

Freedom, Race, and Francophonie : Gandhi and The Construction of Peoplehood¹

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Resumé

Liberté, Race et francophonie: Gandhi et la construction de la notion de peuple.

Gandhi (1869-1948) a vécu en Afrique du Sud pendant 21 ans (1893-1914). Durant ces années, ses combats ont été menés contre les lois affectant la condition des Asiatiques. Mais il ne s'est pas confiné dans l'ethnicité. Cet article explore l'évolution des idées de Gandhi sur les questions raciales au-delà des luttes immédiates auxquelles il a participé. C'est au cours de ses années en Afrique du Sud que Gandhi s'est familiarisé avec le travail de pionniers tels que l'intellectuel français, Jean Finot. Cet article rend hommage à l'influence auparavant négligée de Finot sur les conceptions de Gandhi à propos des préjugés raciaux. Cette influence a favorisé la maturation du point de vue de Gandhi sur la race. En 1908, en Afrique du Sud, Gandhi en est venu à envisager une représentation non raciale de l'Afrique du Sud. Un point de vue similaire, non raciale et non-confessionnel de « peuple » et /ou de « nation » influença la vision de Gandhi sur l'Inde et même sur d'autres zones comme la Guyane. Tout comme il a été influencé par des penseurs comme Finot, Gandhi lui-même a eu une influence lors des débats d'idées dans le monde francophone en particulier en Afrique. Cette contribution évoque également les réseaux de Gandhi au sein des militants anticolonialistes dans la France coloniale.

Abstract

Gandhi (1869-1948) was in South Africa for a period spanning 21 years (1893-1914). During these years his struggles were, of course, centred on laws directed against and affecting the condition of Asians. This does not mean, however, that his ideas remained ethnographically limited or confined. This article explores the evolution of Gandhi's ideas on racial issues beyond the immediate struggles with which he was involved. It was during his years in South Africa that Gandhi first encountered the pioneering work of such thinkers as the French intellectual, Jean Finot. It is suggested here that the influence on Gandhi of Finot's work on racial prejudice has been much neglected. This influence was an important factor in the maturing of Gandhi's views on race. By 1908, while still in South Africa, Gandhi came to envision a non-racial concept of South African peoplehood. A similar non-racial and non-denominational view of "people" and "nation" would influence Gandhi's definition of India and even his view of developments in other countries like Guyana. Just as he was influenced by thinkers like Finot, Gandhi himself had an idealational influence in the Francophone sphere which is also examined with particular reference to Africa. His interface with colonial France and some of its policies is also considered.

1889

A couple of years before he qualified for the Bar in England, M K Gandhi [1869-1948] went across for a week to Paris to see the Exposition Universelle of 1889 organised in commemoration of the centenary of the French Revolution. [Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, (CW), Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, New

Delhi, 1958-1994, Vol 1, p. 344]². The exhibition show-cased, among other things, tableaux from Francophone Africa. The colonial section was described by a contemporary journal as the " main attraction " of the exhibition after the Eiffel Tower and the Gallery of Machines.³ There were North African pavilions and also pavilions relating to Senegal and other Francophone areas. Forty years later Gandhi recalled that " there was a map of and guide to the Exhibition " but " I remember nothing of the Exhibition excepting its magnitude and variety ". (*Autobiography*, CW, Vol 39, p. 68) Possibly the exposition created a mixed impression; and even of the Eiffel Tower which had been constructed to mark the occasion, Gandhi wrote that " in no way can it be said to have contributed to the real beauty of the Exhibition ". (*Ibid.*, p. 69) There had been complaints that some of the colonial people who had been brought across for the exhibition were made part of displays that lacked dignity.⁴

In May 1893 Gandhi went to South Africa and, apart from some trips mainly to India and England, would stay for 21 years. In the course of these years he witnessed and participated, within the framework of loyalty to the British crown, in medical relief activities in the South African War at the turn of the century and the Bambatha rebellion in Natal in 1906, attending, especially on the latter occasion also to the Zulus. These aspects of Gandhi's work in South Africa are well-known and not repeated here. The South African years were formative. Many influences converged on Gandhi. These included, apart from his own upbringing and Indian influences, the writings of John Ruskin (1819-1900), Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910) and Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862). He was appreciative also of the examples of Mazzini (1805-1872), Garibaldi (1807-1882), Karl Blind (1826-1907), Egypt's Mustafa Kemal Pasha (1874-1908), the African-American educationist Booker T. Washington (1856-1915), the Women's Suffrage Movement for Parliamentary rights led by Emmeline Pankhurst (1858-1928) in England, the Sinn Fein in Ireland and Hungary's statesman Francis Deak (1803-1876). On the Sinn Fein in Ireland and on the Hungarian passive resistance and non-co-operation with Austria, Gandhi wrote in Gujarati. (*Indian Opinion*, September 7, 1907, CW, Vol 7, p. 214⁵)

These influences inculcated ideas of simple living, civil disobedience, patriotic protest, freedom of conscience and establishment of institutions for educational advancement and industrial skills. In his tribute on the death of Karl Blind, Gandhi recalled Blind's endeavours " in the cause of freedom and for the rights of others ". (*Indian Opinion*, June 8, 1907, CW, Vol 7, p. 28). Gandhi's admiration for Booker T. Washington's work in Tuskegee, Alabama extended in South Africa to appreciation for the work done by John Dube, the African educationist and leader, who, inspired by Washington, ran an industrial training institute close to Durban and not far from where Gandhi set up his Phoenix settlement. (*Indian Opinion*, September 2, 1905, CW, Vol 5, p. 55) Dube would in 1912 be the first President-General of the African National Congress (initially known as the South African Native National Congress). Likewise, Gandhi appreciated the efforts of a senior African educationist and leader, John Tengo Jabavu, Editor of *Imvo Zabantsundu* (" Native Opinion "), also influenced by Booker T. Washington, to establish " an Inter-State Native College with the present Lovedale Institute as its nucleus. " (*Indian Opinion*, March 17, 1906, CW, Vol 5, p. 234) Inhaling these diverse influences and precepts before him, Gandhi came to project a distinctive style of political mobilisation which emerged in struggles launched during these years against the various restrictive enactments and practices that he, as an Asian lawyer, encountered in southern Africa.

French Influence on Gandhi : Jean Finot's Work on Racial Prejudice

Gandhi's familiarity with and admiration for Voltaire (1694-1778), Rousseau (1712-1778) and Victor Hugo (1802-1885) is known. [For Gandhi's reference to Voltaire and Rousseau, see CW, Supplementary Vol II, p. 281 (December 5, 1931). For Gandhi on Rousseau and Victor Hugo,

see *Young India*, October 1, 1931, CW, Vol 47, p. 420 ; again on Rousseau in *Harijan*, April 4, 1936, CW, Vol 62, p. 311 and again on Hugo on December 20, 1946, CW, Vol 86, p. 246]

An important French influence dating from his South Africa years, which on matters of race was perhaps more pointed and therefore efficacious than that of any of the other writers he had read till then, is, oddly enough, less widely known. This is that of Jean Finot (1858-1922) whose work " *Race Prejudice* " had been commended in Gandhi's journal *Indian Opinion* on September 7, 1907. Earlier, on March 9, 1907, *The New York Times* had described Finot as a " French iconoclast on race prejudice ". Finot's work against racial prejudice had a significant impact on Gandhi ; it accelerated his transformation in South Africa from one who was seeking equality with Europeans to one who spoke in terms of equality for all. This is an element in the sources of his intellectual make-up that has not received adequate attention, even if Gandhi's mind was already working in this direction. Gandhi had appreciated the Governor of Pondicherry in French India for his telling Indians : " A representative of the Republic is bound to regard all [citizens] as equals and there is only one thing between us, viz., the laws ". (*Indian Opinion*, April 27, 1907, CW, Vol 6, p. 439).⁶ Likewise, Gandhi had criticised the racist element in the jury system in South Africa. In June 1907 he had deprecated the trial of an African, Mtonga, and described the jury system in South Africa as " about the worst, that could be devised " and which left much to be desired especially " when the question is as between whites and blacks ". (*Juries on Trial, Indian Opinion*, June 1, 1907, CW, Vol 7, pp. 1-2) . He despaired of obtaining " any satisfaction out of jurymen in a place like South Africa, where different nationalities are still in the melting pot, and a South African nation has yet to rise... " in the " dim and distant " future. (*Idem*) But, declared Gandhi, " equality in the eye of the law " was something " that can reasonably be claimed ". (*Idem*).

By 1907, the northern end of the African continent, like Natal and the Transvaal, was also in ferment. A serious conflict was on in Morocco and, in the note written for the Gujarati edition of his journal, Gandhi described it as a " conflagration " and " a fierce fire "; there was " plunder and rapine " in Tangier, he wrote, and in Casablanca there was " complete anarchy ". (*Indian Opinion*, August 17, 1907, CW, Vol 7, p. 167) He referred to killings, rape, and the arrest of two hundred women, describing Raisooli⁷, the leader of the rebellion, as having " created terror ", but nevertheless being according to reports " a brave and handsome soldier " who was also " alert and quick ". (*Idem*) It would appear that with his experiences of the 1906 Bambatha rebellion in Natal, Gandhi had begun more clearly to distinguish between the cause of a conflict and the mode of its expression and between the justice of a case and the means employed both to press and to suppress it.

He hopped later to give his readers " an account of why such chaos reigns in Morocco ". (*Idem*) That occasion did not come as the demands of his struggle in Transvaal were pressing in. A few weeks earlier, in July 1907, Indian passive resistance had begun in the Transvaal against the Asiatic Registration Act. The struggle required sacrifices from Indians, many of whom would lose their earnings and even wealth and temporarily their freedom by plunging into it. But Gandhi did manage to make a brief record of, and draw some lessons from, the " excellent bravery " of the Moors whose struggles in North-Western Africa against the French and the Spanish were much in the news at the time (*Indian Opinion*, August 31, 1907, CW, Vol 7, p. 203). According to the press reports of one incident in Casablanca that reached Gandhi, the Moors made a " galloping charge ", paying " no heed to the shower of bullets and shell-splinters raining on them ", and such " was their fervour that the French gunners did not have the heart to fire on such brave warriors " and instead " greeted them " and " clapped their hands in admiration " ; and the warriors thereupon " saluted them and turned back " (*Idem*) Whatever the veracity of the report, the idea had made an impression on Gandhi. " Such brave people " remarked Gandhi, " may be emulated by the whole world ". (*Idem*) He added, initiating also an

interrogation of the concept of civilisation that was to occupy a significant place in his thought : " Without doubt the Transvaal Indians will win if there is in them a hundredth part of the bravery of these Moors who are regarded as uncivilised. Here no one has to die. No one has to kill. Only money has to be sacrificed. " (*idem*) Such instances reinforced the various historical and contemporary sources of Gandhi's inspiration.

Arrested in the course of his struggles on October 7, 1908, Gandhi declined to offer bail, and was charged and sentenced on October 14, 1908 to two months imprisonment with hard labour for failing to give thumb and finger impressions under the registration laws and not producing a certificate of voluntary registration ; imprisoned in Volksrust prison, he referred to it as " King Edward's Hotel ". (CW, Vol 9, p. 89, p.89n, pp 103-104 and pp. 120-121) He remained in prison till December 12, 1908.

To Jean Finot's unjustly neglected work, and its influence on Gandhi in matters connected with race, must be added the influence of the writer Olive Schreiner (1855-1920). Soon after Gandhi's release from prison, an article by Olive Schreiner appeared in *The Transvaal Leader* arguing against racial prejudice and envisaging a non-racist South Africa. It was then reprinted with some editorial appreciation in Gandhi's journal. Schreiner wrote : " We cannot hope ultimately to equal the men of our own race living in more wholly enlightened and humanised communities, if our existence is passed among millions of non-free subjected peoples. " (' Olive Schreiner ' on Colour, *Indian Opinion*, January 2, 1909). In the same issue Gandhi's journal expressed its admiration for Schreiner and enthusiastically endorsed her remarks. Like Finot, Olive Schreiner had made a deep impact on Gandhi. He would repeatedly refer to her lack of racial prejudice and made a specific reference to it at the session of the Indian National Congress in Kanpur (India) when Dr A Abdurahman attended it at the head of a delegation in 1925. Both Finot and Olive Schreiner were vital influences that entered into the transformation and broadening of outlook that Gandhi experienced in South Africa on the question of race, particularly from mid-1908.

Towards a Commingling of Races

As Gandhi had noticed in 1907, South African peoplehood was also under construction and he presently threw his weight behind a commingling and equality of races. The African races, Gandhi told a meeting of the Young Men's Christian Association in Johannesburg on May 18, 1908, " are entitled to justice, a fair field and no favour. Immediately you give that to them, you will find no difficulty. " (*Indian Opinion*, June 6, 1908 and June 13, 1908, CW, Vol 8, p. 245). South Africa, he declared, " would probably be a howling wilderness without the Africans " (*Ibid.*, p. 242). He continued, expressly using the term " Coloured People " so as " to include the Coloured people proper – the Africans and the Asiatics ", to declare that : " The majority of people in South Africa, the majority of people in most of the Colonies, have become impatient of colour, and it behoves every right-minded man and woman to think twice before he or she jumps to the conclusion that the Coloured people are a menace and that, therefore, they ought to be got rid of with the greatest possible despatch. " (*Ibid.*, pp 242-243).

And further : " We hear nowadays a great deal of the segregation policy, as if it were possible to put people in water-tight compartments. " (*Ibid.* p. 243). In this speech Gandhi put forth his vision for the future South Africa : " If we look into the future, is it not a heritage we have to leave to posterity, that all the different races commingle and produce a civilisation that perhaps the world has not yet seen ? " (*Ibid.*, p. 246).

He had already been imprisoned in the Indian struggle in South Africa once at the beginning of 1908 and would go to prison four times more before returning to India six years later. Likewise, Kasturba, his wife, would be incarcerated in 1913 and sons Harilal and Manilal would be imprisoned six times each. While Gandhi's struggles were centred on discriminatory

statutes directed at Asians (the Chinese in South Africa too had joined the struggle), his concerns progressively widened. He became increasingly critical of the conditions in which African labour was made to work on the continent. For example, early in the year 1909, Gandhi referred to the need for avoidance as far as possible of tea, coffee and cocoa, which " are produced through the labour of men who work more or less in conditions of slavery ". Cocoa, he observed, was produced in the Congo where indentured Africans were " made to work beyond all limits of endurance ". (From Gujarati, *Indian Opinion*, January 9, 1909, CW, Vol 9, p. 136). This was a theme to which he would return.

The question of the Passive Resistance campaigns affecting the Africans evidently arose repeatedly in the South African Press at the time. Gandhi dealt with it in a speech on " The Ethics of Passive Resistance " at Germiston on June 7, 1909, a few weeks before his leaving on a visit to England : " The Colonists would, therefore, see that no exception could be taken to Indians making use of this force in order to obtain a redress of their grievances. Nor could such a weapon, if used by the Natives, do the slightest harm. On the contrary, if the Natives could rise so high as to understand and utilize this force, there would probably be no native question left to be solved. " (*Indian Opinion*, June 12, 1909, CW, Vol 9, p. 244). Some four years after Gandhi's Germiston speech, African women in the Orange Free State would in fact take to passive resistance.

Obviously, the methods of struggle envisaged by Gandhi were becoming more intensive and defiant. Though he sought to join forces in 1909 with W P Schreiner in lobbying efforts in England to secure greater rights for Asians and Africans in South Africa, Gandhi had reached the end of the petitioning road. In a note Gandhi sent in Gujarati for his journal he wrote : " I see the time drawing nearer everyday when no one, whether black or white, will succeed in obtaining a hearing by merely making petitions. If I am right, then no force in the world can compare with soul force, that is to say, satyagraha. I therefore wish that Indians should fill the gaols if, by the time this letter is published, there has been no decision or solution. " (*Indian Opinion*, August 28, 1909, CW, Vol 9, pp. 317-318). The same issue of *Indian Opinion* carried yet another appreciative reference to Jean Finot's work " Race Prejudice " : " In England and America, in France and Germany, and in the other civilised countries, it is the 'anthropologists' who have lent the most constant and active support to the false doctrines of caste and race ; but they are at last thoroughly discredited. Among others the French writer Finot, in his book ' Race Prejudice, ' has shown the utterly untenable position of this pseudo-anthropology, even though it has filled thousands of volumes of more or less ' scientific research '. The book has already had a remarkable reception, and must exert a great influence for the truth. It has the triple value of summing up the theories of race prejudice, of showing their essential futility, and of proving the fundamental unity of the human race. " (*Indian Opinion*, August 28, 1909) Finot's work against race prejudice, *Les Prejuge des Races* was published in Paris in 1905. The English language version *Race Prejudice* (translated by Florence Wade-Evans) was published in the following year from New York.

As has been noticed above, this work was earlier commended in Gandhi's *Indian Opinion* on September 7, 1907. Gandhi would also refer to Finot's work a few months before the Universal Races Congress held in 1911. (See Gandhi's letters to L. W. Ritch, April 12 and 18, 1911, CW, Vol 11, p. 22 and p. 29). The Polish-born Finot had become a French citizen in 1897. In France he founded and edited *La Revue des Revues* which brought him into contact with writers like Tolstoy. Interestingly, as one scholar, Jennifer Hecht, has remarked, Finot's " indictment of race prejudice was broadly conceived, including discussion of American blacks, animosity between the English and the French and Aryan supremacy "7. Thus Gandhi had a timely exposure not only to a scientific critique of race conceived on colour but also that conceived on Aryan glorification. It is significant that, as editor of *La Revue*, Finot, like Gandhi, had come into

contact with Tolstoy. While the coincidence may be a matter of chance, there may have been a more basic intellectual bridge between Gandhi and Finot's work. It has been suggested by Hecht that "Finot's central interest, and the central interest of his journal, was the promotion of pacificism through internationalism" and that since "nations were understood as representing different races, the cause of pacificism was well served by an attack on racialism" (*Idem*)

Though Gandhi's struggles in South Africa were organised around the Asian causes that more immediately affected Indians, his long-term vision for a non-racial South Africa was by now clear enough, as evidenced by his speech in May 1908, referred to above. By 1910, Gandhi took voluntarily to third class travel. One of the reasons for this, according to him was that he "shuddered to read the account of the hardships" faced by Africans in the third-class carriages in the Cape: "I wanted to experience the same hardships myself". (Letter to M P Fancy, March 16, 1910, CW, Vol 10, p. 183) The practice of third class travel that he would continue in India evidently had this African origin. For such Europeans as were able to rise above colour prejudice, he usually had a word of praise. When Woodhead, a veteran journalist with *The Natal Mercury*, passed away in an accident, Gandhi recalled in his tribute: "During the time he was Managing Editor, *The Mercury* has in all matters relating to the Coloured communities of the Colony, maintained a high standard and has on many occasions struck the note of warning against race hatred and colour prejudice". (*Indian Opinion*, April 16, 1910, CW, Vol 10, pp. 220-221).

Introduction of racial considerations in electoral laws would, according to Gandhi, prevent the coming into being of "real" nationhood in South Africa. In 1910 the African leader, Rev. Dr Walter Rubusana, (who was later to be a Vice President of the ANC or the South African Native National Congress, as it was initially known, in January 1912) was elected to the Cape Provincial Council. Gandhi, in whose journal Dr Rubusana had figured prominently as early as in 1904, warmly welcomed his election to the Provincial Council. The colour provisions of the latest Union legislation had anomalously made Dr Rubusana ineligible to sit in the Union Parliament. Gandhi warned against such legislative anomalies on which the Colonialists were seeking to build the South African nation, declaring that such provisions would prevent South Africa from becoming a "real nation":

"The election of the Rev. Dr Rubusana as a member of the Cape Provincial Council for Tembuland by a majority of 25 over his two opponents is an event of great importance. The election is really a challenge to the Union Parliament with reference to the colour clause. That Dr Rubusana can sit in the Provincial Council but not in the Union Parliament is a glaring anomaly which must disappear if South Africans are to become a real nation in the near future. We congratulate Dr Rubusana and the Coloured races on his victory and trust that his career in the Council will do credit to him and those he represents." (*Indian Opinion*, September 24, 1910, CW, Vol 10, p. 325)

The Universal Races Congress was organised in London in 1911. Gandhi did not himself attend but sent his associate H S L Polak. Gandhi, Olive Schreiner, the Coloured Peoples' leader Dr A Abdurahman and the African lawyer Alfred Mangena (who would be one of the founders of the future African National Congress), among others, were among those from South Africa who were on the Honorary General Committee of the Universal Races Congress. With all of them Gandhi was well-acquainted and of all of them Gandhi's journal had already taken early appreciative note. Also on the committee were E.W. Blyden, the famous African intellectual from Sierra Leone, and Dr W E B DuBois, who was later known as the pioneering force behind the Pan-African movement.⁸ One contribution to the deliberations was from Finot whose work, "Race Prejudice", Gandhi recommended to another earlier in the year, in April, and would refer to again in India. The work had been favourably reviewed four years earlier in Gandhi's journal by A Chessel Piquet, a likely pseudonym for Henry, that is "H.S.L.", Polak. (*Indian Opinion*, September 7, 1907) Dr DuBois, whose contribution to the 1911 Congress was praised highly in

Gandhi's journal, had also invoked Finot in his paper presented at the Congress. How significant the impact of Finot's work had been on Gandhi may be seen from the fact that he invoked Finot even later in the mid-twenties, after he had been back in India for nearly a decade. When Marcus Garvey, as Chairman of the Fourth Annual International Convention of the Negro Peoples of the World, greeted Gandhi on behalf of " the Negroes of the world " for the " fight for the freedom of your people and country ", adding " (w)e are with you ", Gandhi, who had been released in early 1924 after spending nearly two years in prison, published the message from Garvey along with a note in which he referred again to Finot :

" Theirs is perhaps a task more difficult than ours. But they have some very fine workers among them. They have fine physique. They have a glorious imagination. They are as simple as they are brave. M. Finot has shown by his scientific researches that there is in them no inherent inferiority as is commonly supposed to be the case. All they need is opportunity. I know that if they have caught the spirit of the Indian movement, their progress must be rapid. " (*Young India* on August 21, 1924, CW, Vol 25, p. 26).

Nation Formation Processes

As the process of nation formation was undergoing a constricted construction in South Africa, it was underway also in other countries and regions. With some of these Gandhi had occasion to deal, particularly if these were countries to which Indians had migrated. British Guiana (now Guyana) in South America was one such site where Gandhi sought to inculcate an inclusive notion of peoplehood. When his opinion was sought in a matter that would have ramifications for nation-construction in Guyana his advice was in accord with the non-racial character of nationhood he had sought in South Africa and in India. In March 1924, Gandhi had been approached by Mahadeo Panday and Caramat Ali Macdoom who wrote to him about the prospect of an African influx in British Guiana and expressed their anxiety about the Africans seeking the same entitlements as were offered to Indians there. Gandhi, who was then convalescing in Bombay after a surgery, replied on March 28, 1924 : " You state that the Negroes are clamouring for the conditions offered to our Indian colonists. Personally I do not mind it, nor need our countrymen in British Guiana fear the proposed influx of the Negroes. If the 1,30,000 Indians give a good account of themselves, they will bless themselves and bless the Negroes and everyone else who goes there. " (CW, Vol 23, p.332).

Non-cooperation in India (1920)

If Gandhi's struggle against race had some French intellectual inspiration, his striving against British-allied classes accustomed to receiving colonial favours was supported by French historical precedent. As in South Africa, he would be imprisoned again in India. The non-cooperation movement against British rule in India was initiated by Gandhi in 1920. In the course of the struggle, in which he would later be arrested in 1922, Gandhi cited certain events of the French Revolution as an example. Asking for the rejection of titles conferred by the British, he said non-co-operation was not possible " unless the masses themselves reject the classes and take up non-cooperation in their own hands and are able to fight that battle even as the men of the French Revolution were able to take the reins of Government in their own hands leaving aside the leaders and marched to the banner of victory. " (*The Hindu*, August 13, 1920, CW, Vol 18, p. 152)

For his part, Gandhi was prepared even in his non-co-operation, to provide the English with an honourable exit. What he sought was equality among the white, brown and black races and, if this could not be achieved under the English, he was, of course, prepared to end that connection. He defined his objective in a letter to his English friend and associate C F Andrews : " It may be that the English temperament is not responsive to a status of perfect equality with

the black and the brown races. Then the English must be made to retire from India. But I am not prepared to reject the possibility of an honourable equality. The connection must end on the clearest possible proof that the English have hopelessly failed to realize the first principle of religion, namely, brotherhood of man." (Letter dated November 23, 1920, CW, Vol 19, p. 14)

René Maran (1887-1960)

Articulate sections of Francophone Africa had also been taking a keen interest in Gandhi. For example, *Les Continents*, a monthly journal established in Paris in 1924 by the Dahomeyan Kojo Tovalou Houenou had been carrying extracts on Gandhi's ideas and movements.⁹ There were reverberations among leading Afro-Caribbean intellectuals as well. René Maran (1887-1960), the poet and writer who was Vice President of *Les Continents*, wrote an article in the mid-1920s on Gandhi as an apostle of militant nonviolence; an English translation of Maran's article by Edna Worthley Underwood was published by the New York based National Urban League's journal, *Opportunity*, in February 1925. Born in Martinique to Guyanese parents, Maran grew up in Gabon in Africa and was in the French colonial service in Ubangi-Shari (later the Central African Republic) and Chad. In Paris he was associated also with the *Ligue universelle pour la defense de la race negre*.¹⁰ In 1922 Maran had written the acclaimed novel *Batouala* in which he had denounced the injustices of the colonial system in French Equatorial Africa in what is seen as a seminal Francophone African critique of colonialism. René Maran's article on Gandhi was quite well informed, especially on his South African years¹¹. Indeed Maran chided Romain Rolland, who had recently produced a biography of Gandhi, for having paid insufficient attention to Gandhi's struggle in South Africa. Rolland, Maran observed, had written a "perfect" biography which would have been "altogether perfect if he had not forgotten entirely" Gandhi's early years which were "likewise noblest and most lovable" as it was "the time when he was groping to find THE PATH – and had not yet touched it". (Capitals as in original)¹². The journal *Opportunity* in which Maran wrote was founded by the African-American sociologist Charles Spurgeon Johnson and brought out by the National Urban League, New York which focussed on African-American issues. René Maran, a crucial trans-Atlantic link between Francophone Africans, Afro-Caribbeans and African-Americans, was himself co-editor of *Les Continents*, the first African paper in Paris. Maran referred to Gandhi as "one of the most distinguished martyrs of the races that have suffered – have been forced to suffer from the civilizations of the occident – the most representative of all."¹³ In his article Maran displayed a familiarity with Gandhi's life apart from the material available in Rolland's book which appears to have circulated widely among French language readers.

In a prose work written in 1925 and inspired by René Maran's *Batouala*, the Malagasy litterateur, Jean-Joseph Rabearivelo (1903-1937), a pioneering and major poet in the French Colonial empire, referred to the imprisonment of Gandhi and of the Madagascar anti-colonialist Jean Ralaimongo (1884-1942). In this work, which is considered more explicit in its anti-colonialism than his poetry, Rabearivelo asserted that the imprisonment of Gandhi and Ralaimongo had resulted from their being 'contemptuous' of the predominant political "thirst for lucre and material gain"; he condemned the treatment meted out to them as also to Marcus Garvey in America as "barbarism in the midst of the 20th century".¹⁴

The Riff War

The international struggle against racial discrimination, in turn, continued to receive Gandhi's attention. He saw French conduct in this respect fall short of what he considered the ideals of the French revolution and the great French minds with whose writings he was acquainted. Atrocities perpetrated in the French Congo were being replicated by France in Syria against the Druses and also elsewhere. Referring to the treatment meted out by the French to the Riffs

in Morocco, Gandhi remarked of France that " there is little fraternity between her and the Riffs ". (*Young India*, November 12, 1925, CW, Vol 28, p. 441). He saw early the futility of raising such matters with the League of Nations. " And what is the League of Nations ? Is it not in reality merely England and France ? Do the other powers count ? Is it any use appealing to France which is denying her motto of Fraternity, Equality and Justice ? " (*Idem*) Similarly, to appeal to England " is to appeal to Caesar against Augustus ". (*Idem*) The answer, according to him, lay in one's own self – " perceive the truth in its nakedness and learn to appeal to the nation to do her duty " ; this consisted in either fighting " to the bitter end, even as our brothers the four-footed animals often do " or in demonstrating the " uselessness, nay, the sinfulness of exploitation of those weaker than ourselves ". (*Idem*) It was in this sense that he said of Syria as he would often say, in various ways, of Africa : " Relief of Syria lies through India ". (*Idem*) A month earlier there had been a general strike in France in protest against French policies connected with the North African Rif.¹⁵ At this time the Surrealists in France had also become active in their expressions of solidarity with the Riffs in the North African Riff War (1921-26).¹⁶ In May 1926 the combined forces of the French and the Spanish defeated the Riffs and their leader Abd el-Krim gave himself up¹⁷. Gandhi's journal highlighted the Riff and Abyssinian conflicts with an article by C F Andrews criticising the League of Nations for its silence in the face of the " overthrow of the Riffs and the continued crushing of the Druses ".¹⁸

This denunciation was ratified by Gandhi, who had already criticised France a year earlier for its role in the Riff, the region on the north-eastern edge of the Atlas Range. The significance of this may be seen from the fact, as noted by a pioneering scholar of Francophone African literature, that Gandhi's prestige was already great by the time the impulses for political independence, as in the Riff, appeared.¹⁹ Gandhi now followed with an article entitled " Race Arrogance " referring to information " showing the wrong done by white Europe to the Abyssinians and the Riffs " and pointing also to " the injustice that is being daily perpetrated against the Negro in the United States of America in the name of and for the sake of maintaining white superiority ". (*Young India*, October 14, 1926, CW, Vol 31, pp. 492-493)

It was not as though Gandhi had singled out France. As in the case of French external policies, he noticed racism rampant in England's actions both within and without. Pointing to certain racial disabilities in Glasgow, Gandhi had made, earlier in the year, a world-wide projection of his concept of non-violent non-co-operation which he had, introduced in India in 1920. Citing the racial disabilities within Britain, he wrote : " The question therefore that is agitating South Africa is not a local one but it is a tremendous world problem... There is however no hope of avoiding the catastrophe unless the spirit of exploitation that at present dominates the nations of the West is transmuted into that of real helpful service, or unless the Asiatic and African races understand that they cannot be exploited without their co-operation, to a large extent voluntary, and thus understanding, withdraw such co-operation ". (*Young India*, March 18, 1926, CW, Vol 30, pp. 135-136)

The international aspect of the struggle came still further into focus with the invitation to Gandhi to attend the Brussels International Congress Against Colonial Oppression and Imperialism, or the Congress of Oppressed Nationalities, which was to be held in February 1927. In his message sent before February 7, 1927, Gandhi thanked it " very cordially " for its invitation, and while regretting that his work in India prevented him from participating, he added in his message : " *I wish you, however, from the depths of my heart, every success in your deliberations* ". (CW, Supplementary Volume I, p. 411) In December 1926 the Indian National Congress, at its Guwahati (Assam) session, appointed Jawaharlal Nehru, who was already in Europe at the time, as its representative to the Congress in Brussels.²⁰ Along with Gandhi, Albert Einstein and Romain Rolland sent messages of goodwill to the Brussels Congress.²¹⁻²² The Brussels Congress gave birth to the League Against Imperialism. Nehru was made one of the honorary presidents

of the General Council of the League and a member of the Executive Committee. Among the three elected secretaries was the African trade unionist Lamine Senghor. Belonging to Senegal in French West Africa, Lamine Senghor was then resident in Paris and was Chairman of the *Ligue pour la Defense de la Race Nègre*.²³ Houenou had become directly involved in Dahomey (now Benin) and Senegal politics and had even been arrested in Togo. In succession to Houenou's *Ligue Universelle de Defense de la Race Negre*, Lamine Senghor came to lead the *Comite de Defense de la Race Negre* [CDRN] which was later reconstituted as *Ligue de Defense de la Race Negre* [LDRN].²⁴ Nehru reported back to the Congress Working Committee in India that Lamine Senghor's speech at the Brussels Congress appears to have led to the latter's arrest in France for "high treason".²⁵ The journal *La Race Negre* "had been clamoring since July 1927 for complete and immediate independence" and Garan Tiemoko Kouyate from French Sudan (the later Mali) and Lamine Senghor, "the two West Africans who had launched upon this radical course", referred not to "black internationalism" but to Gandhi, the socialist revolutions and Woodrow Wilson in support of their claim for national self-government.²⁶

That Gandhi should have sent a message to the Brussels Congress is significant for he was not especially enamoured of international conferences and it was not often that he would associate himself with them, his emphasis being on strengthening the struggle at hand, then ongoing in his own country. The message was important also as the Brussels Congress represented, at this stage, the coalescing of, or an alliance between, groups seeking, in the first instance, freedom from colonial rule and those focussing on change in the social and economic structure. Participants at the Brussels Congress had a wide canvas before them. The German editor, feminist and socialist, Dr Helene Stocker, who attended the Brussels Congress, "explained the merits of Gandhi's doctrine of non-co-operation and passive resistance" and "classified women among the oppressed classes of the world".²⁷ The problem, as Gandhi noted later in the year, was the idea of inequality itself: "The false and rigid doctrine of inequality has led to the insolent exploitation of the nations of Asia and Africa." (*Young India*, August 11, 1927, CW, Vol. 34, p. 315).

While Gandhi was sought out by writers and organisations outside India on questions concerning racial harmony and international peace, he did not consider racial harmony as being possible without confronting head-on the causes that led to disharmony. Gandhi was requested by the France-based Syndicalist Marcelle Capy for a message, "however short", for a proposed "*Review Interraciale*" to promote human brotherhood and to be written in by "friends of all countries and all races: Africans, Americans, Asiatics and Europeans"; she sought also Gandhi's consent for him to be included in a 'Comite d'Honneur' for the journal.²⁸ Partially answering her request, Gandhi in his reply drew attention to what he saw as the real factor underlying the tension: "There can be no living harmony between races and nations unless the main cause is removed, namely, exploitation of the weak by the strong." (March 20, 1928, CW, Vol 36, p. 121)

By the turn of the decade, awareness of the movements and techniques of Gandhi, who had himself written early enough on Moroccan events, came to figure also in the struggles constitutive of Moroccan nationalism.²⁹

1931 : Revisiting France and England

At the end of August 1931 Gandhi sailed for Europe to attend the Round Table Conference called in London by the British Government to discuss the future constitutional development of India. Disembarking at Marseilles on Sept 11, 1931, he passed through Paris on the next day before going on to London.³⁰ Interestingly, at this time the Exposition Coloniale, a celebration of the French Colonial Empire, was on in Paris.³¹ The Surrealists had started a campaign against visiting the exhibition as it was considered imperial propaganda and dero-

gatory in its depiction of colonial peoples.³² Significantly, Gandhi appears not only to have ignored the Exposition on his onward journey to England but also to have made no reference to it in December 1931 when he addressed some meetings in Paris. This was unlike more than four decades earlier, when he had come across from London to visit the Exposition Universelle held in Paris in 1889.

There was considerable interest in Gandhi in France by the 1920s and early 1930s. The celebrated journalist Albert Londres is believed to have had personal experience of some of Gandhi's campaigns in the early 1920s. On December 4, 1926, the Bar Association in Paris invited Juliette Veillier, a versatile woman who was also a rising lawyer, to deliver its annual lecture ; she chose to speak on Gandhi and his movement in India.³³ France's international role and its domestic scene provided a study in some contrasts. The Indian nationalist, scholar and diplomat, K M Panikkar in his autobiography published in 1954 in Malayalam and in English translation in 1977 gives an account of Paris in the 1920s. " Only in Paris do we find a complete absence of colour bar. Everyone knows that the British look down on coloured people. The reverse was true of Paris. Negro or Mongol, Hindu or Briton, each man was respected according to his education and status... People come like pilgrims to Paris not only from all European countries but from China, Japan, Siam, Africa and America ; everyone gets the same welcome ".³⁴

An International Study Group was formed in Paris after Gandhi's visit in 1931 and it brought out the bulletin *Nouvelles de l'Inde* with Romain Rolland and his sister as well as Edmond Privat and Jawaharlal Nehru among the contributors ; from this group emerged the Friends of Gandhi Association, headed until her death in 1949 by Louise Guieyette who had hosted Gandhi in Paris during the 1931 visit.³⁵

Struggles in Madagascar

Yet, the French authorities must have viewed Gandhi's visit to Paris with some apprehension. In Francophone African territories on and near the African mainland, resistance against colonialism was gathering momentum. The events in North and Central Africa have already been mentioned. Elsewhere too, the prospects for holding on to colonial conquest did not appear bright. Developments in France-dominated Madagascar have been referred to above. Jean Ralaimongo (1884-1942), who has been described as the real founder of the national movement in that country, " encouraged the peasants to engage in the type of resistance practised by Gandhi in India ".³⁶

Leaving England on December 5, 1931, Gandhi passed through France, addressing meetings and resting the night in Paris, before spending a few days in Switzerland and Italy. Gandhi had arrived in Paris on December 5 and addressed some meetings. He also gave some press interviews. It would have been natural for the representatives of the French colonies living in Paris to be curious about what Gandhi had to say. We have at least one confirmation of the presence of North African and other such representatives at the meeting that Gandhi addressed at Magic City Hall on December 5, 1931³⁷. One meeting, organised, according to a note by the editors of Gandhi's *Collected Works*, by " local intellectuals ", was attended by some 2000 persons (CW, Vol 48, p.391n). The interest generated in Gandhi's visit to Europe in 1931 among non-European peoples was to be expected. Francophone African writers and activists in and from the Caribbean too had, at least since the 1920s, become increasingly aware of Gandhi and his struggles. As we have seen, the Martinican-born Guyanese author, Rene Maran, who was based in Paris, had written at length about Gandhi in 1925. The Haitian Jacques Roumain (1907-1944), of mixed-race descent, who had achieved prominence as a writer and political activist and who would found Haiti's Communist Party, had followed with a series of articles in March 1928 and also in May 1930 after Gandhi's arrest.³⁸ In Afro-Caribbean literature, Gandhi's struggles were referred to and invoked ; Claude McKay, the Jamaican-born writer who had

studied at Tuskegee, was in Marseilles when he produced his second novel, *Banjo* in 1929.⁴⁰ Writing in April 1930, the month in which Gandhi launched country-wide civil disobedience in India and initiated the breaking of the salt laws, Paulette Nardal, the Martinican editor and activist, wrote stressing the significant involvement of women in Gandhi's campaigns.⁴¹ In Villeneuve, Geneva, Gandhi spent time with his biographer, the literary giant, Romain Rolland. While there, Gandhi sought out also Pierre Ceresole to whom he gave an account of his South African experience.⁴² Dr Edmond Privat, then teaching at a Swiss university, and his wife Yvonne Privat, had been persuaded by Gandhi to accompany him on his return journey to India on the ship from Brindisi. Privat, who had during the First World War advocated the cause of Polish independence, described what happened at the Egyptian port : " There are big crowds on the piers of Port Said and a big delegation invades the ship. But the police surround the boat, prevent the journey to Cairo and put a stop to the grand reception arranged over there ".⁴³ As the ship entered the Suez Canal, Edmond Privat and Gandhi discussed the struggles ahead. Based on this conversation, Dr Privat has provided us with insights into Gandhi's mind and the place Africa occupied in his thoughts even as regards the future course for India. On relations between India and Britain, Dr Privat noted : " It is Gandhi's dream to have a voluntary association between the two. If he still holds on to the link with Britain, as amongst equals, it is to save the coloured races. Canada dominates the English attitude towards America. Gandhi desires that India should similarly have her say in favour of the oppressed Africans. The liberation of his own country is only the first stage for him. He wishes then to use that power to deliver the others and to add... its moral conscience to the practical genius of the English. A united India would be able to put pressure like Canada under threat of separation. Imperialism and colonialism would have a decided enemy. For India, such an ambition demands a humane conduct. It has to win its cause by irrefragable methods and has to cure herself of her own faults ".⁴⁴ Arrested in India soon after his return, Gandhi's life was spent in and out of jail for some years. He focussed his attention on social reform within India. In early 1934 when he visited Karaikal, a territory in French India, and addressed a meeting, Gandhi observed : " It can be said that it was France that first gave the world the three significant words, ' Liberty, Equality and Fraternity ' ". (*The Hindu*, February 17, 1934, CW, Vol 57, p. 167). Yet, he said, it was " not given to all to enforce the three things in practice ", and, turning the searchlight inwards, he found the prevailing discriminatory social practices among Hindus to be most wanting in this respect.

Tunisia : Confirming a Gandhian Tenet

There was a strong emphasis in Gandhi's world-view on constructive work and efforts to regain economic self-sufficiency. In the thirties, Gandhi's journal typically carried a lengthy article by V L Mehta on " Handicrafts in Tunisia ".⁴⁵ It was a review of a monograph by Roger Plissard of the International Labour Office. Associated closely with Gandhi's economic perspectives, Mehta, who went on to become the first finance minister of Bombay state after Indian independence, pointed out that there was no conflict between modern industry and the protection of handicrafts even in the industrialised world ; in a non-industrialised country like Tunisia, whose situation was similar to that prevailing in India, handicrafts had a vital place in the national economy.

Mehta found confirmation of an important Gandhian tenet from the North African experience which may also have some contemporary resonance : " it is of interest to learn that, in Tunisia, protection in the form of tariffs and taxation is recommended for these products on the ground that for social reasons the craftsman has a moral right to retain his trade, when, as is usually the case – in Tunisia and India as well – there is no alternative employment available ".⁴⁶ Yet it was politics that would soon take precedence and years of political struggle were again

to follow. In these difficult years, there were, as in the past, diverse strands in the sources for inspiration and intellectual strength for the Indian movement.

Quit India : A Prelude to Quit Africa

In a series of statements before the launch of the famous Quit India movement against British rule in 1942, Gandhi stressed that the Western powers must withdraw not only from India but also thereafter from Africa. In an article dated July 18, 1942, under the title " *To Every Japanese* ", Gandhi wrote : " Even if you win it will not prove that you were in the right ; it will only prove that your power of destruction was greater. This applies obviously to the Allies too, unless they perform now the just and righteous act of freeing India as an earnest and promise of similarly freeing all other subject peoples in Asia and Africa. " (*Harijan*, July 26, 1942, *CW*, Vol 76, p. 311) These moves were followed with the adoption of the famous Quit India Resolution by the All India Congress Committee at its Bombay session on August 8, 1942.

Although Gandhi was not an unqualified admirer of what successive French regimes had made of the French Revolution and its legacy, he sought also to invoke and derive inspiration also from its political philosophy which he had come to regard as a heritage for the world. Shortly before initiating the Quit India movement in August 1942, Gandhi wrote : " The French have a noble motto in Liberty, Equality, Fraternity. It is a heritage not for the French only but for all mankind... What the French never realized it is open to us to do. " (*Harijan*, August 2, 1942, *CW*, Vol 76, p. 336) In his speech on August 7, 1942, at the All India Congress Committee meeting in Bombay to launch the movement calling upon British power to quit India, Gandhi would express his "great admiration for the French people" and refer to the French and Russian revolutions as struggles on behalf of the people while also distinguishing the Indian movement for its non-violent character. (*CW*, Vol 76, pp. 380-381) As often in the past, Gandhi also invoked, in an article that would coincide with his own arrest, the writings of Thoreau, Ruskin and Tolstoy. (*Harijan*, August 9, 1942, *CW*, Vol 76, p. 358)

Assimilation : Bourguiba / Senghor

Gandhi's work was being watched with interest by diverse groups in various parts of the colonial world, particularly Africa. Tunisia's Habib Bourguiba, who has been described as one of North Africa's most creative leaders, became a close observer of Gandhi's ideas and methods and believed like him that the struggle against colonialism was essentially the task of recovering the power of independent thinking and that the main thing was to rid the colonised mind of its servility.⁴⁷ By the time of the framing of the still-born April 1946 Constitution in France, not only Soviet ideas but those of Gandhi and Leopold Senghor, who ' wanted to assimilate, not be assimilated '⁴⁸, had begun to influence the section of opinion which had hitherto thought that non-white races could be dealt with in French overseas policy " by simply treating them as Frenchmen " ; as such it began increasingly to be understood that such peoples " should be free, but free to accept or reject French civilisation – or to accept parts of it and reject others ".⁴⁹ But it would still take much time, and encounter much resistance within France, before such a right could in fact be realised.

In the midst of everything, the struggle in South Africa, and the need for a non-racial definition of nationhood, continued to occupy Gandhi's attention. In the past Gandhi, while favouring co-operation with other oppressed peoples in South Africa, had not been sanguine about possibilities of complete identity on all issues, or about an *amalgamated* struggle, considering that the laws governing Indians and other oppressed peoples within South Africa had been different and the points of attack were therefore not identical. (See *Indian Opinion*, July 27, 1907, *CW*, Vol 7, p. 125 and *Harijan*, February 18, 1939, *CW*, Vol 68, pp. 272-273) With the changed situation in South Africa, where a new South Africa-born Indian generation had come

to the fore, Gandhi endorsed a joint struggle including within it all racial categories. However, he did maintain that it ought to be non-violent. A deputation from South Africa led by Sorabji Rustomji came to India in 1946 (CW, Vol 83, pp 352-354). It was protesting against racial legislation in South Africa. A member of the delegation asked Gandhi : " You have said we should associate with Zulus and Bantus. Does it not mean joining them in a common anti-white front ? " Gandhi replied : " Yes, I have said that we should associate with the Zulus, Bantus, etc.... It will be good, if you can fire them with the spirit of non-violence ". (CW, Vol 83, p 353) Gandhi remarked of the deputationists' cause on May 27, 1946: "The cause is the cause of the honour of India and through her of all the exploited coloured races of the earth, whether they be brown, yellow or black. It is worth all the suffering of which they are capable ". (CW, Vol 84, p. 215).

While on a peace mission in East Bengal, on February 28, 1947 Gandhi endorsed the decision of the African National Congress, the Coloured People's Organisation, the Natal Indian Congress and the Transvaal Indian Congress in South Africa to refrain from assisting the celebrations of and to boycott a Royal visit to that country " in view of the disabilities imposed upon the Asiatics and Africans and other Coloured people ". He wrote : " I take this opportunity of publicly endorsing the abstention as a natural and dignified step by any self-respecting body of people. " (*The Hindu*, March 1, 1947, CW, Vol 87, p. 28). [This was in accordance with what he had earlier written on October 25, 1946 (CW, Vol 86, pp 28-30)]

The on-going struggle in Vietnam, where France was seeking to re-assert its control after the War, did not escape Gandhi's attention. Since December 1946 the struggle for freedom had been renewed, the French having gone back on a March 1946 agreement with Ho Chi Minh involving acceptance of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam as " a free state with its own government, parliament, army and finances, forming part of the Indo-Chinese Federation and the French Union ".⁵⁰ Vietnam's delegates to the Inter-Asian Relations Conference held in Delhi called on Gandhi on April 6, 1947. Through the leader of the delegation, Tran Van Heun, Gandhi sent a message to the people of Vietnam : " My heart is always with the oppressed peoples of the world, and I have full sympathy with the cause for which the people of Viet Nam are fighting ". (*The Hindu*, April 10, 1947, CW, Vol 87, p. 220).

Indian Independence

Indian independence from British rule was achieved in August 1947. In an act of friendship and reconciliation with Britain, Indian leaders asked the British Viceroy, Mountbatten of Burma, to stay on as Governor General for the time-being. There was some opposition within India to this decision. In Gandhi's comment one may detect a touch of optimism with regard to British officialdom, but he sketched also an emphatically non-racist conception of India : " I shall say that under the scheme that will come into effect on August 15, it does not matter whether the Governor-General is an Englishman, a Frenchman or a Dutchman, whether he is a brown-skinned Indian or a White or a Negro. If I had my way a Harijan girl would be the Governor General. So if Lord Mountbatten becomes Governor General he will still be a servant of India. " (Speech at a Prayer Meeting, July 12, 1947, CW, Vol 88, p. 322) Another controversy erupted in relation to certain French settlements that still remained in India ; pointing the way forward in a written speech delivered on November 9, 1947, Gandhi said it was no longer possible for these settlements " to remain under servility " and, connecting this with the worldwide struggle, gave expression to his hope " that the great French nation would never identify itself with the suppression of people, whether black or brown, in India or elsewhere " (*Harijan*, November 16, 1947, CW, Vol 89, p. 514).

He set the same non-racial standards for the newly independent India. In an article published less than two weeks before his assassination, Gandhi wrote of Delhi, the capital of India where there had been inter-community strife, and of the peoples inhabiting the subcon-

continent : " (Delhi) is the heart of India. It would be the limit of foolishness to regard it as belonging only to the Hindus or the Sikhs. It may sound harsh but there is no exaggeration in it. It is the literal truth. All Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Parsis, Christians and Jews who people this country from Kanyakumari to Kashmir and from Karachi to Dibrugarh in Assam and who have lovingly and in a spirit of service adopted it as their dear motherland, have an equal right to it. No one can say that it has place only for the majority and the minority should be dishonoured. Whoever serves it with the purest devotion must have the first right over it. Therefore, anyone who seeks to drive out the Muslims is Delhi's enemy number one and therefore India's enemy number one. (*Harijanbandhu*, January 18, 1948, CW, Vol 90, p. 419). Gandhi was assassinated soon thereafter on January 30, 1948. Among the causes that led to his assassination was precisely his non-racial and non-denominational definition of Indian peoplehood.

Francophone Africa and the Posthumous Gandhi

We may conclude with a broad overview of Gandhi's posthumous reception in Francophone Africa. With the Algerian war having started in 1954, the struggle in Algeria received increased international attention. It was inevitable that there would be an intensification of the debates on methods of struggle. Though diverse tactics would be available for adoption there and in other parts of Africa, Gandhi's struggle continued to inspire activists and thinkers in and from the continent. There were also other parts of Francophone Africa where Gandhi struck a chord. In the Ivory Coast Felix Houphouët-Boigny (1905?-1993), for example, regarded Gandhi as a source of inspiration and was himself spoken of as the " Gandhi of Africa ".⁵¹ Houphouët-Boigny was associated with the *Parti Démocratique de la Côte d'Ivoire* (PDCI) and persuaded the French Constituent Assembly in 1946 to support legislation " to outlaw the forced labour system in all of France's colonies ", a measure which ensured wide support for him among the people of Francophone West Africa.⁵² Other scholars have made reference to the influence of Gandhi's passive resistance in sections of *Afrique Equatoriale Française* [AEF].⁵³

The political goodwill of Gandhi was tapped into even by those in Francophone Africa who may have been inclined to a somewhat different path. The Algerian freedom fighter M'hamed Yazid, who came to prominence at the Afro-Asian Conference at Bandung in April 1955 as the representative of the Front de Liberation Nationale (FLN), would record the inspiration that his generation received from " Mustafa Kemal, Gandhi and the Irish rebels of the First World War ".⁵⁴ The three sources named by the Algerian were significant, the first indicated a struggle rooted in the region itself and the last two showed that peaceful mass struggles and more violent forms of protest were both open for consideration. Some hoped nevertheless that peaceful methods would have preference. Soon after Bandung, the Algeria-born Albert Camus⁵⁵ would write of Gandhi as " the greatest man in our history ".⁵⁶ Later Camus would observe that " Gandhi proved that it is possible to fight for one's people and win without for a moment losing the world's respect ".⁵⁷ It is passive resistance, it has been suggested, that Camus " would undoubtedly have liked to see applied by the Algerian nationalists ".⁵⁸ The Camus position on the Algerian struggle engendered debates with Jean-Paul Sartre and also within Africa.

But with the tide of repression in Africa on the rise, particularly since the fifties as the anti-colonial struggle sharpened, the search for multiple strategies can be understood. In the course of the struggle in India, too, other methods of struggle had not been absent. Even so, as Sartre recognised, the non-violent strand remained a vital element in African struggles. Congo's Patrice Lumumba, released from prison just in time to attend the Round Table Conference called by the Belgian government in Brussels, observed on the eve of the independence of his country : " We have wrought our freedom by applying the principle of non-violent action in our fight against Colonialism. This we owe to Mahatma Gandhi. "⁵⁹ This was not merely lip-service. Jean-Paul Sartre wrote of Lumumba and of the Congolese National Movement (MNC) : " On countless

occasions he said that the movement he was organising, and whose uncontested leader he became, would be *non-violent*, and apart from the provocations or a few local initiatives of which he always disapproved, it was by non-violent means that the MNC established itself".⁶⁰

There was another aspect of Gandhi – his strategy for national rejuvenation and reconstruction – which, as we have seen, often interested Africans, such as Bourguiba, in the Francophone area. In Cameroon, for example, intellectuals closely studied Gandhi's ideological resistance to colonialism. The influential journal *Abbia*, was guided by Bernard Nsokika Fonlon who was "quite explicit" in his "resort to writings against imposed forms of education by Ireland's Padraic Pearse and India's Mohandas Gandhi, nationalist rebels who made those descents from elite to mass surroundings Fonlon called for and were respectively executed and jailed for their efforts".⁶¹ "Their resistance served Fonlon as models for Africa's leaders".⁶² A leading Algerian intellectual and Islamic scholar who came under Gandhi's influence was Malek Bennabi.⁶³ Gandhi's approach to decolonisation held appeal for Bennabi. The latter emphasised, in a manner that may be equated with Gandhi's attitude, that in dealing with the colonisation process it was not enough to tackle the exterior (colonising) force and that it was necessary also to end the "colonisability" of the colonised. In contrast, the Fanonian approach to the reception of Gandhian influence in northern Africa was more reluctant, being focussed mainly on the question of violence, which Fanon saw as liberative, versus the non-violence associated with Gandhi's struggles.

Yet clearly, the extent to which Gandhian non-violent struggles came to draw upon the emphasis Gandhi placed on a non-racist construction of peoplehood, especially and expressly from May 1908 onwards, the influences which served to bring this about, and Gandhi's repercussions in the Francophone sphere remain a promising area for further extensive study.

END NOTES

¹ This is a revised and somewhat expanded version of a paper which was initially presented at the Centre for French and Francophone Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi on March 19, 2008. I have benefited from comments by E S Reddy on the penultimate draft of this article. My thanks also to Brent Hayes Edwards, Charles Larson, Geetha Ganapathy-Dore and Roland Lardinois and who helped me obtain certain materials I needed. I am grateful to Asha Puri, Roberta Shapiro and Swati Dasgupta for enabling me to reach into some of the French language writings.

² For reading convenience, references to material from the *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* are given within the main text while other references are in the notes at the foot of each page.

³ See Lynn E. Palermo, *Identity Under Construction: Representing the Colonies at the Paris Exposition Universelle of 1889* in Sue Peabody and Tyler Stovall (eds.), *The Color of Liberty: Histories of Race in France*, Duke University Press, Durham, 2003, p. 285

⁴ Palermo in Peabody and Stovall (eds.) *op. cit.*, p. 291

⁵ Deak's name is mis-spelt in the English translation.

⁶ A year later Gandhi would give expression to a similar long-term vision for South Africa even as he participated in struggles with more limited immediate or medium-term objectives.

⁷ Also known as Raisuli, his full name was Mulai Ahmed Raisuni. He continued to be active till much later, in the 1920s, in the Riff unrest to which Gandhi would have occasion to refer again in 1925 and 1926.

⁸ See Jennifer Michael Hecht, *The Solvency of Metaphysics: The Debate Over Racial Science and Moral Philosophy in France (1890-1919)*, *Isis*, Vol 90, No. 1, (March 1999), pp 1-24

⁹ G. Spiller (ed.), *Papers on Inter-Racial Problems Communicated to the First Universal Races Congress*, P.S.King & Son, London, 1911, p xxxvii

¹⁰ J. Ayo Langley, Pan-Africanism in Paris, 1924-36, *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol 7, No 1, (April 1969), pp 74-75

¹¹ See Alice L Conklin, "Who Speaks For Africa? : The Rene Maran—Blaise Diagne Trial in 1920s Paris", in Sue Peabody and Tyler Stovall (eds.) *The Color of Liberty: Histories of Race in France*, Duke University Press, Durham, 2003, p. 310 and Jeffrey B. Perry, (ed.) *op. cit.* p. 334; see also Kwame Anthony Appiah and Henry Louis Gates, Jr., (eds.) *Africana: The Encyclopedia of the African and African-American Experience*, Basic Civitas Books, Perseus Books Group, New York, 1999, p. 1250

- ¹² There is however an error, probably typographical, in the article as published in *Opportunity* where the date of the resolution on passive resistance is given as "September eleven, 1916" instead of ten years earlier; that Indians are referred to interchangeably as "Hindoos" is a more frequent error found in Spanish and French writings of the period.
- ¹³ Rene Maran, "Gandhi", *Opportunity*, February 1925, pp 40-42.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 42
- ¹⁵ 'Preliminary note' to *L'Aube Rouge* (Red Dawn), cited in Moradewun Adejunmobi, "History and Ideology in Jean-Joseph Rabearivelo's Prose Works", *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, Volume 28, No 2, (1994), pp 219-235, at p. 224
- ¹⁶ Jonathan Derrick, *The Dissenters : Anti-Colonialism in France, c. 1900-40* in Tony Chafer and Amanda Sackur (eds.) *Promoting the Colonial Idea : Propaganda and Visions of Empire in France*, Palgrave, New York, 2002, p. 59
- ¹⁷ See Nicholas Hewitt, *Les Annees Folles*, in Jill Forbes and Michael Kelly, (ed.) *French Cultural Studies : An Introduction*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1995, p. 68; see also David Drake, *French Intellectuals and Politics from the Dreyfus Affair to the Occupation*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2005, p. 89
- ¹⁸ See Albert Guerard, *France : A Modern History*, The University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 1959, p. 400
- ¹⁹ C F Andrews, *The Riffs, the Druses, Abyssinia, Young India*, September 16, 1926.
- ²⁰ Liliyan Kesteloot, *Histoire de la Litterature Negro-Africaine*, Editions Karthala, Paris, 2001, p.9
- ²¹ *Indian Annual Register*, 1926, Volume 2, p. 322.
- ²² *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, Volume 2, Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, D.K Publishers Distributors, Delhi 1988, (first published 1974), p. 280; see also *Indian Annual Register*, 1927, Volume 2, p. 152.
- ²³ According to Nehru, among those who attended were representatives of the South African Trade Union Congress and of the "Natal Native Council". (*Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, op. cit., p. 281). Josiah T Gumede, President-General of the African National Congress (1927-30) was present at the Brussels Congress; earlier, at the onset of the twentieth century, Gumede, along with Martin Luthuli and John Dube, had established the Natal Native Congress. (See Freda Troup, *South Africa: An Historical Introduction*, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1975, p. 208) Also present at the Brussels Congress was James La Guma, a Coloured activist, who, apart from being a communist, was secretary of the ANC's Cape branch. (See Troup, op. cit., p. 248). The South African Trade Union Congress was represented at the Brussels meeting by D Colrairie.
- ²⁴ *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, op.cit., p. 286n
- ²⁵ See J.Ayo Langley, op. cit., pp. 79-84
- ²⁶ *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, op. cit., p.317
- ²⁷ Martin Steins, *Brown France versus Black Africa : The Tide Turned in 1932*, *Research in African Literatures*, Volume 14, No 4, special issue on African Literary History, Winter, 1983, pp. 474- 497
- ²⁸ *Indian Annual Register*, 1927, Vol. 1, p. 207
- ²⁹ Letter dated February 20, 1928 to Gandhi from Marcelle Cappy, [Sabarmati S.No. 14243]
- ³⁰ See, for instance, Michael Brett's contribution, *The Maghrib*, in A. D. Roberts, *The Cambridge History of Africa*, Volume 7, Cambridge University Press, London, 1986, p. 315
- ³¹ C B Dalal, *Gandhi 1915-1948: A Detailed Chronology*, Gandhi Peace Foundation, New Delhi, 1971, p. 92
- ³² Jonathan Derrick, *The Dissenters : Anti-Colonialism in France, c. 1900-40* in Chafer and Sackur (eds.) op. cit., p. 53. According to Derrick's account the Exposition was on from May 6 to November 15, 1931. A counter exhibition was held by anti-colonialists between September 19 and December 2, 1931.
- ³³ As in the case of the 1889 Exposition, in 1931 too some persons had been brought from the colonies to the respective pavilions; there were restrictions on the movement of such 'natives' outside the Exposition. [See Christopher L Miller, *Nationalists and Nomads : Essays on Francophone Literature and Culture*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1998, p. 72. Miller indicates the duration of the Exposition as having been from May 1931 to at least January 1932 (*Ibid.*, pp. 67-68)] Presumably some portions of the exhibition were continued longer than others. In that case it would have been still on, possibly in part, even when Gandhi returned to Paris on December 5 and 6, 1931 on his journey home. If so, on the occasion of his return journey too Gandhi appears to have set aside no time for the Exposition or what remained of it; he arrived on the evening of December 5, addressed some meetings, and left Paris on the morning of the following day. The British were also to have participated in the Exposition but are understood to have withdrawn for fear of the Indian reaction. Nicola Savorese writes : "The declared intent of the Exposition – exhibiting alongside the newest European inventions and products the best examples of the races and cultures subjected to colonization (the triumphant protagonist of the great event) – was not fully realized. The Exposition could not eclipse the turmoil underway in the colonial world. In order to avoid inflaming Gandhi's campaign of civil disobedience in India, England at the last minute unexpectedly withdrew from the exhibition." [Nicola Savarese, 1931: Antonin Artaud Sees Balinese Theatre at the Paris Colonial Exposition, *The Drama Review*, Vol. 45, No. 3 (Autumn, 2001), p. 54]
- ³⁴ K M Pannikar, *An Autobiography*, Oxford University Press, Madras, 1977, p. 65. Pannikar mentions the name as Juliet Duray, but the text of the lecture, *Une Politique d'Idéal au XXth Siecle*, published by the Barreau de Paris in 1927 has the name as Juliette Veillier.
- ³⁵ K M Pannikar, op. cit., p. 61
- ³⁶ See Bhabani Bhattacharya, *Gandhi : The Writer*, National Book Trust, New Delhi, pp 150-151

- ³⁷ M. Esoavelomandroso, *Madagascar, 1880s-1930s: African Initiatives and reaction to colonial conquest and domination*, in A. Adu Boahen (ed.) *General History of Africa : VII : Africa under Colonial Domination 1880-1935*, Unesco (Paris) and Heinemann Educational Books, London, 1985, p. 248; see also p. 246
- ³⁸ See D Guerin, in *La Revolution Proletarienne*, N 122, December 1931, pp 306-309. *La Revolution Proletarienne* was the syndicalist revolutionary journal of Pierre Monatte, Robert Louzon and others. The Guerin interview was much appreciated by Romain Rolland. "These revolutionaries", wrote Rolland, were "more intelligent than the regimented Communists of L'Humanite" and "instead of passing judgement on the value of Gandhi's tactics, hold back and wait for the supreme test of action". [Extract from Rolland's Diary, December 1931, in *Romain Rolland and Gandhi Correspondence*, Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, New Delhi, 1976, p. 239] Another French Syndicalist, Andre Philip, had spent some months in India in 1929. For Philip's very perceptive account, as recorded by Rolland in April 1930, see *Romain Rolland and Gandhi Correspondence*, pp. 134-135.
- ³⁹ See Jacques Roumain, *Un Homme Contre Un Empire : Mahatma Gandhi*, *Le Petit Impartial*, March 3, 7, 10, 14, 21 and 28, 1928, and Mahatma Gandhi, *Haiti Journal*, May 14, 1930 reproduced in Jacques Roumain, *Oeuvres Completes*, Edition Critique, Leon-Francois Hoffman (Co-ordinator), Collection Archivos, ALLCA XX, Universite Paris X, Paris, pp 453-460 and pp. 629-631
- ⁴⁰ See Lilian Kesteloot, *Anthologie Negro-Africaine*, Marabout, Alleur, 1987, pp 28-30 for a reading from Banjo and Wayne Cooper, Claude McKay and the New Negro of the 1920s in C W E Bigsby (ed.) *The Black American Writer : Volume II : Poetry and Drama*, Penguin Books, Baltimore, 1969, pp. 53-65. A character in Claude McKay's Banjo offers the exhortation: Vous apprendriez tout ce que vous pourriez sur Gandhi et sur ce qu'il est en train de faire pour les masses populaires de l'Inde [You shall learn as much as you can about Gandhi and what he is doing for the people of India].
- ⁴¹ Paulette Nardal, *Les Femmes de couleur dans l'ordre social*, *Le Soir*, April 21, 1930, cited by Brent Hayes Edwards in *Small Axe*, March 2005, p.138.
- ⁴² Muriel Lester, *Entertaining Gandhi*, Ivor Nicholson & Watson, publishers, London, 1932, pp 159-161
- ⁴³ Edmond Privat, *Aux Indes Avec Gandhi*, Editions Denoel, Paris, 1960, p. 16; passage translated and quoted in P. C. Roy Chaudhury, *Edmond Privat : A Forgotten Friend of India*, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1976, p. 27
- ⁴⁴ Privat, *op. cit.*, p. 17; passage translated and quoted in P.C. Roy Chaudhury, *op. cit.*, pp. 28-29; this and the previous passage from Privat have been translated by Leelavathy Rao.
- ⁴⁵ *Harijan*, November 14, 1936.
- ⁴⁶ *Idem*
- ⁴⁷ Felix Garas, *Bourguiba: La Naissance d'une Nation*, Rene Julliard, Paris, 1956, pp. 9-11 and pp. 65-67
- ⁴⁸ Compare Gandhi : "I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all the lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any." [*Young India*, June 1, 1921, CW, Vol 20, p. 159]
- ⁴⁹ Edward Mortimer, *France and the Africans 1944-1960 : A Political History*, Faber and Faber Ltd, London, 1969, p. 80; see *ibid.*, p. 70 for Senghor's phrase on assimilation.
- ⁵⁰ William Warbey, *Ho Chi Minh and the Struggle for an Independent Vietnam*, Rupa & Co., Calcutta, 1972, p. 66 et seq.
- ⁵¹ K Madhu Panikkar, *Revolution in Africa*, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1961, p. 10; see also Ali A Mazrui, *Africa Between Gandhi and Nehru : An Afro-Asian Interaction*, *Africa Quarterly*, Vol 39, No. 2, 1999, pp. 1-20, at p.1
- ⁵² See Kwame Anthony Appiah and Henry Louis Gates, Jr., (eds.) *Africana : The Encyclopedia of the African and African-American Experience*, Basic Civitas Books, Perseus Books Group, New York, 1999, p.969
- ⁵³ See Virginia Thompson and Richard Adloff, *The Emerging States of French Equatorial Africa*, Stanford University Press, California, 1960, p. 309
- ⁵⁴ Alistair Horne, *A Savage War of Peace : Algeria 1954-1962*, Macmillan, London, 1977, p. 61
- ⁵⁵ In Camus' words : "plus grand homme de notre histoire".
- ⁵⁶ Albert Camus in *L'Express*, November 22, 1955, reproduced in *Cahiers Albert Camus*, Vol 6, Gallimard, Paris, 1987, pp. 105-107; see also Jeanyves Guerin in Edward J. Hughes (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Camus*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2007, p.88
- ⁵⁷ Albert Camus, *Preface to Algerian Reports* (March-April 1958); tr. from the French by Justin O'Brien and reprinted in Camus, *Resistance, Rebellion and Death*, Vintage Books, New York, 1995, p.115
- ⁵⁸ Philip Thody, *Albert Camus 1913-1960*, Hamish Hamilton, London, 1961, p. 200
- ⁵⁹ *The Times of India*, January 29, 1960, cited in *Africa Quarterly*, Vol II, No 2, July-September 1962, p. 91.
- ⁶⁰ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Colonialism and Neo-Colonialism*, Routledge, London, 2001 (first published in 1964 in French as *Situations V*), pp 156-157
- ⁶¹ Milton Krieger, *Building the Republic Through Letters : "Abbia : Cameroon Cultural Review"*, 1963-82 and its Legacy, *Research in African Literatures*, Vol 27, No 2, (Summer 1996), pp. 155-177, at p. 16
- ⁶² *Idem*
- ⁶³ See Phillip Naylor, *The Formative Influence of French Colonialism and the Life and Thought of Malek Bennabi (1905-73)*, *French Colonial History*, Vol 7, 2006, p. 141.