he welcomes a number of its contributions – civil liberty, equality, rights, prospects for improving the economic conditions of life, liberation of women from tradition and religious toleration. At the same time, the welcome is conditional in that liberty has to harmonise with swaraj, rights with duties, empirical

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-14602-9 - Hind Swaraj and Other Writings, Centenary Edition

M. K. Gandhi

Frontmatter

[More information](#)xxx \* *Editor's introduction to the 1997 edition*

knowledge with moral insight, economic development with spiritual progress, religious toleration with religious belief and women's liberation with the demands of a broader conception of humanity.

Gandhi's admiration for the British constitution helps to put his attitude towards colonialism in its right perspective. In his *Autobiography* he speaks of the two passions of his life: the passion for loyalty to the British constitution and the passion for nursing (CW 39: 140–3). 'The history of British rule is the history of constitutional evolution. Under the British flag, respect for the law has become a part of the nature of the people' (CW 4: 322). Specifically, Queen Victoria's proclamation of 1858 was for him 'the Magna Carta of British Indians', 'a document of freedom for the people of India' giving them the 'full privileges and rights of British subjects' (CW 3: 357–8). The British constitution remained the standard by which to measure the quality of colonial administration: policies in conformity with it were thought to be good, and those contrary to it, evil. This was true even in the context of his doctrines of satyagraha. As he saw it, there was no inconsistency between these and loyalty to the constitution, for, as he said, a 'love of truth' lay at the root of both (CW 39: 140).

Gandhi has his own definition of civilisation: civilisation is 'that mode of conduct which points out to man the path of duty' (*sudharo*, ch. XIII). Barbarism (*kudharo*) is the absence of civilisation. By modern or Western civilisation (he often used these terms interchangeably) he meant that 'mode of conduct' which emerged from the Enlightenment, and more exactly, from the Industrial Revolution. 'Let it be remembered', he wrote in 1908, 'that western civilisation is only a hundred years old, or to be more precise, fifty' (CW 8: 374). The Industrial Revolution for him was much more than a mere change in the mode of production. As he interprets it, it brought into being a new mode of life, embracing a people's outlook on nature and human nature, religion, ethics, science, knowledge, technology, politics and economics. According to this outlook, nature was taken to be an autonomous entity operating according to its own laws, something to be mastered and possessed at will for the satisfaction of human needs, desires and political ambitions. This outlook brought about an epistemological revolution which in turn paved the

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-14602-9 - Hind Swaraj and Other Writings, Centenary Edition

M. K. Gandhi

Frontmatter

[More information](#)*Editor's introduction to the 1997 edition \* xxxi*

way for the secularisation of political theory. The satisfaction of the desire for economic prosperity came to be identified as the main object of politics. Religion, when it was not dismissed as mere superstition, was valued only for its social and psychological use. The Industrial Revolution altered the concept of labour, now accepted mainly for its ability to produce profit, power and capital. Manual labour was looked upon as fit only for the unlettered and the backward. With the technological revolution that followed the industrial revolution, machines, hitherto allies of humans, seemed to assert their autonomy.

Modern political theory provided the general ethical framework within which the changes occurring in the scientific, technological and economic fields were to be integrated. Two types of political theory emerged, one for the industrialised societies and the other for the rest of the world. Liberalism and liberal institutions were thought appropriate for industrialised societies; imperialism and colonialism for the non-industrialised societies such as India. By the third quarter of the nineteenth century, the world for all practical purposes was divided into the industrialised and the non-industrialised, or the 'civilised' and the 'non-civilised', parts. Even the saint of liberalism, J. S. Mill, accepted this civilisational partition of the world. He would in all sincerity use the very doctrine of liberty to justify imperial rule over India.

It was perhaps James Fitzjames Stephen (1829–94), law member of the Viceroy's council, who most candidly articulated the meaning of imperialism in terms of modern civilisation. In his famous essay 'Foundations of the government of India' (1883), Stephen argued that every political theory whatever is a doctrine of or about force. The foundations of the government of India rest on conquest not consent. Such a government must therefore proceed upon principles different from and in some respects opposed to those which prevail in England. Representative government is a requirement of European civilisation, while absolute government is that of Indian civilisation. Only by such a government can any real benefit accrue to Indians. If *suttee*, other human sacrifices, infanticide, disability to marry on account of widowhood or change of religion were to be abolished, as indeed they were to be, only an absolute imperial