The Performativity of Nonviolent Protest in South Asia (1918–1948)

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1 Introduction

"The only thing that's been a worse flop
than the organisation of nonviolence
has been the organisation of violence."[1]

This study seeks to address a gap in the study of nonviolent action. The gap relates to the question of the *form*, as opposed to the *content* of nonviolent politics. Nonviolent protest and resistance have been the focus of studies in the fields of sociology, political science, anthropology and peace and conflict studies. These studies ask important questions about the difficulties encountered in nonviolent protest, as well as investigate its outcomes. They focus on resources, grievances, strategies, intentions, motivations and consequences of protest actions or events. Yet they are often sceptical of references to concepts that are not objective, which address perceptions of protest, its cultural context, its dramaturgy, or its underlying view on conflict and human agency.[2]

Nonviolent action is a form of waging conflict, not of seeking its resolution. What does this form of engagement in political conflict consist of, over and above the absence of or rejection of violence? How can nonviolence be explored as a form of action, rather than as a political or ethical stance? What constitutes a nonviolent act, how is it practiced, performed, enacted and organised? Instead of asking what is accomplished through nonviolent action, this study asks how to speak about nonviolence, how to find a mode to address the subject, in order to understand it differently. Of primary concern is the manner or form of action, and what bearing this has on the content of the act. I ask these questions as a scholar and student in the field of performance studies, using concepts, modes of analysis and tropes of

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[1] Joan Baez, "What Would You Do If?" *Class of Nonviolence,* Lesson 7, ed. Colman McCarthy (Washington D.C., undated), 8.
[2] James Jasper addresses this scepticism in the study of protest in his introduction to *The Art of Moral Protest. Culture, Biography and Creativity in Social Movements* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1997), xi.

thinking from this discipline. Particularly through the notion of performativity, performance studies has become increasingly concerned with understanding and re-articulating human agency, ways of doing, ways of being and becoming, of acquiring and assuming particular identities or inhabiting worlds. This study evolved out of a shift in perspective, by approaching the history of nonviolent protest through the lens of performance studies. Such a shift allows for concepts such as performativity to be tested in terms of their applicability and relevance to contemporary political and philosophical questions. It also allows for a different perspective on the historiography of nonviolent protest. As Herbert Blau has pointed out, "the writing of history occurs through the questions asked about it."[3]

In the first two sections of this study, I will set out the parameters of the key terms of my dissertation: nonviolence and performativity, by tracing their genealogies and legacies as terms. I will then locate these histories as an intersection in the founding of the nonviolent and offer a reading of the history of nonviolence, especially in its trajectories within movements and events in the twentieth century. The focus of my analysis will be two examples of nonviolent protest from the history of civil disobedience in the anti-colonial struggle in South Asia. These are: fasting as a method in Gandhi's political arsenal, and the army of nonviolent soldiers in the North-West Frontier Province, known as the *Khudai Khidmatgar*.

In Section 2, I will provide an overview of current theorisations of nonviolence. I approach the subject through a set of commonly held misconceptions about nonviolent action, such as its supposed passivity, the absence of violence, its ineffectiveness and its spiritual basis. By engaging with these misconceptions, I will tease out the questions that they raise about what nonviolent action in fact consists of. Much of how the concept of nonviolence is understood or misunderstood, is closely connected to the way its boundaries to other concepts are drawn: the boundary between passivity and action, between

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[3] Herbert Blau, "Thinking History, History Thinking," *Theatre Survey,* Vol. 45, No. 2 (2004), 257.

violence and nonviolence, between fighting the opponent and staging the self, or between acts of the body as opposed to acts of the mind or the soul. Through these boundary areas I will address the lacunae within existing theories of nonviolence and point to possible fertile spaces for further exploration. My aim is not to arrive at yet another definition of nonviolence, adding to a list constantly revised by its practitioners. Nevertheless, I would like to adopt what Gayatri Spivak has termed a strategically essentialist view towards nonviolence, in that I seek to destabilise the notion as well as chisel out its potential meanings and applications.[4]

Section 3 begins with a conceptual overview of the different shades of performativity, asking how it is used in various contexts and how these different nuances can be viewed in relation to each other. I will then ask how a theory of performativity can be correlated to the theory of nonviolence, and explore this by returning to the boundary areas of action, violence, the opponent and the body. Inasmuch as nonviolent action emphasises how a conflict can be channelled into constructively transforming society and thus constitute human agency in a radically different way, the notion of performativity is also concerned with the relations between the self and the world, the nature of subjection and the necessity of the other in making one's own identity and agency, as a person, community or a social unit. The performative is not concerned with intentions or attitudes, but with the actual mode of doing. It does not deny the existence or validity of attitudes, but it privileges action as the mode of creating and consolidating attitudes and ethics. It is thus through a reading of the acts that an understanding of the ethical import of nonviolence can be arrived at.

The first case study is Gandhi's use of the fast as a method of nonviolent protest. Using a close reading of his own writings, speeches

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[4] "Essentialism should be used strategically, i.e. self-consciously, towards the achievement of a certain political goal [...] There is no such thing as a lasting strategy, because it would then freeze into an essentialist position."
Gayatri Spivak, "In a Word: Interview with Ellen Rooney (1988)," *Outside in the Teaching Machine,* ed. Gayatri Spivak (New York/London: Routledge, 1993), 4–5.

and letters, as well as a reading of responses to his fast in British newspapers and within India, I will look at what made fasting into Gandhi's most mode of protest and political action. I will reconstruct his unique praxis of the fast from a performative perspective, referring to the triad of actor-spectator-space, within which it was enacted, demonstrating how display and ostentation are vital to the political economy of the fast. I will describe the cultural context and reservoir of body practices, which Gandhi drew from and adapted into 'weapons' of political action. The process of fasting, its repetition and stylisation can be interpreted as a form of "political dramaturgy"[5], in which the conditions and demands placed upon the opponents tread the thin line between persuasion and coercion. By placing a spotlight on the responses to the fast in the British press, in particular *The Times* newspaper, as well as analysing caricatures of Gandhi in the 1920s and 1930s, I will dwell on the transformation of Gandhi's image from being a source of bewilderment and exotic projections of the West, to becoming a figure of sainthood.

The relationship of Gandhian nonviolence to the body forms a crucial part of my analysis and critique of the discrepancy between Gandhi's praxis and theorisation of nonviolence. Although he placed great emphasis on training and preparing the body for nonviolent action, he perceived the body as unruly, dangerous and innately violent or prone to violence. His notion of nonviolence as *soul force* thus sought to 'free the soul' from the limitations that the body presented, in order to be able to meaningfully act in the world. The problems raised by such an understanding of nonviolence will be elaborated upon, along with Gandhi's notion of self-control or self-rule (*swaraj*), which connected control of the body to control over the nation. The fast is also an interesting case to analyse how the opponent in conflict is perceived. Using the dramaturgical paradigm, I will explore how the interaction with and involvement of the addressees or opponents in conflict is essential to the performance of the political fast.

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[5] The term is used by Art Borreca, "Political Dramaturgy. A Dramaturg's (Re)view," *The Drama Review* (*TDR),* Vol. 37, No. 2 (1988), 56–79.

My second example is the nonviolent army of the Pashtuns, *Khudai Khidmatgar or KK,* literally *Servants of God*. This anti-imperialist movement in the North-West Frontier Province of what is today the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan existed from 1929 to 1948. The movement adopted the structures and organisational form of an army. It conducted a number of protest activities against colonial rule, as well as social reform activities for the Pashtuns. This group was connected to the Congress party of Gandhi, but contrary to several historians who interpret the Pashtun actions as a mere variation of Gandhian strategies, I will argue that their conceptualisation and praxis of nonviolence emerged from a very different tradition and worldview. Following a brief introduction to the socio-political background of this Pashtun movement, and a sketch of the nature of membership and participation in the KK, I will explore the activities that this nonviolent army engaged in, looking at their unique understanding of the militancy of an unarmed force, and their mode of combat and confrontation. I will show that their actions were as much targeted at transforming Pashtun society, as they were at opposing British colonial rule. This raises questions of the understanding of agency and opposition that they developed, by choosing nonviolent protest as their form of political engagement. The role of leadership as opposed to the grassroots of the movement will also figure in my reading of the performative politics of the KK, since much of the available source material is about the founder of the movement, Abdul Ghaffar Khan, a contemporary and colleague of Gandhi.

Of particular interest to my analysis is the way the KK re-combined and mixed what appear to be contradictory ideologies and acts. In doing so, they reframed cultural and historical stereotypes of the Pashtuns as a martial race, juxtaposing the institutional form of the army with a nonviolent praxis based on Islamic principles and social reform. What evolves in the protest forms of the KK is an innovative re-configuration of ways of fighting, a re-fashioning of the negative image of the Pashtun warrior, referring to the legacy of colonial rule as well as to Indian bourgeois interference. I approach the form of nonviolence of the KK using the figure of the hyphen, a sign that represents both a crossing of ideas as well as a passageway, leading to a new idea. The hyphen as a sign that both combines and divides

two distinct ideas, as a bridge and a crossing point, is a way to describe the complex performative politics of the Pashtun army. I use the example of the *Khudai Khidmatgar* to explore the idea that nonviolence is not the opposite of violent conflict, but in fact a dialectical engagement and response to violence.

Section 5, in conclusion, returns to the boundary areas of nonviolence: action, violence, the opponent and the body, and re-visits these areas on a comparative note, bringing together elements from Gandhi's fasts and the practices of the KK. I will assess the similarities and differences in the two examples, and contextualise them in relation to the guiding question of this study, namely the question of the performativity of nonviolent action.

The central contention of this study is that nonviolent action is a performative political process. It is not only a matter of abstaining from or rejecting the use of violence in political conflict, it is not only an ethical stance, but it is a form of political action and engagement in conflict, which constitutes human agency. In order to be nonviolent, one must do nonviolence.

2 Theorising nonviolence

Nonviolence is a contested and inexact concept. It has been inadequately theorised, studied and documented, particularly in comparison to the research undertaken in regard to militarised, violent methods of dealing with conflict worldwide. Far too much is being invested in creating violent options of resolving conflict. Far too little is known about how nonviolent action is organised. Even amongst its political advocates, there is not sufficient clarity on what nonviolence actually involves, how it can be taught, trained, evaluated and pursued as a means of transforming social and political conflicts.[6] Since nonviolent action or intervention may lead to the prevention of violent escalation, it is often not visible or perceptible and therefore tends to go unnoticed. On the other hand, there are widespread prejudices and a lack of acceptance of nonviolence as an instrument in political conflict. So apart from being a contested concept, it often appears to be an unfashionable idea. However, the contested boundaries and the poor reputation of nonviolent politics make the subject all the more interesting and worth studying.

I use the term 'nonviolent action' or 'acts of nonviolence' as the concrete expression of the concept of 'nonviolence'. Nonviolent action, as employed in this study, refers to a means of waging conflict in the collective pursuit of social or political objectives, which does not involve physical or structural violence to human beings and the natural environment and takes place outside of institutional politics.[7] Nonviolent action is primarily a form of waging conflict, and

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[6] There are, no doubt, ongoing efforts in this direction, particularly through civilian, non-governmental initiatives. However, all these belong to a minor tributary of efforts in comparison to the massive militarisation of states and non-state groups, the colossal extent of "defence" research and weapons trade, or the presence of violence in the media.

[7] The literature on the subject is divided on whether damage to property is nonviolent. This is one of the criteria used to distinguish the categories of civil disobedience and nonviolent action, since civil disobedience implies no damage to property or injury to humans, whereas nonviolent action may include damaging (contd.)

not of seeking its resolution. It is a civilian-based response to political or social oppression, often but not necessarily always embedded in a broader worldview or ideology. It can also be pursued by one of the conflicting parties and not only by those who have no own interests or agenda in the conflict. Nonviolent action is understood as public, in order to distinguish it from the innumerable examples of interpersonal interactions and conflicts. It is used in reference to civilian, i.e. people-centred actions, which pertain to the interests and objectives of an entire community or group and not to individual conflicts, which are by far resolved without recourse to weapons or physical injury. Nonviolent acts explicitly invite and depend on public reaction and support, beyond a direct engagement with the opponents.

Nonviolent action further occurs outside of institutional politics. So when I speak of nonviolent protest, I do not refer to practices such as diplomacy, legal conflicts, lobbying, litigation, strikes, electoral battles or other conventional methods of political protest. Nonviolent movements or individual activists of course also use these institutionalised methods, but since they are firmly anchored in the rule of law, they have different conditions and more determined patterns of action. Nonviolent acts tend to be initiated in the civilian sphere, they are not as regulated and controlled as institutionalised protest methods tend to be. They are open to creative variation and expression, much of which has been insufficiently investigated, documented or studied.

Theories of nonviolence engage with two central problems: the critique of violence on the one hand, and the proposition of alternative forms of political action on the other. The critique of violence distinguishes between the rejection of violence and the absence of violence, asking in what way the absence of violence is marked as a rejection and made into a significant moment. The constitutive moment of nonviolence is connected to the obligation to fight a conflict

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or destroying property (one's own or that of the opponent). See Robert Hall, *The Morality of Civil Disobedience* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 87.

without weapons and without deliberate injury to the opponents. A theory of nonviolence thus deals with the reasons for opposing the use of violence, as well as proposing alternative ways of acting in conflict.

This section elaborates on some of the areas and concepts, whose relationship to nonviolence have not yet been adequately clarified and which are of particular significance from a performance studies perspective, since they are concepts relevant to both disciplines, that of performance studies as well as conflict studies. This section also seeks to establish the parameters of nonviolent action as employed in this study. The trajectory of four key terms: action, violence, the opponent and the body will be theoretically traced before their concrete exploration in the examples studied in detail in Section 4.

2.1 Principled and pragmatic nonviolence

Nonviolence sometimes refers to a range of socio-political strategies and activities, a set of techniques and methods of protest. At other times it denotes a worldview, a way of life or a philosophical standpoint. These two perspectives can be summarised as the *pragmatic* and the *principled* dimensions of nonviolence respectively.[8] The theory of pragmatic nonviolence – occasionally also referred to as strategic nonviolence or as civilian defence – deals with strategies of waging conflict, mobilising resources and increasing visibility in order to push forward a certain set of interests in a conflict without the use of weapons or other violent forms of intervention.[9] The

[8] The distinction as a base for theorising nonviolence was perhaps first made by Gene Sharp, in *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* (Boston: Extending Horizon Books, 1973), Preface, v–vii. In German, the distinction is sometimes captured in the terms *gewaltlos* in opposition to *gewaltfrei*, where the former represents practical strategies of nonviolent action and *gewaltfrei* refers to the moral and ethical value systems of nonviolence that political actors abide by. See Barbara Müller, *Zur Theorie und Praxis von Sozialer Verteidigung,* Working Paper No. 3 *(*Wahlenau: Institute for Peacework and Nonviolent Settlement of Conflict, February 1996), 2.

[9] Adam Roberts, ed., *Civilian Resistance as a National Defence. Nonviolent Action Against Aggression* (Harmondsworth: Penguin 1969); Sharp, *Politics of Nonviolent Action;* and Theodor Ebert, *Soziale Verteidigung*, Vols. 1&2 (Waldkirch: Walkircher (contd.)

pragmatic theory views nonviolent action primarily as one technique of waging conflict, amongst others. It focuses more on the actual elements of strategy, at the level of concrete organisation of a nonviolent protest action, or in classifying nonviolent struggles and actions. It remains at the strategic level, rather than inquiring into the motivation behind choosing nonviolence as a method to resolve or transform a conflict. So from this standpoint, nonviolence can be and has often been employed by those who do not necessarily believe in 'absolute' nonviolence as a moral stance.

On the other hand, the theory of principled nonviolence may ask questions relating to individual integrity and just social transformation, emphasising the ethics of political engagement and elaborating on the motivation for choosing nonviolence as a way of engaging in conflict.[10] Arguments in the theory of principled nonviolence – sometimes also called non-instrumental nonviolence – refer to religious or other ethical codes of justice and human interaction, such as the idea of the sacredness of human life, the ethical call against afflicting injury, or the obligation to fight without weapons rather than remain passive.[11] Thus in order to act nonviolently, one must completely endorse the principles of nonviolence, whatever this may en-

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Verlagsgesellschaft, 1981) are some oft quoted representatives of the pragmatic approach to nonviolence.

[10] The texts of the Gandhi Peace Foundation in India can be placed in this line of scholarship, based on an analysis of Gandhi's writings and speeches. See Mahendra Kumar and Peter Low, eds., *Legacy and Future of Nonviolence* (New Delhi: Gandhi Peace Foundation, 1996). The tradition of war resisters is another source of inspiration for the principled nonviolence theory. See Shelly Anderson and James Larmore, eds., *Nonviolent Struggle and Social Defence* (London: War Resisters' International, 1991). In a sense the principled view of nonviolence is much older to the pragmatic approach, although the term "principled" came into use to distinguish an ethical approach from the pragmatic. See Sharp, *Politics of Nonviolent Action*, 3–24.

[11] Some examples of the non-instrumental, religiously motivated approaches to theorising nonviolence are: Lanza del Vasto, *Warriors of Peace: Writings on the Technique of Nonviolence* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1974); Hildegard Goss-Mayr, *Der Mensch vor dem Unrecht. Spiritualität und Praxis gewaltloser Befreiung.* Series: Soziale Brennpunkte, 3 (Vienna: Europa Publishers, 1981); Chaiwat Satha-Anand, *Islam and Nonviolence* (Honolulu: Center for Global Nonviolence Planning Project, Matsunaga Institute for Peace: University of Hawai'i Press, 1993); Thich Nhat Hanh, *Peace is Every Step. The Path of Mindfulness in Everyday Life* (New York: Bantam Books, 1992) and Joan Bondurant, *The Conquest of Violence. The Gandhian Philosophy of Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965).

compass.[12] This theory focuses on the conditions and motivations behind nonviolent action or protest.

The distinction between pragmatic and principled nonviolence is sometimes indicated in the use of the hyphen, with principled nonviolence being 'de-hyphenated' as opposed to pragmatic non-violence.[13] However, the attempt to mark such a distinction is ultimately not convincing, since the question is not one of choosing between one or the other form. Most discussions and comparisons of the two traditions of nonviolence arrive at the conclusion that eventually no clear-cut division can be made between the two.[14] Both pragmatic and principled approaches share the belief in the efficacy of nonviolent action in comparison to other means of conflict, they share a pacifist agenda, rejecting violence on ethical and utilitarian grounds, they believe nonviolence can be employed both as a means of social defence, as well as in proactive intervention; to protest against oppression or injustice as well as to prevent undesired changes.

Rather than a watertight 'either-or' distinction, pragmatic and principled nonviolence represent two dimensions, which are present to varying degrees. An act of protest consists of a strategic element at one level as well as a broader ethical motivation or competence at

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[12] Sharma's monograph is one such case, which condemns academic critique of nonviolent action based on the subaltern history perspective as violent, because as scholars they do not pledge to nonviolence as a worldview. See Sita Ram Sharma, ed., *Theory and Practice of Nonviolence* (New Delhi: Cosmo Books, 2001), Introduction.

[13] The distinction between hyphenated and non-hyphenated nonviolence is suggested for instance by Michael Nagler, "Nonviolence", in: *World Encyclopaedia of Peace,* ed. Linus Pauling et al, Volume III, 2nd edition (New York: Oceana, 1999), 447.

[14] Gene Sharp first elaborated on the pragmatic approach to nonviolence, distinguishing it from the Gandhian principled approach, though he refers to Gandhi as "the outstanding strategist of nonviolent action", see Sharp, *Politics of Nonviolent Action,* 5. Robert Burrowes carries out a detailed appraisal of both principled and pragmatic approaches, though ultimately calling for a commitment to nonviolent principles accompanying pragmatic techniques. Robert Burrowes, *The Strategy of Nonviolent Defense. A Gandhian Approach* (New York: State University Press, 1996). Christine Schweitzer's summary addresses the overarching similarities and differences from an activist perspective, see her *Nonviolent Peaceforce Feasibility Study*, Part I (Hamburg: Nonviolent Peaceforce, 2001).

another level. The protest act can be seen as an outcome of its historical context and trajectory of development, the cultural and social conditions that make it possible, its embedment in an individual or a community through traditional value systems. It can also be seen as an enunciation and expression in itself, the way it is performed in the context of the conflict, its tactics and content.

Proponents of pragmatic nonviolence such as Gene Sharp justify their views on nonviolent struggle in terms of a critique and rejection of violence. Ultimately ethical beliefs form the core motivation to opt for nonviolent methods. In fact Sharp's entire collection of writings on nonviolent action is based on the assumption that nonviolent strategies for conflict are far more effective and far less harmful than violent conflict, and that condemning and critiquing violence is complementary to the development of alternative means of struggle.[15] Thus, according to Sharp, developing nonviolent action as a technique by research and experimentation would help to strengthen the case against the choice of violent responses to conflict situations. On the other hand, activists such as Gandhi or Abdul Ghaffar Khan, who epitomised principled, faith-motivated nonviolence, treated it as a technique to be honed and practiced by the people on a mass basis, while holding nonviolence to be an ethical creed or religious principle.

That studies on nonviolence tend to lean towards either a pragmatic approach or a principled approach is overall not surprising. When the emphasis is on the motivation to act nonviolently, the conditions and strategies of waging conflict appear to be of secondary importance. Similarly, when the focus is on pragmatic concerns, the motivation behind the action is of less significance. However, while some research acknowledges the existence of the other approach as legitimate, despite preferring either the principled or the pragmatic approach, there are studies that condemn the other approach altogether. So pragmatic theorists of nonviolence label the overemphasis of principles in the analysis of nonviolence as too utopian or

[15] Sharp, *Politics of Nonviolent Action,* 3–48.

amorphous and thus not able to systematically demonstrate how social or political change is actually effected.[16] On the other hand, pragmatic nonviolence is occasionally viewed as hidden violence, since its proponents give less significance to moral authority than to strategic choices.[17]

It is the question "why fight nonviolently?" for which the principled and pragmatic theories have differing answers. The distinction between pragmatic and principled approaches to nonviolence is about the differences in motivation and justification for nonviolent political action, rather than about the differences in the nature of action. Yet while a justification of the notion is important in terms of its legal consequences and implications, the act of *justifying* the use of nonviolent protest methods is only one aspect of the conceptual work that needs to be accomplished on the subject. The dimensions of pragmatic and principled nonviolence outlined here set a point of departure to analyse the characteristics of nonviolent action and review the current theoretical debates on the question.

Nonviolent intervention or action in any social or political conflict cannot entirely be described or quantified according to certain logical principles or methods, and even if it could, it is unlikely that such a manual or handbook would in fact create better nonviolent actors or make the practice of nonviolence in reality any less complicated and difficult. However, in order for nonviolent action to be adequately theorised, it requires an approach that would allow for generalisations and lessons learnt to be drawn from historically grounded examples. A critique of existing theories of nonviolence would need to focus on expanding on its ethics, including aspects that relate to its form and not only to its content. Rather than merely arguing why nonviolence is more favourable or ethically

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[16] An instance of this is Kurt Schock, "Nonviolent Action and its Misconceptions. Insights for Social Scientists," *Political Science and Politics,* Vol. XXXVI, No. 4 (October 2003), 705–12 and to a lesser extent Johan Galtung, *Peace by Peaceful Means* (London: Sage, 1996).

[17] Particularly Gandhian scholars are apprehensive of historical or Marxist critiques of Gandhian ethics. See Sharma, *Theory and Practice of Nonviolence,* Introduction.

preferable to other modes of resistance or struggle, the critique could focus on the methods and modes of nonviolent action and their characteristics, in order to make the ethics more down-to-earth, more approachable, less connected to charisma or any special individual qualities, but as a form of action that can be learnt, adapted and performed by people willing to be subjects of their own lives. Political resistance and protest cannot only be granted to those movements or individuals who have succeeded in achieving their aims. The question of success or failure in achieving the aims of protest is not my primary concern. By focusing on the form of action, I would like to argue for a broader understanding and theorisation of protest, in which there are no ethically good or bad subjects of resistance.[18]

I seek to theorise nonviolence by way of expanding the concept to enable it to hold many levels and potentialities, rather than reducing and fixing its possibilities. This is not to say that I can offer a comprehensive or grand theory of nonviolence, for that would mean attempting to universalise an idea which has been practised and conceived of in so many different ways, both historically as well as culturally. Starting with an overview of some commonly held misconceptions about nonviolence, I will proceed to explore the theoretical underpinnings and assumptions behind nonviolent action. Since my aim is to work towards theorising nonviolence as a form of action, and thus place form and aesthetics into the ethics of nonviolence, I will introduce the concept of the performative and suggest its relevance in deepening our understanding of nonviolence.

[18] James Scott, *Weapons of the Weak. Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), Introduction, 6.

2.2 Misconceptions and boundary areas

Theorists of nonviolence often approach the subject by first addressing what they perceive as misconceptions about nonviolent action, which repeatedly appear in different contexts without their validity being questioned.[19] In his study on people power movements, Kurt Schock outlines a range of false notions about nonviolence that are commonly prevalent in scholarly and popular discourse.[20] These are: that nonviolence is passive; that any act which is not violent, is an act of nonviolence; that there are very rare circumstances under which nonviolent action works or is efficacious; or that nonviolence is a spiritual process. Schock's list of 18 misconceptions is partially drawn from political science discourse, and partially from an analysis of a study of anti-apartheid movements in South Africa. By challenging these misconceptions, he argues and demonstrates the viability of nonviolent action as a political method in various historical and cultural contexts and the need to study and document these examples more thoroughly. Similarly Gene Sharp develops his theory of pragmatic nonviolence based on a systematic analysis and questioning of popular misgivings and myths about nonviolence. Sharp's *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* (1973) is largely an attempt to distil and categorise historical examples that would prove the opposite, thus strengthen the legitimisation and acceptance of nonviolent action. It is noteworthy that several articles in sociological or peace research journals, dealing explicitly with nonviolent action, address the topic inversely, i.e. by asking what nonviolent action does not do or what it should not be confused with.[21] The fact that misgivings and misconceptions about

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[19] To name just two examples: Gene Sharp, *Correcting Common Misconceptions about Nonviolent Action* (Boston: Albert Einstein Institute, 1973); Kurt Schock, "Nonviolent Action and its Misconceptions".
[20] Schock, "Nonviolent Action and its Misconceptions", 705–06.
[21] Sharp, "Correcting Common Misconceptions"; Mark Shepard, *Mahatma Gandhi and His Myths* (Los Angeles: Simple Productions, 2001); Brian Martin, "Critique of Violent Rationales," *Pacifica Review* Vol. 9, No. 1 (1997), 83–91; Ralph Summy: (contd.)

nonviolence are so pervasive and recurrent, are an indication of areas that have been inadequately researched and theorised. Though it offers no promise of a clarification of the misconceptions, the present inquiry seeks to explore the provisional perspectives from which the commonly held notions about nonviolence illuminate its theory.

The existence of conceptual inconsistencies and a number of red herrings are not only due to a lack of research, or to politically grounded prejudices against the use and development of nonviolent action, but also because there are several disputed boundary areas of nonviolence.[22] The term nonviolence does not allow for easy and stable definition, but the problem is not simply one of agreeing upon a definition. Moreover, much of how the concept is understood is closely connected to how its relationship to other concepts is elaborated upon. The disputed boundaries run across the borders between action and inaction, between nonviolence and violence, between conflict and peace, between ideological and physical protest, between notions of individual and collective agency, between institutionalised and non-conventional protest forms, between ethics and strategy.

Taking the misconceptions above and questions arising from them as a point of departure, I will expand on four boundary areas of nonviolence, in order to explore some constitutive aspects of nonviolent action and the question of how nonviolent action is performed. Through a reframing of the boundaries, I will provide an overview of the principal arguments that recur in the literature on

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"Nonviolence and the Case of the Extremely Ruthless Opponent," *Pacifica Review* Vol. 6, No. 2 (May–June 1994), 1–29.

[22] I use the term "boundaries of nonviolence" in the sense of Brian Martin and Wendy Varney, "Nonviolence and Communication," *Journal of Peace Research* Vol. 40, No. 2 (2003), 216. Martin and Varney describe three boundary areas of nonviolent action: the boundary between discourse and action, between conventional and non-conventional action and finally between violence and nonviolence. While their focus is on political communication forms, this study inquires specifically into action in nonviolence, of which communication would form one important aspect. Therefore I propose four boundary areas: action, violence, the opponent in conflict and the body.

nonviolence. In doing so, I will also address the lacunae within existing theories of nonviolence and point to possible fertile spaces for further exploration. The question of form as opposed to content of nonviolent action runs through all the four boundary areas: the relationship of nonviolence to action, violence, to the opponent and the body. It also opens the door to the idea of the performative in nonviolent action.

2.2.1 "Nonviolent action is inaction": the boundary to action

One of the common assumptions about nonviolence is its perceived passivity.[23] The term passive resistance, which is sometimes used in reference to protest forms of nonviolent movements, perhaps unwittingly supports the perception that nonviolence is, in fact, equivalent to submissiveness in conflict. Nonviolence would thus amount to the refusal to participate in conflict because of fear of violence and escalation or an unwillingness and incapability to engage in conflict at all. Perhaps the alliterative closeness between pacifism and passivity also contributes to the picture of nonviolent action as inaction. The assumption of nonviolence as inaction and submissiveness suggests that this form of political protest is uneventful and avoids conflict rather than taking on its challenges.

The term nonviolence is problematic in itself, since it is expressed as a negation or an absence. This conveys the impression that nonviolent action simply consists of rejecting violence. Yet practitioners of nonviolence emphasise that it is about an active participation in conflict. Zashin Elliott proposes the term nonviolent *direct* action, in order to highlight the active, pro-active and reactive aspects of nonviolence and correct the view that it is a passive form of protest.[24] In

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[23] David Barash expresses this problem appropriately when he remarks: "The very word 'nonviolence' [...] evokes images of passivity, especially in its regrettable counterpart, 'passive resistance.' This is akin to translating *light* as 'non-darkness'." See David Barash, ed., *Approaches to Peace. A Reader in Peace Studies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 167.

[24] Zashin Elliott, *Civil Disobedience and Democracy* (New York: Free Press, 1972), 6.

fact, it has often been pointed out that nonviolent action is in a sense closer to guerrilla warfare than it is to forms of conflict resolution such as negotiation and mediation.[25] The comparison to guerrilla warfare indicates that nonviolent action is primarily a form of waging conflict, and not of seeking its resolution.

Related to equating nonviolence with passivity is the assumption that it is a form of compromise; that believers in nonviolent policies do not push for a 'real fight' for their interests, but would be willing to settle for a compromise, as long as it brings about some solution and an end to conflict. This argument is often used to justify why a certain group has chosen armed resistance, claiming that nonviolent protest would not adequately be registered or be perceived by the opponents as a real threat to their power positions.[26] The refusal to fight with weapons is argued as a sign of one's own weakness or fear of injury and death, which would be an admission of inferiority to an external oppressive force, which is possibly armed.

Rather than attempt to prove why and in what sense this assumption can be fairly called a misconception, or review whether its critique is sufficient, I would like to explore the question that the perception of 'nonviolence as inaction' throws up, which revolves around its relationship to action. How is action, be it individual or collective, conceptualised in theories of nonviolence? What is the role and place for human agency and how is it made visible? The subtext of this misconception pertains to the doubts regarding the efficacy of the nonviolent act as an act of resistance and struggle, which would be able to truly expose the existing injustices and inequalities and address the interests of the struggling group.

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[25] "Nonviolent action is a means of combat, as is war. It involves the matching of forces and the waging of 'battles,' requires wise strategy and tactics, and demands of its 'soldiers' courage, discipline, and sacrifice," Sharp, *Politics of Nonviolent Action*, 67.

[26] Mubarak Awad deals with this mistrust of nonviolent methods in the context of the Middle East in his *Nonviolent Resistance in the Middle East* (Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1985). A broader counter-argument substantiated with various case studies is provided in Peter Ackerman and Christopher Kruegler, *Strategic Nonviolent Conflict: The Dynamics of People Power in the 20th Century* (Westport Connecticut: Praeger, 1994).

This study attempts a closer look at the 'action' in nonviolent action. To a certain extent, this implies looking not at what is being done, but at what is not being done, at the action that ensues from the non-performance of an act, since all action is guided by the imperative of not using violent means of conflict. The rejection of violence gives way to a politics of restraint, refusal and omission, which is surprisingly full of activity and energetic exchanges between the conflicting parties. The performativity of withdrawal and disobedience is of special interest here. Referring to Judith Butler's approach to the performative constitution of human agency and her notion of the precariousness of life, the study will explore how the refusal to use violence and the way the refusal is performed, initiates a sense of self, community and belonging. Sociological studies have pointed out that nonviolent actions, like any other forms of political engagement, serve to empower people and create a bonding between the participants involved, regardless of whether the protest is actually successful or not.[27] Theories of nonviolence, particularly those geared as a guideline for activists, often place the emphasis on empowering individuals or groups to engage in acts that defend their own agency and dignity, rather than offensively attack the rulers or the oppressors. An act of nonviolence first questions the position and status of the oppressed, creates a bonding and solidarity with its participants, before addressing the opponents. However, while it is often assumed that the sense of bonding comes through a shared ideology or belief in the goals and means, I will look at how the acts themselves constitute and sustain the sense of a common identity.

Many analysts of nonviolent action strive to disprove the assumption that nonviolence is a display of weakness, by showing instances of how nonviolent action actually exhibits and exemplifies courage,

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[27] Dieter Rucht, Donatella DellaPorta and Hanspeter Kriesi, eds., *Social Movements in a Globalizing World* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999). Rucht's argument about solidarity in social movements including nonviolent movements is also true of armed groups in political struggles. The point here is not to distinguish nonviolent action from military action, and the corresponding effects it has on social networks, but moreover to stress that nonviolence is also a form of political action.

the willingness to take personal risks and undergo suffering. While this aspect cannot be denied, I will argue that strength does not come without vulnerability, loss and weakness. Paradoxically, the strength emerges from the weakness. This is important to the performativity of nonviolent protest, since the experience of vulnerability, subjection and subordination are essential to the process of empowerment and creation of agency. Here again a performative reading of nonviolent action can highlight the ambivalences and nuances of an empowerment that is at once also a dispossession and realisation of one's non-autonomy.

Gene Sharp's classic analysis establishes a threefold classification or typology of nonviolent action, namely protest and persuasion, non-cooperation and nonviolent intervention.[28] The present study does not refute this classification, which has been widely accepted and developed, however by bringing the subject under the magnifying glasses of performance or cultural studies in the broadest sense, asks different questions of nonviolent action than a socio-political approach such as that of Gene Sharp, Theodor Ebert, Brian Martin, Robert Burrowes or many other researchers do. The emphasis in this study is on the *form* of action rather than on the *content*. By form I mean the way a certain idea is realised, transformed and mediated into existence, as opposed to its efficacy, its contextual meaning or the discourse it is located in. Partly, questions related to form are of a smaller scale in comparison to the larger compass of social or political content. Partly, however, these questions are related to the meta-level of the discussion on nonviolence and are thus more abstract. Instead of asking what is accomplished through nonviolent action, this study asks how to speak about nonviolence, how to find a mode to address the subject, in order to understand it differently. Rather than employing empirical data, the interpretation of the two examples selected in this research are based on a close re-reading and contextualisation of cases widely accepted and unchallenged as nonviolent protest acts or movements. Of primary concern is the manner of action and what bearing this has on the

[28] Sharp, *Politics of Nonviolent Action,* 109 ff.

content of the act. The balance between form and content of nonviolent action is one of the recurring themes of this study, which will be approached from a performance studies perspective. While theorists of nonviolence have analysed it in terms of its strategies,[29] its efficacy,[30] its place within social movement theories,[31] or its underlying political philosophy,[32] the focus in this study will be on the dramaturgy and performativity of nonviolent action, about how concepts from the field of performance can be meaningfully applied to an in-depth appraisal of political action.

Dealing with the misconception about nonviolent action as inaction is not merely a matter of dispelling a negative picture about a certain political worldview. Part of the task of this study is to address how action is related to inaction, how the politics of restraint and refusal to use weapons or to disobey laws perceived as unjust, draws upon existing codes and forms of militancy and re-formulates them in creative and active ways. Rather than a creation of something completely new and innovative, the dramaturgy of action in nonviolent politics is based on a gesture of hyphenation, omission, re-combination and reiteration. It employs a form of juxtaposing and re-combining the refusal of violence with the confrontation with violence. It makes refusal of orders and disobedience a characteristic of its resistance politics. It makes the reiteration, i.e. conscious repetition of an act into a manner of defining the self and its agency in political struggle. This is where the notion of performativity becomes important.

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[29] Sharp, *Politics of Nonviolent Action;* Ackerman and Kruegler, *Strategic Nonviolent Conflict.*

[30] Robert Burrowes, *Strategy of Nonviolent Defense* and Adam Curle, *Another Way. Positive Response to Contemporary Violence* (Oxford: Jon Carpenter, 1995) deal with the question of efficacy.

[31] Paul Routledge's study is an example of the contextualisation of nonviolent movements within broader social movement theory, see his *Terrains of Resistance. Nonviolent Social Movements and the Contestation of Place in India* (London/ Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1993), in particular Chapter 2: "Putting Social Movements in Their Place: Social Movement Theory and the Spatial Mediation of Nonviolent Resistance Terrains," 21–38.

[32] Various political philosophies that have influenced nonviolent activists are presented in Arthur and Lila Weinberg, *Instead of Violence. Writings by the Great Advocates of Peace and Nonviolence Throughout History (*New York: Grossman, 1963).

2.2.2 "Nonviolence is the absence of violence": the boundary to violence

Another boundary area of nonviolence is its relation to violence. While the negation of violence may form the least common denominator of different forms of nonviolent action, it is a misleading term, since it suggests that the absence of violence alone constitutes a nonviolent act. In practice, the rejection of weapons or physical violence is a necessary but not sufficient condition for nonviolent action.

As Schock points out,

> "Nonviolent action refers to specific actions that involve risk and that invoke non-physical pressure or nonviolent coercion in contentious interactions between opposing groups."[33]

This implies that protest forms such as the recourse to legal disputes, parliamentary opposition, litigation, lobbying, petitioning or electoral politics are not necessarily nonviolent acts, although they are characterised by the absence of violence. Theorists of nonviolent action such as Burrowes and Schock point out that while institutionalised forms of protest or representation of group interests may be used and integrated into a movement's strategy, nonviolent action itself is extra-parliamentary and a non-conventional form of protest.[34] It may or may not be legal and the level of risk is specific to the context in which it takes place. The risk factor is important in differentiating between what is referred to as conventional and non-conventional forms of action in social theory. Schock's reference to risk suggests that an act such as displaying a banner of protest may be risky in one cultural or political context, but conventional political activity in another context and thus not involve any risk.

Perhaps because the term expresses an idea by way of negation, theorists and practitioners have sought a positive term for their po-

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[33] Schock, "Nonviolent Action and its Misconceptions," 705.
[34] Martin and Varney, "Nonviolence and Communication," 216–18.

litical practice, in order to show that nonviolence involves more than the rejection of violence. Gandhi promoted the term *Satyagraha,* which literally means 'holding on to the truth' and is often translated as *soul force* or *truth force.*[35] With this he attempted to overcome the *ex negatio* inherent to the concept of nonviolence, in order to develop a positive worldview and comprehensive political paradigm. Other terms such as civil disobedience or civilian based defence emphasise aspects of collective political struggle and engagement rather than a philosophy. All of these terms and their underlying theories contain some degree of sophisticated conception of the relation to violence. Yet one might ask why positive formulations of the term have not been widely accepted. If nonviolence is a positive concept, why is it necessary to express it as a negation?

The idea of nonviolence is stabilised, in fact often constituted by way of establishing its polarity to violence. That may seem at first glance a tautological statement. The problem with the concept of nonviolence is its inherent reference to and negation of violence. Any approach to understanding what nonviolent action consists of, in fact goes back to a positing of violence through its absence. So it is difficult to conceive of nonviolence without the violence, which it is not. Where violence is always the point of reference, it is difficult to ascertain what nonviolence can mean, apart from the abstinence from violence. A positive turnaround of nonviolence in terms such as 'truth force', 'peace' or 'Gütekraft' is unsatisfactory, because the negation and rejection of violence is a necessary condition of nonviolence. It seems impossible to free the concept of the contradictions and complications of expressing an idea *ex negatio,* because of the dialectical thrust of the term. Nonviolence is a critique of and rejection of violence; yet it is equally an act of conflict and political struggle that addresses violence.

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[35] The term was coined by Maganlal Gandhi following a prize competition in the newspaper *Indian Opinion,* see CWMG Vol. 44, 328: *An Autobiography, or the Story of My Experiments with Truth.* Ed. V.K. Srinivasa Sastry, Second revised edition (1940), Chapter 26: "The Birth of Satyagraha".

The thin boundary between nonviolence and violence is further evident in the difficulty in determining the complete absence of violence. A protest act or an act of nonviolent intervention that does not involve the use of weapons may use other means of pressure and coercion, which could be characterised as *indirect violence*.[36] In this light, labelling an act as nonviolent could be condemned as a denial of hidden or not apparent violence, an ethically viable reformulation of what should also be counted as violence. However, hast as it is difficult to decide on a comprehensive definition of violence, this is also the case for nonviolence. The boundary between violence and nonviolence cannot be drawn as a neat line separating two distinct entities that mutually exclude each other. A coercive act may indeed be violent in some contexts, and nonviolent in others.[37] The violence of the weak is different from the violence of the powerful. A critique of violence that oscillates between just or unjust ends and lawful or unlawful means is inherently placed in a historical setting and context, which limits its validity and questions its universality.[38] The abhorrence or acceptance of violence is a category bound to context. The positing of the nonviolent can slip into the denial of the existence of violence or a rationalisation of violence, simply because an act may not be perceived as violent.[39] This is particularly

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[36] The term indirect violence has been adapted in peace and conflict research by Johan Galtung's concept of *structural violence,* which however refers to the institutions and systems that indirectly violate the rights of peoples without the use of direct force. See Johan Galtung, "Violence, Peace and Peace Research," *Journal of Peace Research* Vol. 6, No. 3 (1969), 167–191.

[37] This debate has been explored in relation to nonviolent communication. See Simon Fisher et al, eds., *Working With Conflict, Skills and Strategies for Action* (London: Zed Books, 2000), 11ff. Friedrich Glasl asks in what way speech and interaction implicitly convey violent or coercive messages, though they may appear nonviolent? See Friedrich Glasl, *Konfliktmanagement. Ein Handbuch zur Diagnose und Behandlung von Konflikten, für Organisationen und ihre Berater* (Bern: Paul Haupt, 1992).

[38] This is argued with acuity by Walter Benjamin in his essay on the critique of violence. See Walter Benjamin, *Zur Kritik der Gewalt und andere Aufsätze.* Mit einem Nachwort von Herbert Marcuse (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1965 [1955]), 29–65. Benjamin works with the distinction between lawfulness (*Rechtmäßigkeit*) and justice (*Gerechtigkeit*), placing these in a historical context.

[39] A detailed study of the tension between violence, the denial and the rationalisation of violence argues that the distinctions are not easy ones. See Jan Houben and Karel R. van Kooij, eds., *Violence Denied. Violence, Non-violence and the Rationalisation of Violence in South Asian Cultural History* (Leiden: Brill, 1999).

true of cases of institutional violence, which may not cause direct physical injury but lead to long-term debilitation and de-humanisation of people. Violence can be rationalised and made into a norm, while it is denied to be violence. For instance, military attacks that cause vast destruction, killings and injuries to humans are often rationalised and projected as ethically permissible, for being acts of 'defence'. Signifying an act as nonviolent must be seen in relationship to what it claims it is achieving, as well as what it distinguishes itself from.

Yet, despite the diffuse boundary to violence in terms of its absence, theories of nonviolent action firmly reject violent response to conflict, be it on pragmatic grounds related to the futility and un-sustainability of violence or due to ethical or moral reasons. The rejection of violence carries central implications for the understanding of action and agency that arises out of a politics of restraint or rejection. For when radical politics places the principle of nonviolence to its fore, then that implies not only a critique of violent approaches to conflict, but an inherent suggestion that there is an alternative, which, however, is closely linked to the presence of violence it opposes. Violence is in a way as essential to the conceptualisation and praxis of nonviolence as the sexual act is to the praxis of celibacy, or as feasting to fasting. Rather than viewing nonviolence as the opposite of violence, as diametrically different and mutually exclusive modes, they can be seen as constituting a dialectical movement. Nonviolent politics refers both to the absence as well as rejection of violence – and it is important not to confuse the critique of violence with the supposition of its absence – but the form of this politics is in the way alternatives are proposed.

Since non-injury to the opponent is a prerequisite, the opponent has to be challenged in different ways, urged, convinced, persuaded, coerced, or converted to be ultimately willing to co-operate with the protestors or voluntarily give in to their demands. The opponent, though figured in terms of a homogenous singularity and holder of power in the form of an oppressor, is in fact a plural, as the cases analysed in this study will demonstrate. To begin with, the opponent can be a system, an act, even a single law rather than an indi-

vidual or a regime per se. So for instance it was British rule and not British rulers to whom the civil disobedience movement in the Indian subcontinent was addressed. Further, nonviolent action can be equally targeted at transforming the societies to which the protestors belong, as they are towards an external figure of oppression or injustice. Nonviolent politics becomes as much a search for constituting and re-defining the self, as it is a matter of re-defining the relation to the opponents.

The misconception about the (impossibility of the) absence of violence as the defining moment of nonviolence opens out the question of the dialectical relationship between violence and nonviolence. Is it a relationship of mutually exclusive opposites, such that one can only be thought of as the opposite of the other? And if there is a dialectical back-and-forth movement, where and how does the synthesis take place? How can this relationship be approached and described? How is it expressed and performed? The objective of this research is not to definitively establish where the borderline between violence and nonviolence actually lies, how it can be empirically asserted or cross-checked, but to point out and re-visit the dialectical relationship between what seem like opposite forces, but are not. Nonviolence does not stem from a peaceful place, as Butler states in her reading of Emmanuel Levinas' ethics, but "from a constant tension between the fear of undergoing violence and the fear of inflicting violence."[40] Following this, the possibility of a nonviolent ethic is based on the awareness of how easily human life is injurable or annulled. It is this very same aggression towards life, which paradoxically motivates the rejection of violence.

[40] Judith Butler, *Precarious Life. The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London/New York: Verso, 2004), 137.

2.2.3 "Nonviolence rarely works": the boundary to the opponent in conflict

A third commonly held view about nonviolent action is that there are few real circumstances under which it would actually work and achieve a satisfactory outcome in a conflict. Objections or doubts about nonviolent methods revolve around statements such as: Nonviolence only works with so-called "benevolent enemies"[41], i.e. those opponents who would presumably never resort to extreme violence, or who would be willing to engage in dialogue or negotiation on their own accord; or that it involves a great deal of personal suffering, which can be undertaken only by extraordinarily charismatic leaders or ethical role models; or that it only works for the privileged sections of society, who can afford to be patient, mild-tempered and have the luxury of being accommodative of the opponent, to whom these are virtues worthy of pursuit; or that it only works for those whose goals are moderate and demands not radical.[42]

The argument behind this misconception is one of relativisation and particularisation. The assumption is that nonviolence only works for a select few in select circumstances, for instance to those already

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[41] One common question that many theorists of nonviolent action pose, is how nonviolent action could have dealt with an opponent such as Nazism, in comparison to supposedly more benevolent, compromising forms of oppression such as colonialism. See for instance Ralph Summy, "Nonviolence and the Case of the Extremely Ruthless Opponent".

[42] Frantz Fanon is one of the prominent critics of nonviolent protest who uses precisely these arguments. In *The Wretched of the Earth* (London: Penguin, 1990 [1961]), 48, Fanon writes:

> "At the decisive moment, the colonialist bourgeoisie [...] introduces that new idea which is in proper parlance a creation of the colonial situation: non-violence. In its simplest form this non-violence signifies to the intellectual and economic elite of the colonised country that the bourgeoisie has the same interests as them and that it is therefore urgent and indispensable to come to terms for the public good. Non-violence is an attempt to settle the colonial problem around a green baize table, before any regrettable act has been performed or irreparable gesture made, before any blood has been shed."

Here he critiques the demand for nonviolence by those in power (the colonial bourgeoisie) as hypocritical, for it disregards the asymmetrical power relations between the colonised and the colonisers.

responsive to the conditions of nonviolent action due to certain cultural practices, or to those societies willing to wait for generations before any change takes place (since nonviolent transformation is presumed to be slow paced). It may work, but if it is successful it is because of the particularities of the circumstances which eased the environment for successful nonviolent protest and not because it would prove to be the optimal way to approach conflict. The argument that nonviolent methods rarely work is indicative of a low faith in its efficacy.

The issue here is not whether a theoretical conceptualisation of nonviolence would be able to challenge these assumptions by being able to prove that it is in fact a successful method. Analysts of nonviolence would certainly not claim that nonviolent action always works, but that is no different from saying that any method of waging conflict cannot guarantee success or victory. Adam Roberts thus writes in a defensive gesture: "It is as unrealistic to claim that nonviolent methods always work, as that violent methods always work. Both involve the possibility of victory as well as defeat."[43] For a method to be defined as successful depends on the criteria that make it a failure or a success. That in turn depends on how the conflict itself is perceived. What are the conditions that make a conflict meaningful and the outcomes capable of being viewed as successful? What is being declared a failure when it is claimed that nonviolent action does not work? Is it the resolution of a conflict, is it the agreement reached, and is it the end to inequalities and the achievement of broader societal change? And following from this, one must ask what the standards of measurement are, when the criteria of success and failure are applied.

The range of questions that this set of objections to nonviolent protest raises, relates to the notions of dealing with the opponent in conflict. Particularly because the criticisms mentioned above draw comparisons between nonviolent and other kinds of warfare, it can

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[43] Adam Roberts, "A Case for Civilian Defence" in: *Civilian Defence. An Introduction,* ed. by Adam Roberts, Gene Sharp and T.K. Mahadevan (New Delhi: Gandhi Peace Foundation, 1967), 70.

be fruitful to explore in what way nonviolent action approaches the opponent in conflict differently and how this can be connected to its relationship with violence and with action. What is the understanding of power distribution, equity and social cohesion that emerge from the perception of a conflict as nonviolent? How is conflict valued and how does this relate to the notion of human agency in transforming conflict from stages of escalation to stages of sustainable interaction?

To develop an answer to these complex questions, it is necessary to dwell on the consent theory of power that forms the basis of most theories of nonviolence.[44] The consent theory is summarised by Paul Routledge as follows:

> "Nonviolent theory is a theory of power based upon the principle that all power (personal, institutional, social, political or economic) depends ultimately upon the obedience, consent and/or co-operation of those over whom the power is wielded."[45]

Given a situation of inequality or injustice, with society divided into rulers and subjects, the consent theory views the power of the rulers as derived from the consent or consensus provided by the subjects. Therefore, so the theory goes, people actually create their own oppressors. The withdrawal of consent and an active refusal to be the oppressed or the victim is the essence of nonviolent transformation. If the rulers are deprived of their power and command over the subjects, then the conflict is transformed without the elimination of the oppressor using weapons or other means of force. The demonstrative refusal to co-operate and play along with the demands of the oppressor is thus the means to achieve nonviolent protest. Most historical documents of nonviolent protest record the moment of conscientious refusal of consent as the deciding factor that mobi-

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[44] The term consent theory is used with reference to Martin's review of Gene Sharp's understanding of power, see Brian Martin, "Gene Sharp's Theory of Power," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 26, No. 2 (1989), 214–5. Other theorists do not use the term, but refer to the same idea. See for instance Hall, *The Morality of Civil Disobedience*, 14ff; Ackerman and Kruegler, *Strategic Nonviolent Conflict*.
[45] Routledge, *Terrains of Resistance*, 31.

lised people to topple a government or a ruling tyrant or a system of social oppression. Gene Sharp builds his corpus of examples of nonviolent actions and categorises them according to the way in which the obedience of authority is denied by the oppressed, in order to re-shuffle power relations and topple the oppressor. The theory of consent is referred back to Etienne de la Boétie's often quoted sixteenth-century essay *The Discourse of Voluntary Servitude*, which speaks of the inability of people to realise that they are enslaved, not by the ruler himself, but because they allow themselves to be deprived of their liberties:

> "Obviously there is no need of fighting to overcome this single tyrant, for he is automatically defeated if the country refuses consent to its own enslavement: it is not necessary to deprive him of anything, but simply to give him nothing; there is no need that the country make an effort to do anything for itself provided it does nothing against itself. It is therefore the inhabitants themselves who permit, or, rather, bring about, their own subjection, since by ceasing to submit they would put an end to their servitude."[46]

The consent theory does not conceptualise power, as something possessed by the rulers and exercised upon their subjects at their own will, but a process of dynamic interaction between different actors. It is not intrinsic to their position or their individual selves, but rather ensues from the willingness and submission of the subjects to what appears as an unquestionable set of rules and constraints. Boétie refers to this as a "compelling habituation to subjection,"[47] which makes humans forget that they have a claim to freedom and believe their circumstances to be unchangeable. Subservience is learned and embodied, by individuals and by entire communities.

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[46] Boétie, Etienne de la: *The Politics of Obedience. The Discourse of Voluntary Servitude.* Introduction by Murray Rothband. Transl. Harry Kurz (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1975), 46.
[47] Boétie, *Discourse of Voluntary Servitude*, 55.

Boétie's view of servitude as the outcome of a voluntary, habituated or unquestioned process, finds resonance with several theorists of nonviolent action. It is founded in the belief that humans can steer their own destinies as individuals first, but also as members of a social group. An underlying notion of individuality, including the realisation that one has the power to make choices about one's own life or that one is different as an individual from others, is important to this view of human agency and of its related ideals of freedom and social transformation. The power of resistance comes first of all in the moment of recognition of what way subjects help to constitute the power of the rulers. Prior to calling for a certain action, the first step is to recognise the need to refrain from performing any actions that are already part of the problem: "Resolve to serve no more, and at once you are freed."[48]

Brian Martin has undertaken a detailed critique of Gene Sharp's theory of power and highlighted several drawbacks of the consent theory in nonviolent action, even whilst he acknowledges its usefulness as a guideline for activists and for those interested in participating or organising nonviolent campaigns themselves.[49] The primary objection to the consensual model is that it works best if there is a clear oppressor, in the form of one person or institution. The oppressor is imagined in the singular and the oppressed in the plural, an entire population burdened by the decrees of one ruler. However, the division between the oppressor and the oppressed is usually not clear-cut, because the fault lines of any conflict tend to run right through all the parties involved. In the contemporary world, most violent conflicts take place at an intra-state or inter-community level, with relations between conflicting parties being anything but static or fixed. Economic interdependencies or shared resources add to the complex entanglements between conflicting sides. Even in the case of the presence of an obvious oppressor, the involvement of outside parties or external stakeholders in the conflict make it difficult to identify and then undermine the exact loci of power.

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[48] Boétie, *Discourse of Voluntary Servitude*, 48.
[49] Martin, "Gene Sharp's Theory of Power," 213.

Social hierarchies are also far more complex than can be fit into a binary model of oppressor and oppressed, considering that the oppressed in one situation may well be the oppressors in another. So men belonging to a certain group who may be humiliated and mistreated may continue to perpetuate the same pattern of violence in relation to women. Structures such as patriarchy cannot be shattered by the mere volition to not co-operate with its rules, though such awareness can in itself be an empowering and transformative step. Marxist critique has demonstrated that the distribution of power and access to resources are closely connected to structures, to which individuals commit themselves by virtue of belonging to a certain social order, and transforming these structures involves more than just rejecting one's own position in it.[50]

Further, any expression of individual will and subjectivity can itself be seen as stemming from an existing discourse of power and thus perpetuating the larger structure of containment and control.[51] Historically, nonviolent movements repeatedly faced the danger of colluding with the forces that they resisted, or at least of being occupied with the concerns of the opponent rather than the concerns of the people fighting for their rights.[52] Some of these concerns include constantly proving and establishing the authenticity of their acts and the validity of their intentions, or fighting off accusations as to their identity. So the problem of nonviolent action being contained within a broader mainstream discourse of violence, cannot be easily explained with the consent theory, which works along the assump-

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[50] See Martin, "Gene Sharp's Theory of Power," 215–6. For a detailed discussion of the structural critique of the consent theory see Jonathan Joseph, *Social Theory. Conflict, Cohesion and Consent* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003), 21ff.

[51] This is one of the core insights of the Foucauldian critique of power. While this study does not dwell on Foucault's critique, it is implicitly referred to through the work of Judith Butler, which is of central importance to the development of my understanding of the performativity of nonviolent action.

[52] Section 4.2.7 elaborates on how the Pashtun army was constantly occupied with defending its image against accusations made in the British press about the KK being an offshoot of the Bolsheviks. In Section 4.1.7. I discuss Gandhi's preoccupation with justifying fasting as an effective method of action.

tion that successful struggle implies overthrowing and then appropriating power.

But taking on or assuming or appropriating power is not, as Judith Butler has pointed out, a straightforward matter, of relocating power, moving a stable thing from one place to another and continuing to wield it intact.[53] Moreover, it is a transformation of the self in the process of engaging with the other.

The separation of the oppressed and the oppressor is not straightforward because the formation of the subject depends on the power that oppresses it, even while it resists that power. Thus power makes the subject possible, though it binds this subject down to limits or norms. The consent theory of power tends to assume that the oppressor is external to the oppressed. However, this view can be critiqued in the light of theoretical debate on agency and subjectivity, which have convincingly argued beyond a liberal-humanist formulation that sees the agency of the subject as always opposed to power on the one side, and a political optimism that presupposes the benevolent power that foregoes itself to allow for subjects and agents of socio-political transformation to emerge. Butler puts this aptly when she claims: "Power not only *acts on* a subject, but in a transitive sense, *enacts* the subject into being."[54] It is somewhere in the oscillation between "acting" and "being enacted upon" that the possibilities of political agency and resistance appear. By not denying the necessity and dependence of the subject on power that structures its formation, at the same time allowing for a space for the power to be transformed into the acts of the subject on its own, certain ambivalences are maintained in the theory of power and interaction which are important in the theorisation of nonviolence. Since the apparently clear separating bar between internal and external becomes more of a blurry gradation, the idea of the subject's resistance to the abuse of power is in reference to the power that it resists. Subordination is the other side of subjectivation. Butler

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[53] Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power. Theories in Subjection* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 13.
[54] Butler, *Psychic Life*, 13.

uses the language of boundaries in order to approach this notion of subjectivation: if the subject exceeds power, it does not escape it, as "the subject exceeds precisely that to which it is bound."[55]

Consent theory plays an important role in legal trials and judgements. An act of violation or injury of another person can be judged as a crime if it can be proven that the violated person did not give consent to the act.[56] This implies that giving consent is a sanctioning of the act. Particularly in acts of violence targeted against women's bodies, the idea of consent can be twisted and taken at face value, although it is not simple to prove that saying yes actually does not mean consent. As Carol Pateman has argued in an essay on consent in relation to violence against women,

> "Consent must always be given to something; in the relationship between the sexes it is always women who are said to consent to men. The 'naturally' superior, active and sexually aggressive male makes an initiative or offers a contract to which a 'naturally' subordinate passive woman 'consents'."[57]

Here Pateman seeks to uncover the inequalities hidden in the claim that those who give consent are by virtue of their saying yes at par with those who seek the consent. There is a dialectic of both subjection and empowerment that can be found in the consent theory, depending on how it is interpreted. The question of consent can reveal the possibilities of changing power structures, yet it can also cement these very same power structures by accepting the terms of who seeks consent and who gives consent.

What does this dialectic imply for the understanding of violent conflict and nonviolent action? I read Butler's phenomenological essay

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[55] Butler, *Psychic Life*, 14.
[56] The 2001 International Hague War Crimes Tribunal ruling on rape as a crime against humanity uses this theory in a radical way. For a fascinating reading of the philosophical and legal implications of consent theory see Debra Bergoffen, "February 22, 2001: Toward a Politics of the Vulnerable Body," *Hypatia* Vol. 18, No. 1 (Winter 2003), 116–34.
[57] Carol Pateman, *The Disorder of Women* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989), 84.

as a way of introducing ambivalences, paradoxes and multiple-binds that complicate agency whilst making it possible or imaginable. Theorists of nonviolence refer to the clear distinction between the oppressor and the oppressed, they speak of a "freedom from servitude,"[58] not of "a freedom enmeshed in servitude."[59]

Leaving aside the consent theory of power, theories of nonviolence would agree that conflict is essential to the creation of a subject of resistance. The involvement in conflict paradoxically enables and subordinates the subject and deprives it of agency at the same time. Conflict, as conceptualised here, is not per se something to be prevented, but it is the violent responses to conflict that are to be avoided. Conflict is perceived as a healthy and necessary process for social transformation. Without a conflict of interests, or in perceptions or in systems of meaning and interpretation, the society would be homogenous, static and short of dead. The emphasis of nonviolent action is to restructure conflict, not only or necessarily to find (re)solutions.[60]

Conflicts are perceived as dynamic, with deeper links to various aspects of social life.[61] Conflicts have more than just a beginning and an end. They are interwoven into a social set-up and are influenced by the given social conditions, just as they in turn colour the fabric of the society in which they arise. Rather than viewing conflicts as something to be resolved, nonviolent action promotes the transformation of conflict. Peace researcher Jean Paul Lederach argues for a transformative approach as follows:

> "Resolution [...] carries the connotation of a bias toward 'ending' a given crisis or at least its outward expression, without being sufficiently concerned with the deeper

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[58] Boétie, *Discourse of Voluntary Servitude,* Part I, 41ff.
[59] Reference to Hegel in Butler, *Psychic Life*, 31.
[60] This has been highlighted in a key text in the field of conflict transformation by Kumar Rupesinghe, ed., *Conflict Transformation* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995), Introduction.
[61] This is the approach of Johan Galtung in his essay "Conflict Resolution as Conflict Transformation: The First Law of Thermodynamics Revisited," *Conflict Transformation,* ed. Rupesinghe, 51–64.

> structural, cultural and long-term relational aspects of conflict. 'Transformation', on the other hand, has the suggestive advantage of being both descriptively rich in regard to conflict dynamics and prescriptively embedded in a framework that underscores a more holistic view of conflict. *Descriptively*, 'transformation' suggests that conflict affects and changes things in potentially destructive or constructive directions [...] *Prescriptively*, transformation is concerned with broader social structures, change and moving toward a space open for cooperation, for more just relationships and for nonviolent mechanisms for handling conflict, or what might be understood as dynamic and increasingly peaceful relationships."[62]

Although the transformation approach has served as an important guideline for researchers and policy makers in contemporary conflict management issues, thus for so-called third parties or external actors in a particular conflict, the approach is also to be found amongst those involved in a certain conflict as nonviolent protestors or interveners. The transformation of conflict, as opposed to its resolution, sees conflict in a longer term perspective, looking at issues of sustainability and co-operative interaction between different parties involved, which goes beyond the resolution of the concrete issues under dispute. Resolution of issues and reaching agreements to put an end to hostilities may thus be one part of conflict transformation. While violent methods claim to bring about the resolution of a conflict, they do not show an interest in the development of a comprehensive, sustainable and just social fabric. Nonviolent action places emphasis on transformation by highlighting the engagement with the opponent.

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[62] Jean Paul Lederach, "Conflict Transformation in Protracted Internal Conflicts: The case for a comprehensive framework," *Conflict Transformation*, ed. Rupesinghe, 201–2.

2.2.4 "Nonviolence is spiritual": the boundary to the body

Perhaps because of the charismatic, almost saintly reputation of figures like Gandhi or Martin Luther King who stood for nonviolent methods of political struggle, perhaps because of the commonly perceived connection between nonviolence and a pacifist ideology, nonviolent action is often viewed as extremely difficult, if not impossible for members of the non-elite, ordinary citizens, and communities in their struggles for justice and rights. Connected to this is the notion that nonviolence works through and with the mind, that the methods of nonviolent protest are based on psychological and discursive transactions rather than the employment of the visceral and the corporeal. It is assumed that nonviolence does not require training or learning, it comes through adopting and pledging allegiance to an ethical code of conduct, through some spiritual affiliation or even emotional, psychological predisposition. This idea goes back to the distinction between pragmatic and principled nonviolence and the view that nonviolence is a matter of attitude and not of method, of ideological affiliation and not just the performance or exercise of a form of political praxis.

The body has been widely theorised in relation to violence, particularly because physical injury, violation and killing of the body is the basic common denominator of violence. The use of the body in conflict is almost seen as synonymous to the use of violence. Violence is in the first instance injury done to the human body by human bodies (and by extension, their weapons or 'arms'). The space of war is essentially and most powerfully articulated in and through the human body, its mutilation and desecration in an endless number of ways. Conquering the other in conflict often means gaining control over the other's bodies. Further, terms such as excessiveness, lack of control, aggression, violation and domination pertain to both acts of the body and acts of violence, so the use of the body as agent of violence as well as the object of violence is central to the notion of violence.

By taking nonviolence to be the other of violence, its absence and its opposite, one is inclined to assume that the body is not involved in a nonviolent conflict. This is further related to conceptions of the body as impulsive, prone to unreflected and uncontrolled acts and outbursts, whereas the ideal of nonviolence is envisioned as acts of restraint and composure, well-thought out and balanced, all attributes that tend to be connected more to the mind – seen as distinct from the body.

The questions about the nature and characteristics of nonviolent action can be extended to the realm of the meaning of the human body in conflict, the role that physicality and corporeal expression play in nonviolent conflict; the implications that the distinction between mind and body have for the theorisation of nonviolence. Effectively this can be formulated as a distinction between inner and outer or core and surface. The misconception about nonviolent action being connected to the moral, psychological or spiritual (i.e. perceived as internal, core) authority of the actors, implying not only the absence of physical force but of physicality itself (perceived as external), throws up the larger question of the role of the body in resistance, of how the author of an act is framed and formed. Is the body a tool, ancillary to the mind in nonviolent conflict, is it the constraining force or is it the driving subject of an action? To put it differently, in what way is the self, the subject engaged in nonviolent action an embodied self?

This aspect has not only been understudied. It is also made to appear as if there is no connection between the two. Part of the tasks of this study will be to introduce the unit of the body in the theorisation of nonviolent protest. One of the ways this will be done is to focus attention on how the body is employed in conflict. In what way does the body become a site of political evidence? What are the considerations given to the relationship between the bodies of the actors engaged in nonviolent resistance as against the bodies of the opponents? The protesting body is a public body, visible, vulnerable, threatening but also threatened. This is true of both the individual body as in the first example of Gandhi's fasts as well as in relation

to the body of a group, as in the case of the nonviolent army of the Pashtuns in the second example studied in this paper.

In my exploration of nonviolent action, especially the performativity of nonviolent protest, the body-mind differentiation is implicit in much of the existing literature, both in historical accounts of nonviolent actions as well as in theoretical and political analyses of the various stages of conflict and its outcomes. A theory of protest that only focuses on the issues, strategies, demands and outcomes of an act, cannot adequately take emotionality, the effect of the physical presence of large numbers of people and embodied forms of reaction into consideration. It may explain protests and their history in terms of issues and clashes of interests, but not as visceral events. Participants in any conflict – violent or not – place their bodies at risk, or implicitly convey messages through their appearances, postures and send out physical signals, which they may not explicitly state.[63] Thus theories of conflict also need to take bodies – and not only ideologies and strategies of action – into consideration.

By leaving out the body in a theory of nonviolent action, it becomes difficult to account for why certain events suddenly take place, or for why certain historical figures have such a great socio-political impact. It also makes it difficult to include emotions, bodily presence, immediacy of experience, atmosphere or mood as factors that influence conflicts and the path to their resolution. In the case of the anti-colonial movements in the first half of the twentieth century, what we have are several accounts of events that took place and were evidently crucial for the transformation of the conflict and for the creation of a new nation state. A key element in the story of this conflict is the fact that the battle was fought primarily with nonviolent weapons and means, which are mostly theorised as a psychological and discursive overthrow of the colonial powers, thus

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[63] More recent writings in the field of conflict transformation acknowledge the significance of the interaction between bodies, of posture and appearance, both for those involved in the conflict, as well as for third party interventions. See Hannah Reich, *Local Ownership: Partnership, Participation or Patronage?*, Berghof Occasional Paper (Berlin: Berghof Research Centre for Constructive Conflict Management, 2006 forthcoming).

not requiring training and preparation of the body for combat or confrontation. But the central role of physicality, presence, liveness and the foregrounding of the body and its vulnerability have not been adequately acknowledged in the historiography of nonviolent protest, though they are prominent in the way activists and participants in protest prepare for their interventions and actions.

The dynamics of nonviolent conflict are closely related not only to the issues driving the conflicting parties, or to the worldviews they are influenced by, but also and significantly to the way the body is strategically and ideologically employed. Bodily effort – and not merely ethical conviction – is required to turn arguments and beliefs into ways of engaging in conflict. Acts of labour – and not only a feeling of solidarity – are required to make social entities out of bodies.[64] This mode of fighting is not only and not even primarily a mode of presenting one's standpoint or arguments through language, but a way of physically engaging with the opponent.

When I speak of the body in conflict, I refer to the bodies of both the protestors, the persons carrying out a nonviolent action as well as the bodies of the opponents or the addressees of the action. Here again very important differences can be identified between the body politics of nonviolent action as opposed to other forms of political conflict. The questions that interest me in this research are: how can the body-mind separation be overcome in a theory of nonviolent action? How can the involvement and interaction between different bodies, the embodiment of motivation and social, political identity in conflict be described or approached? Seeing the body as separate from the mind or spirit or soul is characteristic of a worldview that conceives the subject as an entity that is complete in itself, a subject that has a sense of agency (through the mind or spirit) before it interacts (through the body, the instrument of its agency) with the Other.

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[64] This reading of the body is influenced by Bourdieu's notion of physical capital, see Chris Schilling, *The Body and Social Theory* (London: Sage, 1993), 128.

I would like to suggest, however, that the subject and agency of nonviolent action could be more meaningfully explored if viewed as unfinished and in the making, rather than an established subject that exists in its entirety before (and for that matter also after) the entry into conflict. Like Butler, I would like to emphasise that the subject is foremost a linguistic category. It is not an individual or a person, although individuals can become subjects. Moreover, the subject should be understood as a marker, "a site, a placeholder, a structure in formation."[65] So the agency of the subject is a position that a person can take, in relation to and keenly dependent on the agency of the opponents in conflict. Challenging the misconception of nonviolence as a primarily spiritual or mental process of confronting the opponent is thus important in order to highlight the role of the body, of corporeality and of embodied ideas in nonviolent struggle. This does not imply denying any spiritual or non-bodily aspects of nonviolence, but moreover insists on identifying the self-reflexive or self-constitutive moments in the very act and in the way nonviolence is embodied and enacted, how the body speaks rather than is spoken about. The body is part of the constitution of the subject, but the body as a social agent evolves through a complex process that is never entirely completed.

[65] Butler, *Psychic Life,* 10–11.

3 Theorising performativity in the study of nonviolence

The previous section on theories of nonviolence traced the boundary areas of nonviolence and raised a number of questions pertaining to the way the concept of nonviolence relates to political action, to violence, to the opponent or the other in conflict as well as to the role of the body in conflict. The questions at these boundaries demonstrate that theories of nonviolence always involve implicit assumptions of what the underlying notion of power is in the emergence of conflict, assumptions relating to the difference or the possibility to demarcate violence from nonviolence, as well as of the way the body is a part of this complex process. The questions raised in the course of the critical review of theories of nonviolence point to the gaps in the approaches to the subject, which is so far dominated by the search for improved feasibility, acceptance or strategic development of nonviolent action. Certainly the latter are vital and necessary aspects, at least from an activist's perspective. However, the lack of conceptual precision and the arbitrary ways in which terms such as the self, agency and human action are understood, call for attention and scrutiny from a perspective that foregrounds matrices of performance. This section will highlight one concept, namely that of performativity, in relation to the gaps and questions of the theories of nonviolence. In doing so, it will prepare the theoretical background for the analysis of two concrete and historical examples of nonviolent action from the Indian subcontinent in the twentieth century: firstly the case of Gandhi's use of fasting as a weapon of nonviolent protest and secondly the unarmed resistance force and social movement of the Pashtuns, *Khudai Khidmatgar*. The analysis will focus on how the concept of nonviolence is enunciated and enacted, re-reading the historical material in two cases of nonviolent action and asking of these events questions that a performance studies scholar might pose.

There is nothing particularly novel about using performance to describe and understand politics. Political science commonly uses

language borrowed from the performance world, when it refers to actors, antagonists, scenarios, dramatic moves, climaxes, backstage, audiences, shows and so forth. However, performance seems to mostly offer a panorama of metaphors that support and supplement the narrative framing of political events, rather than provide a perspective for grasping political processes and moments. This metaphorical reference to the realm of the theatre and performance usually does not enter into much detail, remaining a part of the packaging in the discussion of politics. What I would like to propose instead, is a heuristic application of performance to other fields, an extension and expansion of the concept rather than a metaphorical transfer into another realm, marked as different from theatre and performance. The question that interests me in this section is how performance studies can be used to understand and analyse structural levels of society, rather than only art-based performance.

In his recent introduction to performance studies, Richard Schechner distinguishes between two different kinds of usages of performance, namely when something "is performance" as opposed to when something can be seen "as performance".[66] The former refers to particular types of events such as dance, theatre, music or ritual. These include the stylisation of acts according to rules of play and involve processes of creating and structuring performance. The latter category "as performance" points to how practically everything can be perceived as performance by way of a certain kind of framing. "Performance will be to the twentieth and twenty-first centuries what discipline was to the eighteenth and nineteenth, that is an onto-historical formation of power and knowledge."[67] This portentous declaration by Jon McKenzie is based on the second notion of framing the world "as performance". In this view of performance studies, there are no bounds to what can be explained or described through the lens of performance, from judicial trials to hospital emergency room situations to political processes to family reunions.

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[66] Richard Schechner, *Performance Studies. An Introduction.* 2nd edition (London: Routledge, 2006), 38.
[67] Jon McKenzie, *Perform or Else: From Discipline to Performance* (London: Routledge, 2001), 20.

But if everything can be seen as performance, then the term is easily susceptible to becoming a catchall phrase with no conceptual stability. One could ask, as Bert States does in an essay on the use of performance as metaphor, "what isn't performance, what isn't culture?"[68]

Yet McKenzie, Schechner and a range of other scholars from the newly emerging field of performance studies contend that performance is becoming "a new global paradigm of knowledge"[69] with relevance across disciplinary boundaries and questions. This is backed up with the observation that performance is pertinent to a wide array of contemporary phenomena, from politics to the global economy, to science and technology, culture, and to sports. Combining, interlinking and juxtaposing the different meanings and practices of performance in these different fields can lead to the development of a paradigm, in the sense of McKenzie, with which these vastly varied problems can be addressed. Far from insisting on one particular meaning of performance, these scholars prefer to open out the term to various strata of meaning, calling for the different nuances to be kept in mind simultaneously and creating a continuum of the meanings of performance, even while focusing on one particular area. So the paradigm of performance seeks to constantly expand its horizons.

This study takes its cue from the "world as performance" view. In particular, the concept of performativity is elaborated from what has been described above as "as performance". Performativity is what characterises something as performance. Situating the study of nonviolent protest in the horizon of performance studies implies not only that nonviolence is differently analysed because of the change of perspective, but also that parameters of performance studies need to be re-articulated, in order to accommodate its changing objects of scholarship and study. Introducing the subject of nonviolent

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[68] Bert O. States, "Performance as Metaphor," *Theatre Journal*, Vol. 48, No. 1 (1996), 5.
[69] McKenzie, *Perform or Else,* Introduction.

action from the field of politics into the gamut of performance means rethinking what performance means. However, the difficulty and challenge is to use the concepts (of nonviolence and of performance) without ending up either listing a plethora of definitions and applications or adding yet another definition and application to the multiplicity without being able to grasp the entire range of complexities of the concepts.[70] As a "keyword" in the sense of Raymond Williams, performativity – and its related sister terms performative, performance, perform – are concepts "whose meanings are inextricably bound up with the problems [they are] being used to discuss."[71] The concept is not merely descriptive in the sense that one can claim this or that *is* performative, rather it is programmatic, in that the choice and justification of the uses of the term lead to and imply specific effects. The moment a phenomenon is described as performative, it implies certain perspectival shifts in the way it is understood.

In order to suggest the ways in which the idea of the performative can shed light on nonviolent action, some conceptual reviewing is in order.

3.1 Four shades of the performative

The recent explosive interest in the concept of performativity has been influenced by four different disciplinary contexts, which shape the range of applications of the term and the variables it circulates around. The emerging different meanings and applications often have no connection to each other, but the metonymic shifts through various fields affect and influence the concept, as it were, leaving traces and analogies behind in its different usages, even though there is no common denominator that binds them together. Each usage comes with its own trajectory, particularly in the English-

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[70] This difficulty was pointed out by Raymond Williams with reference to the concept of culture as a "keyword", see reference in States, "Performance as Metaphor," 1–2.

[71] Raymond Williams, *Keywords. A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), 13.

speaking academic world.[72] The exact definitions of the terms have become difficult to pin down, and the spectrum of applications of these terms has exponentially increased over the past two decades. In this study, my focus is on the term performativity, and all usages of the terms *perform, performing, performance, performative* are placed in relation to the concept of performativity.

Richard Schechner's introductory reader to performance studies summarises the use of the term "to perform" as follows:

> "In business, sports, and sex, 'to perform' is to do something up to a standard – to succeed, to excel. In the arts, 'to perform' is to put on a show, a play, a dance, a concert. In everyday life, 'to perform' is to show off, to go to extremes, to underline an action for those who are watching."[73]

Schechner supplements these three ideas of performance: being, doing, and showing doing with a fourth notion, which, according to him, characterises performance studies, i.e. "explaining 'showing doing'". This fourth stage introduces a reflexive moment into an action, referring it back to an awareness of performing an act.[74]

Another approach to categorising performativity comes from Erika Fischer-Lichte, who describes five "shades" (*Begriffsabschattungen*) of performativity, with reference to the influence of different scholarly disciplines and theories on the term.[75] These are respectively the discourses of technology/economics, generative linguistics, speech act theory, anthropology, and aesthetic practices. In the discourse of technology and economics, performativity denotes the competitive value of a product or its achievement in a market or in

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[72] Although performativity seeks to address cultural practices outside of the West, it is difficult to translate the concept and its related nuances into other languages. For an exploration in the South East Asian context, see Jennifer Lindsay, ed., *Between Tongues. Translation and/of/in Performance in Asia* (Singapore: National University Press), 2006.
[73] Schechner, *Performance Studies*, 28.
[74] Schechner, *Performance Studies*, 28.
[75] See Erika Fischer-Lichte's foreword to *Paragrana. Internationale Zeitschrift für Historische Anthropologie,* Vol. 7, No. 1 (1998), "Kulturen des Performativen", 9.

terms of technical competencies. In linguistics, performativity represents the processual, gradual and creative acquisition of linguistic competencies. In speech act theory, performativity refers to the way language, in particular the uttering of words is in itself the performing of an action. The performative speech act is one particular form of using language as a means of doing or accomplishing an act. The disciplinary context of anthropology uses performativity to characterise rituals, ceremonies and other human practices of show and expression. Finally, performativity is used in a specifically artistic sense, referring to performances as display and forms of staging.

In order to trace the discursive paths and genealogies of performativity, I would like to re-read these shades of the performative as ensuing from verbs, as traces of movements and actions, thus combining Schechner's approach to the different kinds of performance with the disciplinary contexts outlined by Fischer-Lichte. However, it could be argued that the categories of generative linguistics and speech act theory may be more usefully combined into one, with regard to the application of performativity to the context of this study.[76] Since both categories are concerned with performative language or speech, I propose combining them into one shade of the performative, in terms of the adaptation of the concept for the study of nonviolent action.

The point of emphasis in this description is to view the performative as emerging from particular kinds of action. What does it mean to understand a concept as based on a verb? First of all, it suggests that the concept can be understood or formulated as an *operative* rather than a *definitive* concept. This means, "it is not characterised by any thematic definition, but by the intellectual operation that it

[76] Fischer-Lichte herself does not speak of fixed categories; the use of the term "shades" suggests that they are variable. See Fischer-Lichte, "Auf dem Wege zu einer performativen Kultur," *Paragrana. Internationale Zeitschrift für Historische Anthropologie,* Vol. 7, No. 1 (1998), "Kulturen des Performativen", 13–32.

allows for."[77] An operative concept is flexible towards thematic considerations. This implies that there is a relation between the thematic consideration and the way in which it is articulated; hence between content and form, between what is done and the conditions of how it is done. The operative character of the variables surrounding performativity becomes pertinent, to the extent that the different thematic discourses are constituted in the way that they are employed in different contexts. I refer to the verb 'to perform' as the basis of the different shades of performativity currently employed in academic circles.

'To perform' can thus mean one or more of the following four acts:

3.1.1 To test – to achieve

One of the shades of the performative comes from the technological and economic fields. A simple search in any internet search engine for the term 'perform' or 'performance' would reveal the sheer diversity of contexts in which the idea of performance is employed and defined: from the performance of stocks in the share market, to drugs that enhance performance, to performance ranking in tests of all sorts, to performance plans of governments or corporations and performance charts of machinery and weapons … the list is endless and is striking in the range of applications of the term performance. As Jon McKenzie ironically points out, "in the age of global performance, all the world becomes a test site."[78] In this turnaround of the *theatrum mundi* metaphor, performance is first expanded to fields outside of the conventional theatre, leading not to the world becoming a stage, but to performance taking on the attributes of the global economy and technology market. The main act in this arena

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[77] This mode is used by Stefan Nowotny in his discussion of "culture" as a theoretical and an operative concept in "Culture and the Analysis of Power," *transversal, Journal of EIPCP*, Vol. 19, No. 4 (2006); translated from: Stefan Nowotny and M. Staudigl, eds., *Grenzen des Kulturkonzepts: Meta-Genealogien* (Vienna: Turin+Kant, 2003).

[78] Jon McKenzie, "Democracy's Performance," *The Drama Review (TDR)* Vol. 47, No. 2, T178 (Summer 2003), 122.

is that of testing something in terms of its outcome, its capacity to win in market competition and in measurements of optimisation.

Performance in commerce and technology refers to how a machine, a company, or a product fares, how it performs or "outperforms" others in a competitive sense. The concept is firmly anchored in the logic of the market, in which performativity is a measurement of profit and productivity and a particular product or economic actor is valued in terms of how it acquires the capacity to regulate or alter the market. The criteria of success and failure are implicit to the performance discourse, particularly in the commercial sense. A product, a technology, a business succeeds or fails in its performance. Performance can be ranked, rated, quantified as a graph; it can improve or fall. Adjectives such as poor, shabby, miserable or brilliant, unbeatable, first-rate are used to describe performance quality and standards in this field. Performance in business management or technology presumably signifies something quite different from how cultural analysts would use the term. However, its commercial and technological connotations are (albeit indirectly, associatively) contained in the densities of the term, even while the term is used with reference to art-based or creative performance. Performance in this sense is about testing, passing or failing a test, achieving, excelling. It is also about experimentation, seeing whether a certain practice works or not, testing its efficacy and its consequences, trial by way of repetition and error and evaluation of the action. Performance in this discourse has often been critiqued, particularly by those critical towards the global market economy and its Darwinist logic of elimination of those who cannot perform well enough or fall through the standards of selection and testing grounds. However, I would agree with McKenzie that this does not mean the operative movement behind the notion of performance (i.e. to test and to achieve) cannot be strategically affirmed despite the necessary critique.[79] It resonates in the field of cultural performance, with rehearsal, invention and creativity all being processes of testing and striving for achievement.

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[79] McKenzie, "Democracy's Performance," 123–4.

To test and to achieve present what could be read as a "performative contradiction", in the way Butler has used the term. Testing indicates an unfinished process, that which remains to be realised and shown, whereas achieving is already the indication of a completion, or the acceptance and necessity of a universality or final benchmark of progress in order to give the testing a purposeful meaning. The performative operates pervasively because of the contradiction or paradox existing in the double bind between testing and achieving in the technological or commercial sense. To achieve is to not need to test anymore; to test is to confine achievement to an uncertain future.

This shade of the performative does not hold much relevance for the purposes of this study. However, it must be borne in mind, in order to understand all the shades of application of the term.

3.1.2 To speak – to do

A second shade of performativity emerges from the philosophy of language, referring to J.L. Austin's influential speech act theory, in which the idea of the performative utterance as an example of an act, rather than just a descriptive or constative statement, inspired several theorists to reflect on the role of language in action and in the constitution of self. The performative refers to the way things assume shape and are constituted by way of naming, of being called and interpellated. In an extension of the anthropological use of the performative mentioned above, the performative speech act emphasises that speech on the whole, and particular forms of address are acts in themselves, thus questioning the distinction between discourse and action.

What does it mean for words to be deeds? Austin suggests that words can be instrumentalised in getting things done, that "there is an apparent coincidence of signifying and enacting."[80] Some kinds of action are only possible through language, which implies that

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[80] Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech. The Politics of the Performative* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 43–59.

speech is not just a way of describing and naming a reality external to itself, but in fact language constitutes certain kinds of actions. Performativity in the sense of the speech act refers to the double bind of saying and doing, thus also of a way of perceiving action and the conditions of its efficacy. Austin's sense of the performative requires various conditions to be fulfilled in order for a certain statement to 'succeed', to be performed as an act. The person doing the act has to be authorised to effect the statement as an act. The person who is being addressed with the speech act must be willing or in a position to be enacted upon through words in a certain way, to be injured by words, to be constituted as the entity named by virtue of being named. Thus saying as doing involves not just speech but a range of conditionalities that decide whether a form of speech is in fact an action, which will elicit response and recognition.

The theory of performative speech acts as further developed by John Searle points to a further range of questions concerning how real a speech act actually is. While Searle and Austin differentiated between the realms of fiction and reality, asserting that a speech act on stage is different from an act in 'real life', post-modern and post-structuralist thought take the notion of performativity beyond this distinction between fiction and reality, by constantly deconstructing the idea of the authenticity or originality of an act. The border between acting as doing and as pretending to do, or simulating action is another place where the concept of the performative and its fields of application are located. The performative act constitutes the act and the person performing the act in the very moment of its utterance. As a consequence, the performative includes not the act alone but its making of, the exposure of how it comes to be. By paying attention to the act as well as the process of its constitution, a self-reflexive element is introduced, which is an important concern of theories of performativity. Reflexivity also questions the border between reality and simulation or pretension, because the moment one is aware that one is doing something, and makes this awareness visible in the act, the authenticity of the act is ruptured.

The implications of the performative speech act have been widely researched and thought through in performance studies in particu-

lar, and in various strands of cultural analyses in general.[81] The debates here concern not only the conditions of a statement becoming a speech act, but also the consequences of such an act, in legal terms or in terms of responses and the answerability of speech acts towards the addressee. If speech can be an act, then the person speaking becomes imbued with the agency of the doer, performing the act.

The shade of performativity influenced by the philosophy of language and generative linguistics is relevant to this study, to the extent that the notion of authenticity and the possibility of its expression through language, is a recurring theme in the analysis of nonviolent action. The tensions between doing and pretending to do reverberate in the misconception about nonviolent action as inaction as well as in the questions regarding the extent to which an act of nonviolence is in fact free of violence at all.

3.1.3 To play – to display

Performance is further used to describe a wide range of practices beyond the theatre, from language usage to rituals to parades to sports events to political rallies. Following from this, the term performative is used in reference to non-textual expressions, particularly those involving liveness, the presence of and direct interaction between performers and spectators, as opposed to recorded and purely script-based forms. The performative refers to those elements that constitute cultural or social interaction *as* an event or a spectacle.

The works of Goffman and Turner are two prominent examples of the adaptation of performance language to ask and answer questions about social life, practices, conflicts, rituals, ceremonies and

[81] See Henry Bial, ed., *The Performance Studies Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

phenomena of social interaction.[82] The field of anthropology has influenced this use and development of the concept. Cultural studies has been greatly influenced by what has come to be known as the "performative turn"[83], following the linguistic turn and then the iconic turn. With this emphasis on and recognition of sources of cultural expression other than the written or printed text, it became possible for cultural analysis to consider more fluid and impermanent forms as cultural material. Recognising the importance of performative practices meant giving importance to gestures, acts and expressions that were so far considered to be irrelevant or only of ancillary significance to the main modes of social interaction such as language and text. It also allowed for predominantly oral traditions to be recognised as valuable historical sources.

Two interlinked strands of performativity can be traced in this sense of the term. On the one side the element of play, of ephemeral practices that happen in the very moment and disappear, an element common to all performing arts. "Performance's only life is in the present," is one of the important claims of Peggy Phelan's argument about performativity, namely that which is characteristic of performance.[84] The idea of play includes forms of interaction and behaviour that cannot be easily recorded, that are outside the realm of functionality or utility in the strict sense, but are self-referential and self-reflexive. It also includes the idea of repetition, for the element of play is recognised when it is repeated in codified or improvised form. The aspect of playing in performance further refers to pleasurability, enjoyment, entertainment and intensity of feeling in participation or spectatorship. This leads to the other strand of the performative in its relation to play. To perform/play is also to display, to show an audience, to put oneself on a stage, to set the scene for interaction. Performativity in the sense of "as performance" means a

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[82] Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (New York 1959) and Victor Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre. The Human Seriousness of Play* (New York: Performing Arts Journal Publication, 1982).
[83] Erika Fischer-Lichte, "Auf dem Weg zu einer performativen Kultur," 13–32.
[84] Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked. The Politics of Performance* (London: Routledge, 1993), 146.

way of showing, of allowing something to be seen or witnessed, and particularly a kind of display that foregrounds this showing or showing off. The performative turn thus also refers to the rising importance of spectacle/spectacularity in all aspects of life, especially influenced by the presence of electronic media in daily life. Contemporary public cultures are thus often described as "cultures of the performative", increasingly constituted by simulacra and display, where an issue or thematic consideration is transformed under consideration of the relation between the spectators and the performers.[85]

Performativity does not draw a division between the theatrical and other social spheres.[86] The concept thus takes the issues of play and display out of the theatre into the world, as it were, looking at ways in which social and political interactions can be understood differently if viewed "as performance". This is not to be equated with a metaphorical understanding of the term performance, as if the spheres of theatrical performance and non-theatrical performance could be separated into watertight categories. Moreover, the notion of performativity refers to characteristics of human interaction in various circumstances, which highlight the double bind of play and display. This approach moves away from studying cultures as systems of representation to looking at them as processes of practice and enactment, not relying only on symbols or coded forms but on the processes of its construction. Performativity in this sense of the term helps to theorise the creation of presence, liveness and being in the moment, in ways that were not possible using purely semiotic or textual readings.[87] It is in this sense that the term performativity

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[85] This idea is explored in the anthology of essays on performativity and event in Erika Fischer-Lichte, ed., *Performativität und Ereignis*. Series: "Theatralität," Vol. 4 (Tübingen and Basel: Francke, 2003).

[86] This is argued convincingly by Sue Ellen Case in "The Emperor's New Clothes: The Naked Body and Theories of Performance," *Sub Stance. Review of Theory and Literary Criticism,* Issue 98/99, Vol. 31, Nos. 2&3, Special Issue: Theatricality, ed. Josette Féral (2002), 189.

[87] Schieffelin discusses and problematises what the notion of performance as play and simulacrum mean to anthropological method in: Edward Schieffelin, "Problematizing Performance," *Ritual, Performance, Media,* ed. Felicia Hughes-Freeland, ASA Monographs 35, (London/New York: Routledge, 1998), 194–207.

is very close to the older concept of theatricality. This latter, highly elastic term carries a wide range of meanings and attributes, some of which are contradictory to each other, which is perhaps why recent scholarly interest has invested more in the notion of performativity than in theatricality.[88] The usage of theatricality which I find most productive, and which complements the concept of the performative, has been outlined by Tracy Davis and also by Josette Féral.[89] Here the idea of theatricality refers to the way a subject is watched, and to what Davis has called "the dédoublement of the spectator", the fact that choosing to be a spectator in a certain environment or enabling the other to be a conscious spectator of one's own actions, can allow for a critical self-reflexive distance from the particulars of a situation and make fresh assessments of it.[90] This condition of theatricality typically takes place in the environment of theatre spectatorship, but can and does happen elsewhere in the public sphere. It is a condition of spectators, citizens, and participants not showing any empathy, in other words not conforming to the logic of subjection they are being asked to empathise with. Theatricality can thus be brought into the political realm.

Féral argues that the difference between performativity and theatricality is one of perspective, whether one looks at a situation from the angle of actors (performativity) or from the angle of spectators (theatricality).[91] Performativity would thus privilege 'play and display' from the point of view of the subject on display, it would ask what display and show does to transform or constitute the way one

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[88] In a book review of a recent publication by Tracy Davis and Thomas Postlewait, Philip Auslander contends that the concept of theatricality can generate interesting discussions and questions, despite its being shadowed by the notion of performativity. See Philip Auslander, "Review of Tracy Davis and Thomas Postlewait, eds. *Theatricality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003)," *The Drama Review (TDR),* Vol. 50, No. 2, T190 (Summer 2006), 165–6.

[89] Compare Tracy Davis, "Theatricality and Civil Society," in Tracy Davis and Thomas Postlewait, eds., *Theatricality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 127–55 and Josette Féral, "The Specificity of Theatrical Language," *Sub Stance. Review of Theory and Literary Criticism,* Issues 98 & 99, Vol. 31, Nos. 2 & 3 (2002), 94–108.

[90] Davis, "Theatricality and Civil Society," 145.

[91] Josette Féral, "Foreword," *Sub Stance. Review of Theory and Literary Criticism,* Issues 98 & 99, Vol. 31, Nos. 2 & 3 (2002), 3–13.

acts. Theatricality would privilege 'play and display' from the vantage point of the subject that chooses to become a spectator or, finds oneself in the position of a spectator. Theatricality would ask what it means to watch oneself watching, to be aware of how one reacts to a situation as a spectator in a way that may be surprising to oneself, that may alter one's own self-perception and perception of the other. Davis quotes an example from Kierkegaard in order to strengthen the point, where the philosopher ironically notes that a ram was on exhibition in a circus fair one afternoon, which placed an entry fee of eight shillings. Whereas people came in large numbers to the circus fair, nobody bothered to pay any attention to the same ram grazing on the fields earlier in the morning. It is thus not the act or the object itself, but the special status of paying a price in order to become a spectator that made the ram on display an object worth watching.[92] Without the exceptionalness of the circumstance, there would be no play, no performative gestures. On the grazing field, people could not be aware that they were in fact watching, there would be "no breach in empathy", so Davis argues, therefore no theatricality. The circumstance of becoming or choosing to be a spectator alters the meaning of the action of the performer and allows for reactions of the spectator that are active and consequential, in their own right.

The interwoven concepts of the performative and the theatrical as outlined above are pertinent to the analysis of opposition and ways of dealing with the opponent in nonviolent conflict. This shade of the performative also allows for corporeality to be introduced in the analysis of nonviolent action and with it the different perspectives of the actors and the spectators in conflict.

3.1.4 To become – to take on form

Widely influenced by phenomenological questions of subject constitution and the emergence of normativity, the concept of the performative became crucial in the work of Judith Butler, in exploring

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[92] Davis, "Theatricality and civil society," 129.

how we can gain knowledge about our process of becoming human beings, thus how social agents constitute social reality. Although it might appear as if phenomenology presumes the existence of a fully formed and self-identified subject which is the source of all its acts, Butler employs and interprets the concept of performativity to explain how the social agent can be seen as an object rather than the subject of constitutive acts.[93] Here the term 'perform' is seen in its simplified forms of "to do, to dramatise, to reproduce", called the "elementary structures of embodiment".[94] This fundamentally anti-essentialist stance of Butler is key to the notion of performativity as that which constitutes us as possibilities, as processes rather than fixed and finished entities. Rather than entirely dismiss the notion of the subject as a rational and transparent being, whose acts and behaviour can be traced back to its unique personality, Butler's notion of the performative seeks to show how we are constantly in the process of making ourselves into what we believe we already are. Here she refers to Foucault's critique of power and subjection/subjectivation, Derrida's idea of the constitutive other, to a destabilising reading of Freud's work on sovereignty and subjectivity, and to an engagement with Hegel's work on the subject.[95]

Following from the question of how speech can be a form of action, the concept of the performative goes on to ask about the formation of a subject (understood as a linguistic category) through its actions. Again, the emphasis is on processuality, on formation and construction rather than on the representation or expression of an already given idea of a subject. Performativity is thus part of a larger project of a theory of practice and the creation or transformation of a subject, where the focus is not on finding an essence that is al-

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[93] The idea of constitutive acts is elaborated by Judith Butler in *Gender Trouble. Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), where it refers to the acts "not only constituting the identity of the actor, but constituting that identity as a compelling illusion, an object of belief". See also Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution. An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," *Theatre Journal,* Vol. 40, No. 4 (1998), 519–531.
[94] Butler, "Performative Acts," 521.
[95] Judith Butler, *Kritik der ethischen Gewalt. Adorno-Vorlesungen 2002* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2003), 10ff. See also Butler, *Psychic Life*, 3 ff.

ready existent, but on establishing the power relations at work that allow for certain acts to be performed and others not to be performed. Following from this, performativity refers to a process, to the constitution of an idea as a process. To say something is performative thus implies it is not finished yet, that it is lively, it is taking shape in the crossroads of real life, and that it is constantly appropriating from various sources to define itself.

By taking an anti-essentialist stance towards knowledge about the subject, the category of the performative raises questions about the authenticity and the identity of the subject. The way in which identity and agency are constituted by performing acts is one of the key issues that the concept of the performative has evocatively explored and opened out for further questioning. The performative is potentially linked to a theory of agency, of doing and action, which takes inspiration from the fields of artistic performance, but has implications for various other social and political questions. Such a theorisation of acting refers not only to the stage, but also to all aspects of social life, of acting in and through the body, in relation to other bodies.

Judith Butler's theory of performativity is of particular relevance to this study, since I use her ideas to expand on what participating in nonviolent action implies for the constitution of political identity and agency and how this can be interpreted in the context of historical examples of nonviolent protest in South Asia.

3.2 Re-articulating the performative in nonviolent action

In Section 2.2, four so-called boundary areas of nonviolence were elaborated upon in terms of the questions they raise about their relationship to the concept of nonviolence. By grouping these boundary areas in terms of commonly held misconceptions about nonviolent action, it was possible to highlight the re-occurrence of these four areas in theories of nonviolence. In Section 3.1, the concept of performativity and its various shades of usage were outlined and reformulated as pairs of verbs, in order to emphasise that performativity is concerned with forms of doing, more than with forms of being. In the following section, I will return to the boundary areas of action, violence, the opponent and the body, and ask how it is possible to theoretically combine the shades of performativity with a theory of nonviolence. This is to suggest ways of thinking about the "action" in nonviolent action and re-visit its boundary areas.

Such a circuitous route is necessary because of the difficulty of arriving at a general theory of nonviolence, based on just two case studies. Besides, I am suspicious of such sweeping grand theories or master narratives that seek to provide definitive answers to issues where not even all the questions have yet been appropriately asked. Further, the cases of nonviolence selected for the purposes of this dissertation persistently return and turn to these four boundary areas of action, violence, the opponent and the body in different ways.

3.2.1 Performing refusal: theorising action

The distinction between "doing" and "being" is one that the idea of the performative has critically questioned and problematised. A performative understanding of action would suggest not only that certain ways of being can lead to certain actions, but also and more emphatically, that certain ways of doing lead to certain ways of being. This is a debate that echoes in the distinction between strategic and principled nonviolence, whether it is a matter of believing in a principle or a matter of doing things in certain ways. I sought to resolve the debate between principled and pragmatic nonviolence by way of re-framing them as two dimensions of nonviolent action, which both influence each other as well as any particular act to varying degrees.

Does nonviolence characterise a person or an action? Whereas the distinction between the strategic and principled addresses the motivation and ethics underlying the concept of nonviolence, a performative approach assumes that the ethics emerges from the practice of nonviolence, and not that the practice is an expression of the underlying ethics. The shades of performativity discussed in Section 3.1 all express ways of doing, the nexus between speaking and doing, between play and display and between becoming and taking on form. The performative is not concerned with intentions or attitudes, but with the actual mode of doing. It does not deny the validity of attitudes, but it privileges action as the mode of creating and consolidating attitudes and ethics. It is thus through a reading of the acts that an understanding of the ethical import of nonviolence can be arrived at. Rather than ask whether an act is truly nonviolent (i.e. question its authenticity) or look into its consequences (i.e. question its success or its impacts), the performative approach explores the notion of human agency and subjectivity that constitutes an act as a form of nonviolent protest. That does not mean that questions concerning authenticity and impact are unimportant. In fact, they re-appear and need to be addressed at every stage and point of time. However, to perceive identity as performative is to in-

sist that identities are made with effort and action, that they are not foreclosed and unchangeable.

As far as nonviolent action is concerned, the question of action is one of 'not doing' or refusing subordination rather than 'doing'. The negation 'non' provides life to the concept and is, I would like to argue, the best point of departure to understand nonviolent protest and action in its different forms. Refusal, omission, disobedience, objection and non-performance are essential to the performativity of nonviolent protest. Refusal to hold weapons in war, to co-operate with authorities demanding subordination to what may be perceived as unjust laws: not following orders is key to doing nonviolence. Such a refusal is informed by a knowledge of the consequences of an act and a realisation that in doing something, one is enacted upon in certain ways. So refusal or non-cooperation is not just a protest against an external oppressor but in fact also a performative constitution of the self as an agent of one's own future. If, as Butler has argued, subordination is the other side of subjectivation, and "the subject exceeds precisely that to which it is bound"[96], then the performance of refusal or disobedience is a gradual performative creation of a subject of resistance. From the position of subordination to the opponent to the position of defying the opponent by not doing what one would be expected to do, the actors also become something more than or different from what they were, they transform themselves in the process of not doing what they once did.

Of course, refusal and omission of an act are closely related to the import and significance of what is being refused in a potentially violent conflict. The act of refusal could be de-escalating to the conflict, in that the expected reciprocity of attack and counter-attack is deflated and not responded to. It could also serve to heighten tensions by being provocative and threatening to the authority of the opponent. Refusal is performed in visible, perceptible ways. It needs to be enacted and staged in order to be viewed as an act of refusal, and not as an act of indifference or lack of capability or as coward-

[96] Butler, *Psychic Life*, 14.

ice. The act of disobedience or refusal leads to a gap, which is then filled with emergent possibilities.

"What would it mean in the face of violence to refuse to return it?"[97] Judith Butler poses this question in her reflections on what it means to give an account of oneself, to explain and justify one's actions and reactions, when faced with violence or threats. In this essay Butler touches upon the subject of nonviolent response through the issues of responsibility, the social construction of the self and the role that narrative plays in constituting response and sociality. While Butler characteristically avoids direct answers to this question, she refers to the idea of a self that is constituted through its praxis and responsiveness. Surely, Butler's question cannot have the same answer for everyone. She asks what it means to refuse to return violence from the position of the strong, from the point of view of the appropriate response of the US State to acts of violence against it. That context certainly calls for a different answer than the violence faced by those in a vulnerable position. Yet the value of her question lies, I believe, in questioning response as reciprocal. An act of civil disobedience, conscientious objection or other protest by way of refusal to co-operate, is a response but it does not work at the level of reciprocity, i.e. as a response wielding the same means.

Butler's theory of performativity is in her own words related to the Gramscian theory of hegemony, since "both emphasise the way in which the social world is made – and in which new social possibilities emerge – at various levels of social action through a collaborative relation with power."[98] Such a collaborative relation with power implies that different types of action that resist or question power can lead to the emergence of different possibilities for social interaction. At the same time, she acknowledges that the emphasis on acts alone can lead to a failure to see that the conditions and contexts that make certain acts possible, are not external to these acts. "The

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[97] Judith Butler, "Giving an Account of Oneself," *Diacritics*, Vol. 31, No. 4 (Winter 2001), 39.
[98] Judith Butler, Ernesto Laclau, Slavoj Žižek, eds., *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality. Contemporary Dialogues on the Left* (London: Verso, 2000), 14.

transformation of social relations becomes a matter, then, of transforming hegemonic social conditions rather than the individual acts that are spawned by those conditions."[99]

3.2.2 Paradox of performance: theorising response to violence

Strength and weakness are commonly used descriptives when speaking of proponents of nonviolent action. Actors in conflict are either referred to as strong and brave because they eschew violence and dare to confront the opponent without weapons (this is in the best case, those who positively view nonviolence) or they are referred to as weak for not daring to use weapons, for fearing violence or confrontation. A significant portion of the historiography of nonviolent action devotes itself to demonstrating how an act is in fact a sign of strength and not weakness, of proving its authenticity and force as a political instrument and showing that it is more efficacious, sustainable and potent than other forms of protest or struggle. Strength and weakness, courage and cowardice, protest and submissiveness: the repeated reference to such attributes in conflict behaviour can be read in terms of their implicit articulation of the relation and response to violence in nonviolent action. Nonviolent action is keenly concerned with the possibilities and conditions of responding to violence. While this includes an unequivocal negation of and rejection of violence, there is more to finding an appropriate response to violence than its rejection. Moreover, as suggested in the previous section, nonviolence and violence cannot be thought of as opposites, each mutually excluding the other. The articulation of an alternative to violence involves, paradoxically, a reference to this violence. The search for strength and empowerment resonates back to an acknowledgement of one's vulnerability and susceptibility to violence, not only to being subject to injury but also the capacity to easily hurt and injure others. Failing to acknowledge the limitations of one's own responses would mean assuming a certain omnipotence or stature of superiority and a master-narrative that in some

[99] Butler, "Performative Acts," 524–5.

or the other form imposes a violence on the other, even in the precise gesture of condemning the violent actions of the other. So nonviolent action reacts to the exposure to violence by exposing the vulnerability and weakness of the human. This readiness to show that one is weak and can be easily injured becomes paradoxically an assertion of strength. Acts of nonviolent protest are often both assertive as well as exposed. They assert a strength, self-determination and solidarity, assured by a refusal to take arms and fight for a cause without seeking to injure the opponent. At the same time, they are exposed to violence and nonreciprocal retaliation. They explicitly display this exposure and vulnerability, performing nonviolence not as the absence of violence but as a form of counter-power that is determined by the violence it opposes. Vulnerability shifts from being an individual, particular experience to being asserted as a universal experience, an expression of what is quintessentially human.[100]

It seems that the performative response to violence consists of a paradoxical, dialectical response: one that articulates the distance from violence and simultaneous link or closeness to violence. Being faced with aggression or hostility makes one recognise one's own precarious position. But this is different from the Christian credo of doing unto others as you want others to do unto you. That is too comfortable and patent an explanation to be realistic. Communities enraged by what they perceive as unjust laws or atrocities done to them do not protest nonviolently because they are concerned about not injuring their opponents. They do not desire to be enacted upon by the opponents. However, since nonviolent action is usually a response, the moment of being addressed precedes the moment of addressing. And to show that one can be injured and attacked is to paradoxically assert that one cannot be attacked. The response is also self-addressed. It is telling oneself that one's vulnerability and precariousness is a sign of strength. This inaugurates a turning in

[100] For an analysis of what the recognition of vulnerability as human means to feminist theory and in contemporary international war crimes legislation, see Bergoffen, "Toward a Politics of the Vulnerable Body".

the way response is played out.[101] The paradox of the performative response to violence lies in the reference to violence in the moment of its rejection, the closeness that ensues from the distance between these polarities. Violence is a part of and apart from nonviolence.

3.2.3 The necessity of the opponent: theorising the other in conflict

Play and display were elaborated above as one of the shades of performativity. To apply this to the realm of nonviolent protest would be to recognise first of all the necessity of the opponent in conflict in determining its outcome, however tautological that might sound. While many forms of conflict seek to eliminate the opponent in order to resolve conflict, nonviolent action fundamentally requires the response and engagement of the opponent in order to be 'successful'. In speaking of the performativity of nonviolent action, it is not a particular relationship between the conflicting parties that is negotiated, but the very elementary theatrical relationship between actors and the audience. Theatricality, understood as one aspect of performativity that underlines the communicative and interactive nature of performance, gives immense significance to the presence and involvement of spectators in terms of the outcome of the performance.[102]

Spectators of nonviolent action are often directly addressed and called to respond and take action in some way. They may be the opponents of the conflict itself, or the general public, via the mass media. The magnitude of the event can differ according to the context, depending on who is addressed as the audience of an act. However closely rehearsed an action may be, the responses it evokes from its addressees and its general audience is not predictable. As opposed to violent forms of conflict, nonviolent protest requires the participation of the opponent and/or the general public in order to achieve

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[101] Baz Kershaw's idea of a paradoxology of performance has influenced this interpretation of performative response. See Baz Kershaw, "Performance Studies and Po-Chang's Ox: Steps to a Paradoxology of Performance," *New Theatre Quarterly,* Vol. 22, No. 1 (February 2006), 30–53.
[102] Here I refer to Davis and Postlewait, eds., *Theatricality*, Introduction, 1–39.

its aims. Performativity refers to this element of constituting an event or eventfulness in the very moment, which goes beyond issuing a prepared statement, petition or simply expressing an oppositional viewpoint.[103]

Nonviolent action, understood as a means of engaging in conflicts with the aim of achieving certain political or social objectives, consists of a wide range of strategies of dealing with the opponent. Reading these in terms of their performativity means firstly looking at how the conflict is approached and how the actors script their selves into it. This means analysing the moments, events and dynamics of nonviolent movements, the process of fighting, attacking or weakening the opponent. The exchange between actors and spectators radically changes when opponents must respond as actors to the challenges posed to them. This has consequences for the evolution of the conflict as well as its outcome, since there is more than one version of reality which surfaces and the question cannot be limited to that of truth or falsity.

Here again, it is important to emphasise that theatricality is not used as a metaphor, but as a heuristic mode, a way of seeing and understanding human interaction using ideas from the field of theatre.[104] Just as the interaction between protagonists and antagonists are central to the development of theatrical play, so the presence of an audience or the addressees of protest are intrinsic to its success as protest and as nonviolent. This is not the same as claiming that any type of intervention in conflict is addressed to an opponent or an addressee. Moreover, what I would like to argue through the notion of the performative is that the involvement of the opponent is an essential part of the act itself. The opponent is not just the target or recipient of the act, but is involved in its making. This also explains why it is necessary to refuse violence when responding to it in conflict, because eliminating or injuring the opponent would

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[103] Fischer-Lichte, ed., *Performativität und Ereignis,* 22.
[104] The difference between the metaphorical and heuristic use of theatricality is elaborated in: Erika Fischer-Lichte, "Theatricality. A Key Concept in Cultural Studies," *Theatre Research International,* Vol. 20, No. 2 (1995), 85–9.

mean the protest action would fail, because the opponent could no longer respond to it. The cases of Gandhi's fasts make this self-evident. It also explains why the relation of nonviolence to action and agency is one that is influenced, but not determined, by the opponent.

Butler sees the necessity to include and think about the other (be it a person, a community, or any entity outside of the self) in any theory of action. The separation between the one performing an act and the one responding to or receiving the act is thus a conditional one, so any understanding of socio-political action and responsibility must take this into consideration. "Our acts are not self-generated, but conditional. We are at once acted upon and acting, and our 'responsibility' lies in the juncture between the two."[105] Nonviolent action includes the idea of responsibility in its understanding of action, responsibility towards the Other, the part of oneself that is a part of the other.

3.2.4 Intercorporeality: theorising the body in conflict

Following from the recognition of the necessity of the Other in nonviolent conflict, the relevance of the body and the role of physical presence of both protestors as well as opponents becomes the next important aspect in the theorisation of performativity in nonviolent action.

> "Classic theories of political protest envision the body as an agitated irrationality, propelling individuals into the chaos of mob performance [...] Subsequent theories conceptualise protest as the calculated pursuit of narrowly defined interests, which emerges when the political or economic opportunity to leverage a complaint presents itself. Each of these explanatory frameworks depends upon an oppositionality between thought and action, the first because it presumes the inefficacy of spontaneous events, and the second, because it disregards the protest itself, fo-

[105] Butler, *Precarious Life*, 16.

> cusing instead only on the gains and losses of the protestors' agenda. Both dismiss the body, either by conceptualising protest as a practice that erupts out of a bodily anger over which there is no control, or by envisioning it as a practice that uses the body only as an efficacious instrument [...] Neither hypothesises the body as an articulate signifying agent."[106]

This passage from Susan Leigh Foster's insightful analysis of civilian nonviolent protest movements in the USA aptly draws attention to the flaws in existing theories of protest concerning the way we understand how bodies are involved in conflict and political protest. The physicality of protest need not only be viewed as uncontrollable mob behaviour on the one side in contrast to entirely scripted and controlled actions guided by ideology and strategy on the other. The study of the performativity of protest has the task of expanding on precisely this hypothesis of "the body as an articulate, signifying agent", which keenly reads and responds to other actors and the audience in the field, making intelligent choices that are guided by performative criteria rather than ideologies.

The body is inscribed into conflict in a way that constitutes it. The historiography of nonviolent protest knowingly or unwittingly also writes about the way the body is perceived. The body of a soldier is differently inscribed from the body of a fighter, a terrorist, a protestor, a militant, a civilian, and so on. A naked body is different from a nude body because it is a crucial difference whether there is no reference to dress at all or whether the absence of dress is fully visible and signified and therefore saying something.[107] The idea of intercorporeality thus refers to the way bodies are articulate and also respond to other bodies. They are not merely the expression of a mind or a culture or an accompaniment to language-based commu-

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[106] Susan Leigh Foster, "Choreographies of Protest," *Theatre Journal*, Vol. 55, No. 3 (October 2003), 395.

[107] This distinction is touched upon by Laclau in reference to the category of the nude vs. the naked in art history, comparing the depiction of the body in Ancient sculpture as opposed to Renaissance paintings. See Butler, Laclau, Žižek, eds., *Contingency,* 88–9, endnote 42.

nication, but steer this communication in crucial ways.[108] This corporeal communication and reading constitutes a significant part of nonviolent conflict – and here I refer to conflict waged in the streets, outside of the Internet, protest that is embodied and acquired through praxis. Intercorporeality is a concept that has recently gained attention from scholars influenced by the phenomenological tradition of Merleau-Ponty and also by Bourdieu's interpretation of habitus as a combination of practices and fields.[109] What interests me is the potential of the concept in broadening our understanding of encountering conflict nonviolently. Although Susan Foster does not use the term intercorporeality in her essay quoted above, she pursues precisely this goal of understanding social and political action which does not distinguish between thought as a product of the mind and act as an expression of the body, usually explaining the latter as an expression or an outcome of the former.[110] Such a performative approach to the body in conflict would not view conflict only as a matter of two (or more) parties fighting out the differences over an issue, by pursuing their fixed interests with the strategies they deem most appropriate. Moreover, it would pay attention to how the process of a conflict is closely related to the vivacity and intensity of energetic exchanges between actors in the conflict. That means not taking physical presence for granted, as if to say the body is a holder and vehicle for one's ideas and thoughts, but to recognise that conflicts are embodied processes of interaction between people. It means taking the body into consideration in theory and analysis.[111]

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[108] See Gail Weiss, *Body Images. Embodiment as Intercorporeality* (London/New York: Routledge, 1999).
[109] Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), 52–111 and Maurice Merleau Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968), 130–55.
[110] Foster, "Choreographing Protest," 401.
[111] It is at the level of theory and analysis – not in terms of actual participation in conflict – that the body has not been adequately taken into consideration.

4 Civil Disobedience in South Asia (1918-1948)

To explore the performativity of nonviolence, I will turn my attention to two specific examples from the civil disobedience and independence movement in the Indian subcontinent, in the period from 1918 to 1948. It is well known that the struggle for independence from colonial rule in the South Asian region was largely conducted using nonviolent methods. Yet research on these methods has largely confined itself to a cause-effect analysis, focusing on the impact or the outcomes of a certain strategy and often dealing with nonviolent actions as protest forms closely related to the charisma and leadership of a few men, as historically unique and therefore not lending themselves to a general theorisation.[112] A theoretical analysis would separate the acts from the actors and particularly, from the leaders of nonviolent movements. Rather than focus on the socio-political history of the civil disobedience movement, I ask how it might be possible to describe the performativity of political nonviolence. Baz Kershaw has asserted that "most forms of contemporary protest [...] are in part shaped by performative considerations. Though they often involve a good deal of spontaneity, they also follow scripts or scenarios."[113] What are the performative considerations that shape nonviolent protest? How is it expressed, what form does it take and how is it enacted? My aim is not to propose a grand theory of nonviolence, but to explore neglected aspects of nonviolent action. I believe the field of performance studies has something to offer in this analysis by way of conceptual tools and a different mode of perception.

The first case is the use of fasting as a method of nonviolent negotiation or communication with the opponent, exemplified by Mohandas Gandhi at various occasions during his political career in

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[112] For an overview of historical research on Indian independence movement, see Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India 1885–1947* (New Delhi: Macmillan, 1983).
[113] Baz Kershaw, "Fighting in the Streets. Dramaturgies of Popular Protest, 1968-1989," *New Theatre Quarterly,* Vol. 13, No. 51 (1997), 255–276. Reprinted in Philip Auslander, ed., *Performance. Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies.* 4 Volumes (London: Routledge, 2003) Vol. III, 273.

South Africa and India until his assassination in 1948. One might ask: what is the use of yet another study on Gandhian nonviolence? What can be said that has not already been stated and reiterated in the thousands of monographs, historical accounts, critical or hagiographical dedications to this much-proclaimed leader of the Indian nationalist movement? To begin with, it is difficult for any approach to nonviolent action in contemporary South Asia to bypass the figure of Gandhi altogether, particularly for someone who has grown up attending Gandhian schools and been subject to history lessons that make Gandhi into the "father of the nation".[114] The idea of a Gandhian philosophy or politics is, however, not entirely separable from the figure of Gandhi himself, since his shadow looms large over any engagement with the politics and ethics of nonviolence, at least in the South Asian context. Unlike Marxism, which evolved independently from the biography of a single man, a large proportion of research on Gandhian thought is often connected to research on Gandhi's life (he did say "my life is my message"), his political manoeuvrings, his involvement in political struggles in the Indian subcontinent as well as in South Africa. I have not even attempted to cover the vast research on Gandhi and his politics of nonviolent resistance. Rather I shall closely look at one of his favoured 'weapons of nonviolence', namely the use of fasting and reconstruct this method from a performative perspective.[115] Further, the fast has been noted and described by many historians and researchers on Gandhi but is often viewed as one of his religious 'fads', like his experiments with nature cure or his oath of celibacy. I

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[114] In this context, Ashis Nandy comments on how there are in fact several prototypes of Gandhi that loom large over the Indian psyche and act as a sort of superego in the Freudian sense. See Ashis Nandy, "Gandhi after Gandhi after Gandhi," *The Little Magazine,* Vol. 1, No. 1 (2000).

[115] As far as I am aware, no comprehensive study of Gandhi's fasts exist to date, although various anthologies and popular reprints of his writings include chapters from Gandhi's statements on fasting. A collection of essays by Joseph Alter, influenced by Foucauldian questions related to body practices and power/knowledge episteme, deals with Gandhi's body politics, particularly sex, diet and health care. Fasting does receive some attention, but is not specifically explored in its complex connection to nonviolent politics. See Joseph Alter, *Gandhi's Body. Sex, Diet and the Politics of Nationalism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000).

will explore in what way it in fact worked as a method of nonviolent action.[116] Finally, I am interested in the way the example of the fast problematises some of the misconceptions and boundary areas of nonviolent action. The fast is a good example of the politics and performativity of restraint and refusal, which is a core part of nonviolent protest. Yet through this refusal, it lays bare the dialectical relationship between violence and nonviolence, how it is not a relationship of opposition but of moving boundaries and re-articulations and combinations of apparently contradictory ideas and models of action.

How was the cultural context and historically religious anchoring of the fast adapted to politics? Is it possible to speak of different genres or categories of fasting? How was it performed, enacted? What responses did the fast stimulate and how did different addressees view the fast? How was the body, the main agent of the fasting activity, theorised in Gandhi's philosophy of nonviolence? What implications does this theorisation have for the way the opponent is perceived in nonviolent protest? How was this act, which is itself the omission of an act (the refusal to eat), traditionally associated with domestic sacrificial rituals, often practised by women, reformulated as an instrument of nonviolent politics? These are some of the questions I will ask in Section 4.1, pulling together different strands of arguments from my reading of performativity as well as the review of theories of nonviolence.

The second case is the *Khudai Khidmatgar* (KK) – an organisation of Pashtuns which referred to itself as a nonviolent army and conducted protest activities as well as social reform work in the Frontier Province of British India, bordering what is today Afghanistan. The questions that interest me in my exploration of this movement relate to the possibility of a nonviolent praxis in the institutional form of an army. What was the historical and cultural context of this organisation? What was their mode of fighting and understand-

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[116] Fasting is mentioned as a method of nonviolent protest in Simon Fisher et al, *Working With Conflict*, 103.

ing of valour and bravery, given the legacy of Pashtun culture being stereotyped as violent and revengeful? What conception of nonviolence emerges from their acts of protest? And how is this nonviolence reconciled with the apparently paradoxical association with a military infrastructure?

Both examples revolve around the anti-colonial struggle in the Indian subcontinent, which officially ended with the formation of the independent states of Pakistan and India in 1947. Both are instances of large-scale protest, in terms of public participation, media coverage and relevance in national politics. Gandhi's actions and politics are extremely well known internationally. In no way can this be compared to the research on the KK, whose history and legacy are greatly understudied. Apart from aspects of the life of the founder of the movement, Abdul Ghaffar Khan, who was a member of the Indian Congress and was subsequently allotted a place in the annals of Indian nationalist historiography, not much is known about the movement and its socio-political context. I have consciously chosen such uncontested examples of nonviolent action, precisely because I do not want to enter into the debate on whether or not they are indeed cases of nonviolence, or question their historical or political significance. Rather this is my point of departure. If we assume that these civilian protest actions are examples of nonviolent action, what can we say about the way they were performed? Assuming there must be more to these historical events than merely the renunciation of armed fighting and physical aggression, what methods did they use? What do these methods tell us about their understanding of nonviolence? In what way can an analysis of these actions – seen as culturally coded practices and techniques – lead to a broader theorisation of nonviolence as an active, interventionist and even confrontative strategy in conflict?

4.1 Fasting as a weapon of nonviolence: the case of Gandhi

> "The renunciation of violence is more romantic than violence itself [...] unfortunately, a revolution is not made by fasting."[117]

Between 1918 and 1948, Mohandas Gandhi undertook a total of up to 18 public fasts for various political causes. Through the figure of Gandhi in particular, the fast or hunger strike came to epitomise what nonviolence meant in concrete terms, and set a precedent for other nonviolent actions and protests in the twentieth century. Using a close reading of Gandhi's writings about the fast and an analysis of the dramaturgy of this technique in his particular praxis, I would like to elaborate on my understanding of nonviolence as an active process rather than as a passive moral stance or finished ideology. I will also critique Gandhi's theorisation of the fast, its contradictions and ambiguities, which raise questions about the way the body is used in conflict, about the re-framing of the fast from a religious context into a political device, and about the underlying dialectical relationship between violence and nonviolence. Whereas the concept of nonviolence has so far been predominantly theorised as an ethical stance drawn from the rejection of violence and therefore been assessed as a moral principle alone, I show how it is enacted as an active and dialogical process. I employ the dramaturgical approach to look at Gandhi's fasts and propose that it is the fundamentally theatrical relationship between the actor and the spectators that made fasting into a nonviolent method.

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[117] José Carlos Mariátegui, *The Heroic and Creative Meaning of Socialism.* Transl. M. Pearlman (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1996), 49.

4.1.1 Cultural context of the fast

Gandhi's employment of the technique of the fast as an instrument in politics emerged from his personal experiments with fasting and self-discipline. However, this must be understood in the light of the fact that historically, fasting and the praxis of asceticism are socially accepted and positively connoted practices in South Asian public cultures. Until Gandhi, the concept of nonviolence or *ahimsa* was not widely connected to anti-militarism. It was closer to what could be translated today as non-injury and mainly associated with individual praxis and self-discipline. This includes a wide range of ascetic practices, from vegetarianism to celibacy to frugal living and exercises in maintaining silence. Upanishadic thought placed nonviolence in connection with forms of renunciation or sacrifice, such as animal sacrifice as a substitute for human sacrifice.[118] In this framework, nonviolence was a means of self-purification. This was a problematic concept, since it meant rejecting certain acts as violent, while tolerating or denying violence in other instances. Nonviolence could thus be equated with acts rationalised or labelled as not violent, though this was arguably not the case. So, for example, physical violence towards so-called lower castes or outcastes was 'rationalised' as nonviolent, since it could be used as a necessary act of sacrifice in order to maintain ritual caste purity. Violence towards women often did not even appear to require denial or rationalisation, as it was not defined as violence at all and widely accepted and practised as per the social codes of the time.[119]

Fasting in a religious context serves many purposes and has various cultural connotations. It is perceived as a form of cleansing and purging, both in the physical sense of eliminating toxins accumulated in the body, as well as by a metonymical shift in the theologi-

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[118] The Upanishads are the theoretical sections of a series of scriptures in Sanskrit, the Vedas, usually dated as compiled 400 to 500 years before Socrates, i.e. eighth or ninth century BC, dealing with metaphysical and apocryphal themes.
[119] See Houben and Kooij, eds., *Violence denied,* 9.

cal sense of purifying the self of guilt or the effects of wrongdoing. Purification of the body, in turn, implies a disciplining of the body, the control of 'animal' urges and channelling of physical energies from one form of activity, i.e. from ensuring the supply of food, its preparation and so on, to another form of (usually) more spiritual activity, considered to be less base and more civilised. In this, fasting is closely related to the practice of celibacy, which also carries connotations of disciplining the body *using* the mind. The idea that the mind can firstly be separated from the body, and secondly that the mind uses the body as a tool or that the body can be disciplined by the mind, points to the question of situating the agency of nonviolence. In the religious context that Gandhi was influenced by, fasting is closely associated with purification of the body. Similar to the practice of sexual abstinence, fasting expresses a negativity, it is a matter of both control and giving up as well as of purifying and purging. Just as celibacy negatively refers to sex, so also fasting negatively refers to feasting, the indulgence in food, and the philosophy of life that is implied in this indulgence.

Gandhi's introduction of the fast into the political sphere was greatly influenced by these cultural practices and characteristically merged and conflated the purification of the self with the purification of the nation, linking self-discipline to the disciplining of the masses. Deconstructing these correlations within Indian nationalist bourgeois historiography is thus a step in understanding Gandhi's complicated, even contradictory body politics that ran through every aspect of his nonviolent philosophy and action.

The negativities of control, overcoming and purgation stayed with the instrument of the fast as a nonviolent method, despite Gandhi's concerted attempts to posit nonviolence as a positive term, *Satyagraha.* This term is often translated as *truth force* or *soul force*, and other Indian national reformists such as Ramakrishna or Vinoba Bhave also attempted to interpret nonviolent politics as 'respect towards all' or 'serving the common good' rather than just the rejection of violence. Although these may be guiding notions of nonviolent politics, the negation of violence is an important part of the development of the idea. In this I agree with Houben and Kooij, who

argue that certain terms in South Asian cultural history have to be necessarily expressed in the negative, as an absence or a lack of, even if this lack itself is deemed positive.[120] They compare the term *ahimsa* with other observances such as *asteyam* (abstention from theft) or *aparigraha* (non-accumulation of wealth), which were ideals of Jaina asceticism, arguing that the essence of these imperatives can only be expressed in the negation. One cannot express the imperative to 'not steal' as a positive act. Similarly, *ahimsa* is historically rooted in the imperative of non-injury and thus requires the negation in order to express the positive.[121]

In South Asian history, fasting and sacrifice were also connected to the public sphere in that rulers or kings undertook a fast, making ritual offerings to the Gods and seeking favours in return.[122] Similarities can be found in the monotheistic religious traditions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, which also give great importance to fasting as a religious act and as a measure of confirming membership and loyalty to a religious community. Here the act may take on dimensions beyond the level of personal growth and become a communal act. The myths of sacrifice and the promise of redemption and inner refinement ensuing from the sacrifice are reinforced in the practice of the fast. These practices have wide ranging cultural associations and implications, which practitioners of the political fast throughout the world have tapped into in the process of politicising the fast from a personal religious act to a 'weapon' of battle. The political fast carries associations and references to these cultural and religious contexts. I use the term fast and not hunger strike, since the example of Gandhi is a case of such a "complex citational practice,"[123] creating something new even while it constantly refers to common traditions. The main difference between fasting and hunger striking as a political instrument is that the fast is not

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[120] Reference to Jan Gonda in Houben and Kooij, eds., *Violence denied*, 18.
[121] Houben and Kooij, eds., *Violence denied,* 19; 29.
[122] Houben and Kooij, eds., *Violence denied*, 29.
[123] The idea of a complex citational practice is borrowed from Butler. See in particular *Gender Trouble,* 141 and her reading of Foucault and Simone de Beauvoir, in "Performative Acts," 520 ff.

only a way of pushing for the fulfilment of demands from the opponent, but is also an act of addressing the self. In Gandhi's case of the political or *Satyagrahic* fast in the anti-colonial struggle, the fast embodies self-control and autonomy, with reference to his own body as well as the body of the modern Indian nation, in the process of its birth. Ultimately, the notion of self-purification through the fast and through related practices of self-control served as the key mobilising factor of the mass movement led by Gandhi.

As historian Ranajit Guha has observed about Gandhi's notion of self-purification,

> "Its implications for mobilisation could hardly be exaggerated. Since all aspects of the movement, in precept as well as practice, were subsumed under self-purification, any deviation in thought or deed was necessarily defiling, and every defilement called for a re-imposition of soul control."[124]

The term fast cites and refers to various aspects of these spiritualised concepts, which the term hunger strike does not in Gandhi's praxis. The hunger strike is closely related to pressurising for the fulfilment of demands. However, the comparison between the fast and the hunger strike as weapons in conflict raises important questions, which I will discuss and critique using the specific case of Gandhi's engagement with the British suffragettes who conducted hunger strikes in prison (Section 4.1.6).

The fast very much carries the tensions of the 'do or die' principle, arguably oscillating between violence towards oneself and nonviolence towards the other. Nonviolence then, like violence, is a 'thick concept' which carries both descriptive as well as evaluative components inextricably intertwined.[125] Because of this, the ethics and

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[124] Ranajit Guha, *Dominance Without Hegemony. History and Power in Colonial India* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 149.
[125] See discussion on the intertwining of the description and evaluation of violence in Bernard Williams, *Making Sense of Humanity and Other Philosophical Papers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

politics of nonviolent action cannot be viewed separately from its form or its performativity.

4.1.2 Typology of fasts as a political tool

In his typology of nonviolent actions, Gene Sharp refers to the political fast as one type of psychological intervention.[126] Here he distinguishes between three types of fasts: first the morally motivated protest fast, which is meant to show protest to a particular happening and not necessarily connected to concrete demands. Protest fasts are typically acts that mark or commemorate a particular event or seek public remembrance and recognition of a past injustice. An example of this in Gandhi's repertoire of fasts would be the 21-day fast in February 1943, following the disturbances of the Quit India Movement. Gandhi declared the duration of the fast and directly addressed the Viceroy with this act, claiming it was meant to convince the Viceroy that he was not morally supportive of the violence that ensued from the protests. It served the function of creating sympathy and solidarity amongst the general public and drew attention to the seriousness of the protest, more than a letter or a speech could do. Sharp categorises the fast as a protest fast without demands, but this is not entirely the case, since Gandhi asked for a regular trial to shed light on the clashes that took place during the previous months.

The second type, according to Gene Sharp, is the hunger strike, which has the aim to persuade the opponent to grant certain demands.[127] Prisoner hunger strikes would fit into this category, since they resort to pressurising authorities to fulfil demands by risking their own lives, assuming that the authorities want to keep prisoners alive and will force-feed prisoners to make sure they follow orders. Closer examination shows that the distinction between coercion and moral persuasion is not always clear-cut and not easy to prove, apart from often being a self-description of the intentions of

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[126] Sharp, *Politics of Nonviolent Action*, 360.
[127] Sharp, *Politics of Nonviolent Action,* 364–66.

the person undertaking the fast, as opposed to those who are being addressed by the fast. Gandhi's rejection and disapproval of other people's use of fasting in public life is a case of how the domain of moral persuasiveness was established as his own, whereas other instances of fasting as an instrument of politics were sometimes labelled as coercive. There are no doubt instances of fasting by Ashram inmates, Congress affiliates, supporters and even members of the general public, which Gandhi supported and 'permitted', since he was asked for permission.[128] However these are outnumbered by the instances of Gandhi asking people to stop their fast on grounds of it not being justified in that particular context.[129]

The third type of fast in Gene Sharp's categorisation is termed the S*atyagrahic* fast, characteristic of Gandhi's praxis. This fast is not

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[128] In a telegram to the Home Department Secretary, Gandhi asks to establish direct contact with one Professor Bhansali, who had started a fast unto death on 12 November 1942, demanding inquiry into the outrages committed by British and Indian troops and police forces at the village of Chimur. Gandhi writes:

> "Would like establish direct telegraphic contact with him through Superintendent for ascertaining cause fasting his condition. I would like to dissuade him if I find his past morally unjustified. I make this request for humanity's sake." CWMG Vol. 83, 223: Telegram to Secretary, Home Dept., Government of Bombay, 24 November 1942 (Original all capital letters).

His request was denied by the Government, but Gandhi eventually did support the fast, which was broken on 12 January 1943. In his reply to the Secretary, Gandhi notes:

> "I am sorry for the Government rejection of my request. As I believe in the legitimacy and even necessity of fasting under given circumstances, I am unable to advise abandonment of Prof. Bhansali's fast, unless I know that he has no justifying reason for it. If the newspaper report is to be believed, there seems to be legitimate ground for his fast and I must be content to lose my friend, if I must." CWMG Vol. 83, 224.

[129] I cite just two examples: First, Gandhi's letter to Bombay Trade Union leader,

> "In my opinion the notice is wrong, so also is the fast. And you certainly cannot undertake a fast in the Congress House premises. How can a Union be concerned with a senior official? If any injustice has been done to him, he should go to court. He can ask for arbitration. Fasts and strikes will not help things. Anything beyond this would, I am afraid, amount to coercion." CWMG Vol. 91, 375: Letter to Abidali Jafarbhai, 29 July 1946;

or letter to co-worker Dhirubhai Dikshit:

> "I cannot quite understand why you had to undertake the fast. Who made the complaint? And have I not said that no one may undertake a fast without asking me? This is the best course." CWMG Vol. 92, 47: Letter dated 20 August 1946.

merely a form of protest, and not 'only' meant to achieve any political aims. Moreover it is meant to convert the opponent and bring about 'a change of heart'. At least two of Gandhi's fasts (the "fast unto death" in support of the textile mill workers in Ahmedabad in 1918 and the fast to promote inter-religious or communal harmony in 1948, shortly before his death) would, by his own admittance, fall into the group of S*atyagrahic* fasts and not merely strikes to push for the fulfilment of a demand.

Sharp's typology of fasts is meant to emphasise that the quality of the instruments of politics is as important as its objectives and that the means must be viewed in relation to their ends. So according to this argument, the same action can qualitatively differ and belong to a different class altogether, depending on the objectives that it has. This is typical of a social action theory that weighs the outcomes of political action from what it achieved or resulted in and arrives at a taxonomy from this point. Such a categorisation based on motives does not hold on several grounds. Firstly, it can be argued that the fast is not only a form of psychological intervention in conflict. The case of Gandhi in particular shows that the body is conspicuously placed in front of the opponent and is employed in particular ways which demonstrate that 'fasting for a cause' does not work purely on the psychological realm, but very much through an embodied form of interference and action. Sharp does acknowledge the importance of physicality in nonviolent protest, but the separation between physical and psychological intervention is, I believe, not useful as an analytic tool, since it works on the unquestioned assumption of a body–mind distinction. Ensuing from this distinction (which oddly finds its place both in the colonial British view as well as in the Gandhian conception of human agency) is a gesture of dismissing and disregarding the body, at best a tool to be wielded with care and at worst a hindrance to the achievement of the highest form of nonviolence. This is not directly implied by Sharp, but still the classification of fasting as psychological intervention does not help to look deeper into the body tactics of this protest form

and, as Susan Leigh Foster suggests, to "hypothesise the body as an articulate signifying agent,"[130] particularly as an agent of political protest.

Secondly, the psychological force of fasting depends not only on the intentions of the person undertaking the fast, but also and to some extent, primarily on the perceptions of the spectators and in particular, its direct addressees. It is a fundamentally dialogical process, which is guided by the interaction of the opponents just as much as it is by the personal intentions of the fasting persons. In Gandhi's case, a further dimension comes into play, namely the role of media coverage in augmenting the impact of his fasts. A daily health bulletin was issued to the press by the Congress party or by his Ashram secretaries during his fasts, which were widely reproduced in Indian language newspapers as well as in Britain:

> "Mahatma Gandhi is definitely weaker and has begun to feel heavy in the head. This is significant in view of the fact that the kidneys are not functioning well. In our opinion it will be most undesirable to let the fast continue. Therefore it is our duty to tell the people of all communities to take immediate steps to produce the requisite conditions for ending the fast without delay."[131]

There was something spectacular about the way his starving body was displayed and in which every sip of water he took became a newsworthy event. Gandhi's fasts were routinely accompanied by articles in his journals on his own health and the process of the fast, by speeches, press meetings and public prayer meetings. Despite his anti-modernist stance, he consciously and effectively used the press and encouraged journalists to mobilise support and publicise his most intimate actions and thoughts. He also extensively wrote about his fasting in innumerable correspondences, and gave

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[130] Foster, "Choreographing Protest," 396–7.
[131] Mohandas Gandhi, *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, 100 Volumes, Revised CD-ROM edition (New Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 2001, hereafter cited as **CWMG**), Vol. 98, 248: Editorial footnote 2, citing health bulletin dated 17 January 1948.

advice to others on the best techniques to follow. Gandhi even acknowledged the attention he drew and reprimanded others who wanted to fast along with him, or in his place, since he realised that their protest would not have the same effect as his own.

> "Brothers and Sisters, [...] A friend writes that he has gone on an indefinite fast. All that I can say is that it is not right for him to fast. To resort to a fast thus is a sin. While I am alive I should be consulted because I have much experience of fasting. I shall not go into the matter further."[132]

The mediatised aspect of Gandhi's *soul force* is not fully addressed if it is just viewed as a psychological bolster to the 'real' act of fasting. Of course it cannot be denied that there was a psychological angle to the act of fasting and to its extensive media coverage. However, this was inseparably linked to the physical and material aspects of Gandhi's fasting tactics, regardless of the declared motives behind the fast. The publication of diaries and personal notes as well as speeches is often important in this process of mediatisation. As Padraig O'Malley notes in his study of the Irish hunger strikers of the 1970s and 80s, "the private imagination of the strikers become a public event".[133] This was true of Gandhi as well, who wrote and spoke in great detail of his body as well as of his personal experience of fasting.

Another problem with the three-fold typology of fasts is that it is not possible to clearly separate the motives of fasting according to the way Gene Sharp and indeed Gandhi himself proposes in his comments on fasting.

> "One fasts for health's sake under laws governing health or fasts as a penance for a wrong done and felt as such. In these fasts, the fasting one need not believe in ahimsa. There is, however, a fast which a votary of non-violence

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[132] CWMG Vol. 98, 189–90: Speech at prayer meeting, New Delhi, 7 January 1948.
[133] See Padraig O'Malley, *Biting at the Grave. The Irish Hunger Strikes and the Politics of Despair* (Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 1990), 36.

> sometimes feels impelled to undertake by way of protest against some wrong done by society and this he does when he, as a votary of ahimsa, has no other remedy left."[134]

At first glance, this seems like a simple differentiation between fasting on religious grounds as opposed to the nonviolent political use of fasting. However, Gandhi himself repeatedly presented his political fasts as a spiritual act on behalf of the nation, therefore combining all the types of fasts (health, spirituality, politics) with one sweep into his act.

At a deeper level, there is a suggested differentiation between violent and nonviolent fasts in Sharp's typology, in which simple protest without demands and moral persuasion is nonviolent, whereas coercion in the form of hunger strikes is not.[135] This distinction can be contested in most cases, even within Gandhi's logic of fasting as self-purification and penance. Every public fast conducted by Gandhi was attached to concrete demands, which were mostly listed out in writing, occasionally even published. Even those fasts ostensibly intended to express dissatisfaction and simple protest about public affairs, such as the fast against Hindu-Muslim riots, had direct addressees in the political sphere and demands were placed before them, though it was not specified as to how the fulfilment of the demands were to be verified. The exact nature of the demands and the evidence of their achievement is a secondary issue, as far as the consideration of the motives is concerned. Whether or not Gandhi provided a list of conditions and demands, he usually added the disclaimer that his fast was not meant to force anyone to respond: "Please do nothing out of pity for me. I shall fast for as many days as I can and if it is the will of God that I should die then I shall die."[136]

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[134] CWMG Vol. 98, 218–20: Speech at prayer meeting, New Delhi, 12 January 1948.
[135] Sharp, *Politics of Nonviolent Action,* 365–68.
[136] CWMG, Vol. 98, 249–50: Speech at prayer meeting, 17 January 1948.

It is difficult to argue that there was no coercion in these demands and that Gandhi's own words must be taken to be what they were intended to be, namely 'moral persuasion'. Even in instances from Gandhi's personal life, where he used the fast as a form of self-punishment to respond to what he termed as moral lapses by his sons or others, coercion and the instilling of guilt or voluntary remorse are clearly a part of the acts of fasting, although not admitted by Gandhi.[137]

An element of coercion is present in all the three types of political fasts, so it does not seem to make sense to call some purely morally motivated forms of protest and others more coercive. Gandhi's first major public fast of 1918 was in response to an industrial dispute between textile mill workers and owners. Gandhi declared that he was involved in this only in order to keep the morale of the workers, whom he had supported to go on a strike.[138] He however admits that it had the effect of pressurising the mill owners. The dividing line between coercion and persuasion is extremely thin. 'Converting' the opponent cannot be distinguished from pushing for compliance and the fulfilment of one's demands. Rather than distinguishing between the motives of a fast, I think it could be more useful to outline the characteristics of the fast, as practised and propagated by Gandhi and use this to explore what exactly constitutes the politicisation of a fast, making it into an instrument of nonviolent action.

While Gene Sharp's three-fold typology of the fasts is problematic in several ways, I would like to celebrate the distinction he makes in theorising nonviolent acts in terms of omission and commission.[139] Nonviolence involves renouncing and shunning violence on the one

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[137] In a recent publication on the life of Gandhi's son Manilal, Uma Dhupelia-Mesthrie notes how Gandhi punished himself to reproach his son Manilal for kissing a teenage girl at Pheonix farm north of Durban in South Africa, by fasting for seven days to "atone for his son's misdeeds". See Uma Dhupelia-Mesthrie, *Gandhi's Prisoner? The Life of Gandhi's Son Manilal* (Cape Town: Kwela Books, 2005), 107–9.

[138] See M.V. Kamath and V.B. Kher, *The Story of Militant but Non-violent Trade Unionism. A Biographical and Historical Study.* (Ahmedabad: Navjivan Press, 1993).

[139] Sharp, *Politics of Nonviolent Action,* 68ff.

side, but intervening and actively engaging in conflict on the other. Often it is a combination of both acts of omission as well as commission, a refusal to perform certain acts on the one hand and explicitly performing other acts. Apart from the fast, the famous Salt March led by Gandhi in 1930 is an obvious example of such a strategy combining omission and commission. Here the refusal to pay the salt tax and boycott of British goods was combined with a dramatic and highly mediatised march to the seacoast at Dandi, to independently manufacture or collect salt. Like the fasts of Gandhi, the Salt March was an act of omission accompanied by massive publicity campaigns and media visibility. Besides exemplifying Gandhi's philosophy of *truth force* or *soul force* (*Satyagraha*), these are instances of large-scale "media-force" in nonviolent politics.[140]

Not committing an act of violence is combined with demonstratively performing its refusal. So the omission of an act itself becomes an act. Refusal or non-cooperation cannot just be negatively performed, that is, the refusal itself must be marked, framed, repeated and made perceptible in some way. In the combination of acts of omission and commission, nonviolence refers to both what *it is not* as well as what *it is*. The dialectic of omission and commission is also useful in demonstrating that not every action that is not violent necessarily becomes nonviolent. Omission and commission refer to both the absence of violence as well as the rejection of violence, which implies establishing alternatives to violent response in conflict. In this sense, it is important to read nonviolence as a performative term, and not just as a principle or guiding notion, because it is only understood and carried out through the events, actions and moments that dynamise the abstraction of the term. It needs to be viewed as a process of expressive praxis, rather than as a system of representation of a certain given idea.

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[140] See S.N. Bhattacharya, *Mahatma Gandhi. The Journalist* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1965); also Barbara Driessen, *"Mahatma" Gandhi als Journalist: Mit der Waffe der Publizität. Der "Salzmarsch" von 1930 als moderne Medieninszenierung.* (Frankfurt am Main: IKO Verlag für Interkulturelle Kommunikation, 2002). The term "media-force" is borrowed from Robert J.C. Young, *Postcolonialism. An Historical Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 330.

4.1.3 Political dramaturgy of the fast

How can the refusal to eat be a way of expressing protest? How does this act, which is the omission of an act, work as a form of nonviolent intervention? Much of the normative historiography of the Indian independence movement explains the fast as an expression of the charisma of Gandhi as a leader, who was in a position to "impress the multitude and make it act in an organised manner."[141] However, I believe that is not in the least a satisfactory explanation and one that scoffs the very same societies and people who fabricated the mythical status and image of Gandhi, who made the charismatic figure of Gandhi possible in the first place. Such an explanation also shows that the techniques of nonviolent political struggle are not taken seriously enough to admit that they had any system or possibility of abstraction beyond Gandhi. So while nonviolence was praised as an ideology in this tradition of history writing, there is an apparent lack of understanding or conceptual tools to grasp the *forms* of nonviolent action.[142] No doubt, it is difficult to write a 'history from below' whilst at the same time attempting to describe and understand activities and manoeuvres of leaders. Yet it is necessary to upset these descriptions by reading them against the grain. Rather than attribute the method of nonviolent protest to something intrinsic in his personality or his individual ability, I think it is the manner in which Gandhi took on certain positions and incorporated certain acts to achieve gains, which make nonviolent action into his social capital. This is why it is necessary to understand nonviolence from the point of how it was actually done and not merely how it was morally justified. It is also not by accident that Gandhi's political fasts were undertaken alone, almost without exception, whereas his other civil disobedience campaigns depended on mass mobilisation and support. I will argue that the impact and

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[141] Jawaharlal Nehru quoted in Sarojini Sinha, *A Pinch of Salt Rocks an Empire* (New Delhi: Children's Book Trust and Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti, 2004), 52. Such hagiographical descriptions of Gandhi abound in publications of the Indian Education Ministry.

[142] R.C. Majumdar's volumes on the Indian independence struggle are just one example of such nationalist writing. See his *History of the Freedom Movement in India*, Vols. I–III, Reprint (Calcutta: Firma KLM, 1997 [1962–63]).

success of the fast as a protest method relied on its theatricality, the relationship and interaction between spectators and actors, which made it appear as if Gandhi's achievements were solely his own, but which crucially depended on the responses and attention he received from both the direct addressees of the fast, from supporters and associates, as well as the general public through the press.

Introducing the dramaturgical paradigm is one way of extracting and freeing the action from the moral dimensions of nonviolence. For Gandhi, morals were closely connected to their consequences and effects, therefore he himself sees a continuity between moral imperatives and actions.[143] However, for a contemporary understanding of fasting as a *method* of nonviolent action, it is necessary from a performative perspective to comb through Gandhi's practice of fasting, and differentiate between the actual actions and modes of fasting on the one side, and the *utterances* about fasting and its ethical or other consequences on the other side.

Viewing political action in terms of the triad of performer-spectator-space is not new.[144] Yet while it is easy to think of the fasts of Gandhi as 'dramatic' or the mediatisation of the process as a 'staging' or 'enactment' of politics, it is nonetheless challenging to probe the common perceptions behind such characterisations and consciously use dramaturgical terminology to explore what terms such as performer, stage, spectator, scene and act are doing to change how we think about the practice of nonviolence. In the following, I will break down the characteristics of Gandhi's fast in terms of a performative transaction between the actor and the spectators. How was the fast performed and how was it registered in public memory as a key moment of mobilisation and harnessing of activity? This helps to describe more precisely the components and elements of fasting as

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[143] This idea of the fluid connection between morals and socio-political acts runs through all of Gandhi's writings and actions. "Satyagraha and its offshoots, non-cooperation and civil resistance, are nothing but new names for the law of suffering." CWMG Vol. 21, 134.

[144] Art Borreca provides an overview of the different approaches to political dramaturgy, encompassing sociological, anthropological as well as performance studies perspectives. See Art Borreca, "Political Dramaturgy".

one method in the repertoire of nonviolent action. My concern is not whether the dramaturgical paradigm is metaphorical, i.e. whether the notions of the spectator and the actor are only valid as metaphors or constructions of reality. Regardless of their ontological status, my concern is to discover what the implications of the dramaturgical terms are in reality, how they expand and question our current understanding of nonviolent action. Using this dramaturgical analysis, I will move on to a discussion of the significance of the body as an element in nonviolent conflict and finally develop an understanding of the theatrical that can help to theorise nonviolence.

Gandhi's praxis of fasting has often been seen in terms of his spiritualised politics, as an introspective moment of soul searching at times of national crises. This is how he himself describes his experience of the fast, as 'cleansing', as 'internal peace', as the "beckoning of a voice within"[145] and respite from the misery of the real world around him:

> "I am breaking my fast upon the strength of your assurances [...] I am plunging into this stormy ocean out of the haven of peace in which I have been during these few days. I assure you that in spite of the tales of misery that have been poured into my ears, I have enjoyed peace because of a hungry stomach. I know that I cannot enjoy it after breaking the fast."[146]

The depiction of the fast as a solitary act may be true at a purely physiological level of one person not eating for a given period of time, however at a political level, the fast must be viewed as an interaction between different actors with differing stakes in the conflict. Gandhi's fasts would have been politically meaningless if not for the attention they received, the responses they solicited and the interactions and negotiations that ensued from the moment the fast

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[145] To quote just two instances of a vocabulary widely used by Gandhi: CWMG Vol. 98, 219: Speech at Prayer Meeting, New Delhi, 12 January 1948; Vol. 98, 248: Speech at Prayer Meeting, 17 January 1948.
[146] CWMG Vol. 25, 139: Speech reprinted in *Young India,* 21 November 1921.

was declared. Yet so much of this happened behind the scenes, which resulted in the body and the words of Gandhi being in the limelight and appearing to absorb and completely overshadow the significance of those who responded to his politics of voluntary starvation and control.

Gandhi's fasts are in fact very closely connected to political demands and conditions. These demands specify the terms of negotiation, explain the cause to which the fast is dedicated, and place the fast in a broader context of actors and responses. They are sometimes addressed to an undefined larger public, to all citizens and communities, however the assurance of adherence to the demands is sought from specific community representatives and party leaders or colonial authorities.

The following extract from a speech by Congress leader Abul Kalam Azad lists the demands of Gandhi during his last major fast shortly before his death in January 1948, following Partition of India and Pakistan.

> "Before coming here I went to Gandhiji again and asked him what we should do so that he may break his fast. He gave me seven tests, which should be fulfilled by the people. Assurances on these points, he said, must come from responsible people who can guarantee the proper fulfilment of these conditions. [...]
> No false assurance should be given. The conditions were as follows:
> 1) Complete freedom of worship to Muslims at the tomb of Khwaja Qutub-ud-Din Bakhtiar and non-interference with the celebration of the Urs which was due to be held there within a week.
> 2) Voluntary evacuation by non-Muslims of all the mosques in the city which were being used for residential purposes or which had been converted into temples.
> 3) Free movement of Muslims in areas where they used to stay before the disturbances.
> 4) Full safety to Muslims while travelling by train.
> 5) No economic boycott of Muslims.
> 6) Full discretion to Muslims to invite non-Muslims to live in areas occupied by them

> 7) Freedom to Muslim evacuees to come back to Delhi if they so desired."[147]

The formulation of demands is characteristic of Gandhi's strategic combination of appealing to the 'general public' to fulfil certain conditions, but requiring that they do this out of their own accord and not because he asks this of them. Yet he addresses concrete persons such as community leaders, to provide him with the assurance that the demands will be met. The demands in this final fast are very broadly formulated, for criteria such as ensuring "complete freedom of worship"; "voluntary evacuation of mosques" or "full safety" cannot be demonstratively met. This gives the impression that the expression of willingness to fulfil the criteria is in itself a step towards their fulfilment. Placing a set of demands serves to draw attention to an issue as well as to the fast itself. This is very different from the understanding of the fast as motivated by individual or spiritual purgation alone. However, Gandhi superimposes and spiritualises the concrete political demands using the purification rhetoric, construing self-purification through the fast as the purification of the nation and thus resolving the real problem of communal violence with the gesture of atonement on behalf of all communities: "My fast should not be considered a political move in any sense of the term. It is in obedience to the peremptory call of conscience and duty."[148]

Yet, despite this rhetoric, there is no question that there were concrete demands and issues that the fast succeeded in highlighting, even while Gandhi wrestled with justifying the fast as persuasive and not coercive. In the case of the 1948 fast for Hindu-Muslim unity, there were hectic and visible negotiations on throughout the two-week period, which culminated in over one hundred representatives of different organisations and parties signing a declaration and personally handing it over to Gandhi, who first dramatically insisted

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[147] CWMG Vol. 98, 250: Footnote 1, quote from speech by Abul Kalam Azad at a gathering of no less than three hundred thousand people in Delhi on 17 January 1948.
[148] CWMG Vol. 98, 249: Speech at Prayer Meeting, New Delhi, 17 January 1948.

on continuing the fast, "in case the assurances were not sincere", and only agreed to break his fast after several repetitions of the assurances in the declaration.[149]

The effect of the fast as a political weapon lies in the crucial moment of the termination of the fast. Gandhi's stature meant that he could not be forcefully fed, like hunger strikers in prison usually are. There are not many options as to how an indefinite fast can come to an end: either the demands are fulfilled or the person on fast is allowed to die, or the person voluntarily gives up the demands and ends the fast. This do-or-die principle, combined with the spiritualisation of the fast, the pressure of media coverage, public support and political negotiations, made each of Gandhi's indefinite fasts a successful form of nonviolent intervention.

In the case of the fasts of a limited duration, the mode of bargaining and settling the conflict was different, since the fulfilment of the demands raised could not be guaranteed by the end of the fast. However, these fasts worked to register protest loudly and more visibly than institutionalised forms of confronting the opponent, such as meetings or protest letters could do. They also put pressure to speed up the resolution of the issue at hand, in order to save the reputation and morale of the opponent.

Several photographs document the breaking of Gandhi's fast. These depict moments of relief and a focus of supporters and the public on the vulnerable body of Gandhi being saved through a crucial glass of water, or a sip of lime juice (see figures 1–2). The moment of termination of the fast is in fact the climax to the negotiations and diplomatic and persuasive agreements, even though what remains visible is just the starving body of Gandhi on a bed. The vivid contrast is part of the dramaturgy of the act of fasting. The focus of interaction is centred around the body of Gandhi, around the act of keeping him alive, but the actual negotiations on the terms of the conflict take place elsewhere, and do not involve Gandhi at all. In any

[149] CWMG Vol. 98, 250: Editorial footnote.

case, the fast is an interaction between different parties, bustling with activity. However, the image of the starving body, watched by millions in newspaper reports, pushes away these moments of interaction between other persons to the backstage. This is typical of not only Gandhi's fasts, but also finds echoes in studies of hunger strikes in other contexts.[150] The contrast between these sites of hectic activity (political negotiations) and inertia (no intake of food) is reversed, with the starving, emaciated body gaining more and more visibility and the hectic diplomatic procedures becoming more and more muted in the background.[151] However, it is an interaction between these sites that enables the act of the fast to be accomplished from the point of its commencement to its dramatic finish.

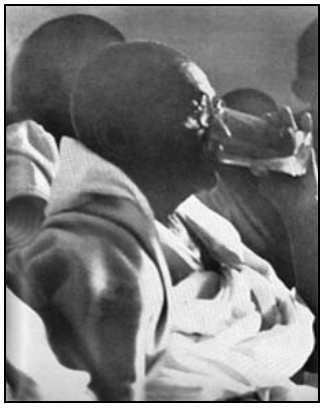

Fig. 1:
Gandhi breaks his fast to end riots following the Partition, New Delhi 1948
Source: Gandhi Serve Foundation, Image Archive

Fig. 2:
Gandhi being attended upon by doctors during his fast for democratic reforms, Rajkot 1939
Source: Gandhi Serve Foundation, Image Archive

Similar to the termination of the fast, though not as laden with tension, is the beginning of the fast. During a prayer meeting (Gandhi's

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[150] See for instance O'Malley, *Biting at the Grave*, and Maud Ellmann, *The Hunger Artists. Starving, Writing and Imprisonment* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1993).

[151] The problem of inactivity in fasting was circumscribed with the rhetoric of spiritual renunciation. So fasting is not "the renunciation of all activities; it means only the renunciation of activities prompted by desire and of the fruits of action performed as duty. This is real freedom from activity. That is why one must learn to see inactivity in activity and activity in inactivity." CWMG Vol. 55, 119: Letter to Narayan Khare, 12 March 1932.

unique version of political gatherings) on 12 January 1948, he declares that he will begin with a major fast unto death.

> "I ask you all to bless the effort and to pray for me and with me. The fast begins from the first meal tomorrow. The period is indefinite and I may drink water with or without salts or sour limes. It will end when and if I am satisfied that there is a reunion of hearts of all the communities brought about without any outside pressure, but from an awakened sense of duty."[152]

Though it may seem trivial, the declaration of the duration and purpose of the fast is essential to and a very significant part of the act of political fasting. Without saying that one is going to refuse food, and explaining to an interested audience why this is a necessary step to take, the refusal to eat is in itself irrelevant and uninteresting. So just as eating is mostly a social and cultural affair, the refusal to eat becomes political the moment it is public. On the one hand, because without the opening declaration of the fast, it would not be an act of protest in the public sphere at all. Were it not for the speech quoted above, which was also simultaneously released in print in Gandhi's weekly *Harijan*, the fast may have gone unnoticed. On the other hand, for such a protest act to be registered, there needs to be an addressee who directly receives the announcement, especially because the act of the fast appears to be self-addressed at first glance. The declarative speech act thus inaugurates and marks the act of fasting. The performative moment in the announcement of the fast lies in the refusal to perform an act (i.e. not eating), or in other words, in marking this refusal as an act. The fast is thus an act that is clearly bounded; it has a beginning and an end, a location and a cause, a sense of direction and purpose. All this is mate-

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[152] CWMG Vol. 98, 219: Speech at Prayer Meeting, New Delhi, 12 January 1948; published in *The Hindustan Times*, 13 January 1948, and *Harijan*, 18 January 1948.

rialised by the inert, starving body in front of an audience (see figures 3–4).[153]

Fig. 3:
Fast during civil disobedience actions, Kheda 1929
Source: Mahatma Gandhi Foundation India, Digital Archive

Fig. 4:
Visitors waiting to catch a glimpse of Gandhi fasting, New Delhi 1948
Source: Peter Rühe, *Gandhi* (London: Phaidon Books, 2001), 276.

Gandhi concludes his speech and commences his fast with a plea: "I would beg of all friends not to rush to Birla House nor try to dissuade me or be anxious for me. [...] Rather they should turn the searchlights inwards."[154] I read this plea as an indication that what Gandhi needed in order to help his cause was *precisely* that people paid attention to the fast, he needed spectators who readily responded to the stimuli he provided. It is thus a profoundly theatrical gesture, when, by begging his friends not to rush to him, he in fact draws to their attention that they cannot remain distant onlookers witnessing his fast, but that they are compelled to react and do what he asks them not to do. Even as late as 1967, Gandhi's second personal secretary, Pyarelal Nayyar writes in a newspaper article on Gandhian standards of fasting: "To be legitimate, a fast should be capable of response."[155]

To "be capable of response," to become significant in an arena of struggle, an act such as the refusal to eat, which is actually not visible at all, needs to firstly be made perceptible and secondly es-

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[153] On the effect of such images, see also Christopher Pinney, *Camera Indica: the social life of Indian photographs*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1997.
[154] CWMG Vol. 98, 220: Speech at Prayer Meeting, New Delhi, 12 January 1948.
[155] Pyarelal Nayyar, "The Right and Wrong Uses of Fasting: How Gandhiji's Standards Apply Today," *The Statesman,* 3 January 1967, 6.

tablished as an event. A response is sought not only from the political opponents but also from a general public, from friends and colleagues. Thus most photographs of Gandhi's political fasts show him surrounded by Congress supporters of all ages, sometimes in the pose of devotees in front of a shrine, or as proud witnesses and onlookers who were fortunate enough to be a spectator to Gandhi's starvation. The practice of supporters keeping vigil during his fasts has its roots in religious traditions, particularly since Gandhi held prayer meetings on a daily basis, mostly early in the morning or at sunset, while he was on a fast. The fast was framed as if it was as much an opportunity for his supporters and well-wishers to take part as spectators of the fast, as it was an act of protest.

Display and ostentation are vital to the political economy of the fast as an instrument of political conflict. The political fast must be therefore seen in the context of its mediatisation, of its coverage in the press and media, the support given to the person not eating by others, as well as the amount of attention given by the authorities concerned. Gandhi's fasts, especially after he became regarded as the leader of the elite nationalist movement, were met with awed response by the general public, with reports of whole cities leaving their lamps unlit in the evening in order to pay respect to him while he refused food. However there were other cases of less high-profile fasters in prison, who were, in fact, allowed to die without much notice. Gandhi himself seemed to realise that a person undertaking a fast required a profile and public standing. In the case of the Ahmedabad fast in 1918, in support of the mill workers' strike demanding an increase of wages, a very local issue, not directed at the colonial authorities, he even forbade others to fast along with him. "Leave this to me [...] fasting is my business", he is reported to have said to Anasuya Sarabhai, one of his supporters from the influential family who were in fact the mill owners.[156] In fact, this first public fast became the test for adapting it as part of the 'arsenal' of Satyagraha in Gandhi's later career. The fast is carried out not in his own

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[156] Quoted in Erik Erikson, *Gandhi's Truth. On the Origins of Militant Nonviolence (*London: W.W. Norton, 1970), 352.

name, but in the name of a collective. Rather, the fast was meant to help the mill workers to not lose their morale in the fight for their demands. This act gives the collective a sense of identity: "It is wrong to fast for selfish ends, e.g. for increase in one's own salary. Under certain circumstances it is permissible to fast for an increase in wages on behalf of one's group."[157]

Yet, despite giving instructions on the right and wrong ways of fasting, Gandhi himself pursued a variety of strategies of fasting. As a political instrument, Gandhi enacts the fast in different ways, involving various stages of negotiation, interaction and communication between conflicting parties, thus constantly generating new possibilities and outcomes. At one level, the fast is about the refusal of food and the politics of engaging others' responsibility in keeping him alive.[158] At another level, it is about the fulfilment of certain political conditions and demands. At yet another, more discursive level, the fast is a critique of violence and a demonstration of the way in which nonviolence can be enacted.

The weak, yet defiant figure of Gandhi on a fast is a sign that points to other signs as well as points back to itself.[159] In an announcement of the fast for communal harmony in 1947, Gandhi used his body as a sign of opposition to the riots, as a stronger statement than would have been possible with words:

> "The weapon which has hitherto proved infallible for me is fasting. To put an appearance before a yelling crowd does not always work [...] What my word in person cannot do, my fast may. It may touch the hearts of all the warring elements in the Punjab if it does in Calcutta. I, therefore, begin fasting from 8:15 tonight to end only if and when

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[157] CWMG Vol. 90, 234: "Fasting in the Air," Article in *Harijan*, 21 April 1946.
[158] This was not how he intended fasting himself, but it was the effective result.
[159] Following Erika Fischer-Lichte, this would be an indication of the theatricality of Gandhi's fast. Fischer-Lichte defines theatrical signs as signs which refer to other signs. See Erika Fischer-Lichte, "From Theatre to Theatricality: How to Construct Reality," *Theatre Research International,* Vol. 20, No. 2 (1995), 97–105.

> sanity returns to Calcutta."[160]

Through the foregrounding of his suffering, starving body, the fast was meant to draw attention to the issue of communal disturbances taking place in Calcutta. In his speeches and journal publications, Gandhi mostly denied that his fasts were meant to persuade or coerce others into fulfilling his demands, although he nearly always, even in the case of the indefinite fasts, formulated these demands in writing, in concrete wordings to specific office holders. This double strategy seems necessary from the point of view of keeping his body at the centre of attention while allowing the fulfilment of the conditions to be a secondary effect of the act. This does not mean the fast was used as an end in itself. But rather than being a medium carrying a message in and to the public sphere, his fasts were richly ambiguous in motives and significance, seeking to gain support and identification with the act itself and thus help to constitute what its outcome could be. By placing himself "in front of a yelling crowd", he used his status to drive public attention to sympathise with him. Party representatives of the Muslim League and the Congress, and other public figures such as newspaper editors and religious leaders, who were the direct addressees of the protest fast, were compelled to enter into negotiations, because suddenly the issue of 'mob violence' was connected to a prominent personality threatening to starve himself to death on this ground. In a sense the responsibility for the acts (the act of ensuring the end of violence and the act of ending the fast) was designated to them. Though the act appeared to be an act of Gandhi's individual volition, it involved other people. Their actions and responses in fact decided whether the fast would have true political significance and effect.

As Gandhi gained reputation for the use of the fast, it gradually became less necessary to actually undertake one. Often it sufficed to merely threaten that he would go on a fast, without actually doing so, as this telegram from Yeravda prison to the Viceroy indicates:

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[160] CWMG Vol. 96, 318: Statement to the Press, 01 September 1947, published in *Harijan*, 14 September 1947.

> "Have just read with considerable pain announcement Government decision remove me on commencement contemplated fast to unknown private residence under certain restrictions. To avoid unnecessary trouble and unnecessary public expense also unnecessary worry to myself I would ask Government not to disturb me for I will be unable to conform to any conditions as to movement from place to place or otherwise that may be attached to foreshadowed release."[161]

The restrictions referred to the refusal of publishing and other facilities to Gandhi while under detention. By threatening to launch a fast, publicising it, he effectively ensured that publishing facilities in prison were provided, even without the fast.[162] In another letter to his colleague, Gandhi quips on his awareness of the judicious use of the fast: "Formerly, I had to fast in order to make people do what I can now persuade them to do with a mere rebuke."[163]

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[161] CWMG Vol. 57, 38: Telegram to Private Secretary to Viceroy, 16 September 1932. (Entire text in capital letters in original)
[162] See Amar Kaur Jasbir Singh, *Gandhi and Civil Disobedience. Documents in the India Office Records, 1922-1946.* London: India Office Library, 1980.
[163] CWMG Vol. 56, 317: Letter to Ramdas Gandhi, 11 August 1932.

4.1.4 Responses to the fast

How were Gandhi's fasts perceived by its addressees amongst the British? A number of cartoons and caricatures from the British press of the 1930s reflect the responses that Gandhi's fasts attracted in Britain. London's *Evening Standard* published a cartoon in 1932 (see fig. 5), responding to Gandhi's fast against untouchability and the introduction of separate electorates for so-called untouchable castes:

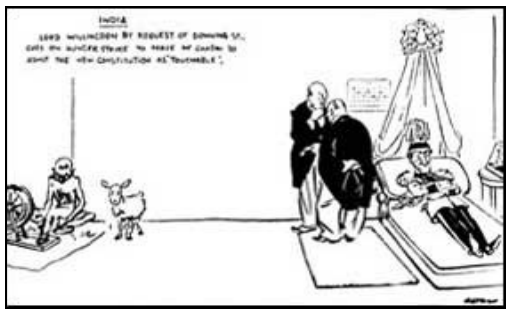

Fig. 5:
"Prophecies for 1933: Lord Willingdon, by request of Downing Street, goes on hunger strike to force Mr. Gandhi to accept the new constitution as 'touchable'."
"Old Low's Almanack," *Evening Standard London*, 31 October 1932
Source: Mahatma Gandhi Foundation India, Digital Archive, Cartoon No. 62

Gandhi with his spinning wheel and a goat sits on the floor in one corner of a room, opposite the figure of an almost clumsy Viceroy Lord Willingdon, reclining in full costume on a couch with two worried attendants pondering over his health. By imagining the reverse situation of Willingdon going on a hunger strike, the cartoon points out how completely different the two political styles are, and how ridiculous it would seem if both were to use the same tactics. The act of countering the fast by Willingdon himself resorting in desperation to a hunger strike also suggests a level of exasperation with the Gandhian fasts, where the interaction between the conflicting parties arrives at a deadlock, on a ground that is culturally and politically unfamiliar or at least uncomfortable to the British at this high level of negotiations.

Fig. 6:
"Mr. Gandhi and his Goats"
Cartoon by Poy, *London Daily Mail,* 1932
Source: Mahatma Gandhi Foundation India, Digital Archive, Cartoon no. 44

That the issue of diet and the celebration of a rural and peasant lifestyle could play such a dominant role in political developments, provided ample material and several occasions for the British press to poke fun at Gandhian abstinence and asceticism. The *London Daily Mail*, known for its vigorous opposition to the dominion status to India, observed with amusement how Gandhi made an issue of taking along indigenous goats on his trip to London for the Round Table Conference in 1932 (see fig. 6).

Another photograph on a slightly more sympathetic note shows Gandhi with other nationalist leaders at a Dairy Show at the Royal Horticultural Hall in Islington, London, inspecting goats, with a comment informing readers that the prize-winning goat was named Mahatma Gandhi (see fig. 7).

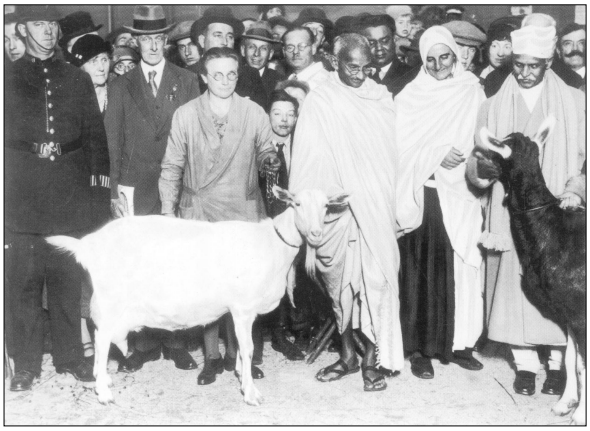

Fig. 7:
Dairy Show at Royal Horticultural Hall, London, 23 October 1931 with prize-winning goat named Mahatma Gandhi.
Source: Rühe, *Gandhi,* 123.

It is true that Gandhi was supported and admired by a vast section of the British public and by several anti-colonial activists throughout Europe and even across the Atlantic. An admiration for his nonviolent policy and political leadership was nonetheless tinged with a nonplussed view towards his asceticism, particularly his dieting and fasting practices.

Fig. 8:
"Top Men of the Year 1935,"
Cartoon by Harrison, *Review of Reviews,* London
Source: Mahatma Gandhi Foundation India, Digital Archive, Cartoon no. 64

This was often symbolised with the goat accompanying Gandhi wherever he went. Cartoonist Harrison of the *Review of Reviews* placed Gandhi with his goat among 10 other top world leaders of the year 1935, an image that conveys both admiration as well as amusement at the self-stylisation of the Indian nationalist leader (see fig. 8). On this cover page cartoon, Gandhi conspicuously stands out, with a black body and a white head, as if his body practices were of a different 'race' than his mind; as if the white part of him (the head, a body part most easily considered to be intelligent) was admired and held in regard, but the black part (including references to body practices such as fasting) seen as too oriental and obscure to be taken at par with his argumentative and diplomatic skills (skills of the 'head').

Besides Gandhi's critics and opponents, he did enjoy great support from various corners outside the country for his fasting politics. This consisted of expressions of support from people who themselves followed a very different line of politics, for e.g. a tongue-in-cheek cartoon of New York State Governor Al Smith paying a sympathy visit to Gandhi during his fast, following the hugely successful Salt March, not to encourage him to break the fast, but to offer him a cigar in solidarity (see fig. 9).

Fig. 9:
New York Governor Al Smith offers Gandhi a cigar, 1930 (Original publication not identified)
Source: Mahatma Gandhi Foundation India, Digital Archive, Cartoon No. 27

Fig. 10:
"Burden of the Great Soul"
Cartoon by Mall, *Free Press Journal,* 1932
Source: Mahatma Gandhi Foundation India, Digital Archive, Cartoon No. 60

Another cartoon following the 21-day fast in 1932 shows the emaciated body of Gandhi carrying the body of the free nation, on his back (see fig. 10). Such portrayals are commonly found in the press coverage of the 1930s.[164] Gandhi's solitary act of fasting, as opposed to the mass mobilisation and participation in other civil disobedience campaigns, came across as an expression of one man's body carrying the burdens of the nation, although the caption to the cartoon in fact read "Burden of the Great Soul", suggesting that through the fast, body was no longer 'merely' body; it had transformed into soul.

The British press followed Gandhi's fasts closely, quoting from the Government's correspondence to Gandhi as well as widely citing Indian opposition to the fasts as well as condemnation expressed in the US and European press.[165] Mostly, the fasts were perceived as an expression of "Mr. Gandhi's obstinate attitude,"[166] an unwarranted step, an intention to "publicly commit suicide,"[167] and an act typical of a "tiresome fakir to most Westerners [...] a thorn in the side of the more intelligent of his countrymen."[168] *The Times* editorial often condemned his fasts as contradictory to his own principles: "These arbitrary claims, following a simi-

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[164] Bean argues that his image and "impact on the West was enhanced by his resemblance, in his simplicity of dress and his saintly manner, to Christ on the Cross." See Susan Bean, "Gandhi and Khadi. The Fabric of Indian Independence," in *Cloth and Human Experience.* Annette Weiner and Jane Schneider, eds., (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1989), 368.
[165] In the following, I will analyse reports and articles in the London-based daily, *The Times*, between the years 1920 and 1948, since they are indicative of the public perceptions and British Government responses to the fasts of Gandhi.
[166] "Mr. Gandhi's Fast. Liberal Indian Leaders' Criticism," *The Times*, 15 October 1932, 9.
[167] "Mr. Gandhi has informed the Prime Minister that he intends to commit suicide by starving himself to death," *The Times*, 13 September 1932, 13.
[168] Quote from *New York American* in: "U.S. Criticism of Mr. Gandhi; Press Comments on 'Fast unto Death'," *The Times*, 19 September 1932, 12.

lar though less spectacular intervention by Mr. Gandhi in [...] Jaipur, seem better suited to the methods of totalitarian dictators than to the theories on which he has based his philosophy of life."[169] Typically, the propositions of the Government were depicted as "fair and cautious", while on the other hand Gandhi's stance was reported as a display of an inappropriate, unrelenting stubbornness. [170]

Sometimes the fasts were marked in the British press as acts of confession of his own failings, thus not perceived as targeting the British authorities at all: "Gandhi's frank confession – Responsibility for Riots – "I must do penance"[171] is the title of a *Times* report during the disturbances that marked the visit of the Prince of Wales to India in 1921, during which time the Congress launched a non-cooperation campaign. By stressing that the fast had nothing to do with the British government, the reports found a way of not being accountable for Gandhi terminating his voluntary starvation: "The Prime Minister and the Government [...] clearly convinced the best Indian minds that the scandal of Mr. Gandhi's self-immolation could not be laid at their door."[172]

That being said, the press closely monitored and reported on the day-to-day progress of Gandhi's health: "Mr. Gandhi grew giddy while sipping water, but soon recovered, and continues to be cheerful,"[173] or "Untouchable boy's gift of orange juice – At 12 o'clock the door opened and Mr. Gandhi's bed was wheeled in. Mr. Gandhi lay motionless among the pillows, and it was clearly seen how wasted he had become in three weeks."[174]. Not seldom, it was portrayed as an achievement on behalf of the Government to arrive at a compro-

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[169] Editorial, *The Times*, 08 March 1939, 17.
[170] "Indian Caste Concordat. Mr. Gandhi's Fast Ended", in: *The Times*, 27 September 1932, 14.
[171] "Gandhi's frank confession – Responsibility for Riots – "I must do penance", *The Times,* 21 November 1921, 9.
[172] *The Times*, 28 September 1932, 13.
[173] "Fourth Day of Fast. Mr. Gandhi's growing exhaustion," *The Times*, 07 March 1939, 14.
[174] "End of Mr. Gandhi's fast – Untouchable boy's gift of orange juice," *The Times*, 30 May 1933, 15.

mise and successfully end Gandhi's fast: "[…] the Viceroy has found a way of preventing the sacrifice of Mr. Gandhi's life on a question not so much of the goal in view as of the method by which it should be reached."[175] While this was very different to the Indian Congress view of the reasons for the termination of Gandhi's fast, it does indicate that the involvement in the dynamics of the fast as an interactive process brought with it at times a sense of achievement for all sides, regardless of what the actual goals and terms of agreement were.

Inevitably, the announcement of a fast by Gandhi led to various speculations and propositions of appropriate responses in the British press, such as this editorial column marking the end of a three-week fast in 1933:

> "There is much speculation about what Mr. Gandhi will do on his recovery. If he resumes civil disobedience campaigns he will be rearrested, and he may again fast in prison if refused the privileges he demands. The Government may eventually be compelled to adopt the methods which the British authorities adopted in the case of the hunger-striking women suffragists."[176]

The comparison to the suffragettes is striking, because the British authorities never forcefully fed Gandhi, even if this may have been thought of as an ultimate option. Yet strangely, while the fasts in protest against the British were viewed as unwarranted and exaggerated, the press expressed open admiration of Gandhi's fasts, when addressed to an Indian audience. *The Times'* obituary to Gandhi remarks: "The fasts of this frail septuagenarian at Calcutta and Delhi will long be remembered for their astonishing influence on tension and dangerous situations […] and of supreme self-sacrifice in support of right."[177]

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[175] *The Times*, 28 September 1932, 13.
[176] "Mr. Gandhi at Liberty. Fast ended," *The Times*, 24 August 1933, 10.
[177] *The Times*, 31 January 1948, 5.

The above examples show that the responses to Gandhi's fasts in the British press were mixed, varying greatly during the three decades of Gandhi's political activity in South Africa and in India, from the first public fasts in 1918 to the final fast shortly before his assassination. The press did not usually consider the fast in the context of nonviolent action, but more as a form of protest and a way of gaining attention. It was often mystified and exoticised as a Hindu ritualistic practice and therefore considered to be outside of the realm of Western understanding.

> "From our earliest records of India, we know that 'holy men' have been in the habit of practising severe austerities of many kinds with the simple object of thereby obtaining spiritual power. [...] We may regret it, but we stand outside the charmed circle and have neither the right nor the power to interfere [...] it is now a national and a religious question, and not an International or Governmental one."[178]

This letter to the Editor of *The Times* in 1933 reflects how such an understanding of the fast could even place it outside of imperial political involvement altogether. Yet it also reflects the interest in looking at Gandhi, not as a politician, but as a holy man indulging in an obscure oriental starvation ritual, satiating the West's desire to gaze, to watch the body of the Other and feel part of "the charmed circle". The fast thus also became an object of fantasy and myth, fully in tune with the orientalist tradition of the *Raj*, the British empire in India. It can be read as an ideological transaction between the performer and his audiences, within whose framework the encoding and decoding of the performance takes place in very different ways.[179]

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[178] Letter from R.H. Elliott, Lieutenant-Colonel, late of the I.M.S., to the Editor of *The Times*, 12 May 1933, 15.

[179] This is similar to Kershaw's interpretation of how efficacy in performance is achieved. See Baz Kershaw, *Politics of Performance. Radical Theatre as Cultural Intervention* (London: Routledge, 1992), 16.

Regardless of what the tenor or content of the responses were, the basic point I would like to emphasise is that interaction and response are per se essential to the practice of the political fast or the hunger strike, and Gandhi's case makes this explicit. Far from being a passive stance, the performance of nonviolent protest through the fast ushered in periods of hectic interaction and challenged the addressees to enter the scene and be involved in the outcome of the fast. The interaction was however not restricted to the binary model of the oppressor and the oppressed, or to use dramaturgical language, the protagonist vs. the antagonist. Many of Gandhi's fasts were targeted at his own people, they were projected as ways of disciplining the nation through a *pars pro toto* control and subjugation of his own body. In these cases, his body became the symbol of resistance to what he termed as "mobocracy" in the civil disobedience movement, an idea I will explore in detail. Undertaking a fast called for mass obedience to Gandhi's particular form of civil disobedience and created a sense of responsibility in Congress party workers and community leaders for keeping Gandhi's body as well as his brand of civil disobedience alive.

4.1.5 Significance of the body

Gandhi began his experiments with fasting while in South Africa. It was already widely in use by prisoners belonging to the Indian civil opposition, and in his correspondences and letters to the editor, he takes note of the way the fast was used by British suffragettes to conduct their campaign. The political fast was not a new idea. What Gandhi did, however, was to practice and experiment with fasting, both on his own, as well as with others on the Tolstoy Farm in Johannesburg, where he set up a commune. Here he eclectically combined elements of fasting as a religious practice common to Hinduism, Islam, Christianity and Zoroastrianism with ideas on dietetics and health treatments in vogue at the time, predominantly influenced by German and British nature cure practitioners such as Louis Kuhne, Father Sebastian Kneipp, Edward Bach, and Heinrich Lahmann.[180] Group fasting was a way to test the effects of the technique in forging a sense of solidarity and common purpose. In his autobiography he notes: "The result of these experiments was that all were convinced of the value of fasting, and a splendid esprit de corps grew up among them."[181] As part of the training for nonviolent action, fasting and other forms of 'self-restraint', including celibacy and a vegetarian diet were part of developing the ideal of complete self-rule or *purna swaraj*, a concept which referred to both control over one's own body as it did to national autonomy, control over the body of the nation. The significance of the body – not any body but particularly his own – in Gandhi's praxis and theorisation of nonviolence cannot be underestimated. Gandhi conceptualised nonviolence in a way that feared and apprehended the corporeal as a hindrance to *soul force*, repeatedly emphasising that "the body should not be dearer than the soul. He who knows the soul, and also knows that it is different from the body, will not try to protect his

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[180] The influence of Western nature cure practitioners on Gandhi is explored in Alter, *Gandhi's Body,* 55ff.
[181] CWMG Vol. 44, 338: *Autobiography*, Chapter 31: "Fasting".

body by committing violence."[182] The body was irrational, agitated, chaotic and unruly. It demanded taming, needed to be bridled in order to allow what he saw as *soul force* to emerge. Importance was given to the body only in order to be able to control it, which ironically implied, however, that he was preoccupied with his body for much of his life.

> "I also saw that, the body now being drained more effectively, the food yielded greater relish and the appetite grew keener. It dawned upon me that fasting could be made as powerful a weapon of indulgence as of restraint [...] I selected first one food and then another, and at the same time restricted the amount. But the relish was after me, as it were. As I gave up one thing and took up another, this latter afforded me a fresher and greater relish than its predecessor."[183]

In this quote from Gandhi's autobiography, the body is described as an entity that is gaining control over and thus corrupting the soul and causing anxiety ("the relish was after me"). And by the logic of metonymy, control over food is seen as control over the body itself, which is then equated to freeing the soul. Fasting in the Gandhian sense, is not limited to giving up food alone: "Fasting relates not merely to the palate, but to all the senses and organs."[184] It is in this context that he develops the idea of mental fasting, which includes giving up 'evil thoughts' and 'passions':

> "Fasting and similar discipline is, therefore, one of the means of the end of self-restraint, but it is not all, and if physical fasting is not accompanied by mental fasting, it is bound to end in hypocrisy and disaster."[185]

Framing the fast in the context of self-restraint in fact implies that without the conscious act of mental restraint, there would be uncontrolled physical and mental activity, amounting to violence. The

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[182] CWMG Vol. 10, 99: Letter to Manilal Gandhi, 17 September 1909.
[183] CWMG Vol. 44, 329: *Autobiography,* Chapter 27: "More Experiments in Dietetics".
[184] CWMG Vol. 61, 221: "All about the Fast," Article in *Harijan,* 09 July 1933.
[185] CWMG Vol. 44, 339: *Autobiography,* Chapter 31: "Fasting".

body, which for Gandhi includes the mind and the thoughts in it, are the wild raw material that the process of active nonviolence tames and civilises. The body cannot become purified, according to this worldview. But *soul force* or *Satyagraha* can at best strive to limit and restrict the harm and the violence that the body is capable of:

> "My body and mind are living in a world by which I remain unaffected, but in which I am being tried. My soul is living in a world physically away from me and yet a world by which I am and want to be affected."[186]

In the following, I use the term *soul* to denote Gandhi's concept of *atman*, which is an ideal that is not affected by and indeed separate from the material body.[187] It is very common to find metaphors of violence in Gandhi's writings to describe the praxis of the nonviolent fast: "fasting unto death [...] is the greatest and most effective weapon"[188] or "the mortification of the flesh through fasting"[189] or "that state [... which] can only be reached after continual and voluntary crucifixion of the flesh."[190]

The perception of the body as "an agitated irrationality, propelling individuals into the chaos of mob performance"[191] is common to several classic theories of political protest. Gandhi's fasting politics becomes contradictory because he demonstrates the importance of physicality in unarmed protest on the one side and simultaneously dismisses the body as opposed to the soul on the other. On the one hand, nonviolence "postulates the conquest of the adversary by suffering in one's own person,"[192] implying that the body is not just

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[186] CWMG Vol. 32, 142: Letter to C. Rajagopalachari, 16 July 1925.
[187] Gandhi's sometimes also uses the term *self* synonymously to *soul*.
[188] CWMG Vol. 83, 123: "Fasting in Nonviolent Action," Article in *Harijan*, 26 July 1942.
[189] CWMG Vol. 83, 367: Letter to Additional Secretary, Home Department, Government of India, Detention Camp New Delhi, 15 July 1943.
[190] CWMG Vol. 61, 221: "All about the Fast," Article in *Harijan*, 09 July 1933.
[191] Foster, "Choreographing Protest," 395.
[192] CWMG Vol. 34, 97: *Satyagraha in South Africa*, first published 1924–25. Revised Third Edition, ed. and transl. Valji G. Desai (Ahmedabad: Navjivan Press, 1961), Chapter XIII: "Satyagraha vs. Passive Resistance".

symbolically employed in the conflict, but a fully articulate and intelligent signifying agent, thus allowing for a vast range of possibilities of action and reaction. On the other hand, the body is viewed in theological terms as separate from and intrinsically a hindrance to the soul, thereby creating a binary, which usually reads as a string of moral oppositions between body/soul, impure/pure, mortal/immortal and blind violence/contemplated force. Undertaking a fast means that intervention in a conflict is performed through and with the body, but Gandhi's conception of fast as purification denies the physicality of the fast even while the physicality is essential to the act of fasting. The "fast drives out the physical and is closely attached to liberation of the soul."[193] Driving out the physical is perceived as driving out something violent, or at least prone to violence. Using the body to elicit a response instead of using arms to annihilate any response is a gesture of nonviolent protest. At the same time, fasting is seen as voluntary physical suffering that has the effect of strengthening and 'self-purification', thus a means of making the body itself less prominent and giving importance to its discipline, "when your passions threaten to get the better of you."[194] This brahminical catholicism reflects a severe mistrust of and anxiety towards the body. It is not a question of treating fasting as a kind of physical training, which can facilitate, cultivate and channel body responses more consciously in a conflict situation. Rather the body–soul disparity assumes that the nature of the human is somehow innately violent, animal-like and methods such as fasting can prevent and restrict what he terms as a curable disease. The metaphor of the diseased or poisoned body is very common in Gandhi's vocabulary.[195] It is used in reference to the effects of modern technology on the body of Indian civilisation, or pertaining to the influence of pleasure and indulgence on health and longevity. Optimism to-

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[193] CWMG Vol. 19, 482: Letter to Mazharul Haque, 20 March 1920.
[194] CWMG Vol. 38, 230: "Self-Restraint vs. Self-Indulgence," Reprinted in *Young India,* 24 March 1927.
[195] See Parel's comments on the use of the metaphor of the "curable disease" in Anthony Parel, ed., *Gandhi. Hind Swaraj and Other Writings* (New Delhi: Cambridge Texts in Modern Politics, Cambridge University Press, 1997), Introduction, lvii.

wards the inherent potentials and use of the body in alleviating diseases in society, is coupled with an anxiety towards the disease that the body by itself is perceived to be.

An analysis of the significance of the body in Gandhi's nonviolence cannot overlook his concept of *swaraj*. The notion of *swaraj* refers to both self-rule of the nation as well as control and mastery over one's own self via the body. The political paradigm of national sovereignty is interdependent and analogous to the paradigm of individual autonomy and is therefore linked to the idea of the soul controlling the body and not being controlled by the demands of the body. Herein lies the main thrust of Gandhi's argument in his 1910 text *Hind Swaraj*, that home-rule (via a self-sufficient, village-driven nation) and self-rule (via the disciplined body) are deeply interconnected, and that they are not only ends but equally means, thus the way in which *swaraj* is practiced is as important and indeed decides how *swaraj* is achieved.[196] Home-rule is embodied in the practices of the nation's citizens. An economy of an ascetic self-sufficiency is developed in terms of national and corporeal control. Sovereignty over the body easily translates into sovereignty of the nation. "Real home rule is self-rule or self-control."[197]

Gandhi's model of self-control went hand in hand with his idea of disciplining the body of the nation. Historian Ranajit Guha works out the relations and dynamics between what he terms "crowd control" and "soul control" in Gandhian led mass mobilisation.[198] Gandhi as a leader of the bourgeois nationalist movement felt that the struggle against British domination could not come about without disciplining the body of the Indian masses. There is a connection between soul-control or self-control (since the term *atman* denotes both self and soul) and control of the masses (mobilisation of the masses) that consistently runs through Gandhi's writings, constituting discipline as a key mediating function between the elite leadership and the subalterns in the Indian nationalist movement.

[196] CWMG Vol. 10, 245–315: *Hind Swaraj,* first published 1910, Revised new edition, ed. Mahadev Desai (Ahmedabad: Navjivan Press,1939).
[197] CWMG Vol. 10, 310: *Hind Swaraj.*
[198] Guha, *Dominance Without Hegemony,* 143ff.

ership and the subalterns in the Indian nationalist movement. Discipline pervasively defined Gandhi's approach to the body and to the division between the body and the soul. As Guha's analysis of Gandhian strategies of mass mobilisation show, "to understand [Gandhi's] obsession for crowd control, one must recognise that it had less to do with the body than with the soul. Indeed it was a foil to his concern for soul control."[199] Control and restraint of the body were related to abstinence: giving up meat, alcohol, sex, foreign cloth, urges to shout or make noises in demonstrations, anger, aggression, but also all kinds of 'unruly behaviour' that is noticeable in peasant revolts and riots. Abstinence through rigour and discipline of the body in turn leads to purification of the soul. It is through this logic that Gandhi could argue that fasting and other practices of self-healing (such as nature cure therapy, sleep control, vegetarianism, celibacy) could achieve a dual control of his own body as well as the body of the enslaved masses.

> "Only you must put your body right even as an artisan's first duty is to keep his tools in order. God has given us this body as a tool to be used efficiently for His service neither for pampering nor for keeping in cotton wool but not even for abusing or spoiling it by neglect. This is a wretched sermon but much needed."[200]

Fasting is perceived as a way to train and discipline the body, "putting it in order", in order to facilitate its "use" in a mass movement, not very different from the way a soldier in an army is trained: "Imagine the consequence of one untrained soldier finding his way into an army at war. He can disorganise it in a second."[201] The body of the masses comes across in this framework as something to be feared, as a dangerous "mobocracy" that needs taming. This is expressed in the same note, even while Gandhi speaks of his boundless faith in the people:

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[199] Guha, *Dominance Without Hegemony*, 146.
[200] CWMG Vol. 19, 361: Letter to Esther Faering, 29 January 1920.
[201] CWMG Vol. 21, 247: "Democracy vs. Mobocracy," Article in *Young India*, 08 September 1920.

> "My greatest anxiety about non-cooperation is not the slow response of the leaders [...] But the greatest obstacle is that we have not yet emerged from the mobocratic stage. But my consolation lies in the fact that nothing is so easy as to train mobs, for the simple reason that they have no mind, no premeditation. They act in a frenzy. They repent quickly."[202]

The soul-controlled fasting body of Gandhi placed in juxtaposition to the body of the uncontrollable mobs of people: these images almost always correspond to each other and suggest that the fasting of Gandhi served to control and harness the energies of the rioting masses, as if the act of starvation could mobilise the mob. The fast is used to discipline and regulate the crowds. This is very different from the disciplinary effect of the gun, but it nonetheless carries a similar distrust of the masses, a view that the crowds were per se unreasonable and over-emotionalised and required disciplinary measures, albeit of a nonviolent sort. The above quote is from an article that was published shortly after riots around the police quarters of the village Chauri Chaura in February 1922, during which a scuffle took place amongst a few anti-British processionists, following which the police opened fire. After this, the police station was set on fire by the group of protestors and non-cooperation supporters and 22 policemen were burnt alive. Gandhi immediately called for the suspension of the civil disobedience movement and undertook a five-day fast 'in repentance' for the incident in Chauri Chaura. This is just one of several cases of the use of the fast by Gandhi to 'atone for the wrongdoing of the masses'.[203]

Gandhi claimed that his fasts were a result of deep reflection and a last resort in the nonviolent struggle, once all other methods were tried and had failed. This suggests that the employment of the fast itself was a well-considered step and not a spontaneous outburst of affect. However, the use of the fast as a political instrument was ap-

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[202] CWMG Vol. 21, 248: "Democracy vs. Mobocracy".
[203] See also study on the event by Shahid Amin, *Event, Metaphor, Memory. Chauri Chaura 1922–1992* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

parently not always the outcome of discipline and control. In his memoirs on the 1918 mill-worker strike in Ahmedabad, Gandhi comments on how his first major political fast was announced:

> "One morning—it was at a mill-hands' meeting—while I was still groping and unable to see my way clearly, the light came to me. Unbidden and all by themselves the words came to my lips: 'Unless the strikers rally,' I declared to the meeting, 'and continue the strike till a settlement is reached, or till they leave the mills altogether, I will not touch any food.'"[204]

This revelation of the spontaneous and uncontrolled manner in which the idea of the fast came to him, stands in contradiction to the way in which the fast is otherwise treated as a matter of disciplined, pre-meditated action. The only explanation for this apparent contradiction is the reference to 'the light' or some divine, higher law. Gandhi's own body was thus differently fabricated from the body of the masses he led. His own spontaneous outbursts were guided by divine intervention, whereas the spontaneous reactions of the mass of people were treated as unruly. However, such an explanation needs to be accompanied with some caution. It seems that Gandhi's innovations in using the fast occurred haphazardly, and his own narrative as well as the chronicles of nationalist historiography that sewed together various facets of the fast embellished it in retrospect with one single symbolism, which it may not have had at the moment of its enactment. This narrative of the heroism in the fast is to be found in Gandhi's detailed descriptions, such as in this letter to his associate Madeleine (Mirabehn) Slaide:

> "I got your letter yesterday. Evidently when you wrote it, you had no knowledge of this, my greatest fast. Whether it will ultimately prove so or not is neither your concern nor mine. Our concern is the act itself, not the result of the action. … I am dictating this immediately after the 3.30 a. m. prayer and while I am taking my meal such as a fasting man with prescribed food can take. Don't be shocked. The

[204] CWMG Vol. 44, 411: *Autobiography,* Chapter 22: "The Fast".

> food consists of 8 ozs. [ounces] of hot water sipped with difficulty. You sip it as poison, well knowing that in result it is nectar. It revives me whenever I take it. Strange to say, this time I am able to take about 8 meals of this poison-tasting but nectar-like meal. Yet I claim to be fasting and credulous people accept it. What a strange world!"[205]

The obsession with "the act itself and not the result of the action", the need to mention that he the leader wakes up at a time when the world is asleep, the detailed and self-deprecating recount of how many sips of water he allows himself to drink: all this is not just a case of privately sharing information about himself with a close friend. It is a mode of narration that thrusts the body into public view, that sees himself as a self being watched and specifically displays it for the spectator: "Yet I claim to be fasting and credulous people accept it." The question here is not whether there was some essential truth underneath the narrative cover. But the presentation of the self (and here I mean body and soul) goes hand in hand with a narration of this presentation to the other, thus an appeal to the other to watch and react.

There are several studies on the significance of clothing in Gandhian politics, both as an economic issue, related to self-reliance and the promotion of cottage industries, as well as the strategic symbolism of dress in Gandhi's public appearance.[206] He propagated and experimented with the gradual reduction of clothing and the stylisation of this near nakedness using similar arguments as with the reduction of food. As Emma Tarlo has pointed out, the Gandhian approach to dress was the outward equivalent to his politics of voluntary starvation.[207] Just as fasting was an act of self-suffering, wearing the loincloth – what he imagined to be the clothes of a 'standard' Indian peasant – was meant to be a sign of identification with their poverty and an expression of protest. Eating and

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[205] CWMG Vol. 98, 240: Letter to Mirabehn, New Delhi, 16 January 1948.
[206] Compare Emma Tarlo, *Clothing Matters. Dress and Identity in India* (New Delhi: Penguin, 1996), in particular Chapter 3: "Gandhi and the Recreation of Indian Dress," 62–93 and article by Susan Bean, "Gandhi and Khadi," 356–416.
[207] Tarlo, *Clothing Matters,* 69.

clothing had a comparable moral worth, in that they were essentials for survival but could equally be expressions of lavishness, waste and exploitation. Gandhi was obsessed with both, literally incorporating these body practices into the mainstream of nationalist protests, making clothing and food into religious issues as well as political ones, and insisting on their 'transformative' qualities. Just as fasting could lead to self-purification, so also wearing home-spun cloth (khadi) could transform the wearer into a more worthy person. This also implied that wearing foreign cloth was 'defiling', just as indulging in food caused physical corruption. Emma Tarlo rightly argues that this argument actually utilises the concept of untouchability, which he viciously opposed in other contexts.[208] The signification of the body with categories of purity and impurity goes hand in hand with the way Gandhi worked out the body's (and in particular his own body's) capacity to perform nonviolence.

The connection between Gandhi's fasts and his dress politics was often drawn by the foreign press. In a cartoon commenting on talks between Churchill and Gandhi, each walks to the Roundtable Conference in 1931 in the other's dress (see fig. 11). Such jokes subtly point to the fact that dress was a conscious part of Gandhi's politics. Though he strived to dress like the common Indian peasant, it was clear that the choice and stylisation of dress was as much a statement as that of Churchill with his characteristic cigar and hat. Considering that colour often represents a political affiliation (red to the Communists, brown to the Fascists and so on), Gandhi's relative nakedness, a visible vulnerability that corresponded to the visceral vulnerability created by the fasts, became a statement of his non-alignment with any international political party or movement (see fig. 12).

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[208] Tarlo, *Clothing Matters,* 91.

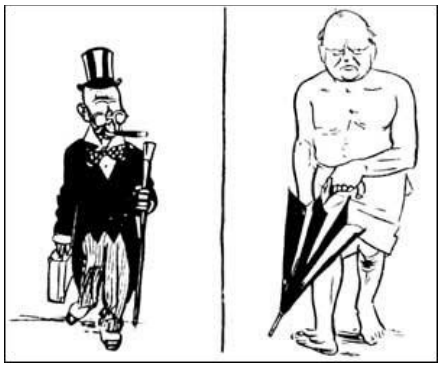

Fig. 11:
"Change of garb"
Cartoon by Reynolds, *Morning Post*, 1931
Source: Mahatma Gandhi Foundation India, Digital Archive, Cartoon No. 48

Fig. 12:
"And he ain't wearing any blooming shirt at all!"
Cartoon by J.C. Hill, *Auckland Star,* 1931
Source: Mahatma Gandhi Foundation India, Digital Archive, Cartoon No. 59

Creating, signifying and using the body as a weapon in conflict is one of the core tenets of Gandhian nonviolence. The body is however both violent and nonviolent in this complex conceptualisation. It carries the dialectic of *Körper as* material body *vs. Leib as* spirited body to the extent that it is both a limitation to nonviolence as well as the potential to incorporate nonviolence. In its opposition to soul, it is posited as innately violent, as instinctive or brute, animal-like. At the same time, it is the way to releasing the powers of soul, making it the tool of nonviolence:

> "Steam becomes a mighty power only when it allows itself to be imprisoned [...] Even so have the youth of the country of their own will to allow their inexhaustible energy to be imprisoned, controlled and set free in strictly measured and required quantities."[209]

Here the material body as potentially violent can be shaped into a tool in service of the spirited body through control and self-imposed restraint. This expresses the dialectical relationship between nonviolence and violence in Gandhi's understanding and performativity of the body. In rejecting violence there is always an implicit refer-

[209] CWMG Vol. 47, 185: "Youth on Trial," Article in *Young India*, 03 October 1929.

ence to it. Underneath the shining ideal of pure nonviolence there lurks the brute animal instinct. The movement away from this 'natural', violent state is accompanied by a constant allusion to it. Even if this 'pure state' can be approached (indeed, rarely achieved) with great self-discipline and practice, there remains an unspoken affinity, albeit a tense one, between these 'brute' and 'pure' states of being, between violence and nonviolence. The allusion is vivid at the level of language, where metaphors of violence are used to describe the instrument of nonviolence. It is also present in the critique of violence, which stays at the normative level in Gandhi's conceptualisation. This means that although the performance of nonviolence is proposed as a radical and alternative mode of political action, the fact that political violence is also enacted, planned and constituted is never questioned to the same extent. There is an assumption in Gandhian thought that violence is innate in the body, and that nonviolent action is performed and constituted by the very same body with great effort. Violence is defined as an instinctive, given quality in humans, an instinct shared with animals, determined by birth. It is not critiqued as an institution, an organised form of using technology, human power, resources, structures and authority that has been established through human investments and political will. This leads to a huge contradiction in Gandhi's theorisation of nonviolence.

4.1.6 Gendering nonviolence through the fast

The fast drew from a vast storehouse of cultural practices and crafted them into a tool of political action. Gandhi's practice of the fast sought to constantly evoke and establish continuity with 'age-old religious customs', eclectically drawing from Hindu, Christian and Islamic sources. Yet it gradually emerged as something novel, out of the ordinary, something only he and few else could perform. It sought to legitimise a different kind of authority for itself in political struggle. In re-inventing this device as a political tool, new meanings are endowed upon it, so that it represents a weapon in

battle. Gandhi speaks of the fast as "his last resort in place of the sword – his own or other's."[210] The fast is fashioned as a substitute for the sword. If not doing something is an act, in the praxis of nonviolence it is often an act of substitution: doing something else, instead of 'taking to the sword'.

Gandhi and his followers worked at re-framing the fast as a political tool, and in doing so they worked at virilising the act. Fasting, like spinning, traditionally has connotations of being feminine in Hindu tradition, with instances from religious texts calling upon women to fast in prayer for the well being of their husbands and children. In Gandhi's political praxis, the fast is fashioned into a manly weapon. "My impotence has been gnawing at me of late. It will go immediately the fast is undertaken."[211] By using the allusion to potency, a very clever turn in the representation of the body of the hunger striker takes place. It is framed as an act of bravery and an indication of gaining rather than losing strength, as a process of enhancing one's masculinity. Gandhi embodied so-called 'female' practices but repeatedly emphasised their transformation into sources of manliness and potency. Establishing the potency of fasting was argued along similar lines to establishing how the practice of celibacy for men increased their physical and mental strength and durability, which in turn were required for their participation in the national independence struggle. True control of the body, be it through celibacy or fasting, was a process of suffering that led to purification. In Gandhi's discourse, celibacy was just another (more difficult) dimension of fasting, implying the control and restriction of the sexual appetite. "It is my experience that anyone who has not conquered the palate cannot conquer the sex impulse."[212] This is complicated by the gendered connotations that eating/starvation and sex/celibacy have in his thinking and praxis. So by a strange twist of argument, purportedly demonstrating the equality of the sexes, celibacy would allow for men to suffer and be productive, the way

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[210] CWMG Vol. 98, 219: Speech at Prayer Meeting, New Delhi, 12 January 1948.
[211] CWMG Vol. 98, 218: Speech at Prayer Meeting, New Delhi, 12 January 1948.
[212] CWMG Vol. 28, 25: "Brahmacharya," Article in *Navajivan*, 25 May 1924.

women suffered when they underwent labour pain: "A man striving for success in *brahmacharya* [the vow of celibacy] suffers pain as a woman does in labour."[213] Suffering, production, reproduction and renunciation are all woven together in this re-writing of birth giving as quintessentially female into a male practice, in favour of greater service to the national public. As Alter has pointed out: "Gandhi defined the problem of violence, and the goal of nonviolence, in terms at once global and intimate, imperial and personal, as well as biological and moral."[214] The fast and related body practices of celibacy and self-healing were presented as acts that achieved more through doing less: reduction, renunciation, restriction and control were promoted as leading to an increase of strength, potency, virility, energy. What appears at times to re-formulate traditional understanding of masculinity in fact articulates the very same binaries (male=active, female=passive), although packaged in a different way.

The process of constructing the body as a tool or weapon of nonviolent action had to necessarily be a process of gendering nonviolence. One of the well-known problems that nonviolent politics faced (and to an extent still continues to face) was the reputation of being passive, submissive and therefore negatively associated with the feminine. Connected to this is the legitimisation of violent conflict, armed fighting and revenge and retaliation as a manly, i.e. positive response. Nonviolence denotes both the absence of violence as well as the rejection of violence, and it is in this double bind that the gendering of nonviolence assumes particular significance. Gandhi's theorisation of fasting as a nonviolent practice moves in two directions: firstly it engenders violent action in response to slavery and colonial rule as becoming unmanly, or being "rendered effeminate".[215] He characterises the use of weapons as a weak gesture and not a gesture of strength, therefore as an unmanly act. The rejection

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[213] Gandhi differentiates between *brahmacharya* in "comprehensive terms" as "control in thought, speech and action of all senses, at all places and at all times" and in its "conventional meaning" as "control of the sex impulse in thought, speech and action," in: CWMG Vol. 28, 22–6: "Brahmacharya".
[214] Alter, *Gandhi's Body,* 27.
[215] CWMG Vol. 10, 266: *Hind Swaraj*.

of violence comes with a rejection of its association with manliness, as a critique of violence as lack of courage and fearlessness. "It is contrary to our manhood, if we obey laws repugnant to our conscience."[216] Simultaneously, the absence of violence comes with its substitution by other means, but the category of male strength and the understanding of strength as male remains unshattered. So if violence is "emasculated and cowardly,"[217] then nonviolence as its absence and its other has to be gendered as masculine: "Believe me that a man devoid of courage and manhood can never be a *Satyagrahi*."[218] It is not surprising that Gandhi was unhappy with the term passive resistance and proposed the term *Satyagraha* (adherence to the Truth) instead. In this he sought to not just free the pacifist ideology from the reputation of being passive, but also from its closeness to a certain essentialised notion of the female. Nonviolent action, however different it may be to violence, needed to be fashioned as heroic and manly, in as much as armed fighting was rejected as cowardly and unmanly. "Forgiveness is more manly than punishment."[219]

Many feminists have critiqued Gandhi's evocation of what he called female qualities whenever it was suitable to his own political strategy, while failing to challenge patriarchal traditions.[220] The act of fasting also served as an appeal to so-called feminine virtues even while it rejected these and endowed the fasting body with essentially male qualities of heroism and invincibility.

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[216] CWMG Vol. 10, 293: *Hind Swaraj*.
[217] CWMG Vol. 10, 266: *Hind Swaraj*.
[218] CWMG Vol. 10, 295: *Hind Swaraj*.
[219] Gandhi's own translation of the Sanskrit proverb "kshama veerasya bhushanam" in: CWMG Vol. 21, 133: "The Doctrine of the Sword," Article in *Young India*, 11 August 1920.
[220] See for instance Ketu Katrak, "Indian Nationalism, Gandhian Satyagraha, and Representations of Female Sexuality," in: Andrew Parker, Mary Russo, Doris Sommer, Patricia Yaeger, eds., *Nationalisms and Sexualities*. (New York/London: Routledge, 1992), 395–406; Joanna Liddle and Rama Joshi, eds., *Daughters of Independence. Gender, Caste and Class in India* (London: Zed Books, 1986); Radha Kumar, *The History of Doing. An Illustrated Account of Movements for Women's Rights and Feminism in India, 1800-1990* (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1993).

So how did Gandhi react to women fasting for political reasons? Gandhi began fasting at a time when the use of the hunger strike by the British suffragettes was very much in the news. Gandhi takes note of these acts of protest, closely commenting on them in his journal articles, but dismisses the politics of the hunger striking suffragettes as not nonviolent, even while he patronisingly praises them for being "as manly as a man" in undergoing voluntary suffering. In an article in *Indian Opinion* written in April 1913, Gandhi relates the episode of the suffragette Emmeline Pankhurst's hunger strike in prison:

> "Even in gaol, these ladies are bent on harassing the authorities and so getting themselves released. Accordingly, though Mrs. Pankhurst was offered a variety of delicious dishes in gaol, she refused to touch them and fasted for eight days. She was about to collapse, and was, therefore, released. And now this brave lady is in hospital in a critical condition. This kind of fighting is not Satyagraha. A Satyagrahi's object is to get into a prison and stay there. He will not even dream of harming others. If, however, we leave aside her mode of fighting and only think of the suffering she has borne, we shall find much to learn from her. Despite numerous difficulties in their way, she and her companions do not yet feel dispirited, nor are they likely to do so. They will struggle on till death. Though a woman, Mrs. Pankhurst is as manly as any man. Indians should emulate all this courage, for the British women being without the franchise is nothing compared to the disabilities we suffer."[221]

There are several issues that arise in this passage, related to the comparison between the hunger strike and the fast. Gandhi perceives a crucial difference between his own practice of the *Satyagrahic* fast and that of hunger strikers in prison, and for him, the difference lies in the manner of expressing their demands, their attitude, not in the demand itself. Gandhi sees Pankhurst and the

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[221] CWMG Vol. 13, 81: "Mrs. Pankhurst's Sacrifice," Article in *Indian Opinion,* 19 April 1913.

other suffragettes as fasting for the cause of women, which he acknowledges as legitimate. However, he does not regard their attitude as nonviolent. "A Satyagrahi will not even dream of harming others." In other words, the suffragettes' attitude of provoking the authorities is interpreted by Gandhi as harmful, i.e. not nonviolent enough. He perceives the self-suffering of Pankhurst as qualitatively different from the self-suffering of a *Satyagrahic* fast, which is only evident in the attitude towards the opponent. Spiting the opponent through inducing self-harm is, according to Gandhi, not nonviolent. However, it is not clear in what way Pankhurst and her associates were indeed 'harming' the authorities. Their refusal to obey orders, their dismissing attitude towards eating "the delicious dishes offered to them" (note that Gandhi does not mention the forced feeding of the suffragettes) is read as a sign of their faulty attitude towards nonviolent protest.

It seems more like Gandhi's moral and social taxonomy abhors those notions and practices that blur or question the boundaries that have been set by him. Despite commending the courage of the women to voluntarily suffer, the passage reflects a deeper anxiety towards women undertaking a fast for political reasons. It does not take into consideration that women demanding their rights are treated in different ways than men are by the very same authorities. Their refusal to cooperate with the jail authorities is read by Gandhi as an indication of harassment of the authorities, not as their resistance to harassment by the authorities. In a different context, it could be speculated that a similar refusal to eat jail food would be a legitimate form of *Satyagraha*. Gandhi did not make general comments about or against women undertaking political fasts. However, the example of the suffragettes shows that for Gandhi, an act is not an act in itself. Depending on the context, the refusal to eat can be perceived as corrupt as it can be perceived as sublime. The meaning of a starving body changes according to the context in which it occurs. Despite the apparent equation of men and women in terms of their bravery, there is a judgement of the attitude of the fasting suffragettes as not being selfless enough, which I read as an implicit mistrust of their attitude in the fight for women's suffrage.

4.1.7 Authenticity and authority in nonviolent action

The practice of the fast raises another question that is pertinent towards exploring the meaning of the performative in nonviolent action. While eating is something anyone can and indeed everyone must do to stay alive, the refusal to eat and that too for an extended period of time, can be safely called an extraordinary feat. The element of excess, show and hyperbole inherent in the act is in contrast to the quotidian act of eating. As an example of nonviolent action, the political fast points to the debate on its authenticity.

For Gandhi, clearly the praxis of nonviolence assumes the status of something to be cultivated and refined, something that cannot be achieved easily. In a letter to Congress activist Mazarul Haque, Gandhi urges the use of organised collective fasting and prayer as a fundraising strategy for party activities, however strictly under his leadership: "I know that wherever collective fasting and prayer is held, we will get in abundance the money or whatever we want even without any effort."[222] Why did Gandhi want to mobilise millions in all his civil disobedience campaigns, but choose to nearly always fast alone? Fasting was a subject of much of his correspondence. He advised many people to fast for health or religious reasons, but rarely approved of others undertaking a political fast on their own accord. "Not every one is qualified for undertaking it without a proper course of training."[223] While he saw his own fasts as self-purificatory acts and acts of duty, he often reprimanded others who embarked upon a fast. So while he fasted against a separate electorate on grounds of untouchability in 1932, he dismissed the fasts undertaken by those affected by untouchability as sinful and harmful.

> "If non-Harijan Hindus want, let them take Harijans to

[222] CWMG Vol. 19, 481: Letter to Mazharul Haque, 20 March 1920.
[223] CWMG Vol. 83, 123: "Fasting in Nonviolent Action"

> their temples with due respect. As long as that does not happen, let the Harijans stay at their homes and sanctify themselves with the purifying Ganga of their devotion. There is no need for them to fast before a temple. I believe that it is *adharma* to do so. … There is no merit in it. It is certainly sinful and everyone should keep miles away from such sins."[224]

The fast was an innovative political tool that attracted many groups involved in the nationalist movement. It carried multiple associations and found approval in a culture that valued asceticism and abstinence. It was a way of engaging the opponents and introducing a sense of immediacy and dramatic escalation into the conflict, pushing for a solution and settlement of the issue at hand. Therefore it is not surprising that although Gandhi sought to be the sole authority on the correct use of the political fast, there were many others who appropriated it for goals and objectives that Gandhi may not have approved of himself.

> "Ridiculous fasts spread like plague and are harmful. But when fasting becomes a duty it cannot be given up. Therefore I do fast when I consider it to be necessary and cannot abstain from it on any score. What I do myself I cannot prevent others from doing under similar circumstances. It is common knowledge that the best of good things are often abused. We see this happening everyday."[225]

Gandhi's own fast, a matter of duty, the best of good things, is contrasted to the way the method of the fast is abused and ridiculed by others who use it in similar circumstances. So it becomes an act which is difficult to perform and hard to achieve. This process of making the fast into the ultimate weapon of nonviolence makes it most inaccessible and even super-human. An aura of awe and se-

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[224] CWMG Vol. 98, 308: "Harijans and Temple Entry," written on 27 January 1948, Article in *Harijanbandhu,* published on 01 February 1948. A note on the terminology: *Harijan*, lit. people of God, was coined by Gandhi as a positive word for those who used to be called Untouchables. The term was never accepted by the communities themselves, who preferred to call themselves *Dalit*, the downtrodden or oppressed. *Adharma*: non-righteousness, injustice, immorality.
[225] CWMG Vol. 90, 234: "Fasting in the Air," Article in *Harijan*, 21 April 1946.

cret power surrounds the one who can use the fast against any adversary. The effect of the fast lasts only as long as this aura lasts, so it must be fashioned as something larger than life. Though Gandhi takes great effort to present himself as a common man, as a 'humble son of the soil', and his weapon of nonviolence is projected as the essence of simplicity, much of his writing builds up the opposite dynamics. Fasting as protest is described as an act of self-discipline of the highest order, which not everyone can accomplish. Gandhi's act becomes inscribed as something out of the ordinary, arguably comparable to the acts of kings and prophets. His authority is achieved through the foregrounding of his authenticity as compared to the lesser successful attempts of others. Although the idea of the fast was closely connected to death, Gandhi's fasts unto death were not so much an indication of imminent death, but reminiscent of the declaration "Le roi ne meurt jamais", the king never dies. The mortal body of Gandhi invokes certain immortality, not of Gandhi as a person, but as the embodiment of dignity.[226] Yet while it may appear as if Gandhi's self-representation can be interpreted according to Kantorowicz's distinction of the body of the king as embodying the national corpus (hence Kantorowicz's idea of the king's two bodies), it does not neatly apply to the example of Gandhi's fasts. Firstly, the authority of the king in South Asian cultures is caste-based or oriented in lineage. No matter how highly respected he was as a figure, Gandhi received the title of *Mahatma* and not *Maharaja.*[227] Further, there were so many other contemporary figures involved in the anti-colonial struggle through the Indian National Congress, who were extremely popular and well-known in their own

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[226] Ralph Giesey explores the significance of funeral ceremonies and the constitution of royal authority despite or precisely in the moment of death in: Ralph Giesey, *The Royal Funeral Ceremony in Renaissance France* (Geneva: Droz, 1960). Another interesting comparison would be the way Gandhi's body was mediatised and created in the way kings such as Louis XIV were imagined. See the important work of Ernst Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies. A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology (*Princeton: Princeton University Press 1957). I thank Prof. Maria Ines Aliverti for the suggestion to compare Gandhi's corporeal authority with the fabrication of the bodies of kings.

[227] As opposed to Abdul Ghaffar Khan, who belonged to a semi-noble family among the Pashtuns, who was given the title *Badshah/ Bacha,* "King of Kings".

ways, that Gandhi by no means could stand alone for the body of the nation which was not yet there.

By making fasting into his field of expertise, he in fact becomes an inaccessible and saintly person, a claim he then rejects. Gandhi explicitly rejected the glorification and worship of his person, as the *Mahatma* or as father of the Nation, as he soon came to be regarded. He preferred to see himself in the position of the Editor, answering questions of an interested, critical but devoted readership. *Hind Swaraj*, Gandhi's most programmatic text, is formulated as a dialogue between an Editor and a Reader, with the reader mainly asking questions in the manner of a student and the Editor responding at length and convincing the reader about various issues.[228] This creation of an enlightened protagonist on the one side and an ignorant but willing onlooker on the other is the type of relationship that Gandhi envisaged between himself and his public. So although he steadily sought to make nonviolence an accessible creed and not a product of elite theology or erudition, he stood above and apart from the masses he wanted to bring to order.

> "The religion of nonviolence is not meant merely for the Rishis and saints. It is meant for the common people as well. Nonviolence is the law of our species as violence is the law of the brute. The spirit lies dormant in the brute, and he knows no law but that of physical might. The dignity of man requires obedience to a higher law – to the strength of the spirit."[229]

The underlying distinction between the 'law of the brute' and the law of a higher spirit runs through Gandhi's entire body of writings and speeches on nonviolence. The theorisation of nonviolence on the grounds of a differentiation between the refined and the raw is highly problematic. It presumes that violent behaviour is a default natural instinct in every human, underneath which the more superior nonviolent spirit 'lies dormant', so needs to be awakened. It pos-

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[228] See Parel, *Hind Swaraj*, xiii-xiv.
[229] CWMG Vol. 21, 134: "The Doctrine of the Sword". *Rishi*: holy man in Hindu scriptures.

its the 'law of nonviolence' in opposition to 'physical might', whilst, however, assuming that this bruteness is the raw material provided by nature, which must be refined and overruled by a 'higher law'. Gandhi gets caught here in a self-contradictory move by making the saints and Rishis (ascetics, holy figures) into the ideals of common people, who have not yet discovered or been trained in this higher state of being, although it should be something everyone can achieve. While claiming on the one side that nonviolence is an active force, he inadvertently describes it on the other side as a dormant, passive spirit, waiting to be shaken into action. By giving violent behaviour the status of the brute, the natural, he fails to critique violence as institutionalised, as a system that has to be cultivated and invested in and created, just as much as any collective nonviolent action does. This also gives way to the assumption that the violent apparatuses of British rule are instinctive and spontaneous appearances, rather than systematically developed and refined practices. It assumes that violence is the commonplace rule and nonviolent action the ideal exception. Gandhi theorises his own understanding of the fast using the same dichotomy of the brute versus the spiritually pure. "Fasting can help to curb animal passion, only if it is undertaken with a view to self-restraint. Some of my friends have actually found their animal passion and palate stimulated as an after-effect."[230] Nonviolence in the praxis of the fast is thus an effort to restrain, control, canalise some 'brute animal passion', which always has the danger of showing itself. The 'natural' state of being is violence. As opposed to this, nonviolence, which must conquer and overcome this instinct by way of restraint and self-induced suffering, is the 'true' state of being. While fasting is perceived as a practice that requires human effort, eating with indulgence and excess is perceived as a natural urge, which leads to violent behaviour, difficult to control, making violence inevitable. In Gandhi's conceptualisation, nonviolence is posed as the exception and violence the rule, which, of course, must be broken.[231] This dialectical

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[230] CWMG Vol. 44, 338: *Autobiography,* Chapter 31: "Fasting".

[231] It would be interesting to explore the conceptual and ideological differences to Frantz Fanon, known as one of the greatest critics of nonviolence, who however (contd.)

relationship is problematic, as is evident in the way Gandhi theorises the body and soul duality, or in his deterministic[232] understanding of bodily needs.

> "I as a specialist, want to tell you my experiences in this particular field. I do not think that I have any such contemporary who has made fasting and prayer a science and has been a beneficiary of it like me. I wish to make the country a beneficiary of my experience and with wisdom and sincerity, want to take it on the path of fasting and prayer."[233]

By declaring himself to be a specialist in fasting, Gandhi established an authority and authenticity for himself in being skilled and qualified to use his body in nonviolent protest in a way that others could not be capable of, although they were urged to aspire to this ideal. This authority, combined with an expansionist agenda, was a central part of the strategic use of the fast in political negotiations, since it created a space for the spectator and the gaze of the onlookers whilst maintaining the reins of control in his own hands. The reactions of the spectators and the addressees of the fast are no doubt crucial in deciding and shaping the outcome and political consequences of the fast. Yet, the advantage lies with the one undertaking the fast, performing the main act. Gandhi's fasts were an effective instrument of nonviolent action because they engaged with and even depended on the agency and responses of the spectators. Simultaneously, they were conceptualised in such a way that he strictly kept his position as subject and auteur of the fast, precisely because this was the precondition for the relationship between actor and addressee to work. The dramaturgy of the fast implied that Gandhi's body was in the position of the actor, considering a triad of

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held a similar view about violent behaviour being a part of human nature. For Fanon, nonviolence is a class-based privilege that most victims of violence are not in a position to adopt and is therefore an unrealistic option. See Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth,* 48ff.

[232] in the sense that aggressive behaviour and violent tendencies are viewed by Gandhi as determined by nature, as inborn.

[233] CWMG Vol. 19, 481: Letter to Mazharul Haque, 20 March 1920.

actor-spectator-space. The spectators were the opponents and addressees of the fast from different sides, sometimes British, sometimes Indian political leaders and contemporaries, sometimes an undefined general public. Without these spectators of the fast, without their responses and their reactions, they could not have worked. The spectators, addressees, onlookers are therefore an essential category in the process of the political fast. Yet, in Gandhi's use of the body as a weapon of nonviolence, he was in most cases the sole actor and author of the political fast.[234]

> "Much of this discipline runs to waste because instead of being matter of the heart, it is often resorted to for stage effect. I would therefore warn the bodies of this movement against any such suicidal manoeuvring. Let them have a living faith in what they urge or let them drop it. We are now beginning to attract millions of our countrymen."[235]

There are several instances of Gandhi condemning the use of the fast, which had gained popularity as a political instrument through his own practice. Any other person or group attempting to fast was considered inauthentic, as resorting to the method "for stage effect" and using it as a manner of "suicidal manoeuvring". However, the authenticity of Gandhi's fast was not free of "stage-effect", it was negotiated with the spectators and required their participation in order to establish Gandhi's authority.[236] The moment of staging, per-

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[234] There were exceptions, as I exemplified in Section 4.1.2, but the overall picture in the CWMG, particularly the views he expressed in his correspondences, indicate that he saw himself as an authority in fasting.

[235] CWMG Vol. 19, 22: Letter to the Editor of *The Bombay Chronicle*, reprinted in *Young India*, 04 October 1919.

[236] The term "staged authenticity" is used by Dean MacCannell to denote the dissolution of the borders between staged and authentic, particularly in commercial, tourist entertainment. However, I would like to use the term in this context to denote the necessity of staging, placing before an audience, in order to establish authenticity in the first place and to show the importance of the audience in affirming that authenticity. See Dean MacCannell, "Staged Authenticity: Arrangements of Social Space in Tourist Settings," *American Journal of Sociology, Vol.* 79 (1973), 589–603. See also adaptation of the term by Christopher Balme, "Staging the Pacific. Framing Authenticity in Performances for Tourists at the Polynesian Cultural Center," *Theatre Journal*, Vol. 50, No. 1 (1998), 53–70.
The Berlin-based research group on theatricality devotes a volume to the staging/*mise en scène* of authenticity and a discussion of the processuality and in-
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forming an act before an audience, was the way to establishing the authenticity of the fast as a nonviolent tool.

4.1.8 Theatricality of the fast

The fast, like any political tool, cannot work in isolation. It is however particularly characterised by the theatrical relationship between the actor and the spectator. I have argued that the fast was an instrument in Gandhi's nonviolent action, through which the *form* of action as opposed to the *content* or message that it is meant to convey comes to the forefront. Much effort went into developing the fast as a technique of nonviolent action. It involved repeating and stylising the act in a particular way, gradually creating a sense of identity and meaning through its repetitions and by referring to his own and other's previous usages of the fast in different contexts. The refusal to eat is not in itself nonviolent. It becomes a way of fighting a battle only when it is encoded within and enacted in a particular context using particular practices. Gandhi used every possible means at his disposal in instituting nonviolence through the fast. He also sought to set the limits and conditions of the act by proscribing certain practices while legitimising others. In his praxis, the fast is the material realisation of the possibilities which nonviolence offers. It is not predetermined by some essence. It demonstrates that nonviolence is not a passive stance, which seemingly only consists of rejecting violence, but rather it is bustling with activity at various levels. It implies that nonviolence is not a standpoint; in order to be nonviolent, one must do nonviolence. In this it is processual and performative.

Yet the fast does not work as a means of political interaction and conflict without its addressees. The spectators are as indispensable to the act as the actor himself. Reflecting on his major fast of 1932, Gandhi notes: "The fast unto death undertaken against the pro-

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completeness of the authentic: Erika Fischer-Lichte and Isabel Pflug, eds., *Inszenierung von Authentizität.* Series: Theatralität, Vol. 1 (Tübingen and Basel: Francke, 2000).

posed separation of the Harijans had instantaneous effect. People did not come and sit down with me but went into action."[237] The fact that their responses and reactions are so essential to the act of fasting makes the concept of theatricality particularly valid here. It is the moment of enabling the spectatorship of acts in public life, that theatricality has a sense as a heuristic mode. Through the theatrical mode of the fast, the addressees are made into conscious spectators, they cannot look away and cannot not react. Gandhi liked to call this "an appeal to the best sides of the wrongdoer."[238] What this implies is that by the act of voluntary starvation, the responsibility for oneself is shared with others, to an extent even transferred to the realm of the other's subjectivity.

Why the concept of theatricality? Performativity emphasises the agency of the actor, whereas theatricality focuses on the agency of the spectators, even while they remain spectators.[239] The agency of the spectators is materialised in the body of the actor, namely in the starving body of Gandhi. In the nonviolent act of the fast, the spectators are engaged in either urging Gandhi to break his fast, or in ridiculing it and condemning his fast as coercive, or in fulfilling the demands he placed in order to voluntarily end the fast. While all this happens, the gaze remains on the body of Gandhi, keeping his authority undiminished and his status as the sovereign actor unquestioned. The figure of Gandhi remains almost inert, while the world watching him bustles with activity when the fast is announced. Petitions are written to change laws, the public is urged to put a halt to violent clashes, round table conferences are summoned, community leaders meet to negotiate a compromise. Yet the narration of the political fast is framed in such a way that the ad-

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[237] CWMG Vol. 83, 138: "Talk with Vinoba Bhave and Others," 26 July 1942.
[238] CWMG Vol. 83, 123: "Fasting in Nonviolent Action".
[239] For a detailed discussion of the relationship between performativity and theatricality, see the special issue of *Sub Stance. Review of Theory and Literary Criticism,* Issues 98 & 99, Vol. 31, Nos. 2&3 (2002), ed. Josette Féral, in particular: Josette Féral: "Foreword", 3-13; Susan Leigh Foster: "Walking and Other Choreographic Tactics: Danced Inventions of Theatricality and Performativity", 125–46; Janelle Reinelt: "The Politics of Discourse: Performativity meets Theatricality", 201–15; Sue Ellen Case: "The Emperor's New Clothes", 186–200.

dressees of the fast do not become visible as actors, even though they are actually doing many things.

To speak of Gandhi's fast as a theatrical act is to use theatricality as a "tacit concept", as Josette Féral would argue, i.e. one, which can be used directly but described only indirectly.[240] Theatricality can mean several different things, and is used in a wide range of contexts, both within and outside of the theatre.[241] Since I am clearly working with an example outside of the theatre, the question is not whether Gandhi's fast has qualities of the theatre. This it certainly does, though emphasising this too much would decontextualise it as a political tool and take its analysis into a needlessly abstract direction. My dramaturgical reading of the fast and in particular the rehearsal and representation of Gandhi's body shows that the fast is a process that has to do with the gaze of the spectator in a crucial way. This is a particular understanding of spectatorship, endowed with a sense of agency, a necessity to act and react, a manner of actively watching without being watched, acting without becoming the actor. It is this spectator's gaze that also characterises the form of the fast as a nonviolent method. Rather than annihilating or attacking the opponents, they are made to respond and participate in the process of the fast.

But this is different from the interactions of everyday politics, where debates, exchanges and responses happen in quotidian terms, because the role of the actor is unquestioned. Gandhi's insistence on his own authoritative knowledge of fasting and ability to use the tool in politics, his condemnation and rejection of other people's use of the political fast created and allocated a space for himself, and a space distancing himself from the audience. The space is constituted not just by himself, but by those to whom the fast was ad-

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[240] Josette Féral: "Theatricality: The Specificity of Theatrical Language," 95. This is different from William Egginton's use of theatricality as a spatial term, expressing how individuals experience the space they inhabit. Se William Egginton, *How the World Became a Stage. Presence, Theatricality and the Question of Modernity* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), 124.

[241] A good overview of the different usages of the term theatrical/theatricality is provided by Davis and Postlewait, eds., *Theatricality*, Introduction, 1–39.

dressed, and those contemporaries who witnessed the fast, even without direct connections to Gandhi, through the widespread media coverage of the event.

In a sense, Gandhi's nonviolence had less to do with his refusal to eat than with those watching him and inscribing his act with importance and political relevance by reacting to it. The fast was a way of being looked at. Gandhi's self was at stake, but not only because he was physically degenerating with every day of his fast. It was also at stake because the success or failure of the fast depended on the participation of its witnesses. Gandhi's vulnerability and non-autonomy[242] becomes his strength, for it is only because of the visible vulnerability that the others looked and responded to him at all.

When Peruvian Marxist theorist José Carlos Mariátegui asserts that "a revolution is not made by fasting alone," he critiques what he perceives as an anti-materialist romanticism in laying a claim to nonviolence by forsaking food. I have used the example of Gandhi's fast to explore how nonviolence was understood as an active and dialogic way of engaging with the opponent as a necessary part of achieving one's just goal in conflict. Despite some of the contradictory and problematic undertones of Gandhi's theorisation and practice of the fast, he employed it in ways that reveal the many possibilities of waging conflicts instead of resorting to the barrel of a gun.

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[242] Gandhi would presumably prefer a term such as "the oneness of all", since he believed his own "soul" to be deeply inter-related to that of each and every other living being. "I believe in absolute oneness of God and therefore also of humanity. What though we have many bodies? We have but one soul." See CWMG Vol. 29, 209–10. I use the term non-autonomy, however, to express the interdependence between Gandhi and his spectatorship.

4.2 Unarmed soldiers in a nonviolent army: The *Khudai Khidmatgar* movement

"Is not the Pashtun amenable to love and reason?
He will go with you to hell if you can win his heart,
but you cannot force him even to go to heaven."[243]

If there is one institution anywhere in the world that embodies the notion of violence and its material manifestation in war, it is the military. Nonviolent movements have often been anti-militarist in nature, urging for conscientious objection, calling for an end to arms proliferation, supporting the rights of deserters or launching anti-war campaigns. The military apparatus is by definition one of the most hierarchical and de-individualised structures, prone to brutality towards the disobedient or nonconforming and legitimising the use of weapons in the name of defence. It is therefore hard to imagine an armed force that is unarmed, or outrightly calls itself a nonviolent army. It may be even more difficult to imagine such a nonviolent army to have been in existence in the borderland between Pakistan and Afghanistan, a region which is today a war zone, which conjures images of rifle-sporting tribesmen, marked by the total absence of a rule of law and controlled by warlords and militarised groupings. Yet although the idea of a nonviolent Pashtun army sounds paradox, it was possible for the fascinating movement of the *Khudai Khidmatgar* to combine what appear to be contradictory elements and philosophies of warfare in explicating and embodying the idea of nonviolent resistance.

The focus of this research is on the form of nonviolence that was adopted by this nonviolent army. How was a battle or a conflict envisaged, what was the underlying understanding of an enemy and the mode of fighting that guided the army's actions? And what are the implications of this historical example for the theorisation of

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[243] Abdul Ghaffar Khan quoted in Eknath Easwaran, *Badshah Khan. A Man to Match his Mountains* (New Delhi: Penguin, 1999), 95.

nonviolent action? Employing a close reading of the speeches of the founder of the *Khudai Khidmatgar* (KK), texts from the journal of the movement, *Pakhtun*, media reports and historical accounts on their activities, I will investigate the paradoxical closeness between violence and nonviolence as practised by the KK. In particular, I will explore how and why it was necessary to posit the nonviolent movement as an army and not merely as a social movement or political party. I will argue that the image of the violent Pashtun in fact helped to generate the notion of a nonviolent soldier and that both emerged from the cultural code known as *Pashtunwali*, or characteristics of Pashtun identity.[244]

The guiding question behind my exploration of this example of nonviolent resistance is related to how one can think of and conceptualise the form of nonviolent action. Viewing nonviolence merely as opposition or resistance to political oppression or as a faith-based or ethically founded worldview offers only a limited understanding of the concept and its political import. Introducing other tropes of thinking about nonviolence means exploring larger questions about the concept of conflict that underlie nonviolent protest and their approaches to conflict. I will argue that the Pashtun organisation recombined and re-articulated seemingly contradictory ideas of conflict in a new way, thus offering an example of radical nonviolent action. This re-combination can be expressed through the figure of the hyphen, which I will explore in Section 4.2.10.

[244] I use the spelling *Pashtun* instead of *Pakhtun, Pukhtun, Pashtoon* or *Pathan*. The only exceptions are (a) direct references to terms in the Pashto language, such as the title of the KK journal *Pakhtun* or the organisation *Zalmai Pakhtun,* or (b) quotations from other sources. The language of the Pashtuns consists of two major branches or dialects: the northern *Pakhto* and southern *Pashto*, of which I use the latter as the common term.

4.2.1 Historical background

The *Khudai Khidmatgar*, literally "Servants of God", was an organisation pledged to nonviolent resistance to British occupation, founded in 1929 and existing until 1948 in the North-West Frontier Province of Pakistan, bordering Afghanistan, in what was then part of British India. Because of its organisational characteristics and institutional structure, it was often called an army, though its recruits explicitly rejected the use of weapons. This is certainly one of the lesser known examples of nonviolent action in the world, scarcely researched and with comparatively few remaining documents or archival material. Compared to the huge public relations events led by Gandhi and even the nonviolent movements in other parts of the world, very little has been recorded about these Pashtun soldiers of nonviolence and their leadership.

Fig. 13:
Founding meeting of the *Khudai Khidmatgars*, April 1930
Source: D.G. Tendulkar, *Abdul Ghaffar Khan. Faith is a Battle* (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1967), 80–81.

The *Khudai Khidmatgar* was launched by the brothers Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan and Dr. Khan Sahib in 1929 as an interventionist

force of a social reform movement.[245] The KK was formed shortly after the *Zalmo Jirga* (Pashtun Youth League), in order to accommodate larger sections of the illiterate population who sympathised with the Pashtun nationalists. The Khilafat movement of the 1920s, supporting the spiritual head of the Ottoman Empire, provided one of the important political impulses for the politicisation of Pashtun activities beyond the very local level. As Pakistani historian Sayed Wiqar Ali Shah points out, "The Khilafat movement, which had both anti-imperialist as well as Islamic aspirations, exerted great influence on the emerging political consciousness of the province."[246] The Pashtun Youth League was established in 1929 and its activities mostly centred on educational and social work. As the political situation became increasingly tense due to the enforcement of the Frontier Crimes Regulation, a set of restrictions and repressions imposed by the colonial Government, the KK was introduced as a voluntary action wing to fight against British imperialism, along with continuing social reform work within Pashtun society. Within a few years, the KK assumed a prominent position in Pashtun politics, as it also became the representative chapter of the Indian National Congress in the North-West Frontier Province and Abdul Ghaffar Khan became increasingly involved in Indian National Congress activities as well. However, the socio-political movement lasted for a brief 18 years, until shortly after Independence from British rule in 1947 and the Partition of India and Pakistan. Following the Partition, the *Khudai Khidmatgar* was banned, Abdul Ghaffar Khan's elder brother, Dr. Khan Sahib, took over the presidency of the Frontier Province and other KK members joined the Awami National League. The history of the KK is unique, in that at different points of time, the KK was either part of a political party (i.e. North-West Frontier chapter of the Indian National Congress), a rural re-

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[245] The social reform organisation *Anjuman-I-Islah-ul-Afaghana* (Society for Afghan Reform) was started in April 1921 with Abdul Ghaffar Khan as President. In 1929, the *Zalmo Jirga* (Pashtun Youth League) was launched by *Anjuman* members along the lines of similar movements in Central Asia. See Sayed Waqar Ali Shah, *Ethnicity, Islam and Nationalism. Muslim Politics in the North-West Frontier Province 1937–47* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1999), 25–26.

[246] Shah, *Ethnicity, Islam and Nationalism,* Introduction, xv.

sistance force or a social welfare organisation. In this section, I am particularly interested in the KK as an organised force for nonviolent resistance, which gave it the institutional resemblance to an army.

At the time the voluntary service wing was first launched, membership was estimated at a little more than 1000 soldiers. By 1934, there were more than 25,000 KK recruits, mostly men but also a few women who had attended the secular schools set up by Ghaffar Khan and his affiliates.[247] Existing research material does not however tell us enough about the nature and extent of women's involvement in the KK.

The first four decades of the twentieth century saw the sprouting of several organisations uniting Pashtuns for various causes. On the one hand, anti-British associations such as the *Zalmai Pakhtun* sought independence for Pashtunistan, resorting to physical threats to authorities and the staging of violent protests.[248] The *Zalmai Pakhtun* was founded by Ghani Khan, Abdul Ghaffar Khan's son, and several members were either dropouts from the KK, or those who viewed the threats against the Pashtuns too great to be tackled without the use of armed defence.[249] On the other hand, the British, using the landed elite and some members of the Islamic clergy, supported the establishment of covertly pro-colonial organisations such as *Khaksar*. The KK emerged out of this complex scene, being the only force explicitly rejecting arms and in spite of its allegiance to the mainland Congress agenda, dedicated to reforming the culture of conflict in Pashtun society.

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[247] Banerjee concludes that it was mostly older women who participated in KK activities, since they were not strictly bound to the tradition of *purdah,* requiring no public contact between women and men. She estimates there were up to 600 women members who took the oath of the KK. See Mukulika Banerjee, *The Pathan Unarmed*. Opposition and Memory in the North West Frontier (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 59; 97ff.

[248] Mohammed Yunus, *Persons, Passions and Politics* (New Delhi: Vikas, 1979), 59.

[249] Tendulkar, *Abdul Ghaffar Khan*, 418.

The founder of the movement, Abdul Ghaffar Khan, was an active member of the Indian National Congress, chief of the Frontier Province chapter of the Congress and a close ally to Gandhi. Unlike other nationalist leaders, he came from a rural background and did not receive as much formal higher education as some of the other Congress members. His political activism became prominent with the founding of reform schools teaching in Pashto rather than Urdu and not controlled by the Muslim clergy or the British. These were also the first schools open to educating girls and accessible to the rural poor. Abdul Ghaffar Khan belonged to a comparatively well-off landowning family and himself attended college in Aligarh, but returned to the Peshawar province, declining an offer to study overseas in England, apparently due to homesickness. Unlike Gandhi or Nehru, he was neither a man of Western learning, nor a prolific writer. In fact, he was, as Aijaz Ahmad has described him, "a man of very large silences,"[250] a nationalist leader about whom comparatively little is known and whose life of 98 years, one third of which was spent in jail, is steeped in myth and legend. To call him a nationalist leader itself is somewhat misleading, for *Badshah* or *Bacha* Khan,[251] as he was affectionately referred to by the Pashtuns, was "rooted in place, almost in the way of peasants."[252] Many Congress politicians viewed him as a provincial leader rather than as a national figure. His primary political aim was the improvement of the lives and circumstances of the Pashtuns, a community in a region always referred to as 'remote', which was not even a full-fledged province of the British Empire at the time of his birth. Though the strategic location of the North-West Frontier Province cannot be overlooked, it did not play as major a role in Indian nationalist politics as mainland regions of India.

Khan spent nearly 35 years of his life in prison, mostly after Partition. The British and later the Government of Pakistan systemati-

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[250] Aijaz Ahmad, "Frontier Gandhi. Reflections on Muslim Nationalism in India," *Social Scientist*, Vol. 33, Nos. 1–2 (2005), 22.
[251] *Bacha* (Pashto) or *Badshah* (Urdu): King of Kings; *Khan* is also a title for members of respected landowner families.
[252] Ahmad, "Frontier Gandhi," 22.

cally destroyed most documents and material records of the movement, by raiding homes and confiscating anything related to the KKs, from handkerchiefs to uniforms and flags to copies of the KK journal *Pakhtun*. So an accurate chronology of the movement is close to impossible. Apart from colonial reports and police archive files, a few diaries and memoirs of KK members remain, which are only slowly being accessed and analysed by historians.

4.2.2 Review of research

Most studies are not on the nonviolent army itself, but more focused on its founder and leader Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan. The most frequently quoted 500-page biographical source on Khan is authored by Congress politician D.G. Tendulkar.[253] The Tendulkar biography in English consists of several anecdotes from Khan's life and involvement in politics. Since he was able to secure access to some key information sources and Congress committee reports and minutes of the period between 1920 and 1948, which have not been published to date, the biography relates details on Khan's political career that were not documented anywhere else. However, it was written thirty years before Khan's death, so is not a comprehensive biography. It also misquotes sources, plagiarising sections from other articles and reports.[254] Tendulkar, who was also commissioned to write Gandhi's biography, openly admits that he was not so much interested in understanding Khan's nonviolence as in his 'personality'. In the very first paragraph of the preface to the biography, Tendulkar begins with the remark that he admires Hô Chí Minh just as much as Badshah Khan.[255] This seems to suggest a certain distancing from or non-preferentiality towards the radical pacifist agenda of Khan, whilst only highlighting his involvement with a radical resistance movement. It also suggests the possible separation of revolutionary ideology on the one side and the mode of engaging in such

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[253] Tendulkar, *Abdul Ghaffar Khan*.
[254] Mohammed Yunus, once personal assistant to Khan and later Indian Ambassador in various missions abroad, refers to Tendulkar's plagiarism from his book on Pashtun society. See Yunus, *Persons, Passion and Politics,* 173.
[255] Tendulkar, *Abdul Ghaffar Khan*, xiii.

oppositional politics on the other. A comparison of the performative politics of the Vietnamese and the Pashtun leaders can of course be revealing in terms of how far the form of political action does affect and change the outcomes and message of these actions. Also in the context of resistance to British and French colonial rule, the two contemporaries pursued common goals of independence and self-governance for their peoples, although they differed significantly in the means towards their achievement and in their international backings. Khan's life and political philosophy of action view no separation between goals and means and would reject the achievement of a goal if the means were not congruent to it, so in fact nonviolence was both goal and means as far as the working principles of the KK is concerned. Tendulkar's biography, though rich in details and personally endorsed by Abdul Ghaffar Khan, does not show as much interest in the worldview of Khan and his philosophy of nonviolence, as it does in his political career and relations to other nationalist leaders.

Other biographies of Khan, notably by Eknath Easwaran and more recently, by Rajmohan Gandhi, also emphasise the Gandhian influence on Ghaffar Khan and view the movement of the KK very much in terms of its leadership and in reference to the Indian nationalist struggle, rather than in the context of Pashtun politics and socio-economic reform.[256] The KK is also connected to Gandhi's idea of a Peace Army (*Shanti Sena*), however it would be only fair to say that Gandhian influences form but one part of the socio-political context of the KK.[257] It is typical of Indian nationalist historiography to view the KK and its anti-imperialism as merely an offshoot of Congress activities, or following the Gandhian style of civil disobedience. However, this is far from the complex truth of the political history of the North-West Frontier Province.

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[256] Easwaran, *Badshah Khan*; and Rajmohan Gandhi, *Ghaffar Khan. Nonviolent Badshah of the Pakhtuns* (New Delhi: Viking/Penguin, 2004).
[257] On the Gandhian model of the Peace Army, see Thomas Weber, *Gandhi's Peace Army. The Shanti Sena and Unarmed Peacekeeping* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1996).

Sayed Waqar Ali Shah's study on the KK is an example of historical research that carefully scrutinises the complex background and context of the KK, the influence of Central Asian reform movements as well as the specific ethno-political developments of the North-West Frontier Province, in addition to its Congress affiliation. The study *Ethnicity, Islam and Nationalism (1999)* is also based on years of field work and interviews with surviving members of the KK and officials who chose to integrate themselves into Pakistani mainstream politics. The focus of his research is on the Pashtun notion of ethnicity in the context of Muslim politics and nationalism in the North-West Frontier Province. The study critically questions and appraises concepts of nationalism and ethnicity from Western scholarship against the specifics of Pashtun society, which has a very different history to nationalism in any other part of the world. It is also unique in evaluating and incorporating source material in Pashto, particularly first-hand memoirs, diaries and oral testimonies of KK associates and members.

Like Shah, Adeel Khan also points out to the inadequacies of an understanding of nationalism and ethnicity, which connects the development of nationalism to industrialisation and in particular to print capitalism.[258] Since Pashtun society was neither industrialised, nor even literate, nationalism cannot be explained through such a reference to Benedict Anderson's matrix. Both these studies by contemporary Pakistani historians serve to expand and critique Western concepts of what an ethnic movement is. Rather than a narrow understanding of ethnicity as a racial, cultural or linguistic group sense of belonging, they highlight the history of Pashtun politics through the KK as a materially grounded ethnic movement, having common issues and facing the same problems.[259]

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[258] Compare Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism.* 2nd edition (London: Verso, 1991) and Adeel Khan, *Politics of Identity. Ethnic Nationalism and the State in Pakistan* (New Delhi/London: Sage, 2005), 83 ff.

[259] Other studies on the KK in Pashto and Urdu were not accessible to me due to my lack of knowledge of the languages. I have used Shah, *Ethnicity, Islam and* (contd.)

Mukulika Banerjee has written another important study of the rank and file members of the KK using oral testimonies of surviving members in the 1990s, ethnographic observations and anthropological methods, provides significant insights into the grassroots of the movement, the problems and crises faced at personal levels for those who joined the KK and the undocumented activities of the army. The study also problematises the question of memory and historiography in a sensitive manner, shedding light on individual motivations and frustrations of unknown nonviolent soldiers and activists. The study however fails to critically assess the shift in the movement after partition to party politics in Pakistan and the painful and violent thwarting of the demands for Pashtun autonomy, since it views the end of the KK as the mark of successful nonviolent resistance. The relations between the KK and organisations such as the *Zalmai Pakhtun* were particularly problematic and complex, considering that the latter provided armed protection to the KK soldiers, thus fundamentally contradicting the notion of the unarmed Pashtun. The testimonies of the surviving KK could possibly have provided insight into understanding this surprising collaboration, but are unfortunately not specifically outlined by Banerjee in what is otherwise an excellent anthropological and historical account of the movement's grassroots.

Aijaz Ahmad has formulated a valuable critical appraisal of Khan's perspective on Islamic nationalism in South Asia as a counterpoint to that of Mohammad Ali Jinnah, in which he reviews Khan's articulation of Pashtun autonomy as a vision of a secular (i.e. multi-religious) and de-centralised nation within an undivided India.[260] This article focuses on the career and vision of Ghaffar Khan as opposed to other nationalist leaders and highlights in particular the ambivalent relationship between the KK and the Indian National Congress. Most importantly, Ahmad points out how Ghaffar Khan rooted his nationalist aspirations in a very local context and main-

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Nationalism as my main reference, since the study covers both Urdu as well as Pashto material.

[260] Ahmad, "Frontier Gandhi," 22–39.

tained a closeness to the real material lives of Pashtun peasants, which led to the transformation and emergence of an ethos of nonviolent resistance vastly different from the rest of the Indian civil disobedience movement.

While there has been some research on the KK from a historical, sociological and political perspective, the movement has not been studied in terms of cultural expression. It has also not been sufficiently appraised for its unique conceptualisation of nonviolent action. That is the task I have undertaken in this section. My approach to reading the research and source material on the KK is guided by Gayatri Spivak's question "Can the Subaltern Speak?"[261] and in particular the question she asks here of well-meaning postcolonial critics who inadvertently re-inscribe and re-formulate in their research the structures that they seek to dismantle. This can particularly happen when one is keen to rescue the Pashtuns from the stereotyping and negative portrayals of their colonial past or from the Indian narratives by throwing in more positive connotations and representations of the Pashtuns. By ironing out the complexities that are articulated in the stereotypes and the negative representations of the Pashtuns, a manner of over-praising one's subjects could creep into what is meant to be a scholarly analysis. Although this should be welcomed to a certain extent, in order to set right false assumptions and contrast patronising descriptions with a different perspective and with facts so far ignored or left unnoticed, caution must be taken to not assume that such a positive representation is the same as what the self-perception of the subaltern subject would be, nor that any critical research can provide a full explanation and understanding of the history of this movement.

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[261] Gayatri Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" Originally published in Carey Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, eds., *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (New York 1988), 271–313; reprinted in Peter Cain and Mark Harrison, eds., *Imperialism. Critical Concepts in Historical Studies.* Vol. III (New York: Routledge, 2001), 171–219.

4.2.3 Syncretism of the *Khudai Khidmatgar*

Membership to the KK was open primarily to Pashtuns, but not on a religious basis, for there were Hindu and Sikh recruits as well as Muslims.

> "If you wish to serve God, then he can become a Khudai Khidmatgar, who would serve the creatures of God. The Muslims are not the only creatures of God, but it includes Hindus, Sikhs, Christians and all the natives of this place – the people of this place."[262]

Although Islamic principles strongly influenced not only the leadership of the KK but also the kind of activities that it pursued, it was not an organisation dedicated to promoting a certain religious identity. In the context of the history of South and Central Asia, movements pledged to Islamic ideals cannot be seen separately from their socio-political environments. The syncretic nature of the movement is evident in the pledge taken by KK recruits, in which there is no mention of Muslim identity, although it was solemnised with the right hand placed on the Quran. Although they referred to themselves as the Servants of God and unhesitatingly located their working principles in an Islamic code of social conduct and engagement, the KK did not strive to unite all Muslims. It emphasised faith-based social commitment in equal measure to resisting political oppression. Khan was vocally opposed to the religious clergy wielding hegemonic social power in the Pashtun community:

> "… Whosoever be a tyrant – may it be a Musalman, a Hindu or an Englishman, you will have to oppose them. […] Islam has come into the world for the purpose of annihilating slavery from the world."[263]

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[262] Speech by Abdul Ghaffar Khan on 10 November 1931 at Dab near Mansehra Police Station at a meeting of the *Khudai Khidmatgar*, in P.S. Ramu, ed., *Momentous Speeches of Badshah Khan. Khudai Khidmatgar and National Movement* (New Delhi: SS Publishers, 1992), 57.
[263] Ramu, ed., *Momentous Speeches of Badshah Khan*, 57.

This statement was uttered in the course of a meeting of the KKs under the presidency of the religious head of the area, Maulvi Qamar Ali. To urge opposition and resistance to all tyrants, even if they were Muslim, amounts to claiming that the movement is prepared to oppose and fight against the religious clergy, if need be. That being said, several Frontier Ulema were KK members.[264] The syncretism of the KK was thus rooted in Islam whilst being critical of oppressive social practices justified under the name of Islam. This raises the question as to how the ruling conservative clergy were tolerant of the KK and did not raise objections to such a principled stance. Clearly, the uniting factor of the KK movement was that of Pashtun identity, and being Pashtun was not equivalent to being Muslim, although Islam strongly influenced Pashtun culture. The involvement of people belonging to different religions in the movement was driven by a practical logic: since the British colonisation was oppressive to all, there needs to be solidarity amongst Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims.[265]

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[264] As Shah has noted, the clergy in the Frontier Province were far more anti-imperialistic than their counterparts in Punjab, Sindh and other provinces. See Shah, *Ethnicity, Islam and Nationalism*, Introduction, xlvii.

[265] Speech on 14 October 1934, Raipur Railway Station, Ramu, ed., *Momentous Speeches of Badshah Khan*, 193–94:

> "My Hindu and Muslim Brethren, if you will go to the villages, you will see the real state of India. Villagers are dying of starvation […] Those very Hindus and Muslims were worth their weight in gold in olden time but they have been reduced to nothing through slavery and they cannot do anything. […] If Hindus and Muslims work together they are sure of getting complete independence."

Fig. 14:
Senior rank holders of the Khudai Khidmatgar with Abdul Ghaffar Khan (top row, centre)
Source: Easwaran, *Badshah Khan*, 102.

The organisation was impervious to the idea of Muslims as a separate political community and never saw Pashtunistan or the Land of the Pashtuns as a Muslim land. This gave the KK and particularly its leadership the reputation of being a lackey of the 'Hindu Raj'[266] amongst all pro-Pakistan nationalists. It also saw the organisation in an uncomfortable position with the Congress party during late 1946 and 1947, when the idea of Partition had gained popularity and many Congress leaders supported the move, although Abdul Ghaffar Khan bitterly opposed the Partition and the formation of a Pakistani state. The KK became unpopular with the Muslim League and the proponents of the 'two-nation theory'. Yet Khan refused to leave his homeland and migrate to India after Partition. When asked to join forces with the armed group *Lashkar* in Kashmir, the Pashtun leader Ghaffar Khan is reported to have said: "I am not a raider to go out plundering and annexing other peoples' lands."[267] So spreading the KK movement to other parts of India was not an aim at all. In spite of all its nationalist, i.e. anti-imperialist ethos, the KK was meant to be a local organisation, aiming at the complete self-sufficiency and autonomy of the Pashtun community, which included creating a sense of solidarity and dignity, as well as economic and administrative independence. Rather than clothing the political aim of autonomy in terms of Pashtun ethnicity, the

[266] A derogatory term for the Congress Party elite.
[267] Yunus, *Persons, Passions and Politics,* 69.

speeches of Khan primarily refer to the economic self-sufficiency and dignity of the Pashtuns:

> "Do you see the English? Their servants and their employees are selling their country and their religion in these days for a few pennies. They are destroying their country for a few pennies. I say that these Khudai Khidmatgar are noble, because they eat what is their own. They wear what is their own and with their own money."[268]

That the syncretism of the KK was closely linked to economic and material self-sufficiency is made evident through the example of the Pashtuns entering the sugar trade. At the time the KK was launched, there was a drive for Pashtuns to enter the sugar business, which was a trade dominated by the Hindus in the Province. Khan urged Pashtuns to open their own sugar co-operatives to increase their financial independence and was pejoratively labelled the Hindu Khan for this initiative, implying he as a respectable Khan (landowner) was becoming Hindu by urging Muslims to take on so-called Hindu professions. However, in the following years, many KK volunteers were recruited through these agricultural co-operatives and the sugar depots often served as meeting points and local organisational quarters for KK agitations.[269] This example demonstrates that the religious aspects of the movement were not solely spiritual; rather they cannot be seen in isolation from the socio-political circumstances in which its members lived. However, while the same socio-economic conditions led to the formation of violent clan-based groupings and anti-colonial guerrilla-like agitations, the KK developed its unique aesthetics of nonviolent action and political articulation. The syncretic approach to religiosity was an important aspect of this aesthetic.

Khan expresses in his autobiography the influence that not only Gandhi's religiosity had on him, but also the Sikh movement of the *Akali Gurdwara* agitation, some of whose activists he shared many

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[268] Speech on 10 November 1931, in Ramu, ed., *Momentous Speeches of Badshah Khan,* 60.
[269] Banerjee, *The Pathan Unarmed,* 55.

months with in the Dera Ghazi Khan jail in the period between 1921–1924.[270] Here he writes in admiration of the Sikh religion concluding that the Sikhs were more spirited and able to resist oppression, because unlike Muslims or Hindus, their prayers were composed in their mother tongue and not in Arabic or Sanskrit, so it made the religion accessible to the people. This aspect was particularly relevant to the KK, who as a resistance force, drew inspiration from the teachings of Islam, but usually adopting a very localised interpretation of Islamic theology, strongly influenced by Pashtun culture. This is typical of the syncretism of Islam in Central and South Asia.[271] Khan himself was well-versed in the Quran and Hadith, but was known as being extremely unorthodox in its interpretation. Right from the initial phase of the KK, cultural activities were organised to promote Pashto literature, drama and music. This again was different to Gandhi's approach of organising prayer meetings with readings from religious texts of different faiths. Khan was not a cleric, though he did give speeches after prayers at a mosque. Despite this delicate position, he chose not to enter into Muslim identity politics.

The authority that Abdul Ghaffar Khan possessed was both religious and political. As a landowner and a member of a prestigious family, he already possessed an advantageous and respectable position in Pashtun society, which partly explains how it was possible for him to start secular schools and invest in educational reform. His involvement in the nationalist struggle at the Congress gave him additional authority in Pashtun affairs. On the other hand, the fact that despite being a relatively wealthy Khan, he lived an austere life, associated himself with his people and rejected all luxuries and positions of power, including the Presidency of the Indian National Congress, gave him an aura of respectability that was not profane.

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[270] Abdul Ghaffar Khan, *My Life and Struggle. Autobiography as narrated to K.B. Narang.* Transl. Helen Bouman (New Delhi: Hind Pocket Books, 1969), 70 ff.
[271] For a summary of the syncretic and locally determined interpretation of Islam with particular reference to Central Asian cultures, to which today's Afghanistan would belong, see Edward Allworth, *Evading Reality. The Devices of 'Abdalrauf Fitrat, Modern Central Asian Reformist* (Leiden: Brill, 2002).

Khan was also referred to with several titles given to spiritual leaders, such as *Pir* (holy man), *Dervish* (sufi saint), *Faqir* (one who renounces the material world), *Wali* (seer) and *Buzurg* (respected elder).[272] In a sense the figure of Khan reflects the nature of the organisation he led, which was deeply rooted in Pashtun culture, and bore religious elements without being an explicitly religious group.

Unlike the Gandhian model of syncretism, which tried to level out differences between various religions, emphasising the principles shared by all, the history of the KK movement reveals that the dissimilarities and contradictions to other religions were left open. An anecdote related by Ghaffar Khan's biographer Tendulkar emphasises this point. During a visit to Gandhi's Ashram in Sewagram, Khan was asked whether he and his fellow Khidmatgars should be served meat, since the Ashram practised strict vegetarianism and it would have to be ordered from outside. Khan refused saying he did not wish to disrespect the rules of the commune and would eat whatever his hosts ate, but added that he only wished the Gandhians who visited the KK camps would reciprocate the gesture and also partake of their host's food and not insist on a pure vegetarian diet.[273] This tongue-in-cheek comment suggests that the openness of the KK was perceived as welcome as long as it did not make the religious or cultural differences between the Pashtuns and the Indians (particularly the Hindus) apparent. The moment differences were visibly positioned next to each other, as Ghaffar Khan tended to do, it led to mistrust and misgivings towards the KK from all sides.

The issue of meat eating is of particular significance when placing nonviolence in the Pashtun and Islamic context. Gandhian nonviolence was strictly vegetarian in tastes, and the logic was that any-

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[272] Banerjee, *The Pathan Unarmed,* 127ff.

[273] A similar incident occurred during a tenure in Dera Ghazi Khan Jail in 1922, about which Khan recalls:

> "I would rather go without [meat] than have it cooked in the general kitchen and injure my vegetarian brother's susceptibilities [...] But some of the Sikh and Hindu friends could not tolerate my taking meat. Without a tender regard for the feelings of one another, we are never going to achieve Hindu-Muslim unity." Tendulkar, *Abdul Ghaffar Khan,* 174.

one who pledges not to injure another in conflict could not possibly enjoy the meat of an animal. Meat eating was thus not congruous with a pledge to nonviolent politics according to the Gandhian worldview. Abdul Ghaffar Khan held a very different view on the subject. Eating meat was not only an essential part of Pashtun culture, but the code of *melmastia* (hospitality) also insisted on offering meat to guests as a sign of respect, implying that not accepting meat offered to you was equally a sign of disrespect to the host. There are several records of Khan expressing dismay or consternation at the double standards of those claiming purity on grounds of not eating meat. Khan was forthright in pointing to Brahmin and Hindu intolerance of Muslim sentiment regarding meat. He remembers an incident in Hazaribagh jail, when he offered a papaya to a fellow prison inmate, a Brahmin from Bihar who, Khan recalls,

> "would not cut the papaya with my knife, because I was a meat-eater. When I asked him why he was jailed, he replied innocently that he was involved in a murder case."[274]

However, while Khan critiqued Brahmin opposition to meat on grounds of purity and animal love, he was also equally blunt about the vast quantities of meat consumed by the British officers and their families. Many of his speeches return to the theme of hunger and poverty in Pashtun society and the connection this bore to the wasteful lifestyles of British officers: "Your children die of hunger and thirst while their children are enjoying everything they want."[275]

Leaving differences un-reconciled and opening out contradictions without assimilating them into a discourse of unanimity and harmonious blending is a recurring aspect of the performative practices of the nonviolent army KK. It points to a larger question of the theorisation of nonviolence in an Islamic society where – unlike some nonviolent movements influenced by Christianity – alleviating differences is not necessarily an ideal. The syncretism of the KK meant on the one hand that it was not an Islamic resistance force, since

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[274] Tendulkar, *Abdul Ghaffar Khan,* 162.
[275] Tendulkar, *Abdul Ghaffar Khan,* 78.

members of other religious groups were involved. However the tensions and complications involved in getting Muslim agricultural workers to enter into Hindu-dominated trade professions, or having the oath of membership solemnised on a Quran, demonstrates that the differences between religious practices were not simply put aside or ignored.

4.2.4 Pashtun socio-political history at the turn of the twentieth century

With the arrival of British rule and the annexation of the region bordering Afghanistan in the second half of the nineteenth century, the economic base of the tribal Pashtun society was disturbed.[276] The traditional land distribution system (known as *wesh*) and patterns of land ownership, with their related positions of social authority, were completely overturned. This gave way to the emergence of a small landed elite, patronised and appointed by the British, who controlled and administered the province on behalf of the British in return for favours and privileges. The ruling elite emerged as a group of powerful landlords who fought amongst each other and increased rivalry amongst their clans. Ignoring traditional tribal authorities such as the *jirga* and introducing their own manner of punishment and control, including levies, fines and even imprisonment, they gradually created a new culture of conflict and its own rules of settlement. This was a major change in comparison to the *jirga*'s traditional focus on limiting conflicts and blame, and the practice of resolving feuds without punishment.

Special regulations were introduced specially in the Frontier Province, to control the violence, social unrest and inter-clan fighting, which resulted from the changes in the land ownership system. These regulations, such as the 'Frontier Crimes Regulation Act' or the 'Tranquility Act', first introduced in 1872, sanctioned punishments and mass arrests without trial and legal support and placed

[276] Punjab was annexed in 1849 and the North-West Frontier Province was included as part of the Punjab.

heavy restrictions on the free assembly of Pashtuns. They were far stricter in the Frontier Province than in any other part of British India and directly limited civil liberties. The violence gradually spread and was not only limited to inter-clan fighting, but was also targeted towards the British. Once the religious leadership, the *ulema,* supported the agitations against the British, even though they did not openly speak out against the landowners, the region became increasingly militarised.

This very brief introduction to the socio-political background of the region in which the KK was founded is important, first in order to demonstrate that there was real, material oppression and discrimination in Pashtun society, with a complex colonial history and the emergence of an oppressive ruling elite that fostered inter-clan violence and feuds. Without taking these aspects of Pashtun history into consideration, it is easy to fall into the orientalist discourse of viewing Pashtun culture as one that inherently values brutality and revenge. Indian nationalist historiography itself has unfortunately played a big role in perpetuating this image of the brute Pashtun, whilst not acknowledging or mentioning their own role, the position of the Indian bourgeoisie, who were quite prepared to be a part of the structural and institutional violence in the Frontier Province, often eager to gain favours from the British.

Secondly, as Homi Bhabha informs us, the lines of binary opposition cannot be easily drawn between the colonisers and the colonised.[277] The socio-economic realities of the period only complicate and puncture such a historiographic account, where the oppressed and the oppressors are depicted as two distinct groups who encounter each other only in battle. The British ruled in the Pashtun provinces through rich and influential landlords. One of the most prestigious regiments in the British Indian Army, founded back in 1847, was the 'Corps of Guides' with significant recruitment of Pashtuns. Many of the activities of the KK were addressed to the Pashtuns

[277] See Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), in particular 85–92.

supporting the British rather than directly to the British officers. This must be kept in mind when contextualising the formation and public actions of a nonviolent army, which was characterised by moments of ambivalence, shifting allegiances and agendas and nowhere close to having a clearly identifiable enemy who needed to be conquered or attacked.

It is also significant that the KK itself was organised on a voluntary basis, with no paid members and rank holders. Historical documents do mention that members themselves contributed funds and resources, though usually in kind. As Ghaffar Khan is reported to have quipped to Congress worker and Gandhi's personal secretary Mahadev Desai: "Pashtuns will waste any amount of money over entertaining guests, but if you ask them to contribute any hard cash, they will not do so. They are temperamentally incapable of giving any cash."[278] That being said, in his study on the Muslim politics of the North-West Frontier, Shah reveals evidence of KK members contributing funds generously to the movement.[279] This economy based on solidarity and recognition of status must be kept in mind in reading the history of the movement, as it played an important role in creating the cohesion and collective engagement in the actions of the KK.

4.2.5 Negotiating the image of the nonviolent Pashtun

The appeal to take the material conditions and poverty of the Pashtun province into consideration does not at all imply that the violence and militarisation of Pashtun society was justified or can be condoned in any way. Yet the question arises as to what the real interests and opinions of the Pashtuns themselves were, which were certainly muted or distorted in the historiography of Pashtun society. Rather than revealing the long and almost entirely unpleasant history of the Pashtuns as a community living at the borders be-

[278] Tendulkar, *Abdul Ghaffar Khan*, 231.
[279] Shah, Ethnicity, Islam and Nationalism, 23–25.

tween different civilisations, repeatedly subject to attacks and threats to their survival, one finds instead a repeated reference to the same image: that of the rugged, bloodthirsty, fanatic, iconoclastic warriors dwelling in remote mountains combined with the picture of veiled (to be read as oppressed) women. Abdul Ghaffar Khan's biography by Tendulkar is one such example of an assessment of Pashtun culture, which in fact perpetuates stereotypical platitudes about the "nature of the Pathan"[280]:

> "The Pathan is a great lover of folk dances, music and poetry. He is fond of field sports, such as hawking, hunting with dogs and shooting. Even a child loves to carry a rifle. ...These men are hard as nails, live on little, carry nothing but a rifle and a few cartridges, a knife and a bit of food. Every man is a soldier."[281]

This prelude seems to represent a necessary, almost predictable narrative element in the story of the emergence of a nonviolent movement. Pashtuns must be larger than life, exotic and inaccessible and provide material for scary stories to keep children quiet. Such remarks are far from uncommon, they can be found in the majority of textual sources about the period, and are not seldom repeated even in self-representations of the Pashtuns.

The Pashtuns have been spoken about more than they have spoken themselves to the outside world. Thus they appear, as Spivak argues in her reading of Marx's class descriptions, as "dispersed and dislocated subjects", whose common ground is their hostile or "inimical confrontation" to the other.[282] As subalterns, economically or materially dispossessed, it was not possible to immediately forge a sense of collective agency, even when the Pashtuns did speak or represent (*vertreten*) or present (*darstellen*) themselves to others. Research *on* the Pashtuns must be careful to avoid the urge to represent and present the interests and agenda of the Pashtuns. But how did the Pashtuns represent/present themselves?

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[280] The term Pathan carries derogatory connotations.
[281] Tendulkar, *Abdul Ghaffar Khan,* 5.
[282] Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?", 176.

The Pashtun image was complex and ambivalent, combining on the one side the reputation of being a courageous, proud, loyal, hospitable culture, on the other side wild, volatile, criminal, revengeful. In his speeches and addresses to the KK recruits, Abdul Ghaffar Khan himself constantly referred to these images. But rather than launching attacks on the way Pashtuns have been depicted or stereotyped, Khan employs the same stereotypes to gain insights into Pashtun identity, although in a very ambivalent way. It is interesting to ask from the performative angle, in how far it was possible for the KK to irritate this image of the Pashtun. A close reading of the speeches, meeting reports and documents on the movement show that the issue of Pashtun identity was a very important part of the KK, and that the activities were not only directed at resisting an opponent, but also at changing the meanings given to Pashtun identity, by 'doing Pashto' differently. The adaptation of nonviolence as a sociopolitical instrument of action was also a process of negotiating the meaning of being Pashtun and what it means to belong to this community. This process requires the Other, in order to create a distinction and constitute the self as a negation of the Other, which included not only the obvious opponents, i.e. the British rulers, but also those aspects of Pashtun society which kept it in a state of stagnation and oppression.

So it was also possible for the image of the violent Pashtun to be turned around and attributed to the British instead:

> "The greater their oppressions, the more pleased I feel because a mad dog has a very brief life. They are on the point of becoming "rook" [*rabid*] because you have weakened the foundation of their Government. I prefer the mad and enraged Firangis [*white foreigners, the English*] because their bitings shall cause an awakening amongst us. Had the Firangi been gentle, this spirit and this love would never have sprung up among us."[283]

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[283] Speech on 01 December 1931, in Ramu, ed., *Momentous Speeches of Badshah Khan*, 88. My translation in square brackets.

Here Khan refers to the anxiety and absurdly extreme measures taken by the British to control the KK movement spreading to other provinces, the repressive laws enforced which prevented free assembly and outlawed any association other than those approved of by the ruling government. In a sense, the picture of the civilised white men being threatened by violent tribes is reversed with the image of the dog becoming rabid, faced with the actions of the KK, who conspicuously surrendered themselves for mass arrest, or who were trained to say "I am ashamed to hit back" when themselves beaten by police forces.

Mukulika Banerjee rightly points out that Pashtun violence was governed by an elaborate system of rules, which sanctioned violence in certain contexts and strictly disapproved of violent reactions in certain situations.[284] It is therefore wrong to say that practising restraint of anger as part of nonviolent training was something very new or alien to Pashtun culture. In fact restraint was written into the code of *badal* or revenge, which involved specific forms of revenge or attack under specific conditions and strictly prohibited other forms of violence. The challenge that the KK faced was to tap into the cultural understanding of restraint already present in Pashtun society, and deeply chiselled into the image of the crusading Pashtun, and channel this performative concept into a nonviolent direction.

A similar transformation of Pashtun values took place in the realm of the interpretation of religious principles. Pashtun society was deeply influenced by Islam, even while this took on different forms than in other Islamic cultures. Abdul Ghaffar Khan's initial socio-political activities concentrated on setting up reform schools, which would be less dominated by the clergy as most social institutions were at the time. The KK embodied the same reformist character, by not rejecting Islam, yet criticising the clergy's sole right to interpret and implement its principles. The references to the Quran and to egalitarian Islamic principles cannot be missed in Ghaffar Khan's

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[284] Banerjee, *The Pathan Unarmed,* 158.

speeches, however religiosity and the anchoring of Pashtun culture in Islam were directly connected to socio-political change and reform:

> "Our honour and country is being lost because God does not listen to the prayers of the impractical. God listens to that prayer which is offered by a practical person. Be a practical man and then pray. If you do not come out of the rooms of your Mosque, your prayers will not be granted. Could such prayers be granted, the Musalmans [*Muslims*] would not have been in this condition."[285]

Here the critique is addressed directly to the clergy, who partly sided with the landed elite and partly sought favours from the British and control over the schools and other social institutions and were therefore party to creating 'this condition' which Khan refers to. Critique is also addressed to the KK to 'do Pashto' differently, to continue to pray, but not to believe that prayer alone without corresponding action, would solve their problems, as indeed the clergy may have promised.

One of the common questions that Abdul Ghaffar Khan was asked, was how far the idea of nonviolence was coherent with or derivable from Islam. This issue presents another example of the KK's performative engagement with Pashtun identity. When Khan speaks of nonviolence, he usually borrows the phrase *ahimsa* from the Gandhian usage, which specifically means non-injury. However, the term used more frequently is *sabr*, meaning patience, endurance or self-restraint. This religious term has a vast range of connotations, referring to patient individual suffering of hardships without complaint, or enduring false accusations and trouble caused by others, or steadfastness in pursuing an Islamic way of life and mission.

The way in which Khan uses the notion of patience (*sabr*) is probably conceptually the closest to nonviolence.

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[285] Speech on 09 December 1931 at a roadside meeting of the KK near Dhodial, audience estimated at 400–500, including 50–60 KK members, in Ramu, ed., *Momentous Speeches of Badshah Khan*, 99. My translation in square brackets.

> "Our work is to observe patience, and it is such a weapon that even the guns, machine guns, aeroplanes and the armies cannot contest with. This is not a new weapon, it is of the time of the Holy Prophet."[286]

The concept is imbued with potency and strength and adapted as a proactive idea, therefore not just limited to non-injury of others, although it includes the idea of self-restraint and control of aggression. This also suggests a new or better form of masculinity, whereas traditionally, patience as in forbearance is a feminine attribute. Most significantly, *sabr* is directly interpreted as a weapon, as sanctioned by Islam, and as the instrument fit to use against the colonial power's weapons. This is in clear distinction to the understanding of *sabr* as tolerating or putting up with injustice and unwarranted suffering.

Self-restraint and self-control in the face of aggression is also interestingly written into the discourse of trained bodily discipline, which then draws the link to military training. For a people historically marked as primitive, excessive and uncontrollably violent, the show of discipline and control itself is a way of protesting against the stereotypes and quasi-rationalisations of repressions against them.[287] The innovation of the training camps of the KK lies in the fact that the form of physical training was in fact embedded in a locally understood concept of self-restraint, even though it was discursively compared to the efficacious army training. In this, the KK incorporated various seemingly contradictory elements, allowing new dispositions to emerge from the matrix of possibilities, not only at a discursive level (i.e. what meaning the camps were given, how they were symbolised, how they were perceived by outsiders), but

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[286] Speech on 14 December 1931 in Shah Nazir Khel Mosque at Swabi, in Ramu, ed., *Momentous Speeches of Badshah Khan,* 139.

[287] Susan Leigh Foster points out in a similar vein how the protestors at segregated lunch counters in the US used their bodies in such a way that stunned and irritated the stereotypical perceptions of the blacks as primitive and excessive. Thus their protests were not just ideological or for the sake of achieving desegregation at restaurants. The way they used their bodies was a register of the physical relationship to the oppression they suffered. See Foster, "Choreographies of Protest," 400ff.

primarily at the level of bodily action (i.e. how they trained for nonviolent intervention, what they did with their selves in order to rehearse their responses when faced by adversaries).

Ghaffar Khan's speeches are repetitive, the language used is very simple, rustical and direct, using recurring themes and phrases. On the one hand, he repeatedly urges the Pashtuns to be patient, to take the oath that "if somebody puts them to disgrace, they would not try to do the same."[288] On the other hand, the Pashtuns are invited to "get up and gird up their loins"[289], to do service (*khidmat*) to their people, to drive out the white foreigners (*firangis*) and to display pride (*ghairat*). All these phrases are indicative of a call to active engagement and intervention.

> "No other nation has the right to utilise the treasures of this country and the income thereof. The Firangi has no right to move about in motor cars, to eat five times a day, to eat biscuits, cakes, kebab, to drink wine and make revelry when we be dying of hunger and be naked out of poverty. The Firangi has no right to reside in bungalows when we be living in huts and cattle sheds."[290]

The call for patience and restraint is combined with the call for proactive resistance to oppression and injustice. Here again there is an interplay of seemingly contradictory ideas, all of which are present in some form in defining different layers of Pashtun identity, and these are transformed and translated into the context of nonviolent action.

Apart from this, nonviolence in the form of *sabr*, the exercise of judicious restraint and bravely holding back in the face of pressure and oppression, is translated back into the context of fighting and waging war.

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[288] Speech on 01 December 1931, in Ramu, ed., *Momentous Speeches of Badshah Khan*, 101.
[289] Speech on 15 December 1931 in Torlandi, in Ramu, ed., *Momentous Speeches of Badshah Khan,* 144.
[290] Speech on 01 December 1931, in Ramu, ed., *Momentous Speeches of Badshah Khan,* 102.

> "It is quite wrong to think there was a single method of fighting. There were two systems of waging wars. One of the methods is this which you see nowadays – the system of battles and oppressive actions. There is another method too – of which the old world was ignorant. Let the Muslims see their own history and they will find that this battle of nonviolence is not a new one."[291]

The KK thus sought recognition for nonviolence to be recognised as a system of waging war, as a method of fighting. In doing so, it asserted that this was rooted in Pashtun tradition and in Islamic principles, thus seeking religious and cultural legitimisation and authority to negotiate a new performative interpretation of Pashtun identity, of what it meant to 'do Pashto'.

4.2.6 The oath of the *Khudai Khidmatgar*

Every soldier who joined the army took the following oath:

> "I am a Khudai Khidmatgar (Servant of God); and as God needs no service, but serving his creation is serving him, I promise to serve humanity in the name of God.
> I promise to refrain from violence and from taking revenge.
> I promise to forgive those who oppress me or treat me with cruelty.
> I promise to refrain from taking part in feuds and quarrels and from creating enmity.
> I promise to treat every Pashtun as my brother and friend.
> I promise to refrain from antisocial customs and practices.
> I promise to live a simple life, to practice virtue and to refrain from evil.
> I promise to practice good manners and good behaviour and not to lead a life of idleness.
> I promise to devote at least two hours a day to social work."[292]

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[291] Speech on 10 November 1931, in Ramu, ed., *Momentous Speeches of Badshah Khan,* 64.
[292] This particular version is quoted from the English translation of Khan's autobiography, Khan, *My Life and Struggle,* 97.

The oath itself is quoted in several different versions, an indication that there was no orthodoxy in the actual terms of membership, but a sense of inclusiveness, which allowed all who understood the general message of the movement to join its cadres.[293] There is in fact no mention even of India or national independence. What united the KK soldiers was clearly a very locally rooted Pashtun identity, defined by what Pashtuns do rather than how they are born.

What is striking in this oath is that practically every promise of nonviolent action contains an inherent reference to the violent act, to that which it seeks to overcome. So while Abdul Ghaffar Khan sought to counter the image of a Pashtun as a revengeful warrior, the oath to 'refrain from violence and taking revenge' in fact emphasises that revengefulness was a characteristic associated with a Pashtun. Anyone who promises to refrain from 'antisocial customs and practices' obviously has a clear idea of what these practices are and indeed acknowledges that they still exist. A promise to not lead an idle life is an indication of the existing attitude or practice of not doing so until this point. The explicit negation and rejection of violence seems to serve as an immunisation against these acts of violence so closely associated with and attributed to Pashtun culture. It is not surprising that the brief period between 1929 and 1948, during which *Khudai Khidmatgar* ideology influenced mainstream

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[293] Shah quotes a significantly different version translated from the Pashto, referring to Peshawar Police Archive files, see Shah, *Ethnicity, Islam and Nationalism,* 44, note 38:

"I call on God as a witness, and solemnly declare on oath that I will abide by the following principles:
1. With sincerity and faith, I offer my name for Khudai Khidmatgarship.
2. I will sacrifice my wealth, comfort and self in the service of my nation and for the liberation of my country.
3. I will never have *'para jamba*' (party feeling), enmity with or wilfully oppose anybody; and I shall help the oppressed against the oppressor.
4. I will not become a member of any other rival party not will I give security or apologise during the fight.
5. I will always obey every lawful order of every officer of mine.
6, I will always abide by the principle of nonviolence.
7. I will serve all human beings alike, and my goal will be the attainment of the freedom of my country and my religion.
8. I will always perform good and noble deeds.
9. All my efforts will be directed to seeking the will of God and not towards mere show or becoming an office-holder."

Pashtun politics is often described as the "outbreak of nonviolence" in a society notorious for its violence.[294] There is a sense of the immense difficulty for the Pashtuns to break out of their acute subaltern position. The stereotypes and representations of their society were so difficult to shun away and it was almost unthinkable to counter these stereotypes with a different image of the Pashtun, because they reached deep into their own self-perception. It was not only the orientalist view of the Pashtun, but also that of the Indian bourgeoisie itself, which imposed on this frontier society an identity it was nearly impossible to refute. Saying no to this set of perceptions and value systems amounted to negating that which is truly Pashtun. But the negation was the first step in re-defining what it meant to be Pashtun, i.e. to 'do Pashto'. It could only be done within or from the given value system, by exploring the possibilities of the code of Pashtun conduct, referred to as *Pashtunwali*. The oath as a classic example of a performative utterance, was thus one step towards such a constitutive act of Pashtun identity.

Every line of the oath refers to one element of *Pashtunwali*, a traditional code of behaviour consisting of five tenets, based on the notion of integrity (*nang*). The oath of refraining from revenge or of avoiding entering into feuds and family rivalries refers to the notion of *badal*, the exchange of challenge and violence in the face of insult or injury. While the oath of the KK negates the idea of *badal* or bloody revenge, it seeks to use the notion of *badal* to generate other manners of action, which would still allow for the code of *Pashtunwali* to be respected, whilst in fact completely questioning its tenets. The oath of forgiveness and of treating every Pashtun as a friend, refers to the notion of *nanawatai*, or giving asylum to anyone who asks for it. While the code of *nanawatai* can be – and of course has been – interpreted as a legitimation for violence against the other in order to protect one's own, the KK oath turns this around and calls for a new reading of *nanawatai*. Similarly the promises of living a simple life, practicing virtue and good manners and not leading a life of idleness, directly refers to the tenets of *melmastia* and *purdah*,

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[294] Banerjee, *The Pathan Unarmed,* 11.

the notions of hospitality, the honourable use of material goods, and the honourable organisation of domestic life. Although these notions have been ridden with violent associations, such as the domestication of women, the wastage of resources and exploitation of the poor in order to enjoy wealth and boast of hospitality, the oath of the KKs rejects this idea while attempting to attach different connotations to *melmastia* and *purdah*. Even the final statement of the oath, which is the most concrete statement and most direct instruction in the entire oath: to spend at least two hours every day in voluntary social work, is a straight reference to the *Pashtunwali* idea of *jirga,* the honourable arrangement of public affairs, a term also used in reference to the council of elders to help settle conflicts. It also takes up the Islamic tenet of service to the community, *Islahi*, in a secular sense, i.e. without reference to its religious rewards.

The oath thus seeks to establish a new sense of Pashtun identity, using and deriving legitimacy from existing elements of Pashtun culture. The concepts of *Pashtunwali* or ways of 'doing Pashto', are essential in helping us understand the idea of nonviolence which was embodied in the army of the KK. To speak with Bourdieu, I would like to suggest that they form part of the habitus, "a system of lasting, transposable dispositions, which function as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations and actions,"[295] out of which arose on the one side the revengeful Pashtun culture and on the other side led to the formation of the first nonviolent army in history. So while the activities and ideology of the KK seem to be far away from the code of revenge and honour, they were paradoxically performed in accordance with these codes. In a sense, nonviolence and violent action emerged from the same habitus. Their difference lies in their performativity, in the way social identity and meaning are enacted. I therefore do not believe, as Gandhi for instance suggested, that it was a 'miracle', that the Pashtuns, of all peoples, could adopt nonviolence. A close analysis of the writings and material available on

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[295] Pierre Bourdieu, ed., *Outline of a Theory of Practice.* Transl. Richard Nice. Cambridge Studies in Social Anthropology 16 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 82.

the KK makes it evident that the idea of a nonviolent Pashtun was very close to the image of the warrior Pashtun. The core concept in *Pashtunwali*, from which the various elements emerged, is known as *nang*, best translated as integrity. It is the very same idea of *nang* which generates the image of an unarmed Pashtun soldier as it does an armed Pashtun warrior. The cultural notion of *nang* serves as the matrix or a transposable disposition, which on the one side forms the Pashtuns as a martial race and on the other side made it possible for tens of thousands of recruits to join a civil service as volunteers and dedicate themselves to socio-political activities for nearly two decades. Further, the KK were keenly aware of how they were perceived, yet engaged with these perceptions and misconceptions in an active way.

The model of nonviolent action developed by Abdul Ghaffar Khan and others in the army of the KK is different from the nonviolence of Gandhi, who is often suggested as being the mentor and inspiring model to Khan. While Abdul Ghaffar Khan may indeed have admired and respected Gandhi as an individual and professed affiliation to his political goals, the way he interpreted nonviolence within his own Pashtun social set-up could hardly have been more different from Gandhi. So it is in fact inappropriate and patronising to refer to Abdul Ghaffar Khan as the 'Frontier Gandhi', as much of Indian nationalist historiography is inclined to do. Khan's nonviolence was closely connected to Islamic principles of service to humanity and to surrendering oneself to a greater cause, as well as to uniquely Pashtun concepts of integrity, citizenship and social cohesion.[296]

This however becomes evident only when one takes a closer look at the aesthetics of Pashtun nonviolence, the form as opposed to the mere content of rejecting violence. Unfortunately, most of the archival material on the *Khudai Khidmatgar* was systematically destroyed by the British and later on by Pakistani authorities following independence and Partition. One of the only remaining historical

[296] See Shah, *Ethnicity, Islam and Nationalism,* 45, reference 42.

sources – apart from the few surviving KK soldiers in their late years – is the newspaper or pamphlet *Pakhtun*, from which some of the speeches of Ghaffar Khan and other KK leaders have been preserved.

4.2.7 Militancy of an unarmed army

What characterised the KK as an army? The aim of the KK was independence from British domination and the establishment of self-governance, however its activities and philosophy strove towards a broader reform of Pashtun society and to a re-definition of what it meant to be Pashtun, or, as one would say in the local dialect, what it meant 'to do Pashto'. There were, broadly speaking, two wings to the movement, military and social, each with a different set-up and division of roles and tasks. Like most other armies, the KK was hierarchically organised, using a combination of both the traditional model of the *jirga* with local village elders as well as colonial military structures with posts such as that of lieutenant, colonel, general, etc. And since most of the recruits of the army were from the grassroots, i.e. peasants and landed or even landless labourers, there were committees and branches in every village, sub-district and so on. The KK employed the vocabulary of the military as well as several performative practices that are associated with armed forces, in order to promote a form of political action that ironically distanced itself from all military or guerrilla actions, even while it conspicuously alluded to them. The distinction to the military or to guerrilla warfare was not limited to the absence of weapons alone. It was in the movement's aims, in its style of communal organisation and mobilisation, as well as the visibility of the soldiers and the overtness of their actions. It was possible for a recruit to leave, i.e. desert the army, on principled grounds. One version of the oath of the KK carries the line "I shall always obey every lawful order of every officer of mine,"[297] which apparently even in the Pashto version lends

[297] Quoted in Shah, *Ethnicity, Islam and Nationalism,* 44; see also Sebastian Niesar, "Die Armee gewaltloser Soldaten. Abdul Ghaffar Khan und seine 'Rothemden'," *Informationsstelle Militarisierung - IMI-Analyse* No. 23 (August 2005), 2.

itself to a flexible interpretation of what is considered to be a "lawful order". Cases of KK members leaving the organisation are reported in Banerjee's study, as well as occasionally in Khan's autobiography.[298] While it was probably not a simple process, the fact that it was possible emphasises another important difference to service in a conventional army.

It is worth noting that although the organisation of the *Khudai Khidmatgar* was referred to as an army, particularly because of the obvious presence of the KK members in their uniforms, the name itself does not suggest that it was an army. *Khidmatgar* is not soldier, but servant, or strictly speaking, one who does service to the community. As a social reform organisation, with voluntary membership, the closest association to the military would perhaps be that of the Salvation Army, which also has religious underpinnings and is reform and relief-oriented, hierarchically organised and run as a charitable body. The Salvation Army was active in the Indian subcontinent right from the 1920s, however not in the Frontier Province. It is unlikely that Khan found inspiration from the Salvation Army in setting up the KK, because the organisation was part of the British presence and outward-oriented as a helping agency, i.e. not focused on self-reform. However, the emphasis on physical discipline, callisthenics, hygiene, sanitation and social work, guided by religious motives, are elements common to both organisations. Yet while these activities characterised the low-key events and day-to-day organisation of the KK, it is the acts of protest, resistance and civil disobedience that made the KK into a movement, which further differentiates it from the Salvation Army.

The British authorities saw no similarity between the KK and the Salvation Army. The one group they were consistently associated with, was the Bolsheviks. The British forces reacted to the KK using a combination of legal restrictions, subtler counter-propaganda, arrests and direct clampdown on activists. Demonstrators were fired

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[298] Compare Banerjee, *The Pathan Unarmed*, 113 and Khan, *My Life and Struggle*, 110.

at, KK meeting places were burnt down, travel within the Frontier Province was severely limited. Protestors were rounded up and asked to put their thumbprints on a declaration stating they were not a "Red Shirt".[299] In a communiqué issued to the local chiefs and tribal leaders, dated 10 May 1930, the Chief Commissioner urges the local leaders not to trust the KK:

> "Now it is time for you to help the Government which has ever been benevolent to you and has done justice towards you. What help can you render to the Government? You must prevent the Congress volunteers, wearing red jackets, from entering your villages. They call themselves *Khudai Khidmatgars*, Servants of God. But in reality, they are servants of Gandhi. They wear the dress of Bolsheviks and they are nothing but Bolsheviks. They will create the same atmosphere as you have heard in Bolshevik domination."[300]

This framing of the KK acknowledges (though indirectly) that the volunteers were engaging in political activities and were not merely a charitable social welfare organisation. However, the comparison to the Bolsheviks (the term is likely to have been used as a synonym for Communists) helped to generate associations and linkages that did not necessarily increase the credibility of the British as a benevolent government. This is visible in the series of responses to the communiqué in the speeches of Ghaffar Khan. While the connection to the Bolsheviks is denied, the comparison actually helps to bolster the image of the KK as an autonomously co-ordinated resistance force. The reference to being an army, a community of fighters, an 'army of God' (in Pashto*: Khuda'i fauj*) is visible in all these phases as well as in the oral testimonies of the surviving KK members. The militant allusion is also often present in Abdul Ghaffar Khan's speeches.

> "Some people think that this red dress is the uniform of

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[299] Since KK members dyed their clothes dark brown or red, they were often referred to as "Red Shirts".
[300] Quoted in Tendulkar, *Abdul Ghaffar Khan,* 73.

> the Bolsheviks. The uniform of the Bolsheviks is not red. It is the colour of their flag which is red. That rumour has been spread by the English ... The Red Shirts wear red merely as a mark so that wherever they go the people may be able to distinguish them as belonging to the Army of God."[301]

There is a manner of speaking about the identity of the KK by first invoking false associations, in order to then juxtapose this with a sense of belonging to a common cause. As Ghaffar Khan begins by saying what the KK is not, he is placing this new conception of an 'army of God' in opposition to both the British and to their existing enemies, the Bolsheviks. But rather than emphasise the differences of the KK to the other kinds of armies, Khan uses a mode of hyphenating Pashtun identity with that of other armies and groups, speaking simultaneously of both similarities and dissimilarities, combining and comparing, while at the same time separating and distancing. He engages in dialectical response rather than just condemning allegations. The figure of the hyphen expresses one aspect of the aesthetic of nonviolent response, in that it marks a break between two subjects without denying the existence of either. It is not a figure of eradication or substitution, but one of contradiction by way of addition and contrast.[302]

It is significant that the counter-propaganda of the British about the KK alluded to the Bolsheviks in order to describe the militancy of the Pashtuns. Although this is partly due to the imagery of the red uniforms, which to the British were evocative of the Communists, the references to the Pashtuns assuming 'para-military tendencies' and setting up 'military formations and camps' like the Bolsheviks abounds in British Government correspondence at the time. The Bolsheviks were contemporaries of the KK in another part of the world. They were also a hierarchically, centrally organised party with an internationalist approach to politics and a grassroots view

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[301] Speech on 15 December 1931, in Ramu, ed., *Momentous Speeches of Badshah Khan,* 145.
[302] I will expand on this idea in Section 4.2.10.

of power-sharing and opposition to unfair distribution of wealth and resources; they too were a political formation, in which the charisma of the leaders (Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin) played an important role in the development of the movement. Ideologically speaking, the KK's demands were not very far away from the Bolsheviks' fight to overthrow traditional Russian statehood and the authority of the Orthodoxy. In terms of the forms of resistance, agitation and organisation and of course the cultural specificities of the movements, though, the differences are apparent. However, it is interesting that in Khan's speeches, the Bolsheviks were neither positioned as the Other, nor were they clearly mentioned as allies or sympathisers.

Khan very cleverly reverses the allegations of fear and danger by playing with the signification of the colour red:

> "They want to frighten you Indians with the idea that we are Bolsheviks, you also know that they want to frighten the British because the English race is very much afraid of red. You might have occasionally seen red signals on the crossings. Red signifies danger to the Englishmen. The railway train stops immediately when it notices a red flag. You may have noticed that whenever the road is under repair or whenever there is danger, a red lamp is fixed."[303]

Rather than outrightly acknowledging or denying any sympathy to the Bolsheviks, the focus is on how both the KK and the Bolsheviks are perceived by the British, how this can be read as a deeper fear in the British psyche. Ridiculing the comparison between the two groups therefore becomes a way to challenge and reverse the false perceptions and accusations by the British.

The wearing of bright red uniforms very similar to the style of the British army is another form of subversive attack used by the KK. Firstly the uniforms vastly increased the visibility of the KK, particularly in contrast to the traditional white or grey dress of the Pashtuns. Visibility is a characteristic of nonviolent resistance, as opposed to guerrilla warfare, for instance, which operates using se-

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[303] quoted in Ramu, ed., *Momentous Speeches of Badshah Khan,* 228.

crecy and stealth, furtively attacking opponents and excelling in quick escape. Guerrilla-type of attacks, petty thefts and other forms of hidden, routine or "minor resistance", as described by Scott in his study of peasant resistance, were, no doubt, very common in the Frontier Province as well.[304] The idea of the KK was, however, to establish a visible and easily identifiable presence of unarmed civilian guards, who would prevent clashes between rival factions and confront the opponents by refusing to obey their orders and refusing to go away. One incident narrated by Khan in his autobiography humorously sheds light on the way this method of throwing oneself into the captor's hands actually worked. During a raid by British officers in Utmanzai, where the office of the KK was set afire and several KK members were arrested, the Deputy Commissioner of Police went around town in search of any KKs, shouting "Are there any more Red Shirts here?" One of the local leaders (who was not even enlisted as a member of the KK) is said to have run back home, dipped his shirt and that of his domestic helpers into a bucket of water with red colouring and then run back to where the Commissioner was, along with his assistants, all in dripping wet clothes, courting arrest: "Yes, here we are, some more Red Shirts!"[305]

Yet it is not just the idea of being more visible that the KK adopted the uniforms. In a unique way, the uniform came to symbolise the newfound Pashtun creed of nonviolence. The red colour of their uniforms was in fact somewhere in between the colour of the colonial military establishment at the time and the colour of the Bolshevik flag. By having a band of peasants usurping the symbols and practices of the ruling power, the KK performed nonviolence in a sort of subversive way. While the Imperial Army had red military uniforms supplied to them from the Lancaster textile mills, the army of the Pashtuns also adopted the same style of uniform, substituting the

[304] See James Scott, *Weapons of the Weak,* 290ff.
[305] Khan, *My Life and Struggle,* 108.

British material with hand-spun cloth instead and re-fashioning the trousers to fit the Pashtun traditional dress code.[306]

> "You should give up enmities and parties. If you cannot do so, do not wear Red Clothes, because, in this way, no difference would remain between a Red Shirt and a White Shirt. If you cannot follow these principles, then be careful not to defame us. This is God's Army – that is Firangi's Army. Everybody can be a Government servant be he honest or dishonest, of good or bad character; but everybody cannot join God's army [...] Here, only he can join who has good morals, who may give comfort to the people, restore peace in the world and liberate the oppressed from the tyrants."[307]

By explicitly naming the KK as an army and not just as a social welfare organisation or as a political party, Ghaffar Khan makes several points. Firstly it serves to make a distinction from the British army and critique the Indians serving in the British legions. This is also implicit in the distinction between a Servant of God, i.e. a *Khudai Khidmatgar* on the one hand, and a 'Government Servant', i.e. a servant of the British military on the other. It is significant that the critique of the military is open in the KK, despite the fact that (or precisely due to the fact that) the organisation itself mimicked or imitated and adopted several military practices. Yet in the KK, the critique of violence and the assertion of an ethics of nonviolent politics required the transformation of the institutions of violence just as much as it did the creation of new forms of nonviolent action.

Secondly, despite the rejection of military values of violence and brutality, the self-description of the KK as an army is an attempt to increase the value and recognition of a grouping, to make it seem as if the KK is just as strong as any other army. Yet, this is done without considering the armed forces to be any standard for judging the

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[306] Shah believes that members usually dyed their ordinary clothes with cheap locally manufactured dye, since special uniforms were not designed. See Shah, *Ethnicity, Islam and Nationalism,* 28.
[307] Speech on 09 December 1931, in Ramu, ed., *Momentous Speeches of Badshah Khan*, 101.

strength of a resistance force. Moreover, the standards are transformed and replaced with principles of nonviolent action. Membership to the KK is seen as an achievement of personal courage and strength. This is similar to the recognition and honour that military recruits are given.

It is interesting to note that the pacifism of the KK was not defined by a total rejection of anything related to violent institutions, a characteristic of many nonviolent movements. Moreover ideas such as that of a 'soldier' or a 'fighter' were constituted with an entirely different moral authority as well as a new mode of acting. This seems like a banal step, but the practice of setting up, conducting or being a soldier or member of a nonviolent army, reveals that the form of nonviolent action is absolutely essential to and a defining moment in the constitution of a nonviolent ideology. The critique of the military was performed through a re-definition of what it means to be a fighter, of what it means to sign up for combat. It is an elaborate mimetic statement, referring to earlier political orders as well as imagining new orders through performative acts. I would therefore like to read the emergence of the *Khudai Khidmatgar* army as a moment of critique and comment on the violence that an army perpetrates, but more importantly as a constitutive moment of nonviolence, not as a principle but as a practice, which refers to, combines and mixes various seemingly incongruent positions and worldviews.

Thirdly, the bolstering of nonviolent actions in a military manner also shows that for the *Khudai Khidmatgar*, nonviolence was not a matter of individual soul-searching and achievement, but an ideal and a principle for the entire community, requiring a collective effort. This is another reason why I believe the Pashtun interpretation of nonviolence is very different from the individualistic approach that Gandhi adopted. The appeal to the 'we', to a solidarity in effort also stems from a shared suffering and experience of discrimination, which gave the Pashtuns a certain vulnerability and sense of precariousness of human life.

The openness inherent in the form of nonviolent action is however clearly different to the performativity of the military. The military is

a prime example of a closed institution that has its own etiquettes, rituals, performative codes and characteristics. If one were to restrict the analysis of military actions as opposed to civilian nonviolent actions merely to an analysis of their political motivations, argumentation, norms and organisational structures, it might get increasingly difficult to draw the boundary line between the two. After all, in their own view, the military also aims and claims to establish peace, justice, stability, security and freedom. However, the dramaturgy of military action is predictable, calculated and closed.[308] There are no gaps and fissures here, which invite responses or are merely suggestive, indeed there is not much room for different types of interpretation of military action, apart from ideological differences. The British military which opened fire and attacked picketers and KK demonstrators acted as a single homogenous unit which followed orders and did what was expected, systematically and thoroughly.

Importance is given in the KK to the notion of *khidmat*, or service, to the community or to a cause greater than oneself, and this is crucial to the conceptualisation and enactment of a nonviolent army. To speak with Bourdieu, the figure of the soldier in an army is symbolically invested or re-invested with the idea of service to a larger cause, without however demoting the individual to merely a cog in a large wheel. When Abdul Ghaffar Khan stated: "I am only a soldier […] do not make a leader of me,"[309] in response to being asked to address a meeting, he invests the notion of the soldier with a very different meaning and set of possibilities than is otherwise suggested when referring to a recruit of a militarised unit.

Apart from the figure of the 'Red Shirts', the use of the term *Khidmatgar* also describes a re-writing and punctuation of the colonial vocabulary. In government contracts or documents, it was used to denote on the one hand 'servant', i.e. lower-class menial or domestic labourers as well as 'civil servant', usually upper or middle class

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[308] Note: the way military action is organised, is predictable, *not* its outcomes.
[309] Tendulkar, *Abdul Ghaffar Khan,* 94.

English-educated administrators. The term also referred to 'servicemen', i.e. army recruits. In calling the nonviolent resisters by the same name as those who co-operated with the colonisers, the KK appropriated a social role, giving it a completely different connotation. The KK soldiers were all volunteers, they in fact paid a nominal fee for enrolment and regularly contributed funds in cash or in kind from their own savings and collected donations from wealthier Pashtuns in the area to pay for the running of the camps and the activities of the movement. Donating money or supplies for a charitable cause was a practice located in Islam (*zakat* or tithing), but the use of the funds was obviously for political purposes. Being independent of the ruling powers as well as of the local elite, the economic structure of the KK empowered the notion of the servant, *khidmatgar*, both as a figure of socio-political action (service of the people) as well as made more noble in religious terms (servant of God).

The concept of the servant or serviceman being devoted to a cause larger than him/herself is common to both the military as well as a religious community. Like the military, KK serviceman were required to voluntarily subordinate themselves and obey orders without question; however being a voluntary association, they were theoretically allowed to leave without punishment. The social and peer pressure to stay in the movement was, however, extremely high, in spite of the repressive persecution by the British. Khan's autobiography takes note of the social pressure, particularly on young men, to continue with the KK despite torture and imprisonment.

> "Haji Shah Nawaz Khan, from our village, who was in prison with us, furnished security and thus got himself released. When he returned home, everyone sneered at him, and gave him a cold shoulder. He became so ashamed of himself that he took his own life."[310]

[310] Khan, *My Life and Struggle,* 110.

Such incidents indicate that membership to the KK was not without its dangers. Nonviolent resistance was a business of life and death, and not one of comfortable, low-risk activism, which is what it is often assumed to be. The line between consent and coercion in maintaining membership of the army is rather thin. Even if there were no authorities to persecute someone for desertion from military service, families and the community at large placed immense pressure to maintain the momentum of the KK agitations. This aspect is more akin to the mechanisms of a religious community, where sanctions are often indirect and subtle. One can of course legitimately ask whether this sort of pressure was indeed nonviolent, if it forced someone doubtful of the cause to take such an extreme step as commit suicide. Yet the example shows that there was a dialectical relation to violence in the performance of a nonviolent army and this is, I believe, a key aspect of the aesthetics of nonviolent resistance. Over and above rejecting violence and generating a culture of conflict radically different from violent escalation, there is a closeness to violent acts, similar to the way a hyphen separates two words as well as brings them together.

Not all that the nonviolent force did had to be completely different from the actions of its opponents. One sometimes gets the impression that the British army in fact set the discursive terms or base for making possible the actions of its resisters. The militancy of the KK, when referred to as the army of God, directly refers to the British Army even while distancing itself from it.

> "... there seems to be no reason why the army of God, who is greatest of all, should not wear a uniform when there is a uniform for the English Army. They are the army of God and not riff raff."[311]

The KK expresses a kind of performativity that is different from the act of mimicking the colonial army, although it takes off from the standards set by the army. At first glance, it seems, like Bernhard

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[311] Speech on 15 December 1931, in Ramu, ed., *Momentous Speeches of Badshah Khan*, 145.

Cohn suggests, that the British idiom set the terms of discourse of the oppositional forces.[312] However, the reference to the British political idiom is just one side of the coin. Apart from establishing the credentials of the Pashtuns as being just as capable of militant organisation as the British, there is a sense of productive self-affirmation that is written into this claim to superiority. In order to show what 'riff-raff' is, an alternative needs to be performed, enacted, actually established in material terms. The performative act in this is doing something and consciously signifying something else. Calling the organisation an army is a process of re-signification, but however retaining and placing it in contrast to, resistance to 'the army', i.e. the armed forces. It is obvious that the army is so openly associated with weapons and violence and destruction, that it is seemingly impossible to rid the institution of this meaning to militancy. But performing one's acts of resistance as an army does not attempt to deny that its acts will always be seen against the backdrop of not only the British armed forces but the armed factions and clan fighting of the Pashtuns. And this itself allows certain moments and acts to be marked as obviously different. Wearing uniforms, marching, drilling, offering the civilian population a security force in times of social unrest, organising members under the leadership of appointed captains (*Kiptaan*), colonels (*Karnail*), generals (*Jarnail*) and a Commander-in-Chief (*Salar-e-Azam*): the resemblances to a regular army are many, they are intended, perhaps in the gesture of "dismantling the Master's house with the Master's tools,"[313] but also as an attempt to transform this house itself into an abode worth living in and suitable to one's own tastes and standards. The speeches of Abdul Ghaffar Khan, which name the KK as an 'army of God' or its volunteers as 'soldiers', indicate that the aim was not so much an oppositional mimicry[314] or a recal-

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[312] See Bernhard Cohn, "Representing Authority in Victorian India," in *The Invention of Tradition,* eds. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 209.
[313] The title of Lorde's feminist essay in Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider. Essays and Speeches* (Freedom California: Crossing Press, 1984), 110–13.
[314] I use the term with reference to Homi Bhabha, *Location of Culture*, 86: "a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite."

citrant gesture and not even so much a reference to the opponent which gave the movement its identity. Moreover it is posited as a constructive and reformative gesture, following a simple logic: there are injustices to fight and a need for social and political change. The army, being the only existing institutionalised mode of waging a battle, cannot be adopted in its entirety the way it is, since it condones the use of violence, follows a pattern of attack and defence, and cannot be accepted on ethical and political grounds. So what can be done in order to transform the army into an acceptable institution? How can it be made congruous to nonviolent principles and religious or ethical codes of action? And how can the army serve to not merely fight an outside opponent, but to transform the way conflicts are settled within one's own society? The questions addressed were both about external relations to dealing with the British colonisers as well as about internal relations amongst the Pashtuns.

4.2.8 Mode of fighting

So how did these soldiers actually fight? How did they conduct warfare? From what we know, they drilled and marched like any other army regiment. They wore uniforms made of hand-spun cloth dyed in a reddish brown colour from the local leather factory, and thus came to be known (mostly derogatively) as the Red Shirts. The KK held public meetings in large numbers throughout the North-West Frontier Province, with speeches and poetry readings and performances of patriotic Pashto plays. They conducted demonstrations, marched through villages, singing patriotic songs and reciting couplets in Pashto. They held pickets in front of colonial institutions, calling for boycotts of British goods and for non-cooperation with British authorities. The thrust of their activities was in visible public disobedience and disregard of colonial laws. So for e.g. one of the activities (part of the daily two-hour social work programme) for some of the rank and file soldiers was to travel from village to village, persuading the locals and more influential Pashtun landlords to resign from government posts and not accept favours from British officers. They picketed and raided courts. When challenged by armed policemen, KK soldiers sought arrest en masse. Besides the more dangerous activities which led to imprisonment, torture and

killings, there are records of more mischievous acts by the army, such as the story of how the house where the Province Governor was living while on a visit to the area was surrounded in the nights by the bugle and drum band of the KK soldiers, who kept up a constant noise throughout the night to show how un-welcome he was.[315]

Many of the tactics of the KK were protest acts, which, though relatively modest in themselves, added up to some significance in the eyes of the colonial authorities. For instance outside the quarters of a regiment stationed in a certain town, the KK set up their own 'fake' rival quarter guard, patrolling and marching around the area parallel to the British guards. It was also common practice for KK recruits to conduct flag marches through the same areas where British police forces usually conducted their marches.

Regular camps were conducted, attended by up to a thousand KK soldiers from several villages, who gathered for several days at a stretch, underwent disciplinary training by way of drilling and physical exercises, parades and patrols of the districts, schooling on the anti-imperialist struggle and the political principles of nonviolence.[316] This training was combined with obligations to cook for and feed the poor, which again was a practice stemming from Islamic codes and *Pashtunwali* ideals. The KK was in a sense a youth movement seeking to de-militarise and disarm an area where it was considered necessary for every respectable male Pashtun to carry a rifle. The daily training also consisted of what was called the reform programme (*Islahi*), which partially adopted ideas from the Gandhian constructive programme such as spinning, weaving, prayer and fasting, but included elements such as village sanitation drives, sending soldiers to help in repairing huts and village infrastructure, as well as acting as guards, showing visible presence in areas of tension and social unrest and arbitrators in family or clan feuds: all

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[315] Banerjee, *The Pathan Unarmed,* 96.
[316] See Mary Barr, "A Red Shirt Camp," *The Modern Review*, Vol. 71, No. 1 (1941). Article reprinted in Shah, *Ethnicity, Islam and Nationalism,* 268–71.

activities that could be called 'civilian peacebuilding' in contemporary political vocabulary.[317]

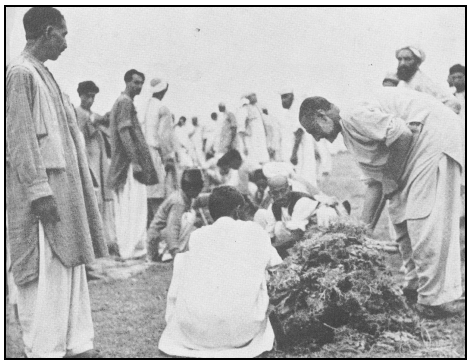

Fig. 15:
Community activities during training camp of the Khudai Khidmatgar (Abdul Ghaffar Khan, right), 1941
Source: Tendulkar, *Abdul Ghaffar Khan,* 400–1.

In her anthropological study of the surviving members of the KK, Mukulika Banerjee explores the question of whether there were lapses from the oath of nonviolence and forbearance on behalf of the KK members and how these were remembered and related. Although most of the stories told to her by the surviving informants presented a successful picture of a complete transformation to nonviolent action, instances were related of how KK demonstrators occasionally turned to stone-throwing or using canes and sticks. However the fact that these incidents were heavily defended as cases where either the Pashtuns were provoked too far or the use of violence was attributed to women who threw stones when upset about losing a male family member, is an indication of the real effort, including shortcomings of the KK. I agree with Banerjee's conclusion that the recorded lapses of the KK in nonviolence "place the many undoubtedly successful applications of nonviolent protest in a more plausible context of effort, failings, on-going lessons and gradual mastery."[318] They also show that violence and nonviolent action were closely interrelated, with constant reference between different modes of action.

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[317] See also Thomas Weber, "From Maude Royden's Peace Army to the Gulf Peace Team: An Assessment of Unarmed Interpositionary Peace Forces," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (1993), 45–64.
[318] Banerjee, *The Pathan Unarmed,* 122.

How nonviolent is nonviolence? There are instances and records of the KK that complicate the understanding of the Pashtun nonviolent army and their conceptualisation of nonviolence. Two such instances are worth discussing in depth. The *Zalmai Pakhtun*, Young Pashtuns, was an organisation formed by Abdul Ghaffar Khan's son, Ghani Khan in 1947.[319] While the *Zalmai Pakhtun* supported the cause of Pashtun autonomy, it did not advocate a radical pacifist stand and indeed was primarily involved in providing security and not in political struggle. It consisted of male youth who assisted the activities of the KK and provided safety to its members, if needed with the use of firearms.[320] The connection of this organisation to the KK raises the question of how a nonviolent army could relate to being protected by armed security guards. It is true that the KK were often fiercely physically threatened, not only by British officers, but also by the Muslim League, who objected to the KK's opposition to Partition and because they did not want to engage in building a Muslim political force. Ghaffar Khan describes the emergence of the *Zalmai Pakhtun* in this context in his autobiography:

> "... as the KK never used violence, though violence was frequently used against them, they needed the protection of young men who would counter the violence. They made a public announcement that henceforth Zalmai Pakhtun would protect the KK."[321]

The toleration or partnership with an organisation that fundamentally differed in the adherence to nonviolence might be surprising, or seem like an unprincipled compromise on behalf of the KK. However it is also the expression of a willingness to enter into uneasy coalitions. And it must be viewed in the context of a period in the history of the movement, when there were few allies of the movement, when it started becoming clear that the two-state theory was gaining currency and there were few organised groups who actively supported

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[319] The *Zalmai Pakhtun* was formed on 24 April 1947. For details, see Shah, *Ethnicity, Islam and Nationalism*, 205.
[320] Quoted in Tendulkar, *Abdul Ghaffar Khan*, 418.
[321] Khan, *My Life and Struggle,* 203.

the methods of the KK against the British. However, the collaboration with the *Zalmai Pakhtun* in the last phase of the KK's existence does present a problem, which cannot be easily explained away with the argument that it was a 'necessary' though undesired partnership. Arguably, the coalition with the armed youth wing signalised the end of nonviolent resistance in the Frontier Province. The fact that Khan's own son led this security force also raises questions about their independence and ideological distance from each other.

Khan's biography mentions another incident during Gandhi's visit to the Frontier Province in 1938, when Abdul Ghaffar Khan suggested that a few KK guards armed with bamboo sticks and the like, be posted on the rooftop of the house where Gandhi was staying at night, as a precaution against break-ins or raids in a volatile trans-border area. Khan's intentions, as explained by his biographer, are that the sight of armed guards itself would deter any raiders, without the necessity of their actual use. Gandhi is said to have firmly rejected the suggestion, but finally agreed upon Khan's insistence that the guards could stay on the condition that they were unarmed.[322] The deterrence argument is of course one that can easily lead to the logic that the possession of arms can act as a defence and is thus less destructive than the use of arms. Or to put it the other way around, the deterrence argument posits the use of arms and not the mere possession of arms as violent. This instance shows a different ethic of dealing with weapons between Gandhi and Ghaffar Khan. So how does one reconcile Ghaffar Khan's recourse to the logic of deterrence, however minor it may be, in the realm of personal security, despite his radical pacifism? Of course, compared to the massive security entourage of today's politicians, setting a few guards on the guesthouse rooftop appears like an innocent gesture. However, such a reading would not entirely grasp the tenor of Khan's nonviolent ethic. There is not enough historical material on the incident to fully gauge its context and the motivation of Khan, and it must be taken into account that descriptions of encounters between Gandhi and Khan usually tend to pose the former as the

[322] Tendulkar, *Abdul Ghaffar Khan,* 243–4.

teacher and the latter as the pupil, learning lessons from and expressing admiration of the mentor.[323]

While Gandhi rightly rejects the show of force as a species of violence in itself, the compromise suggested by Khan is somewhere in-between the complete rejection of security guards and the threatening presence of armed guards. The suggestion appears to be guided by practical questions of how to deal with attacks that did not have any direct political demands attached to them, but were a reality in the region. Rather than blindly adopt Gandhi's first suggestion to not have any guards at all, Khan remains convinced that it would be naïve to not provide some security for his guest and thus modifies his proposal. I believe it is not possible to draw any broad conclusions from this sparsely documented incident, however it is an indication that the nonviolent act as pursued by Ghaffar Khan emerged not as a ready-made product, but as a weighing of consequences and implications, as a matter of reaching compromises that did not always or necessarily pass through the litmus test of absolute pacifism, but nevertheless express immense effort and reflexivity and adaptation. However, these two examples discussed above, help to destabilise and question a positivist tendency in research on subaltern movements, to logocentrically assume an explainable behaviour amongst a heterogeneous people.

The nonviolent army thus juxtaposed elements and practices that seemed apparently contradictory, and so it was possible to performatively transform codes of institutional violent action into nonviolent acts. By doing what the enemy did, only with some alterations, the battle was fought not only over resources, over access to land and over questions of governance and exploitation, but also over meanings and representations, over what it means to be a 'fighter', of what valour and honour and bravery mean and how these meanings were performatively established.

"In the Peshawar district every village has its army of

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[323] Compare Tendulkar, *Abdul Ghaffar Khan,* 244 and Easwaran, *Badshah Khan,* 155ff.

> Khudai Khidmatgars. Their uniform is more or less of a military type. They love to wear these uniforms and to drill and march in military formation. There are many ex-servicemen amongst them. These form the training-staff. Even the ignorant villagers seem to take to drill and military parade easily. Drums and bugles are generally used during the marches. All weapons are eschewed, including lathis. Officers hold canes as emblems of supposed dignity rather than as a weapon of offence."[324]

In this Congress Working Committee Report, the activities in the KK camps are described by Gandhi's son Devdas. Noteworthy is the report that ex-servicemen – most probably retired officers from the British Corps of Guides – acted as trainers of nonviolent action. This means that the conversion of combatants or ex-servicemen to the fold of nonviolent civilian resistance was a part of the strategy of the peace force. The training itself was therefore obviously not a finished or polished process, since such a training strategy using ex-combatants is bound to have been full of its own problems and contradictions. But it suggests that rather than disqualify persons with a background in the British military, their experiences and skills were sought to be integrated into the training activities of the KK camps, which placed great emphasis on physical fitness and discipline. The tone of the report hints at the general reverence and admiration that Pashtuns showed for the 'military-type' of action and training provided to them in the camps. The camps had the attraction and crowd-pulling status of *melas* or fairs and were publicity events in themselves, creating spectacles out of the military-style camps. Ritualistic aspects of the military were adapted and transformed into 'emblems of dignity' and status symbols, while the most obvious part of military training, namely the use of weapons, was consciously omitted and the omission itself was performatively elevated into an achievement and act of defiance.

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[324] Report submitted to Congress Working Committee by Devdas Gandhi, cited without exact source in Tendulkar, *Abdul Ghaffar Khan,* 108.

The *Pakhtun*, monthly journal of the KK movement in the Pashto language, was repeatedly banned, stopped and systematically destroyed by both the British as well as the Pakistani rulers. Apparently, no single library or individual possesses the complete file of all issues of the journal (first issue May 1928, final issue 10 August 1947) and no comprehensive translation exists until date.[325] Abdul Ghaffar Khan, his son, Ghani Khan, apart from other KK members, wrote regularly for the journal. The articles dealt with a vast array of topics, ranging from poetry to articles on personal health and hygiene, village sanitation, educational reform and current affairs. What created the profile of the journal was a sense of search for Pashtun identity, which was of course already pre-judged and connotated with various qualities and attributes. A sense of self-reflexivity and pride seems to pervade many contributions to the journal, as is evident from this poem by Ghani Khan entitled "The biggest fool in the world". In this poem, the Pashtun male is invoked as a simple-minded soul with a large heart and a sense of integrity. Interestingly, although there is no mention of the word Pashtun, the obvious references to so-called Pashtun attributes, such as large-heartedness, pride and fearlessness, make it a poem about the essence of Pashtun identity, as well as about the essence of being human. Rather than contrasting the Pashtun community with other ethnic groups, the poem contrasts different broadly human qualities and characteristics.

> "He likes to live for a dream and not for a royal banquet.
> He would rather think than eat.
> He would rather dance than think.
> He would rather sleep and snore than sit up and be polite to his rich mother-in-law.
> He would rather console the little fragile heart of a child than sit up and soothe the pride of the proud and powerful.
> He would rather be the great friend of a small dog than the small friend of a great man.

[325] Dr. Sayed Waqar Ali Shah, historian at University of Islamabad, is currently working on a commented translation and edited publication.

> He likes to talk of fairies and grasshoppers and prefers the
> gold in the moon to the gold in your pocket.
> He is the biggest fool in the world."[326]

The mode of the poem, one of re-combination and contrast also best describes the ethos of the non-violent action of the KK army. The characteristics of the 'fool' (read the brave fighter of the KK) as the 'biggest saint' only become apparent when viewed against the counter-images of the real fools, those who are socially or otherwise respected but in fact lacking in principles or honesty.

Appadurai's comment on the emotional force of songs and poems stemming from their being commentatorial as well as constitutional, fits aptly in assessing the role of poetry and regard for the Pashtun language in the KK's nonviolent struggle.[327] The *Pakhtun* journal collections are a rich and lively source of texts that comment upon Pashtun society as well as imagine and constitute its transformation and its possibilities.

4.2.9 Authenticity and mimicry in nonviolent action

Studies and commentaries on the KK, particularly by non-Pashtun scholars, ask in amazement "how it was possible for the Pashtun culture to produce one of the most remarkable pacifist movements"[328] or whether an organisation with the appearance of an army can truly be nonviolent. The notion of authenticity repeatedly appears in accounts of nonviolent action and poses some intriguing questions in terms of theorising nonviolence. When Khan states in his autobiography, that "there is nothing surprising in a Muslim or a Pathan like me subscribing to the creed of nonviolence,"[329] he in fact registers the surprise and sense of disbelief that surrounded the reception of the KK movement in India and elsewhere. The Pash-

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[326] Quoted in Tendulkar, *Abdul Ghaffar Khan*, 54.
[327] See Appadurai in Arjun Appadurai, Frank Koron, Margaret Mills, eds. *Gender, Genre and Power in South Asian Expressive Traditions.* South Asian Seminar Series (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press, 1991), Afterword, 470.
[328] Karl E. Meyer, "The Peacemaker of the Pashtun Past," *New York Times*, 07 December 2001.
[329] Cited in Easwaran, *Badshah Khan,* 103.

tuns had to prove themselves to be more capable of nonviolent action than any other community in the entire subcontinent. The question was repeatedly asked, as to whether the KK were 'merely acting', i.e. externally performing nonviolent acts, while remaining violent 'at heart', or whether they truly, i.e. authentically embodied the principles of nonviolence?

Gandhi's speeches to the Pashtuns as well as his writings on his visits to the KK camps reveal a certain mistrust of the authenticity of Pashtun nonviolence. This can be traced back to both a suspicion of the lower-class KK soldiers' capability to embrace the 'high' ideals of nonviolence, as well as an anti-Muslim slant in his perception of the Pashtuns.

Gandhi visited the NWFP in October 1938 for a second time, to meet with the KK rank and file members, since he felt that "their nonviolence was sincere but incomplete"[330] and wanted to reassure himself that they were not enrolling as members of the peace force simply out of coercion alone or because they were enamoured by the charisma of Badshah Khan.

> "I have known the Pathans since my South African days. [...] They were a rough and ready lot. Past masters in the art of wielding the lathi [*baton*], inflammable, the first to take part in riots, they held life cheap and would have killed a human being with no more thought than they would kill a sheep or a hen. That such men should, at the biddings of one man, have laid down their arms and accepted nonviolence as the superior weapon sounds almost like a fairy tale."[331]

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[330] Cited in Easwaran, *Badshah Khan,* 155. See also Gandhi's remarks in CWMG Vol. 74, 91: *Harijan,* 15 October 1938:

> "I have come to the Frontier Province, or rather he [Abdul Ghaffar Khan] has brought me, to see with my own eyes what his men here are doing. I can say in advance and at once that these men know very little of nonviolence. All the treasure they have on earth is their faith in their leader."

[331] CWMG Vol. 74, 115: Speech to the *Khudai Khidmatgar* at Hoti Mardan, 16 October 1938.

Asking for proof of the genuine nonviolent spirit of the KK is extremely problematic, because it implies that there is more to an act of nonviolence than the act itself. Some unqualified, additional moral cushioning and display of credibility is demanded, in order to prove that the nonviolence is authentic, that it is not spurious. This is consistent with Gandhi's distinction between nonviolence as an act and as an inner stance or attitude. It also presumes that the rank and file members of the KK – predominantly farmers, landed or landless poor men and women and predominantly Muslim – did not understand the philosophy of nonviolence, but merely played along with a trend of the time or had joined the organisation without truly imbibing its principles. This attitude attaches a certain sense of moral superiority and unattainable stature to the nonviolent ideology, suggesting that it is in fact inaccessible to 'peasants and tribals'. The legitimisation of nonviolent organisation by the KK was subject to the tension that inhabits the term 'to act', which in English means both 'to do' as well as 'to pretend to do'. Although the leader of the KK was never or rarely doubted as to his allegiance to genuine nonviolence, the soldiers and recruits in the resistance force on the ground were often labelled as blind followers of a leader and reflecting a mob mentality.[332] None of the KK members were, for instance, listed under the government category of freedom fighters, which would have entitled those involved in the independence struggle to special pensions and widow benefits.[333] This is an indication of how politics in the mode of the KK was hardly officially rec-

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[332] This resonates in Tendulkar's biography, as well as in Congress Working Committee Reports, during their visits to the Northwest Frontier Province. See Narayan Desai, quoted in Tendulkar, *Abdul Ghaffar Khan,* 108–9.
Gandhi repeatedly refers to this in his speeches during his 1938 tour of the Northwest Frontier, see for instance CWMG Vol. 74, 104–5: Talk to the *Khudai Khidmatgar* – I:

> "You should renounce the sword because you have realised that it is the symbol not of your strength but of your weakness, because it does not make for true bravery. But if you put away your sword outwardly but there is the sword in your hearts, you shall have begun the wrong way and your renunciation will be devoid of any merit."

[333] Banerjee connects this issue with the question of national memory in Mukulika Banerjee, "Partition and the North West Frontier: Memories of Some Khudai Khidmatgars," in Suvir Kaul, ed., *The Partitions of Memory. The Afterlife of the Division of India* (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2001), 30–73.

ognised. They were neither true to the image of the Pashtuns nor did they fit into the Gandhian aesthetics of nonviolence, which was guided by an individual, spiritual search for truth and more universal and missionary in its purpose, whereas the KK were locally rooted and never sought adherents to the movement from other parts of the continent.

Gandhi's mistrust of the Pashtun nonviolent army, similar to many other members of the nationalist movement, also has traces of anti-Muslim sentiment, usually wrapped in patronising and indirect statements. In one of his speeches, he uses the metaphor of the snake shedding its skin to describe what Pashtun nonviolence would be, "if" it could be realised:

> "If the one lakh [100,000] Khudai Khidmatgars became truly nonviolent in letter and in spirit and shed their violent past completely, as a snake does its outworn skin, it would be nothing short of a miracle. That is why in spite of the assurance of your faith in nonviolence that you have given me, I am forced to be cautious and preface my remarks with an 'if'."[334]

The language of this speech is surprisingly characterised by Christian notions of sinners shedding their violent past, of doubt in their faith and that of miraculous transformation, a mode of addressal strikingly resembling that of missionaries or charitable workers, claiming to reform Islam and rid it of its un-Christian aspects. It is astounding that this doubt in the faith of no less than 100,000 KK members was expressed just a few years after several hundred KK volunteers were killed on 23 April 1930, when British troops opened fire on a crowd of demonstrators.[335]

The issue of authenticity vs. pretence reflects one of the crucial problems in the theorisation of nonviolent action, which is often limited to judging an ethical or political position, without, however, acknowledging and recognising that ethical positions are reflected or

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[334] CWMG Vol. 74, 115: Speech at Hoti Mardan, 16 October 1938.
[335] See Shah, *Ethnicity, Islam and Nationalism,* 60.

made apparent in acts, responses, gestures and opinions, not just in avowals and repetitions of these ethical positions. This implies that nonviolent action is on the one side about the critique of weapons, but on the other also about a mode of fighting that distances itself from a passive stance of non-confrontation or avoidance of conflict. In this double bind (ethics of nonviolence as opposed to the performance of nonviolence) there is a pressure to constantly make both sides simultaneously visible. Whenever there is a critique of violence, a genuine form of action that goes beyond criticism is demanded in order to establish the nonviolence as more than mere words. Authenticity becomes equivalent to proving one's ethical stance with deeds. On the other hand, whenever an act of nonviolence is performed, there is a call to embed an act within an ethical or moral position, in order to prove that the acts were not pretentious. Here authenticity becomes equivalent to substantiating one's acts with a display of moral credibility.

The KK does not fit into the distinction suggested by Gene Sharp and other theorists of nonviolence between pragmatic and philosophical nonviolence. It was in a sense neither a pragmatic nor a philosophical movement and it was both. Forming a nonviolent army was an active and constructive way of engaging with the legacy of violence in Pashtun society and of promoting a certain utopian vision (this would be classified as philosophical nonviolence by Sharp). Yet the movement must also be seen in the context of the emergence of a civilian public sphere in Pashtun society, which for the first time was not dominated either by the religious clergy or by the landed elite. The formation of the KK was connected to real issues of survival and civil liberties, in the expression of civilian engagement in public affairs, an experiment in adopting nonviolence as one instrument amongst others (this would be termed pragmatic nonviolence, according to Sharp). KK members did not leave their social settings in order to join the nonviolent army, in the way Gandhian followers sometimes heroically 'renounced' their working lives in order to join a commune or dedicate themselves to *Satyagraha*. The KK continued to be housewives, labourers, farmers or small traders whenever they were not picketing, demonstrating and attending camps or spending time in jails. Arguably, freedom from

British rule through nonviolence was not even the highest goal to achieve, since the issues that motivated its members most were related to Pashtun dignity, communal solidarity and welfare.

Since the KK was organised in the manner of an army, in terms of its cadres, regimentation, practices of body discipline and formation of a collective fighting together, it had to make explicit the ways in which it was not an armed force. This involved more than just the absence of weapons. The aesthetics of its nonviolent action however functioned through juxtaposition, contrast and dialectical connection to violent action rather than by maintaining a single universal ethical stance. This makes the movement vulnerable to being viewed as unstable, or without a clear profile or agenda. It raises the suspicion that the KK was mimicking the British army or the Bolsheviks, the Afghan tribal groupings or the Indian Congress. Honorary titles for rank holders of the KK followed the structure of the British military, with Abdul Ghaffar Khan being the first Commander-in-Chief, *Salar e Azam.* This gave way to accusations that the Pashtuns tried to create an organisation to parallel the British forces under a different leadership, particularly since there were already several Pashtun recruits in the Royal Army.[336] From the British side, the KK was looked upon as an attempt at imitation of the Bolsheviks. The accusation of mimicry is related to the view that the nonviolence of the KK was not authentic enough.

One argument that makes it evident that the KK army was not a mimicry of the British army, is the lack of camouflage, which is the common effect of mimicry. The differences and contrasts to the British army were meant to be visible, and despite all resemblances, it was on the grounds of the differences that it was possible to challenge the British army.

> "We started this movement because we were watching that the other nations of the world are organised. We thought which sin have we committed that all the other nations are organised, why should we not be organised? When our

[336] Rajmohan Gandhi, *Ghaffar Khan,* 84.

> house is ruined, why should we not re-build our house through this movement?"[337]

The logic of 'if they can do it, why not we?' gives the impression that the organisation of the KK took other existing national organisations as its reference point. In addition, it makes the KK appear not really nonviolent, since they adopted an institutional form in which violent action is deeply ingrained. The KK however did not enter into a detailed critique of the British army before deciding whether or not to adopt its more ritualistic aspects. It simply proceeded by translating its institutional practices such as military rankings, parades, uniforms and drills into another cultural matrix, to see what would happen and come out of this re-writing and re-designing.

The call for proving that Pashtun nonviolence was authentic and not superficial was also addressed by the Pashtun leadership. In one of Khan's speeches to a KK gathering, he relates a fable:

> "Once a pregnant tigress attacked a herd of sheep and gave birth to a cub and died. The cub grew up among the sheep and adopted their ways and manners. Once a tiger attacked them and discovered that there in the herd of sheep was a tiger cub bleating while running away with the sheep. The tiger was amazed to hear a tiger cub bleating. The tiger separated the cub from the herd and dragged it to a pool in which it could see its own reflection and realize that it was a tiger and not a sheep. The tiger told the cub, 'You are a tiger and not a sheep, do not bleat but roar like a tiger!' You Pashtuns are not sheep but tigers. You have been reared in slavery. Don't bleat, roar like a tiger!"[338]

In a reversal and re-combination of images, Khan associates nonviolent action with attributes of the tiger, such as bravery, a pro-active stance, strength and invoking awe and fear in others, whilst viewing the state of the Pashtun society as sheep-like, i.e. meek, enslaved,

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[337] Speech on 10 November 1931, in Ramu, ed., *Momentous Speeches of Badshah Khan,* 46.
[338] quoted in Tendulkar, *Abdul Ghaffar Khan,* 46.

full of fear, submissive and even spiritless. In this the common sheep vs. tiger binary is being read against the grain, because it twists not only the stereotypical characterisation of the ferocious Pashtuns but also the common association of pacifism to passivity or sheepishness. The fable also addresses the issue of authenticity by extolling the 'true nature' of the Pashtuns ("You are not sheep but tigers") while condemning the state of slavery they were reduced to. The story itself implies that it is the act of 'bleating' or 'roaring' that determines one's identity as a sheep or a tiger and not solely any physical features. Translated to the performativity of nonviolence, which is what the speech addresses, this means that nonviolence is viewed not as a ready stance or a given principle, inherent to some culture or particular communities more than others, but the result of effort, achieved by performing acts in certain ways. At the same time, the fable hints at the unbridgeable difference between sheep and tigers, that alterity and difference are at the core of any identity struggle. While the frames are retained (strong vs. weak, brave vs. cowardly), there is a shift in its attribution by implying that the Pashtuns are in fact cowardly and weak in obeying the regime and that they must become strong through nonviolence. This reverses the depiction of masculine, armed Pashtuns losing their virility or strength by giving up weapons and placing themselves ostentatiously in the hands of their oppressors.

4.2.10 Acts of juxtaposition: the figure of the hyphen

I want to suggest the figure of the hyphen as a way of thinking about the performativity of nonviolence in the case of the KK. The question of how nonviolence is performed and materialised addresses more than the content, what the issues are, what the resistance demands or even questions of right and wrong. The ethical import of nonviolence as the expression of a pacifist worldview is extremely and undeniably important. However, the debate on nonviolence often hovers around the choice between saying 'yes' or 'no' to violence, while it in fact spans a far greater range of philosophical and practical questions of handling and responding to conflict. In order to say no to violence, the full implications of this 'no' in the specificities of conflict must be charted out. This in turn demands

attention to not only the ethics, but also the aesthetics or the form of nonviolence, while at the same time placing the aesthetics firmly in the realm of the ethical. In the 'yes-or-no-to-violence' debate, it has become amply clear as to what 'yes' means: the institutionalised forms of violence are numerous and well-developed, they are present in all cultures and societies, funded by states and legitimised by various authorities. Yet on the other side, it is not at all clear what a rejection of violence actually means, how this act is carried out actively and not merely as a passive stance. Therefore enquiring into the aesthetics of nonviolence suggests asking what the rejection of violent response to conflict actually involves, beyond the issue of yes-or-no-to-violence. An engagement with the form of nonviolence implies finding a productive interpretation of nonviolence, which generates a range of possibilities and avoids non-negotiable positions.

In this section I have described and analysed the political actions of the KK in the 1930s against British rule and towards a reform of Pashtun society as an example of a nonviolent army. To link this analysis with the central question of theorising nonviolence from a performative perspective, the acts of the KK can be explored with the figure of the hyphen.

The hyphen is a sign of separation as well as of combination. It signifies both union as well as alterity, divergence in the moment of consonance. It brings two elements in relation to each other, as well as creates a gap between them. The punctuation mark also mixes and re-combines alphabets, words, phrases, sometimes bringing out multiple resonances in a word. It shows a gap between two subjects, as well as a link. The philosophical and theoretical implications of this punctuation mark can be productive in working out the aesthetic of nonviolent action. Jean-François Lyotard and Eberhard Gruber think through the relation 'between' Judaism and Christianity using the figure of the hyphen that separates and binds the Jew-

ish–Christian duality.[339] Here particularly Gruber explores the ramifications of the figure of the hyphen as a passageway (*Durchgangsort*) as well as a crossing (*Kreuzungsort*), as a sign that does not work in isolation, but in the service of composing new words, phrases, and thoughts. The essays explicate the possible scope of the hyphen in understanding relations that are unexplored, because they are located in the gaps and links in-between the main subjects. Gruber posits the hyphen as a figure of communi(cati)on, an aesthetic that both unites (communion) as well as creates connections/divisions between two separate entities (communication).[340] The figure of the hyphen suggests several angles to conceptualising the nonviolent actions of the KK.

Firstly, the idea of a nonviolent army is a re-combination or mixture of two seemingly contradictory ideas: nonviolence and armed fighting. It differentiates itself from an armed force by the very gesture of referring to it. The moment of setting up the KK as an army without arms becomes the moment of breaking away from the exclusive conventions of an army. The KK re-wrote the definition of an army by combining certain elements (such as the vocabulary of appointing or ranking officers and commanders, the wearing of uniforms, the practice of parades, flag hoists and patrols) with practices of civil disobedience, picketing, sit-ins, mock parades, fake guards and non-cooperation.

The fact that the institutional garb of the army was chosen, as opposed to other models of organisation of a resistance group, demonstrates that the use of the term 'army' is not metaphorical but direct. However, this conceptualisation of the army is placed at the crossing or in the passageway, as it were, of divergent streams of thinking. It is qualified as a voluntary association, as one that outrightly eschews the use of weapons, as an organisation of rural solidarity and welfare. All these qualifications that emerge from the

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[339] See Jean-François Lyotard and Eberhard Gruber, *Ein Bindestrich zwischen "Jüdischem" und "Christlichem"*. Unabridged edition, translated from French by Eberhard Gruber (Bonn: Parerga, 1995).
[340] Lyotard and Gruber, *Ein Bindestrich,* 63.

process of moving through and across divergent categories irritate the notion of an army, as well as complicate the meaning of nonviolence. The way the nonviolent army worked and survived for 18 years at this time in history, was a case of creative transformation of codes that once promoted injury. The performativity of the army was a matter of mixing and combining codes and placing a hyphen into their praxis, which transformed organised, trained violence into organised, trained nonviolent action. It also interrupts, breaks and irritates the uncontested ways of seeing or building an army by crossing ideas and actions.

Secondly, the sign of the hyphen explains how it was possible for Pashtun society, perpetually defined by a culture of revenge and brutality, to be transformed through a group of nonviolent soldiers. I would like to suggest that the latter in effect emerged from the former, not just historically, but also discursively. This was possible because of a nonviolent praxis characterised by hyphenation, attaching and adapting new ideas to the code of *Pashtunwali*, negating or rejecting the concept of *badal* (revenge) as essential to the community's *nang* (integrity, honour); supplementing the notion of *purdah* in the limited sense (domestication of women) with the notion of the honourable regulation of domestic affairs; emphasising respect towards one's opponents and patience and submission on the one side, while demanding no tolerance of injustice on the other. The gap that the hyphen of nonviolent action thus covers is what allows for a new relation to be made. Gruber compares this function of the hyphen with the mathematical function of the fraction. The line that divides the fraction is also the line that sets a relation (or more precisely, a ratio) between the numbers.[341] The nonviolent action of the KK treads this fine line. Pashtun civil disobedience consistently refers to Pashtun aggression, it sets a relation to this image and this history of the warring factions by marking a dividing and separating line from the image of a martial race. Rather than obscuring the facts of violent conflict in Pashtun society, ignoring or denying them, the KK consistently refers to them in order to break

[341] Lyotard and Gruber, *Ein Bindestrich,* 73.

away from them, creating fractions of differences and similarities. The form of the hyphen helps understand how the identity and way of being of a warrior clan could be changed to a nonviolent one: the KK never eradicated or covered up the images of the hot-headed Pashtun, instead they hyphenated this image with a new interpretation of how honour and integrity could be staged. It combined and fractured these identities, adapted them into new fields and therefore engaged in a performative formation of social and political identity.

Thirdly, the hyphen being a sign of distinction and not only of opposition, helps to broaden the present understanding of nonviolence as not merely the opposite of violence. Opposition and negation is of course semantically denoted in the negative term (not-violence). But the sign of opposition makes it seem as if nonviolence is nothing but or nothing more than the opposite of violence, in the way that one can claim that non-smoking is nothing more than not smoking. I would like to argue through the analysis of the KK that their nonviolence is far more complex, since it is drafted as a translation or a re-writing of violence into another cultural language. The acts of the nonviolent army transformed the underlying value codes, of which violence was an expression, into another context. Whether it is a good, appropriate translation or not, is a secondary question. The impetus was on the act of re-writing/translating and not on the outcomes of this act.

The embedding of nonviolent principles in the Islamic concept of patience, *sabr*, is one such example of how nonviolence is defined by the acts of unarmed resistance as more than the opposite or absence of violence. This multi-layered concept can be interpreted in several, even contradictory ways. It can be translated as a form of active patience and conscious restraint that brings about change and not only as submissiveness, passivity and a sense of being acted upon. The former is however not (merely) the opposite of the latter, it is a new translation of *sabr* that carries an entirely different quality. This gesture of translating against the grain, re-writing violence by shifting its grounds, is also reflected in the figure of the hyphen, which in Gruber's dialectic, is a necessary part of written

expression, even whilst it is of an entirely different make-up than the alphabet itself.[342]

It is for this reason that I do not use the hyphen between 'non' and 'violence'. I suggest that the KK's practice of nonviolent action can be theorised through the figure of the hyphen and its philosophical implications, just as I argue that the dialectical connections and divisions between violence and nonviolence are far more complicated than has been perceived in the existing theories of nonviolence. However, I think the example of the KK demonstrates the importance of not placing a gap between the 'non' and the 'violence', in order to keep the ambivalence and allow for other translations to emerge, apart from the ethical negation of violence. Nonviolence in the example of the KK is full of contradictions and unresolved problems. Yet the paradoxes and contradictions became productive and useful in the struggle for socio-political action. Like Spivak once remarked, I wish to see the critique of nonviolence as a "persistent critique of what one cannot not want."[343] I have shown that it was not a perfect, unquestionable political or ethical ideal, yet this is what made it a realistic and serious political option for thousands of political activists and citizens of the Pashtun province for two significant decades.

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[342] "Das Zeichen des Bindestrichs bezeichnet: am Rande der Buchstabenkonstrukte, von anderer Qualität als sie zu sein." Lyotard and Gruber, *Ein Bindestrich,* 90.

[343] Gayatri Spivak, "Bonding in Difference. Interview with Alfred Arteaga, 1993–94," in *The Spivak Reader. Selected Works of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak.* eds. Donna Landry and Gerald MacLean, (London: Routledge, 1996), 15–28.

5 Conclusions: Performative politics

In this dissertation, I have worked with the concept of performativity in order to read two cases of nonviolent action in South Asia from the first half of the twentieth century. In this final section, I will explore the differences and similarities in the conceptions of nonviolent action in the two cases. I will compare the figures of Gandhi and Khan, who were contemporaries and close associates in the anti-colonial political struggle, and yet who developed two very different concepts of nonviolent action. I will compare the fasting praxis of Gandhi with the activities of the Pashtun nonviolent army, returning to the question that guides this study: in what way does the form of nonviolent action constitute a part of its ethics? If there is more to nonviolence than the absence and rejection of violence, then what form does this politics take? My aim is not to propose a new definition of nonviolence, for that is not possible based on the analysis of just two historical instances. Rather, I seek to expand on the theory of nonviolence and contribute to the historiography of nonviolent protest by way of focusing on neglected aspects of its form.

Four recurring thematic areas can be identified throughout this study: the relationship of nonviolence to action, to violence, to the opponent in conflict as well as to the body. I have argued that these relations can be described as boundary areas of nonviolence, in that they are employed in order to distinguish nonviolence from what it *is not,* from what it is misconceived to be, from what it negates or critiques. At the same time, these boundary areas express something about what nonviolence is about, they point to the way nonviolence is realised and articulated. I will re-visit the four boundary areas in comparing the examples of the KK and the fast, to elaborate on their performative politics.

5.1 Gandhi vs. Khan

Mohandas Gandhi and Abdul Ghaffar Khan were closely affiliated to each other. They belonged to the same Congress party, and shared similar views on several issues in the civil disobedience movement. They were also close friends, held each other in high regard and spent significant time working together. This has created the impression that they had a common ideology and that the nonviolent politics of the KK in the Frontier Province was just an offshoot or a variation of Gandhian nonviolence.[344] This commonly held perception does not however do justice to the nonviolent ethos and praxis of the KK, which I believe was significantly different from Gandhian conceptions of nonviolence.

The differences between the two figures and contemporaries are many. One was a widely recognised and acclaimed leader, the other not much known outside of the region, though highly respected within his own community of the Pashtuns. Gandhi was a qualified lawyer and barrister in court, travelled extensively, lived abroad in England and in South Africa for nearly two decades. Khan hailed from a landed family, but while he maintained his class title as Khan, he did not lead a life of privilege that many others of his social status did. Khan had a basic college degree and began his career as a school teacher. His travels were restricted to the *Haj* pilgrimage and a visit to Syria and Palestine on the way back to India. He remained rooted to the Frontier Province throughout his life and showed interest in national politics, only in as much as it corresponded to Pashtun interests. Gandhi read widely, was a prolific writer, editor, correspondent and translator, keeping contact with influential leaders and thinkers from all over the world. His com-

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[344] Unfortunately, even biographers of Khan and Gandhi, such as Rajmohan Gandhi, only reiterate the common goals and arguments of both, ultimately placing Khan in the footsteps of Gandhi. See also Rajmohan Gandhi: "Mohandas Gandhi, Abdul Ghaffar Khan and the Middle East Today," *World Policy Journal* (Spring 2005), 89–94.

plete works run into 100 volumes and approximately 30 new publications on Gandhi appear in the market annually.[345] Khan spoke and wrote mainly in his native tongue Pashto or in Urdu, was uncomfortable in the written medium, he even had his autobiography compiled by one of the KK colleagues rather than write it himself.[346] Though he and his brother edited a monthly journal of the KK, *Pakhtun*, most of the remaining copies were destroyed by the government, and very few articles have been translated into other languages. Research on Khan and the KK movement he led is scarce and has very few accessible sources.[347]

Khan was not surprisingly always placed in the shadow of Gandhi, he was often referred to as his pupil or as the *Frontier Gandhi*. Both pledged their lives explicitly to nonviolent politics and both based this ideology in religion and in upholding traditional value systems: Gandhi in his interpretation of Hindu scriptures and cultural practices and Khan in the principles of Islam and the code of *Pashtunwali*. Both rejected the separation between public and private in their quest for authenticity, by adopting lifestyles that they believed to be more coherent with their political positions, and by foregrounding emotions and personal tastes in their political philosophy. Despite being members of an elite and recognised as leaders of movements with a mass support, both Khan and Gandhi introduced a personal, biographical dimension to their involvement in the anti-colonial struggle. This is arguably true of all protestors involved in social and political activities, but in these two personae, the biographical dimension of their political praxis is heightened by the

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[345] This estimate is given in a book review by Goolam Vahed, "Review of Uma Dhupelia-Mesthrie, Gandhi's Prisoner? The Life of Gandhi's Son Manilal," *H-Safrica, H-Net Reviews: Humanities and Social Sciences Online* (June 2005).
URL: [http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.cgi?path=143901125071325].

[346] The autobiography was dictated to K.B. Narang, a KK member and assistant of Khan.

[347] The most recent biography of Khan is written by Gandhi's grandson, Rajmohan Gandhi, *Ghaffar Khan*. Here an interview with a KK rank holder is quoted, which mentions an apparently missing volume of handwritten autobiographical notes and letters, which Abdul Ghaffar Khan handed over to an affiliate, asking him to edit to complete his autobiography. The colleague is later said to have denied having been given the documents at all. See Gandhi, *Ghaffar Khan,* 260.

conflation of private and public in their lives.[348] The distinction between private and public is further specific to the South Asian cultural context, particularly because of the spirituality of both Khan and Gandhi and the importance given to austerity in their public appearance and activities. This was a religiosity acquired by means of personal interest and effort rather than endowed upon them through a religious institution. Both were viewed as charismatic leaders, often elevated to a mythical status, associated with prophets or seers. Their honorary titles, for Khan *Badshah* (King of Kings) and for Gandhi *Mahatma* (Great Soul) are a reflection of the status and respect they received as political leaders due to their religiosity. Yet in political terms, their religious views were very differently expressed. Gandhi emphasised an individual search for truth, which corresponded to his interpretation of Hindu piety, whereas for Khan, the community aspect of Islam as a social binding force was more prominent than any individual aspirations or goals.

Gandhi had already achieved international fame by the time he launched his civil disobedience campaign in India, whereas Abdul Ghaffar Khan remained at best a local hero and refused to enter into national politics at the cost of compromising on Pashtun political and social reform. Both Gandhi and Khan spent several years in jail as political prisoners, but while Gandhi was often given special treatment, provided access to literature, correspondence, visitors, even printing facilities, Khan's accounts of prison life, which totalled to more than thirty years both before and after Partition, present a grim picture of how demoralising prison life was.[349] Certainly, for Khan, prison could not be called a temple, as Gandhi referred to the Yeravda jail, where he was a regular inmate. Khan was often placed

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[348] In a study on the dimensions of moral protest, taking inspiration from Habermas' theory of communicative action, James Jasper mentions biography as one of four dimensions of protest, the other three being resources, strategy and culture. Biography implies the conscious and purposive sense of self as opposed to just personality or individual traits. Thus the biographical dimension implies that social movements depend on individual actions, and are not just a sum of abstract social processes or transformations. See Jasper, *The Art of Moral Protest*, 54ff.

[349] In a letter to Tendulkar, Khan notes: "If you want to write something on my life in Pakistan prison, I would write it for you, a painful narrative though it would be." Tendulkar, *Abdul Ghaffar Khan,* Facsimile of Letter, xii.

in solitary confinement, where the guards were given instructions not to speak to him, where he was not allowed any visitors or access to reading material or letters or interviews. While Gandhi was served special vegetarian meals in special cutlery, Khan was provided with a cook who suffered from tuberculosis in the lungs, whom Khan suspected to be specially appointed in order to infect him with the disease.[350] Their personal lives were also very different. Gandhi staunchly opposed the marriage of his son Manilal to a Muslim woman in South Africa, though he argued for Hindu-Muslim unity at a national level.[351] He demanded uncompromising compliance and discipline from his own family members. Khan's son, Ghani Khan, launched the armed resistance group, *Zalmai Pakhtun,* astonishingly contradictory to Khan's own political principles. Khan's family members had married into several other communities and religions, which led to the frequent allegation of the Khan family's 'diluted' Islamic principles, to which Khan often responded that "very few Muslims in fact knew the true spirit of Islam."[352]

The question that interests me most concerns not their personalities or their biographies, but the similarities and differences between Gandhi and Khan in their conceptions of and experiments in nonviolence. Indeed, when I speak of a comparison between Gandhi and Khan, I refer only partly to these historical individuals or to their distinctive modes of leadership and engagement in political struggle. Their agency as leaders cannot be thought of as separate from the agency of those nameless and faceless subaltern subjects in whose name they spoke, who elevated them to their status, who enabled their ideas to take shape and be articulated.[353]

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[350] quoted in Gandhi, *Ghaffar Khan,* 109.
[351] In Manilal Gandhi's biography by his daughter, Gandhi is reported to have objected to his marriage to Fatima Gool, saying that Hindus and Muslims should remain brothers and sisters, and not "indulge in carnal pleasures". See Dhupelia-Mistry, *Gandhi's Prisoner?*, 175–6.
[352] quoted in Gandhi, *Ghaffar Khan,* 103–4.
[353] See Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments. Colonial and Postcolonial Histories (*New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994).

5.2 Form vs. content

South Asian history cannot be seen independent of or in the absence of its history of colonisation. As Christopher Balme notes,

> "Colonialism has been intensively researched by historians and economists, political scientists, anthropologists. There is, however, another side, an aesthetic component to the colonial project, which has been neglected. A crucial, but until recently under-researched concept for analysing colonialism as a cultural and aesthetic phenomenon is that of theatricality in its manifold forms."[354]

The aesthetic component that Balme refers to is valid not only for colonial rule but also for the history of resistance to the colonial enterprise. And his observation is relevant not only to the phenomenon of theatricality, but also to performativity. Introducing performativity to the analysis of nonviolent protest means focusing on its aesthetic components, specifically on the *form* of nonviolence rather than only its *content*. The thrust of this study has been to re-read the historiography of the civil disobedience movement in terms of how the form of nonviolent action is very much a part of its ethics or its socio-political message.

To study this aesthetic component of anti-colonial protest, I have used concepts and approaches from the field of performance studies as a heuristic tool and a mode of investigation, as a way of asking questions of the historiography of resistance movements and events, that would help to throw light on aspects that would otherwise remain invisible. I am therefore *not* employing terms such as performance, theatricality or spectatorship in a metaphorical sense. The dividing line between the metaphorical and the heuristic can be slippery, because there is a tradition of viewing the world as theatre,

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[354] Christopher Balme, "Impressing the Natives". Theatricality, Ceremony and German Colonial Rule in Western Samoa," *Horizonte der Emanzipation. Texte zu Theater und Theatralität,* eds. Christopher Balme, Christa Hasche and Wolfgang Mühl-Benninghaus, Series: Berliner Theaterwissenschaft, Vol. 7 (Berlin: Vistas, 1999), 202.

as a narrative mode (*theatrum mundi*). A metaphorical usage would be a good way of comparing the two semantic fields of theatre or performance on the one side, and political conflict on the other. Metaphors help to establish *contrasts* between the two fields, rather than as a tool to chisel out concrete *entities* and meanings.[355] Metaphors work when concealed, when the effect is not only rhetorical, but certain things can be perceived and made suggestive by way of contrast with others in making a particular argument. However, the heuristic mode seeks to expand and extend the applicability of concepts from performance studies to our understanding of various social and political questions.

5.2.1 Action – inaction – restraint

The relationship of nonviolence to action has two components: firstly the justification that it is not inaction or passivity; and secondly the formulation of a politics of restraint and refusal.

Proposing a civilian nonviolent response to conflict always implies *justifying* its efficacy and its appropriateness, *proving* how it is better than or superior to the use of weapons or other forms of violence; it implies *establishing the authority and originality* of the act in comparison to other ways of settling conflict. The prejudices against nonviolent methods are usually related to a doubt of its effects, whether it actually works, whether it leads to change or is merely a form of 'pacification' or 'passivity'. Both the cases analysed in this study show that the performance of nonviolence was not only concerned with the core issues or motivation behind the protest action. They were also concerned with establishing, proving, justifying nonviolence as a mode of waging conflict, and in this they were acts of creating and staging its authenticity.[356] I understand authenticity

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[355] This aspect of rhetoricity in relation to performance and media theory is explored in: Jürgen Fohrmann, ed., *Rhetorik. Figuration und Performanz* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2004), viii.

[356] Of course the rhetoric of most protest movements and their leaders at some point argue about the efficacy of their actions and ideologies in comparison to other existing or past methods or efforts. However, the question remains as to whether all protest forms are as self-conscious about their efficacy and their ac- (contd.)

not as unitary or verifiable truth contained in or originating from a person or an abstract idea, but as a process of gradually establishing an identity or an experience and marking this moment in relation to the other, to that which it is not. This process cannot be separated from the representation or staging of authenticity (*Inszenierung, mise en scène*), which is complementary to the production of authenticity.[357]

Showing that nonviolence was not equivalent to inaction or passivity involved different arguments in both cases analysed in this study. When Khan declares to the KK members "You are a tiger and not a sheep, do not bleat but roar,"[358] he calls for collective action and effort that would establish the authentic, i.e. nonviolent culture of the Pashtuns. Yet this is perceived as a processual change and one that always refers back to and emerges from the stereotype of the aggressive Pashtun. To assert that the activities of the KK are in fact a proof of bravery and political action, is to say that the image of the nonviolent Pashtun can be just as potent as that of the violent Pashtun. With the KK, the staging of authenticity in their choice of nonviolent protest refers to the politics of dislocation and misrepresentation that the Pashtuns had been subject to. Calling for authenticity is a move towards self-representation, being the authors or creators of their own political identity rather than being represented or defined by others.

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ceptance, as nonviolent protest seems to be, at least in the two examples discussed in this study. See Jasper, *The Art of Moral Protest,* 82.

[357] Authenticity is often considered together with or as a foil of the concept of theatricality in the specific sense of staging. For theorists such as Michael Fried, they are opposite terms, with theatricality being negatively associated with excess, show, hyperbole or that which is deliberately and consciously fashioned for an audience, whereas authenticity represents a form of "absorption", genuine, self-contained, non-referential. See Michael Fried, *Absorption and Theatricality. Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980). For others, authenticity is a staged process, making theatricality a constitutive moment of establishing authenticity and not its direct opposite. Compare Balme, "Staging the Pacific," and Eleonore Kalisch, "Aspekte einer Begriffs- und Problemgeschichte von Authentizität und Darstellung," *Inszenierung von Authentizität,* eds. Erika Fischer-Lichte and Isabel Pflug, Series: Theatralität, Vol. 1 (Tübingen and Basel: Francke, 2000), 31–44.

[358] Speech at Azad School, Peshawar, 1921, quoted in Tendulkar, *Abdul Ghaffar Khan,* 46.

For Gandhi, establishing fasting as a form of *action* was particularly important, considering that the act itself could be easily associated with inertia, with a lack of activity and a self-referentiality in the refusal to take food. "What my word in person cannot do, my fast may. It may touch the hearts of all the warring elements,"[359] he asserted and drew a link to the emotional force and impact of fasting on the public imagination. He also perceived the act of fasting in contrast to and more effective than giving speeches and direct addresses, to call for the end of violence.

Refusal, disobedience, restraint, control and omission are recurring elements of the performativity of nonviolent action. Not doing something is turned into a political ideal of action, and it is further contrasted as superior to the politics of the gun. However, this refusal is in itself a complex activity, which involves training, preparation and various levels of involvement of different actors. Not committing an act of violence involves visibly and demonstratively performing its refusal. Or it may be a form of quiet, circumspect refusal, preferring anonymity to direct confrontation.[360] So the omission of an act itself becomes an act. Refusal and restraint, as expressed in the examples studied in this dissertation, cannot just be shown as an absence; the refusal itself must be marked, framed, repeated and made perceptible in some way. In the combination of acts of omission and commission, as Gene Sharp informs us, nonviolence refers to both what *it is not* as well as what *it is*, it points to both the absence of violence as well as the presence of alternative responses to conflict.[361]

In his speeches, Abdul Ghaffar Khan often called for patience and restraint (*sabr*) when he explained what resistance of the KK to British occupation meant: "Our work is to observe patience, and it is such a weapon that even the guns, machine guns, aeroplanes and

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[359] CWMG Vol. 96, 318: Statement to the Press, 01 September 1947, published in *Harijan*, 14 September 1947.
[360] Scott describes this invisibility, the "preference of the nocturnal" as the characteristic of the resistance of the poor. See Scott, *Weapons of the Weak,* 272ff.
[361] Sharp, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action*, 63ff.

the armies cannot contest with."[362] Embodying a politics of restraint and refusal was one of the biggest challenges to Gandhi as well, who saw in his act of controlling physical instincts, the micro-level of political conquest on a macro-level, individual sovereignty leading to national sovereignty: "To conquer the subtle passions seems to me to be far harder than the physical conquest of the world by the force of arms."[363]

In the case of the KK, the refusal to keep or use weapons was performed through the difficult route of organising a group of people on the basis of solidarity and common identity, through social work, physical training and cultural activities, in addition to the more established forms of protest such as pickets, demonstrations, sit-ins and so forth. In Gandhi's fasts, the control of his own body became the means to formulate a form of positive action. The simile of steam under pressure is one which aptly describes his politics of restraint: "steam becomes a mighty power only when it allows itself to be imprisoned [...] so have the youth of this country to allow their inexhaustible energy to be [...] controlled and set free in strictly measured and required quantities."[364]

Both Khan and Gandhi strove to justify nonviolent politics on two grounds: arguing on the one hand that nonviolence is different from and better than violent forms of political intervention or non-intervention, and on the other hand seeking to 'normalise' nonviolence, shape it into a realistic alternative, a form of action that anyone can and ought to opt for. Although Gandhi's fasts were perceived as spectacular, unique events, he strove to make the act into an option for anyone, provided the circumstances were justified. He propagated fasting to friends and associates, suggesting it would

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[362] Speech on 14 December 1931 at Shah Nazir Khel Mosque at Swabi, in Ramu, ed., *Momentous Speeches of Badshah Khan,* 139.
[363] CWMG Vol. 44, 468: *Autobiography.*
[364] CWMG Vol. 47, 185: "Youth on Trial", Article in *Young India*, 03 October 1929.

help them train their body the way a soldier in an army must train his body.[365]

With the Pashtun army, the acts of nonviolence were evidence both of the exemplary nature of the KK, being an extraordinary movement that is unique in the history of the Pashtuns, as well as being depicted as ordinary acts that the Pashtuns were capable of just like any other community or nation: "which sin have we committed, that [when] all the other nations are organised, we should not be organised?"[366] At the same time, nonviolence for the KK is about proving the actions of the movement to be extraordinary since they demanded great courage, in contrast to conforming to the rules of the colonial empire: "Everybody can be a Government Servant be he honest or dishonest, of good or bad character; but everybody cannot join God's Army"[367]

5.2.2 Violence – its rejection – its recurrence

The most prominent boundary area around nonviolence is marked by its relationship to violence. Although nonviolence is predicated upon the absence and rejection of violence, as well as put forth as an alternative to violence, the very same exclusion returns to haunt its praxis. The relationship of nonviolence to violence is thus a dialectical one. This has so far been understood as a flaw in nonviolent politics, carrying the suspicion that such acts are not as nonviolent as they are supposed to be. However, this study has sought to demonstrate that an engagement with violence, with the boundaries of violence is extremely productive.

Gandhi's praxis of the protest fast is again very different from the nonviolent protests of the Pashtuns in this respect. By foregrounding his own vulnerable, weak body he asserted the strength that

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[365] See CWMG Vol. 21, 247: "Democracy vs. Mobocracy," Article in *Young India*, 08 September 1920.
[366] Speech on 10 November 1931 at Dab near Mansehra, in Ramu, ed., *Momentous Speeches of Badshah Khan*, 46.
[367] Speech on 01 December 1931, in Ramu, ed., *Momentous Speeches of Badshah Khan*, 101.

arose out of this injurability, implying that it would not be possible for someone to hurt one who was visibly and unashamedly vulnerable. He also pursued a praxis of what he saw as self-cure through the fast, gaining control over the body, over 'its violent tendencies'. Gandhi's pitting of the supposedly nonviolent soul against the apparently violent body, as well as his postulate of self-suffering to convert the hearts of the opponent, also clearly show that the borderline between what appear to be opposites is not that clear, nor are they impermeable boundaries. His physical vulnerability became a sign of his invincibility. His fasts contrasted attributes such as strong and weak, victor and conquered, active and passive, life and death, in their public enactment. In his writings, he frequently converted language of violent conflict into the vocabulary of nonviolence, thus placing what might be seen as contradictory attributes next to each other.

> "Passive resistance is an all-sided sword, it can be used anyhow; it blesses him who uses it and him against whom it is used. Without drawing a drop of blood it produces far-reaching results. It never rusts and cannot be stolen. Competition between passive resisters does not exhaust. The sword of passive resistance does not require a scabbard. It is strange indeed that you should consider such a weapon to be a weapon merely of the weak."[368]

The Pashtuns effectively re-combined and newly defined existing cultural codes from a tradition that condoned the use of violence to one that refused it. The oath of the KK, each line of which refers to what the KK would *not do* in order to confirm his affiliation with the organisation, is one example of the complex reference to violence in the moment of its rejection.[369] Instead of categorically rejecting the historical existence of cultural norms such as revenge (*badal*) or pride in one's community (*ghairat*), they were given different connotations, which at once critiqued the traditions as well as accorded them an importance and value, when appropriately transformed.

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[368] CWMG Vol. 10, 295: *Hind Swaraj*, Chapter 17.
[369] Elaborated in Section 4.2.6. See also Khan, *My Life and Struggle,* 97.

The form of the Pashtun army, the structure of command and adoption of military etiquette all express a dialectical re-articulation of violence in nonviolent resistance. Adopting the form of the army to clothe the nonviolent politics of the KK appears at first to be a contradictory step, but the figure of the hyphen as a sign of separation as well as combination can serve to elucidate this combination of violence and nonviolence.

The hyphen is a sign of separation as well as of combination. It signifies both unification as well as alterity, divergence in the moment of consonance. It brings two elements in relation to each other, as well as creates a gap between them. It mixes and re-combines, thus allowing new meanings to emerge. It signifies a gap between two subjects, as well as a link. The philosophical and theoretical implications of the hyphen are productive in terms of understanding how the KK punctuated Pashtun warrior traditions with their own interpretation of nonviolent praxis. One of the common mottos of the KK members is reported to have been: "A nonviolent Pashtun is more dangerous than a violent Pashtun."[370]

The issue of coercion in mobilisation is another aspect that points to the dialectical relation between violence and nonviolence. Marxist historian Ranajit Guha elaborates on the implications of attributing the authority and credit for certain events solely to the capacity of the leaders to mobilise the masses.

> "Mobilisation is attributed to the dynamics of enthusiasm alone. Its consequence for historiography is a rewriting which is both elitist and abstract. It is elitist insofar as it feeds on that messianic tendency of nationalist discourse according to which mobilisation was the handiwork of prophets, patriarchs and other inspirational leaders alone and the mobilised were no more than an inert mass shaped by a superior will. It is abstract, too, because it empties mobilisation of that very real tension between force and consent from which Indian nationalism acquired

[370] cited in Tendulkar, *Abdul Ghaffar Khan,* 253–54.

its form and substance."[371]

The "very real tension between force and consent" is amply evident in both cases of nonviolent action presented in this study. Gandhi's fasts tread the thin line between persuasion and coercion, in that he pushed for the addressees of the fast to take partial responsibility for his life. In the case of the KK, the pressure exerted on men and women to become members of the movement and the condemnation of those who dared to leave, was an example of how Khan's own narration of the movement's mobilisation carried the tension between forced and consensual participation in nonviolence. The exclusion of violence constitutes the agency of nonviolent protest. Violence is apart from and a part of nonviolence.

5.2.3 Conflict – consent – opposition

In both examples presented in this study, the momentum of nonviolent action was not achieved without significant effort and investment. Part of this effort was to locate the opponent and develop an approach to the conflict, i.e. the colossal problem of colonial rule and its associated structural discrepancies. Although British colonial rule could be described as the opponent in the conflict, it was often not that straightforward a matter. In the specific case of the Pashtuns in the North-West Frontier Province, British rule was established via the local chieftains, tribal lords and landowners, accompanied by a set of laws that gradually gave these select few Pashtun landowners vast privileges and imposing all kinds of restrictions and punishments on the rest of the population. Further, the British army and police recruited its ground forces from the very same tribes it sought to keep in control. The nonviolent protests of the KK were thus not merely targeted at the white English military officers, though this was often used as the common denominator to describe the opponent. Moreover, the conflict had moved inwards, into the fabric of the community, so resistance could not be narrowly defined as the resistance of a homogenous group of Pashtun

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[371] Guha, *Dominance Without Hegemony,* 103.

peasants against a clearly defined external oppressor. The protest actions were in the first place targeted at other Pashtuns, to urge non-cooperation and withdrawal of support and refusal of favours and bribes. The opponent was thus a part of oneself, a necessary other, in the broader framework of the anti-colonial struggle. The form of nonviolent protest conceived of the opponent as a necessary and crucial part of the conflict process. This is one of the main and important differences to violent protest, which seeks to eliminate, injure or at least restrict the power of the opponent. Nonviolent action requires the presence of the opponent at every stage of the conflict, including its outcomes. The aim of the KK was to serve the Pashtuns, not to conquer the British or any other group. They fought against colonialism, not against the colonisers.

For Gandhi too, the conflict process was more than a matter of fighting an oppressor. His major fasts were targeted at persuading Indians to unite and overcome differences on the basis of caste and religion. They were not directly related to British occupation. The transformation of the conflict became a matter of transforming the self, achieving a level of agency and autonomy, independent of external circumstances or restrictions. The performativity of nonviolent protest thus consisted of transforming servitude into empowerment. The fasting praxis of Gandhi makes subordination and the experience of oppression into the conditions for creating a sense of personal agency and subjectivation (the process of becoming a subject).

That being said, both cases of nonviolent action presented in this study reveal a concern for the way the opponent is perceived, or positioned in relation to the protest action. The speeches of Abdul Ghaffar Khan often refer to the prototype of the Englishman, partly in jest and mostly in earnest, as *firangi*, the white foreigner, the sweaty military commander who turns red with rage at the tricks of the KK, the meat-eating and wine-drinking tyrant, who amuses himself and makes revelry at the cost of exploiting the labour and the land of the Pashtuns. The term 'English race' is used in the English translations of Khan's speeches, in the same way that the 'Pashtun race' is used, a term that would today probably be trans-

lated as community or nation. He was clearly anti-British, and not diplomatic or polite the way Gandhi was in addressing officers and people of rank. However, the nonviolent army of the Pashtuns was more concerned with defending their sense of dignity and pride, and with Pashtun reform, than with eliminating British presence.

The fact that this organisation took the form of an unarmed army meant that the ruling powers had to notice their presence and notice that their own disproportionately harsh reaction to this army was incommensurate with the self-perception of a colonial governing power. To a certain extent, one may say that the paradoxical practices of the KK took the ruling forces by surprise, it was something one could not quite completely believe and which raised eyebrows of suspicion and distrust. At the same time, they were directly addressed through symbolic and other means. The use of red uniforms, military etiquette and ceremony parodied the British army. The very same stereotypes of the warrior race and primitive society were turned around, re-formulated and rendered as empowering attributes rather than labels of discrimination. From being named civil, domestic or military servants of the British, they named themselves the servants of God. These acts primarily functioned to create a new sense of Pashtun identity and solidarity, but seen in the context of conflict, they also subtly shifted the position of the British colonisers and Indian bourgeoisie to becoming spectators who were alienated from their own accustomed roles and perceptions of the Pashtuns.

In Gandhi's case of the fast, the necessity of the presence and responsiveness of the opponent as spectator is obvious. Here the observers of his fasts were absorbed by its authenticity, it was compelling and re-confirmed an image of Gandhi that was already well established and did not come with any surprises. What is significant is that by using the fast as a weapon in conflict, the presence and involvement of the opponent becomes indispensable to the act. The fast does not work as a means of political interaction and conflict without its addressees. The spectators are as indispensable to the act as the actor himself. Through the theatrical mode of the fast, the addressees are made into conscious spectators, they cannot look

away and cannot not react. Gandhi liked to call this "an appeal to the best sides of the wrongdoer."[372] What this implies is that by the act of voluntary starvation, the responsibility for oneself is shared with others, to an extent even transferred to the realm of the other's subjectivity. It is this inclusion and necessity of the other in the act of protest that characterises the form of nonviolent action.

5.2.4 Body– soul – intercorporeality

Part of the aim of introducing the notion of performativity to the analysis of nonviolent action in this study has been to allow for a place for the theorisation of the body and physicality in political protest that rejects violence and injury. I have argued that far from being a cognitive or spiritual effort, based on argument and principles, nonviolent politics hypothesises the body as a significant part of protest, not only as an instrument of carrying out a particular action, but as a unit of conflict that in fact constitutes what the conflict and its outcome looks like.

The concept of intercorporeality as the way bodies articulate to and respond to each other, distinct from the level of discourse and argumentation, is useful to this understanding of the performative body in conflict. Nonviolent conflict involves more than fighting the opponent on the grounds of argument and law, which is why I have excluded the category of institutionalised conflict (legal or electoral battles, petitions, lobbying) in this study. Intercorporeality includes and addresses confrontation between bodies with greater levels of complexity and nuance than direct injury or physical attack. The concept allows for a sensitivity to the way ideas and statements are embodied in gestures, postures, glances, acts, responses. Yet this embodiment is more than an externalisation of something internal; rather the concept of intercorporeality seeks to bridge the divide between body and soul or body and mind through an understanding of the body as intelligent and responsive.

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[372] CWMG Vol. 83, 123: "Fasting in Nonviolent Action".

The case of Gandhi's fast is to me one of the most obvious instances of the tenacious and persuasive use of the body in conflict. However, this is very different from Gandhi's own theorisation of the body. Gandhi wrote about the body at length in his articles and in his correspondences. In his worldview, the body was innately defiled, it was impure, violent and represented the animal in the human. The mind, i.e. thoughts and ideas, were part of the body in his conception. The soul, on the other hand, was the ideal agent of non-violent action. Fasting was just one of the practices he experimented with in his project of controlling the body, restricting what he saw as its destructive powers, in order to allow the soul to emerge as an agent of self-rule. His propagation of and interest in nature cure therapy was an eclectic mix of approaches developed in India, South Africa as well as Europe. He also theorised abstinence from sex or celibacy (*brahmacharya)* as a tool to strengthen the soul's power of resistance by weakening the body's urges. By placing these practices within the context of the anti-colonial struggle, he collated personal health, social welfare as well as national sovereignty in one sweep.

Gandhi's practice of the political fast demonstrated the limits to which he could push his body and the extremities that it could endure by refusing food for long periods of time. This displayed voluntary starvation evokes the etymological roots of the term authentic as *authentes*, *auto – entes:* self-completing, doing with one's own hand, having full authority over an act.[373] He also contrasted his own body and its capacities for restraint and control with the uncontrollable body of the mob and the furious masses. In a number of cases, the fast was employed to discipline and regulate what he perceived as a crowd that would not be willing to listen to speeches but would respond to seeing his starving body placed in front of them.

[373] Kalisch, "Aspekte einer Begriffs- und Problemgeschichte von Authentizität," 32.

For the KK, the body is more positively connoted as an agent that carries the potential of changing the circumstances in which it lives, as well as the potential of self-change. Although Gandhi viewed all living souls as part of a unified whole in theological terms, the focus of his praxis was at individual effort towards achieving this goal. For the KK, the body is enacted into conflict in the plural form. The Pashtuns could not have chosen a more non-individual form of community than the organisational structure of an army. It was through the form of the unarmed collective that they approached nonviolent action. Collective action in the KK was rooted in Islamic principles, such as that of service to the community, *khidmat,* which is re-articulated through the body of the servant, extended to the figure of the soldier, the fighter, the individual who can only come to being in a social unit. It is also articulated in the perhaps uniquely Pashtun notion of identity as doing, of belonging to the Pashtun community by following its codes of conduct, *Pashtunwali*, rather than merely being born into its fold.

Gandhi's posture of omission and rejection of violence contrasts to the KK's dialectical relation to violence. In Khan's speeches and articles, the concept of *sabr* (patience, effort, hard work) is the key to performing nonviolent actions and achieving the goals of independence and community reform. This implies a very different notion of productivity and transformation than that proposed by Gandhi in his fasting praxis. Gandhi's efforts were in the minimisation of body needs and control of his own metabolism, whereas the KK did more and more community work, physical training, recruitment and social work in their nonviolent protest.

Gandhi's distinction between body and soul has significant implications for thinking through the agency of nonviolent action. Gandhi sees the body as innately prone to violence, as defiled and chaotic. This view permeated through his critique of violence, since he explained every act of political violence as a consequence of the body's urges gaining the upper hand over *soul force*. So while on the one side Gandhi invested the efforts of a lifetime in developing what he termed as *soul force* or nonviolence, he saw violence on the other hand, as innate to the body, as well as to humankind. This is differ-

ent from what I outlined above as the dialectical relationship between violence and nonviolence, since it does not adequately recognise that violence too, particularly in its institutionalised forms in political conflict and in the history of colonialism, was systematically developed and created. It did not just appear as a result of the human urge to violence. Yet, although Gandhi himself may not have positively theorised the body in his conception of nonviolence, I believe it is necessary for a performative approach to nonviolence to take the body into consideration, and question the divide between body and soul or mind in proposing an approach to responding to conflict.

Glossary of terms

ahimsa	non-injury, nonviolence
badal	revenge
brahmacharya	celibacy; also control of all senses
dharma;	ethical duty, code of right living
(antonym: adharma)	
fauj	army
firangi	(white) foreigner, often derogatory
ghairat	pride, honour
harijan	literally 'people of God', Gandhi's term for the so-called untouchable castes, now called Dalits.
Islahi	social reform programme
jirga	council of elders; also refers to a political party
khadi	hand-spun cloth
khidmat; khidmatgar	service, ability to serve; one who serves
Khuda	God
lathi	police baton
melmastia	hospitality
nanawatai	giving asylum or refuge
nang	integrity, honour
pashtunwali	Pashtun code of life, value system
purdah	literally veil, tradition of segregation of women in public
Raj; Hindu Raj	British imperial rule in India; Hindu-dominated Congress elite
rishi	holy man, ascetic
sabr	patience, restraint, endurance
Satyagraha	literally truth force, Gandhian civil disobedience
swaraj	self-rule, autonomy
ulema	Islamic clergy
wesh	traditional Pashtun system of periodic land distribution

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