Crossing the great divide: the Gandhian repertoire's transnational diffusion to the American civil rights movement

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Chapter two

INVENTION AND GENEALOGY OF THE GANDHIAN REPERTOIRE
1906-1948

Like previous new repertoires, the Gandhian repertoire of nonviolent contention evolved in the context of major political struggle and moved considerably beyond existing forms of collective action (Tilly 1986, 1995a; Tarrow 1996). Although Gandhi was indisputably its author, the Gandhian repertoire was an invention created in the midst of collective experiments during the Indian minority’s struggle for civil rights in South Africa and especially during the Indian independence movement (Fox 1989; Rudolph and Rudolph 1983). Of course, the Gandhian repertoire was not the first contentious repertoire deployed to resist British rule. Since the end of the nineteenth century, two political camps had predominated in India: the “Moderates” in the Indian National Congress, who expressed their grievances through legitimate and conventional channels, and the “Extremists” among Hindu and Muslim nationalists as well as Marxists, who tended toward anarchism and refused to rule out violent terrorism against the colonial government. Although Gandhi acknowledged the past contributions of these camps, his protest methods were both more confrontational and mass-oriented than those of Indian Moderates and more committed to nonviolence, truth, self-discipline, and constructive work than those of Indian Extremists. In contrast to familiar Western forms of pacifism and passive resistance, moreover, the Gandhian repertoire of nonviolent contention was designed for pro-active, direct, and collective rebellion in the context of a social movement (van den Dungen 1971: 43-63). Thus, by the time that Gandhi started getting involved in the Indian independence movement, his approach was as strange and new to Indians as to foreigners (Nandy 1987: 154; Fox 1997: 69-70, 80; Arnold 2001).

This chapter traces the complex genealogy of the Gandhian repertoire from Gandhi’s authorship of satyagraha in Johannesburg to the aborted attempts at massive nonviolent direct action throughout India, from the zenith symbolized by the Salt March to the path of decline carved during the Quit India movement. Far from teleological,
each development (that is, each advance as well as downturn) in the Gandhian repertoire was the contingent product of contentious interaction between Indian activists, local or national authorities, and groups of bystanders in various parts of the world. Instead of becoming increasingly definite or fixed, moreover, relationships among the Gandhian repertoire’s action forms, organizational styles, and discursive language never ceased evolving in unexpected ways.

I. The advent of satyagraha in South Africa

It is September 11, 1906 and the Empire Theatre in Johannesburg is packed with Indian delegates from across Transvaal, one of South Africa’s largest provinces. Mr. Abdul Gani, the old Muslim businessman and chairman of the Transvaal British Indian Association, presides over the mass meeting, while Gandhi sits in the background waiting to present the crucial Fourth Resolution. When his turn comes, Gandhi gets up from his chair and addresses the crowd of 3,000:

In the event of the Legislative Council, the local Government, and the Imperial Authorities rejecting the humble prayer of the British Indian community of the Transvaal in connection with the Draft Asiatic Law Amendment Ordinance, this mass meeting of British Indians here assembled solemnly and regretfully resolves that, rather than submit to the galling, tyrannous, and un-British requirements laid down in the above Draft Ordinance, every British Indian in the Transvaal shall submit himself to imprisonment and shall continue so to do until it shall please His Most Gracious Majesty the King-Emperor to grant relief (CWMG 5: 338).

The audience is deeply moved by Gandhi’s solemn words, and several speakers rise to second his resolution calling for a collective struggle against the Ordinance.

One of the speakers, Sheth Haji Habib, also a prominent Muslim spokesman, goes even further and pledges, with God as his witness, that he will never submit to the humiliating Ordinance, inviting others to follow his example. Startled by this powerful declaration of dedication, Gandhi briefly ponders its implications before sharing his interpretation of Habib’s proposal with the Indian community:

I know that pledges and vows are, and should be, taken on rare occasions. A man who takes a vow every now and then is surely to stumble. But if I can imagine a crisis in the history of the Indian community of South Africa when it would be in the fitness of things to take pledges that crisis is surely now…. But every one of us must think out for himself if he has the will and the ability to pledge himself…. Although we are going to take the pledge in a body, no one should
Imagine that default on the part of one or many can absolve the rest from their obligation. Everyone should fully realize his responsibility, then only pledge himself independently of others and understand that he himself must be true to his pledge even unto death, no matter what others do. We may have to go to jail, where we may be insulted. We may have to go hungry and suffer extreme heat or cold. Hard labour may be imposed upon us. We may be flogged by rude warders. We may be fined heavily and our property may be attached and held up to auction if there are only a few resisters left. Opulent today we may be reduced to abject poverty. We may be deported. Suffering from starvation and similar hardships in jail, some of us may fall ill and even die. In short therefore, it is not at all impossible that we may have to endure every hardship that we can imagine, and wisdom lies in pleading ourselves on the understanding that we shall have to suffer all that and worse. But I can boldly declare, and with certainty, that so long as there is even a handful of men true to their pledge, there can only be one end to the struggle, and that is victory (CWMG 5: 334-336; Gandhi 1928: 98-100).

After explaining the profound meaning of such a pledge, Gandhi enthusiastically endorses Habib’s suggestion and promises that he himself will never violate his pledge. In response, all those present rise as one and, with upraised hands, take the pledge that with God as their witness they will not submit to the Ordinance if it becomes law.

Looking back almost twenty years later, Gandhi (1928: chapter XII) identified this moment, when 3,000 out of 13,000 Indians in the Transvaal spontaneously vowed to resist the Asiatic Law Amendment Ordinance, as the actual birth of satyagraha, the Gandhian repertoire’s underlying concept (see also, Fox 1989: 139). Prior to the Johannesburg meeting, political activism by Gandhi and the Indian community in South Africa had consisted of moderate and elitist forms of “appeal” to the morality and common sense of adversaries (Swan 1985; Arnold 2001). In 1894, for instance, after authorities in the province of Natal introduced a bill to disenfranchise South African Indians, Gandhi drafted a petition to the Natal Legislative Assembly and helped found the Natal Indian Congress (CWMG 1: 144-148). Following the example of its namesake in India, Congress members held monthly meetings, collected membership dues, kept careful records, produced propaganda for India, South Africa, and Great Britain, and spread political information throughout local Indian communities (CWMG 1: 262-268). It also created the Natal Indian Educational Association to train the youth, stimulate unity within the Indian community, and promote internal development and hygiene (Gandhi 1928: 43).

In 1903, Gandhi decided to expand the Indian minority’s arsenal for “appeal” by creating Indian Opinion, an indigenous newspaper that kept the local community up to date in two languages, Gujarati and English. The Gujarati section educated the majority
of Indian immigrants, while the English section informed the remaining Indians who did
not know Gujarati as well as the Englishmen in India. Great Britain, and South Africa
(Gandhi 1928: 132). Indian Opinion became a symbol for the Indian community's self-
reliance and an expression of its openness and inclusiveness. Moreover, it provided all
parties involved in the political struggle over Indian civil rights in South Africa—the
participants, the sympathizers, the critical bystanders, but also the authorities—with a
forum for entering into a public dialogue concerning political issues and communal
concerns. But while it was an important weapon, Indian Opinion in itself did not alter the
moderate protest strategy of political lobbying, legislative agitation, and favorable
publicity.

The transformation from “appeal” to “direct action” did not start until the
Johannesburg meeting in 1906, which is why Gandhi, in retrospect, assigned so much
symbolic value to the event. Part of the reason for this transformation was the content of
the Asiatic Law Amendment Ordinance, a bill that required all Indians above the age of
eight years to register his or her name with the Registrar of Asiatics and take out a
certificate of registration. The Transvaal Indians considered registration humiliating,
because it involved giving finger and thumb impressions, like a criminal. Moreover,
every Indian who did not apply for registration before a certain date had to leave the
province, while anyone who did not carry the certificate risked being fined or imprisoned
(Gandhi 1928: 92-93). But while previously legislative initiatives with similar content
had not caused a great stir among the Indian in South Africa, this time Gandhi and other
leaders were able to convince fellow Indians that the Transvaal authorities had gone too
far. Articles in the Indian Opinion moved beyond the rhetoric of courteous appeal by
calling the ordinance “abominable” and even “criminal” (CWMG 5: 317-318). And
when these outcries evoked widespread support within the Indian community, the
leadership decided to hold a mass meeting on September 11, 1906 to propose resolutions
and develop a more effective strategy for collective protest against the ordinance, by then
popularly known as the “Black Act.”

Two months later, Gandhi wrote an article for Indian Opinion confirming that the
Johannesburg meeting had fundamentally altered the Indian community’s perspective on
collective protest:
We have sent petitions; made speeches; and we shall continue to do so. But...[p]eople do not have much faith in articles and speeches. Anyone can do that, they call for no courage. Deeds after all are better than words. All other things are unavailing, and no one is afraid of them. The only way therefore is to sacrifice oneself and take the plunge. We have much to do yet, no doubt of that (CWMG 5: 432).

The earliest opportunity for putting these words into practice was on July 1, 1907, the day that the Black Act took effect. After deciding to organize pickets at each permit office, Indian activists in Transvaal created the Passive Resistance Association and prescribed the following rules of behavior for participating in their first nonviolent direct action campaign:

Volunteers were provided with badges and expressly instructed not to be impolite to any Indian taking out a permit. They must ask him his name, but if he refused to give it they must not on any account be violent or rude to him. To every Indian going to the permit office, they were to hand a printed paper detailing the injuries which submission to the Black Act would involve, and explain what was written in it. They must behave to the police too with due respect. If the police abused or thrashed them, they must suffer peacefully; if the ill-treatment by the police was insufferable they should leave the place. If the police arrested them, they should gladly surrender themselves. If some such incident occurred in Johannesburg, it should be brought to my notice. At other places the local secretaries were to be informed, and asked for further instructions. Each party of pickets had a captain whose orders must be obeyed by the rest (Gandhi 1928: 125).

Although the political impact of this campaign was relatively minor, the fact that Indian activists adhered to the guidelines set by the Passive Resistance Association was encouraging.

While Gandhi was satisfied with the discipline and solidarity displayed during the pickets against the Black Act, he felt that the term "passive resistance" did not capture the originality of the South African Indians' nonviolent form of protest. To solve this problem, he asked Indian Opinion readers to come up with a Gujarati name for their new approach to collective action. Based on one of their suggestions, he finally decided that the word satyagraha came closest to expressing what he had in mind:

I have received one [suggestion] which is not bad, though it does not render the original in its full connotation. I shall, however, use it for the present. The word is sadagraha. I think satyagraha is better than sadagraha. "Resistance" means determined opposition to anything. The correspondent has rendered it as agraha [i.e. firmness or insistence]. Agraha in a right cause is sat or satya [i.e. Truth] agraha. The correspondent therefore has rendered "passive resistance" as firmness in a good cause. Though the phrase does not exhaust the connotation of the word "passive", we shall use satyagraha... (CWMG 8: 80).
Gandhi told his English friends that the correct translation of satyagraha was not passive resistance, a weapon of the weak, but "soul force," which involved love, nonviolence, and self-suffering by strong believers in truth (Gandhi 1928: 105-106). Thus, more than a year after the mass meeting in Johannesburg, Gandhi’s core concept had finally crystallized—not as a product of his own genius, but as a result of dialogue with other Indians and English friends in South Africa (see also, Fox 1989).28

Another opportunity for translating the notion of satyagraha into collective action did not arise until January 10, 1908. That day Gandhi and other leaders of the Indian community appeared in court on the charge of disobeying the Black Act. To uphold “Truth in a right cause,” they all pled guilty and the Transvaal magistrate sentenced them to two months imprisonment. Two days later, more Indians refusing to obey the Black Act arrived at the jail, and after one week their number exceeded one hundred. Under pressure from the British public and media, General Smuts, South Africa’s leader, offered a settlement stating that if the Indians re-registered voluntarily, the Government of Transvaal would repeal the Black Act. On January 30, 1908, Gandhi consulted his fellow prisoners on this proposal, suggested a few changes in the settlement’s language, and traveled to Pretoria for his first conversation with General Smuts. That evening, the two men agreed on a compromise: Smuts accepted the conditions stipulated by Gandhi in exchange for the immediate release of all Indian satyagrahis.

Back in Johannesburg, Gandhi explained the meaning of the settlement by referring to the principles of satyagraha:

Compromise means that both the parties make large concessions on all points except where a principle is involved. Our principle is, that we would not submit to the Black Act, and therefore, would not, in virtue of it, do even such things as were otherwise unobjectionable, and to this principle we must adhere at all cost. The principle with the government is, that in order to prevent the illegal entry of Indians into the Transvaal, it must get many Indians to take out non-transferable permits with marks of identification and thus set the suspicions of the Europeans at rest and allay their fears, and the Government can never give it up on their part....Our struggle aimed...at removing the stigma which the Black Act sought to attach to the community. If, therefore, we must utilize the new and powerful force which has sprung up in the community for gaining a fresh point it would ill become us, who claim to be Satyagrahis. Consequently, we cannot justly object to the present settlement. As for the argument that we must not surrender our weapons before the Act is repealed, it is easily answered. A Satyagrahi bids good-bye to fear. He is therefore never afraid of

28 Afterwards, moreover, the Passive Resistance Association changed its name to the Satyagraha Association (Ashe 1968: 107), while Gandhian activists started referring to each other as “satyagrahis.”
Despite Gandhi’s support for the compromise, however, Smuts subsequently refused to repeal the Black Act and even added two anti-Indian pieces of legislation. In response to this breach of trust, Gandhi encouraged local Indians to resume their collective struggle. Internally, they started educating the community, holding meetings, propagating their cause in *Indian Opinion*, and collecting registration certificates. Externally, they presented a petition to the Transvaal Legislature and, finally, an ultimatum to the Government announcing that if it did not repeal the Black Act before August 16, 1908, the Indian minority would burn their certificates en masse (Gandhi 1928: 182-183). On August 16, the Satyagraha Committee held a mass meeting in Johannesburg and when the Government formally declined to meet the demands in the ultimatum, one of the satyagrahis sparked a bonfire of more than 2,000 certificates.

After serving a three-month jail sentence for his role in the bonfire, Gandhi wrote *Hind Swaraj* (literally, Indian home rule) in 1909 to indicate that satyagraha not only applied to the Indian minority’s campaigns in South Africa, but also to the struggle for Indian independence. In his book, he explained how Gandhian nonviolence differed from the methods favored by the two main political camps in India: the Extremists and the Moderates. At the time, Indian anarchists (both in their home country and abroad) tended to highlight the positive aspects of violent tactics and belonged to the former camp, while most traditional Indian leaders and members of the Indian National Congress opposed all forms of direct action and considered themselves part of the latter camp. While Gandhi criticized both sides of the Indian political spectrum, he was eager to cooperate with Extremists as well as Moderates rather than create a divisive third party. In his eyes, the two camps could join hands by agreeing that: (1) real *swaraj* is self rule, not tyranny by British colonizers or a Hindu majority; (2) the way to achieve home rule is through satyagraha; (3) *swadeshi* (i.e., using goods made in India) is a prerequisite for exerting this force; and (4) Indians bear no enmity towards the English people, but only towards their imperialist system, which is a product of “modern” Western civilization (CWMG

While Gandhi was becoming more confident about the conceptual meaning and practical potency of satyagraha, the actual impact of the Indian minority’s collective efforts to repeal the Black Act remained minimal. In 1912, the South African authorities once again agreed to meet the Indian minority’s demands, but like before, the government broke its pledge and failed to abolish the Black Act during the following year (Gandhi 1928: 244-245). To make matters worse, on March 14, 1913, a judge ruled that in the future only Christian marriages would be considered legal, thereby nullifying all Hindu and Muslim marriages among Indians in South Africa (CWMG 13: 444-446; CWMG 14: 61-62). Outraged by yet another anti-Indian measure, the Satyagraha Association’s leadership promptly decided to initiate a satyagraha campaign. It called on a small group of sixteen women from Tolstoy Farm near Johannesburg—the *ashram* or cooperative commonwealth that Gandhi and his colleagues at *Indian Opinion* had founded in 1910—to disobey the court order by entering the Transvaal colony from Natal without permits and refusing to give their names and addresses to police officers. After doing so, the female satyagrahis crossed the border again and encouraged miners in Newcastle, a coal-mining center in Natal, to go on strike. Forced to react, the government ordered the police to use violent means for arresting these nonviolent women and sentenced them to three-month jail terms, causing a public outcry in South Africa, India, and Great Britain.

Meanwhile, Gandhi had gone to Newcastle to unify the striking miners and negotiate a settlement with the mine owners. When negotiations failed, Gandhi and the strikers joined an “army” of satyagrahis (including 2,037 men, 127 women, and 57 children) at the border between Natal and Transvaal, and on November 6, 1913, after Gandhi had instructed all participants to obey the rules of nonviolent behavior, this army embarked on the Great March from Charlestown, Natal to Volksrust, Transvaal, and with the Tolstoy Farm as final destination (CWMG 14: 462-463; Gandhi 1928: 444-446, 455-456). The South African authorities responded by arresting Gandhi three times in the next four days and sentencing him and several other leaders to three months in prison.
The Great March continued, however, with one of Gandhi's colleagues leading the way, until the government decided to disrupt the campaign by deporting the marchers back to Natal by train and forcing the miners to return to work (idem: 466-471). Incensed by such brutal repression, Indian laborers throughout South Africa went on strike, provoking yet more violent retaliation by government officials (Erikson 1969: 215).

Confronted with nonviolent direct action by the Indian minority, and with negative publicity at home and abroad, the South African government finally relented. In 1914, it passed the Indians Relief Bill, thereby officially validating Indian marriages and overturning the Black Act (CWMG 14: 493-496). The Indian community in South Africa accepted the settlement and Gandhi, in a letter to General Smuts, declared that the satyagraha movement against the Black Act was over (see also, CWMG 14: 203-208):

The passing of the Indians Relief Bill and this correspondence finally closed the Satyagraha struggle which commenced in September of 1906 and which to the Indian community cost much physical suffering and pecuniary loss and to the Government much anxious thought and consideration... [If] the generous spirit that the Government have applied to the treatment of the problem during the past few months continues to be applied, as promised in your letter, in the administration of the existing laws. I am quite certain that the Indian community throughout the Union will be able to enjoy some measure of peace and never be a source of trouble to the Government (Gandhi 1928: 304-305).

Although the Indians Relief Bill only improved the legal standing of South African Indians, not their long-term social and political position, it represented an important symbolic victory for the protest method emerging from Johannesburg’s Empire Theatre in 1906.

In the midst of the Indian struggle for civil rights in South Africa, the early contours of the Gandhian repertoire became visible. In the South African laboratory, Gandhi and fellow activists experimented with forms of nonviolent direct action such as pickets, jail-going, strikes, and marches, and with modes of organization like the Natal Indian Congress, the Satyagraha Association, and the Tolstoy Farm ashram (Dalton 1993: 14-16). Moreover, inspired by concrete experiences with collective struggle, the Indian minority in South Africa helped invent the discursive concept that invested these tactics and institutions with new meaning, while Gandhi—by writing Hind Swaraj—entered into a dialogue with the two dominant political discourses in India, indicating how the praxis of satyagraha could overcome the limitations of both camps (Nandy 1987: Parekh 1989).
But while the campaigns in South Africa demonstrated the potential power of satyagraha, the real test was whether it could guide a nationwide movement against British rule in India. Eager to confront this challenge, Gandhi returned to his home country in 1915 and began preparing the soil (Arnold 2001).

II. The formation of the Gandhian repertoire in India

Soon after arriving in India, Gandhi founded the Satyagraha Ashram near Ahmedabad as a training center for nonviolent direct action. The rules of behavior for ashram members were even stricter than at Tolstoy Farm: they had to take a vow of truth, observe the doctrine of non-violence (*ahimsa*) at all times, remain celibate, control their palates, and promise to avoid thieving. They also had to vow to use only products made in India (*swadeshi*), adopt the habit of fearlessness, realize the dignity of manual labor (*khaddar*), and deny the curse of untouchability. To stress the importance of the last vow, the Satyagraha Ashram welcomed an untouchable family only a few months after its inception, to the dismay of many orthodox Hindus (Andrews 1930: 101-111; Gandhi 1927). Gandhi also traveled across the country to participate in public debates on Indian nationalism and learn more about the social, economic, cultural, and political environment. In February of 1916, for instance, he gave a speech at Hindu University Central College in Benares, the home turf of prominent Hindu nationalist and Theosophist Annie Besant. In the presence of the Viceroy of India, Gandhi proclaimed the futility of accommodating speeches and resolutions, and the necessity for confrontational action involving students and the masses:

> ...if we are to reach our goal, we should have an Empire which is to be based upon mutual love and mutual trust....I am, therefore, turning the searchlight towards ourselves. I hold the name of my country so dear to me that I exchange these thoughts with you, and submit to you that there is no reason for anarchism in India. Let us frankly and openly say whatever we want to say to our rulers and face the consequences, if what we have to say does not please them....It is well to take the blame sometimes. If we are to receive self-government we shall have to take it. We shall never be granted self-government. Look at the history of the British Empire and the British nation; freedom-loving as it is, it will not be a party to give freedom to a people who will not take it themselves (Fischer 1962: 130).

During the next few years, he joined several small-scale campaigns against local authorities. He assisted the farmers of the Kheda district who demanded suspension of
taxes on land revenue due to severe crop failures (Shridharani 1939: 87-89); he helped peasants in Champaran, Bihar resist exploitation by British landlords (Prasad, 1949: 24-29; Sharp 1960: 10-37; Tendulkar 1957); and in 1918 he got involved in a labor strike by mill workers in Ahmedabad (Shridharani 1939: 85-87; Bondurant 1958: 65-73; Fischer 1962; Erikson 1969). The first opportunity for a national satyagraha campaign, however, did not arise until 1919, in the aftermath of World War I.

Previously, the Government of India had justified its repressive measures against indigenous terrorist groups and political extremism by emphasizing the need to support the war effort (Hutchins 1967). In the wake of World War I, however, it had to develop new legislation to deal with insubordination at a time of peace. On January 18, 1919, therefore, based on recommendations by the Rowlatt Committee, British rulers in India presented two bills to the Imperial Legislative Council. The first sought to amend the Indian Penal Code in such a way that the Government retained the same authority to control Indian resistance in India as during the war, the second gave the Government discretionary power to suppress revolutionary crime without due process of the law. Despite internal opposition from Indian members, the Imperial Legislative Council enacted the first Rowlatt Bill within a few months. Meanwhile, Indian nationalists had united in condemnation of these measures: Moderates felt betrayed for their loyalty during World War I, which was supposed to be rewarded with increased self-government after the war, while Extremists naturally objected to the restrictions on their civil rights (Draper 1981: 26; Singh 1962: 18). Gandhi, on his part, stressed the malicious spirit behind the Rowlatt Bills and almost immediately called for a massive satyagraha campaign against them:

To me the Bills are the regulated symptoms of the deep-seated disease. They are a striking demonstration of the determination of the Civil Service to retain its grip of our necks. There is not the slightest desire to give up an iota of its unlimited powers, and if the civil service is to retain its unlimited rule over us, the British commerce is to enjoy its privileged position. I feel that the reforms [i.e. those proposed by Montagu and, eventually, Viceroy Chelmsford] will not be worth having. I consider the Bills to be an open challenge to us. If we succumb we are done for. If we may prove our word that the government will see an agitation such that they have never witnessed before, we shall have proved our capacity for resistance to arbitrary or tyrannical rule....For myself if the Bills were to be proceeded with, I feel that I can no longer render peaceful obedience to the laws of a power that is capable of such a devilish legislation as these two Bills, and I would not hesitate to incite those who think with me to join me in the struggle (CWMG 17: 280-281, quoted in Kumar 1971: 2-3).
On February 24, 1919, Gandhi and four ashram members signed a satyagraha pledge and informed Viceroy Chelmsford of their intentions (CWMG 17: 297-299; Bondurant 1971: 77). They founded an informal organization, the Satyagraha Sabha, and addressed the Indian population through the Bombay Chronicle and Young India, urging them to join their campaign and remain nonviolent (CWMG 17: 316-318). Gandhi, moreover, visited cities and villages in all corners of India, seeking public support for the nationalist cause and calling on all Indians to observe April 6 as a hartal, a day of “humiliation and prayer” in preparation for the nation-wide Rowlatt Satyagraha (CWMG 17: 343-344; see also, Kumar 1971: 1-4; Low 1971: 64-92). And finally, on March 11, he sent an ultimatum to the viceroy, requesting him to reconsider the bills before the struggle (CWMG 17: 327).

Despite Gandhi’s lack of political experience and organizational base, millions of Indians from all parts of the country and all layers of society—Hindus as well as Muslims, Extremists as well as Moderates, rich as well as poor, upper as well as lower-caste people—responded to his call: on April 6, they closed their shops and limited their activities to signing pledges, praying, and fasting (Gandhi 1927: 414). After the hartal, moreover, Indian activists across the subcontinent challenged the Rowlatt Bills by selling prohibited literature, publishing an unregistered newspaper called Satyagrahi, breaking the salt tax law, and holding political meetings (Bondurant 1971: 79; Shridharani 1939: 125). The British authorities’ reactions to these protests varied per province. The Lieutenant-Governor of Bombay, for instance, showed great restraint in handling the Indian satyagrahis. Michael O’Dwyer in the Punjab, in contrast, regarded Gandhian activism as a threat to British rule in India and endorsed the use of indiscriminate and brutal force against all demonstrators (Kumar 1971: 8; Hutchins 1967).

After the hartal in Amritsar, therefore, O’Dwyer requested military reinforcement

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20 Although support for the Rowlatt satyagraha was nationwide, not every region was equally involved. Areas with pre-existing activist networks established by the Home Rule Leagues founded during World War I—one led by Extremist Bal Gangadhar Tilak, the other by Theosophist Annie Besant—were better organized and more enthusiastic than areas without protest experience. Strongholds of the Khilafat movement, comprised of Pan-Islamist groups struggling against the British Empire’s treatment of the Sultan of Turkey, also contributed significantly to the Rowlatt Satyagraha’s initial success (Israel 1994: 10). Moreover, areas with sympathetic newspapers were more likely to sustain enthusiasm for the Gandhi campaign than areas without such favorable press. And finally, the places Gandhi visited, particularly Bombay, Delhi, Allahabad, Lucknow, Madras, Tamilnad, and Andhra, were also more disciplined and loyal to satyagraha than places he did not visit (Low 1971: 64-92).
and on April 11, General Reginald Dyer and his garrison arrived in the Punjab city to prevent further unrest. On the afternoon of April 13, about twenty-thousand local activists defied O'Dwyer's ban against political meetings and gathered in Jallianwala Bagh, an enclosed market place in Amritsar, to express their solidarity with the satyagraha movement. A few hours later, Dyer and his troops marched to Jallianwala Bagh and, without issuing a warning or instructing the crowd to disperse, the General ordered his men to fire at the demonstrators. After ten minutes, the soldiers had used 1650 rounds of ammunition, killed more than 500, and wounded another 1,000 peaceful protesters (Draper 1981; Sayer 1992; Israel 1994). Dyer later had a simple explanation for his decision:

*It was no longer a question of merely dispersing the crowd, but one of producing a sufficient moral effect from a military point of view, not only on those who were present, but more especially throughout the Punjab. There could be no question of undue severity* (Hunter 1920: 1136; quoted in Sayer 1992: 155 and Fischer 1962: 150).

Following the massacre O'Dwyer imposed martial law throughout the Punjab, while Dyer issued a number of humiliating orders to punish the population of Amritsar for their defiance, with public flogging and the "Crawling Lane" as the most notorious penalties (Sayer 1992: 151-154; Bondurant 1971: 81). In the eyes of British officials and residents, Dyer's actions were part of his duty and they widely lauded him as "the saviour of the Punjab" (Sayer 1992: 156, 167-168).

The Government of India, however, was aware of the impact that the killings in Amritsar could have on Indian nationalists outside of the Punjab and suppressed the spread of information about the event for nearly eight months by gagging the local press (Israel 1994: 11). Thus, when satyagraha leaders heard that Indian demonstrators had reacted violently to police brutality and started riots, they did not know the details about the atrocities in Amritsar. Gandhi was shocked by the lack of discipline among Indian demonstrators and, on April 18, he suspended the campaign against the Rowlatt Bills (Tinker 1998: 151). In public speeches and writings, he admitted to have made a "Himalayan miscalculation" by calling on people to engage in nonviolent direct action without ensuring their readiness beforehand. He later remarked in his autobiography:

*I had called on the people to launch upon civil disobedience before they had thus qualified*
themselves for it, and this mistake seemed to me of Himalayan magnitude...I realized that before a people could be fit for offering civil disobedience, they should thoroughly understand its deeper implications. That being so, before restarting civil disobedience on a mass scale, it would be necessary to create a band of well-tried, pure-hearted volunteers who thoroughly understood the strict conditions of Satyagraha. They could explain these to the people, and by sleepless vigilance keep them on the right path (Gandhi 1927: 423).

Several months after the first nationwide satyagraha campaign came to an abrupt end, news about the tragedy at Jallianwala Bagh gradually began to reach Indian nationalists (CWMG 18: 251-253). In October 1919, Gandhi went to the Punjab to serve on a committee investigating the matter and by February 1920 he and other Indian nationalists finally realized the full extent of British repression in Amritsar (Draper 1981: 199-203, 213).

When the cruelty of the “Punjab wrongs” sank in, Gandhi and other Indian nationalists stopped seeking legislative reform within the existing political system and began preparing for widespread rebellion against British rule in India (Hutchins 1967). As Andrews (1930: 230), his English friend, observed:

No one can understand Mahatma Gandhi’s attitude towards Great Britain and the British empire unless he has come to realize that ‘Amritsar’ was the critical event which changed Mahatma Gandhi from a wholehearted supporter into a pronounced opponent.

Energized by this new sense of urgency, and by anti-British sentiments among Indian Muslims as well as Hindus, Gandhi announced the formation of a national non-cooperation movement in May 1920 and informed the British authorities of his plans. This time, unlike during the Rowlatt campaign, Gandhi sought and received the full support of established organizational structures like the Indian National Congress and the Pan-Islamic Khilafat movement (Low 1971: 299). Despite some opposition, he persuaded Congress members to promote swadeshi, the spinning wheel, and the Khilafat issue, and to purchase the Jallianwala Bagh garden as a symbol of Hindu-Muslim unity and national mourning (CWMG 19: 307). He spoke at major Khilafat movement meetings, where he urged Muslim activists to adhere to the principles of satyagraha, and defended their issues (CWMG 19: 141-142, 475-479, 488-490, 499-504). Moreover, before initiating this campaign, he called for a Satyagraha Week celebrating the one-year anniversary of the hartals on April 6 and commemorating the innocent Hindu and Muslim
victims of the Amritsar massacre on April 13, 1920 (CWMG 19: 451. 486-488). And finally, he wrote a long letter to Viceroy Chelmsford giving his perspective on issues, outlining his plan for mass nonviolent resistance, and setting an ultimatum (CWMG 20: 413-416).

Buoyed by the solidarity and discipline demonstrated during Satyagraha Week, Gandhi instructed Indian activists to follow four progressive stages for withdrawing cooperation from British rule in India. The first involved the surrender of honorary titles and offices, the second invited government employees to relinquish their jobs, and the third stage called for the withdrawal of the police and the military. Finally, if these acts of noncooperation did not have the desired effect and participants remained nonviolent, satyagrahis would engage in mass civil disobedience (the most intensive and demanding level of satyagraha) by refusing to pay taxes, disregarding bans on nationalist literature, and breaking the government monopoly on salt production (CWMG 20: 286-289; Shridharani 1939: 128-129). In July 1920, the Noncooperation Committee issued a statement informing the Indian public of the movement's guidelines and starting date (CWMG 21: 13) and on August 1 the nation-wide noncooperation campaign started with a hartal, massive surrender of titles and honorary posts, and mass meetings. In the following weeks, the Noncooperation Committee urged rich people to stop taking out government loans, poor people to discontinue petty service to the local authorities, lawyers to suspend their practices in court, students to boycott government schools, civil servants to resign their posts, and politicians to leave the legislative councils. It also invited the Indian public to boycott foreign goods, buy indigenous products, abstain from alcohol and drugs, stimulate hand spinning and hand weaving, and use hand-spun and hand-woven cloth (CWMG 21: 13; Shridharani 1939: 127-128; Alexander 1969: 40).

The sheer number of people participating in the non-cooperation movement was impressive and clearly visible. Back in 1919, Gandhi had designed a special cap, made of cheap homespun cotton, as a symbol of national unity and opposition to British rule.

Although Gandhi often used the terms satyagraha and civil disobedience interchangeably, civil disobedience was actually a particular form of satyagraha. As Shridharani (1939: 33-43) observes, civil disobedience is the most militant form of satyagraha before taking over the activities and functions of the local government or state through "assertive satyagraha" and the creation of "parallel government" institutions. While the campaigns between 1919 and 1922 primarily consisted of "non-cooperation," only the Salt March campaign of 1930 and 1931 involved massive civil disobedience and limited assertive satyagraha.
From 1920 onwards, millions of Indians from all castes, cultures, and religions began wearing this white "Gandhi cap" to denote their support of Gandhi and Congress. Besides subversive headwear, moreover, many Indians (including traditional Congress leaders) donned white khadi (i.e., handspun Indian cotton) outfits to signify their support of Indian textile manufacturers and their aversion to British imports (Tarlo 1996: 62-93). But while its symbolic achievements were significant, the non-cooperation campaign's practical results were disappointing. In spite of Gandhi's diligent efforts, relatively few educated Indians gave up their privileged positions within the Government of India. The Indian peasants and villagers, on their part, were highly excited but unable to do much more than shout "Mahatma Gandhi ki jai" (i.e., "victory to Mahatma Gandhi") (Alexander 1969: 40). Moreover, the imperial Government learned its lesson from the Amritsar tragedy and displayed a great deal of restraint in the face of widespread nonviolent direct action. Unlike in 1919, it managed to abstain from violent repression and avoid making martyrs of nationalist leaders (Low 1971: 298-323).

At the start of 1922, after the annual session of Congress in Ahmedabad, Gandhi announced that the non-cooperation movement would soon proceed to the fourth stage in the province of Bardoli (CWMG 26: 51-54). But then, on February 4, a crowd of 2,000 villagers and National Volunteers attacked and burned government buildings at Chauri Chaura in Gorakhpur district, killing the officials trapped inside (idem: 314; Amin 1995: Arnold 2001). When Gandhi heard about this horrible incident on February 8, he condemned it and—realizing that the "army of volunteers" was unable to control the Indian population—quickly suspended the non-cooperation movement with a Congress Working Committee resolution on February 12 (CWMG 26: 138-142, 177-183). On March 10, government officials arrested Gandhi without causing much of a stir among the Indian people; soon afterwards he began serving a six-year jail sentence for his role in the rebellion (Low 1971: 316-317).

Thus both the Rowlatt satyagraha and the non-cooperation movement ended prematurely due to violence perpetrated by Indian demonstrators. Yet despite these

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11 Gandhi's decision to cancel the non-cooperation movement led to much criticism among the more extremist factions within the Indian independence movement. Clearly, the Gandhian repertoire faced significant opposition in India from the beginning. In fact, many contemporary students of Indian history, particularly those contributing to the Subaltern Studies series, still take Gandhi to task for ignoring the will of untouchables and peasants in Chauri Chaura as well as elsewhere (see esp., Amin 1995; Guha 1989).
failures, the two collective action campaigns contributed positively to the development of the Gandhian repertoire. The early contours in South Africa had evolved into a distinct guide for engaging in large-scale nonviolent direct action—a guide that incorporated insights from Western philosophy and Indian traditions, but in a unique and innovative way (Rudolph and Rudolph 1983; Nandy 1987; Fox 1989). The fact that the Gandhian repertoire matured during the national struggles between 1919 and 1922, however, did not mean that it became less flexible or multifaceted. If anything, its action forms, organizational styles, and discursive language grew more versatile and more adaptable to the rapidly changing circumstances in British India following World War I.

As illustrated above, the action forms applied during the Rowlatt satyagraha represented a continuation of the ones implemented during the satyagraha campaigns in South Africa. Peaceful tactics like selling prohibited literature, publishing unregistered newspapers, ignoring the salt laws, and holding illegal meetings still targeted legislative reform within the existing political system (van den Dungen 1971: 43-63). Ironically, what made this event exceptional was that Gandhi suspended it at the first sign of sustained unruliness among Indian activists. Occurring after information about the Amritsar massacre became widely available, the non-cooperation movement, in contrast, unambiguously tried to undermine the legitimacy and future prospects of British rule in India. The typical protest methods of this campaign—rescind government loans, halt services for local authorities, cease participation in the court system, quit civil servant jobs, leave legislative councils, boycott British products, buy domestic goods, abstain from alcohol, wear hand-spun cloth—aimed at sparking widespread, persistent, and nonviolent rebellion against the contemporary power structure. Before reaching the final stage of mass civil disobedience, though, the Chauri Chaura incident once again forced nationalist leaders to call off the event, leading to much criticism from Marxist and extremist activists.

As the action forms grew increasingly radical and anti-systemic, the organizational styles also evolved. During the Rowlatt campaign, the Satyagraha ashram in Ahmedabad, the Satyagraha Sabha (an ad hoc organization), and a wide array of Hindu nationalist and Pan-Islamic associations served as the institutional infrastructure guiding mass protest. Leaders and participants followed the Gandhian repertoire’s characteristic
four steps before initiating nonviolent direct action: 1) negotiation, 2) agitation and demonstration, 3) ultimatum, and 4) group preparation and self-purification (Bondurant 1971: 40; Shridharani 1939: 5-14). As described earlier, Gandhi and his associates started by signing the satyagraha pledge, informing the British authorities of their intentions, and giving them a chance for a peaceful settlement; they then raised consciousness through mass meetings in all parts of the country and distributed an open letter to the Indian people, encouraging them to sign the satyagraha pledge and obey the rules of behavior. Next, Gandhi sent a letter to the Viceroy announcing the date that nonviolent direct action would start; and finally, Indians across the subcontinent held a hartal to contemplate the implications of satyagraha and pray. When these precautions failed to prevent internal violence, Gandhi emphasized the need to train an army of volunteers in crowd control before embarking on another campaign. Prior to the non-cooperation movement, therefore, he helped found the Noncooperation Committee and ensured the support of formal and national organizational structures such as the Indian National Congress and the Khilafat movement—in addition to the existing base of Gandhian ashrams and informal associations (Brown 1972). Moreover, to test the mood of the Indian people and avoid unrest, he and other leaders not only followed the usual preliminary steps, but also called for a Satyagrah Week. The deplorable incidents in Chauri Chaura and elsewhere happened despite such preventative measures, not due to a lack of them (Amin 1995; Arnold 2001).

Both the action forms and organizational styles were reciprocally and inextricably related to the Gandhian repertoire's discursive language. Even before 1919, Gandhi's statements and gestures indicated that speeches by prominent Indian nationalists and the accommodating tactics of the Indian National Congress did not suffice: only mass action involving all layers of Indian society could achieve the goals of self-government and freedom. For Gandhi, therefore, it was the malicious spirit of the Rowlatt Bills that upset him most, not the technical details of the proposed legislation. By focusing on this moral aspect, he was able to mobilize the majority of Indians to participate in a social movement rather than just oppose British rule through lofty rhetoric and elitist forms of politics. When strategic and organizational precautions failed to prevent indigenous outbursts of violence, however, Gandhi was the first to take responsibility and describe
his decision to initiate satyagraha as a "Himalayan miscalculation." Learning from previous mistakes, he and fellow satyagrahis put more emphasis on symbolic efforts to maintain solidarity and discipline during the non-cooperation movement: they promoted swadeshi and the spinning wheel to stress the economic plight of poor Indians, and they highlighted the Khilafat issue and the purchase of Jallianwala Bagh to stimulate Hindu-Muslim as well as national unity. Moreover, by stimulating people of all ranks and beliefs to wear the Gandhi cap and khadi clothing, they further dramatized the strength of their numbers, the harmony among Indian nationalists, and the vulnerability of the British Empire. But the moment that Indian peasants in Chauri Chaura broke their satyagraha pledge and attacked government officials—often while declaring "Mahatma Gandhi ki jai"—Gandhi swallowed his pride and condemned their violent actions.

III. The Gandhian repertoire's zenith in India

During his years in jail—reduced from six to two years due to illness—Gandhi had ample time to consider the weaknesses of his contentious repertoire and the criticisms expressed by Extremists as well as Moderates. He decided that although Indian nationalist leaders (himself included) had frequently referred to the plight of rural masses in their speeches and writings, they had not worked hard enough to solve peasants' concrete problems. After leaving prison, therefore, he spent the remaining years of his sentence touring the villages of India and implementing his so-called "constructive program" rather than concentrating on more visible political activities (Alexander 1969: 43-44). For Gandhi and fellow satyagrahis, though, the constructive program was not a substitute for—or a retreat from—nonviolent direct action, but an integral part of it. As he later wrote: "For my handling of civil disobedience without the constructive programme will be like a paralysed hand attempting to lift a spoon" (CWMG 81: 374). The constructive program, in other words, was essential before, after, as well as during satyagraha campaigns.

The Gandhian constructive program was not a dogmatic blueprint with fixed objectives, but an open-ended document that shifted focus depending on the audience and the circumstances. In the Indian context between the 1920s and 1940s, it consisted of four areas of emphasis for legislators and Congress members, and nine additional areas
for other volunteers. It stressed that political and community leaders needed to go into
the villages to promote: the use of the spinning wheel and khadi, Hindu-Muslim and
communal unity, prohibition and recovery from alcoholism, and the removal of
untouchability by the Hindu population. Hand spinning enabled poor peasants to
improve economic conditions by themselves instead of relying exclusively on
government assistance. The key to religious harmony was mutual respect and tolerance
at the grassroots level, not pacts between leaders at the elite level. Preventing alcohol
abuse required local knowledge about its destructive effects as well as prohibitive
national legislation. And finally, removing the blight of untouchability necessitated a
change of heart and spirit as much as awareness in the heads and minds of Hindus
(CWMG 71: 244-245).

The remaining elements of the Gandhian constructive program were less
prominent in the contemporary situation, but no less important in the long run. Besides
hand spinning, other village industries could also play a significant role in uplifting
India’s rural population, whereas village sanitation was equally crucial for a healthy and
productive community. Gandhi also highlighted the need for new and improved basic
education, based on practical activities and knowledge, to provide children with usable
skills (Alexander 1969: 101-103); and for better adult education to encourage social and
political participation among all community members—not just among highly-educated,
middle-class Indians. Such constructive work was only possible if the involvement of
women increased and became an integral part of the social and political agenda. They
were particularly essential in educating rural people about health and hygiene, because an
unhealthy population could not contribute to national independence. To prepare for life
after British rule, the Gandhian program also called for the propagation of a national
language (Rashtrabhasha) and the cultivation of love for local languages. And finally,
Gandhi stressed the need for a minimum level of economic equality and material
resources (CWMG 71: 111-114).

After more than four years of hands-on constructive work in villages, Gandhi was
more confident than ever that the Indian people were ready for nonviolent direct action
on a mass scale. During his sabbatical, moreover, extremist Indian nationalists, such as
Subhas Chandra Bose, had gained considerable popularity among the Indian population
(Bose and Bose 1997; Hutchins 1973: 133). By the end of the 1920s, therefore, Gandhi realized that another satyagraha campaign was not just feasible, but also necessary to prevent widespread violence. Sharing the Indian population’s anger about the Simon Commission’s report in 1928 (CWMG 45: 68), which recommended toothless political reforms instead of fundamental changes, he drafted a resolution that Congress passed on December 31, 1929:

This Congress ... declares that the word “Swaraj”...shall mean Complete Independence...This Congress appeals to the Nation zealously to prosecute the constructive programme of the Congress, and authorizes the All-India Congress Committee, whenever it deems fit, to launch upon a programme of Civil Disobedience including non-payment of taxes, whether in selected areas or otherwise, and under such safeguards as it may consider necessary (CWMG 48: 161-162).

On January 26, 1930, as a preparation for mass satyagraha, the entire country celebrated Purna Swaraj (i.e., Complete Independence) Day: people in villages and towns throughout India took the pledge of independence, hoisted the national flag, and held peaceful demonstrations and solemn ceremonies. Even Indians living in foreign cities (including Los Angeles and Detroit) joined in the festivities.

After much contemplation, Gandhi decided that the campaign’s primary symbolic target would be the Salt Tax, and announced that he, accompanied by eighty satyagrahis (Weber 1997: 490-496), would march to the Dandi sea and violate the law by picking up salt. In Young India, he revealed the main reason for attacking the British monopoly on Indian salt:

There is no article like salt outside water by taxing which the State can reach even the starving millions, the sick, the maimed and the utterly helpless. The tax constitutes therefore the most inhuman poll tax that the ingenuity of man can devise....Salt production like cotton growing has been centralized for the sake of sustaining the inhuman monopoly...the necessary consequence of salt monopoly was the destruction, i.e. closing down of salt works in thousands of places where the poor people manufactured their own salt. The illegality is in a Government that steals the people’s salt and makes them pay heavily for the stolen article. The people, when they become conscious of their power, will have every right to take possession of what belongs to them (CWMG 48: 350-351).

Unlike in the past, moreover, he declared that this time the satyagraha campaign would continue despite outbursts of violence, until British authorities agreed to meet Congress’s demands or grant India independence:

Whilst...every effort imaginable and possible should be made to restrain the forces of violence, civil disobedience, once begun this time cannot be stopped and must not be stopped as long as there is a
single civil resister left free or alive. A votary of satyagraha should find himself in one of the following states:
1. In prison or in an analogous state; or
2. Engaged in civil disobedience; or
3. Under orders at the spinning wheel, or at some constructive work advancing swaraj (idem: 348).

Like before, Gandhi’s appeal to his opponent, by now Viceroy Irwin, was open and straightforward. First, on January 30, he publicly identified eleven specific objectives: total prohibition of alcohol, reduction of the exchange rate, reduction of the land revenue by at least 50%, abolition of the salt tax, reduction of military expenditure by at least 50%, reduction of top civil servants’ salaries, acceptance of a protective tariff on foreign cloth, passage of the Coastal Traffic Reservation Bill,\(^2\) discharge of all political prisoners, abolition of the Criminal Investigation Department (C.I.D.), and distribution of licenses to use fire arms for self-defense (idem: 271). Then, in his letter to the British leader, he not only set an ultimatum, but also suggested ways to avert nonviolent direct action (idem: 362-367).

When Viceroy Irwin ignored his appeal, Gandhi once again published a satyagraha pledge (CWMG 48: 485-486) and the rules of nonviolent behavior, urging individual participants to harbor no anger, suffer the opponent’s anger, avoid retaliations in word or deed, submit to arrest or confiscation of one’s property voluntarily, and protect officials from insults and attack. He advised prisoners to behave courteously towards prison officials, observe prison rules, accept clean food, reject special treatment, and abstain from fasting. He instructed groups of satyagrahis to obey orders from their leaders, appeal to higher authorities in case of disagreements, and expect no maintenance of dependents. And finally, he warned Indian activists to prevent communal conflict where possible, assist only the party that is demonstrably in the right, and stay out of processions that would “wound the religious susceptibilities of any community” (idem: 340-342).

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\(^1\) This demand called for the immediate reservation of coastal trade of India for Indian owned and Indian manned ships. Like the second and seventh demand, therefore, it sought to give India more control over international trade and commerce.

\(^2\) This final demand may seem puzzling, but Gandhi stressed the psychological harm inflicted on the Indian people as a result of the Government’s monopoly of violence. Although Gandhi was personally opposed to violence, he wanted the Indian population to make up its own mind about this issue (Weber 1997: 64).
On the announced date, March 12, at 6:30 a.m., Gandhi and eighty well-prepared satyagrahis from his ashram began their 241-mile journey to the Dandi coast. Along the way, they encouraged local peasants, laborers, and leaders to prepare for mass protest after illegally making salt on April 6. To their surprise, the first group of marchers reached its destination on April 5 without any arrests. Gandhi expressed his appreciation for the government's mild treatment, but remained dubious about its intentions:

I cannot withhold my compliments from the Government for the policy of complete non-interference adopted by them throughout the march....I was wholly unprepared for this exemplary non-interference. I am not so foolish as to imagine that the Government has suddenly lost their proved capacity for provoking popular resentment and then punishing with frightfulness. I wish I could believe this non-interference was due to any real change of heart or policy......the only interpretation I can put upon this non-interference is that the British Government, powerful though it is, is sensitive to world opinion which will not tolerate repression of extreme political agitation which civil disobedience undoubtedly is, so long as disobedience remains civil, and, therefore, necessarily non-violent.

It remains to be seen whether the Government will tolerate, as they have tolerated the march, the actual breach of the salt laws by countless people from tomorrow....The 6th April has been to us, since its culmination in Jalianwala Massacre, a day for penance and purification. We, therefore, commence it with prayer and fasting. I hope the whole of India will observe the National Week commencing from tomorrow in the spirit it was conceived (CWMG 49: 12-13).

The next day, at exactly 6:30 a.m., Gandhi scooped a handful of sand and water from the sea and extracted a tiny amount of salt, thereby breaking the Salt Act and calling on the rest of the country to do the same (Sharp 1960; Weber 1997).

Between April 6 and 13, during National Week, people throughout the subcontinent began digging salt (from the sea or inland deposits), selling salt on the streets, initiating hartals, attending mass meetings, joining parades, boycotting foreign cloth and promoting swadeshi, withdrawing from government jobs and schools, and picketing liquor shops and opium dens. The police reacted with gruesome tactics like random beatings, driving nails into the soles of activists' feet, pouring boiling saline water over bodies, and shooting demonstrators in the back, and arrested many prominent Congress leaders throughout the country—but not Gandhi himself (Sharp 1960: 114).

Despite such brutal repression, most participants in satyagraha campaigns remained surprisingly disciplined and peaceful. Unlike in 1922, instances of internal violence in places such as Calcutta, Poone, and Karachi were sporadic and impulsive, not organized or deliberate (CWMG 49: 39-42, 52-53, 147-149; Sharp 1960: 89-114; Weber 1997).
After four weeks of nationwide civil disobedience, Gandhi wrote another letter to the Viceroy on May 4, announcing the Indian independence movement's intention to capture the salt works at Dharasana:

God willing, it is my intention on...to set out for Dharasana and reach there with my companions on...and demand possession of the Salt Works. The public have been told that Dharasana is private property. This is mere camouflage. It is as effectively under Government control as the Viceroy's House. Not a pinch of salt can be removed without the previous sanction of the authorities. It is possible for you to prevent this raid, as it has been playfully and mischievously called, in three ways:
1. by removing the salt tax;
2. by arresting me and my party unless the country can, as I hope it will, replace everyone taken away;
3. by sheer goondasism unless every head broken is replaced, as I hope it will (CWMG 49: 260).

The next night, the British government in India finally arrested Gandhi and incarcerated him without trial. The following day, Indians across the country held hartals and demonstrations to express their support of the satyagraha leader, without becoming violent. Indians and sympathizers throughout the world read about Gandhi's imprisonment in the newspapers and sent messages to Viceroy Irwin and British Prime Minister urging them to meet the Indian people's demands (Sharp 1960: 123; Weber 1997).

With Gandhi in jail, unfettered Congress members took over the leadership of the satyagraha movement and continued with preparations for the salt raids. On May 12, groups of volunteers started marching to Dharasana, but initially the police was able to force them to retreat. On May 21, a group of 2,500 volunteers, led by the famous poetess Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, refused to obey police instructions and continued walking toward the salt works (Sharp 1960: 135-147; Chicago Daily News, May 14, 1930: 1f). Webb Miller, an American journalist, described the horrific scenes that follow:

Suddenly, at the word of command, scores of native police rushed upon the advancing marchers and rained blows on their heads with their steel-shod lathis. Not one of the marchers even raised an arm to fend off the blows. They went down like ten-pins. From where I stood I heard the sickening whacks of the clubs on unprotected skulls. The waiting crowd of watchers groaned and sucked in their breaths in sympathetic pain at every blow.

Those struck down fell sprawling, unconscious or writhing with pain with fractured skulls or broken shoulders. In two or three minutes the ground was quilted with bodies. Great patches of blood widened on their white clothes. The survivors without breaking ranks silently and doggedly marched on until struck down. When every one of the first column had been knocked down, stretcher-bearers rushed up unmolested by the police and carried off the injured to a thatched hut which had been arranged as a temporary hospital.
Then another column formed while the leaders pleaded with them to retain their self-control. They marched slowly towards the police. Although everyone knew that within a few minutes he would be beaten down, perhaps killed, I could detect no signs of waver or fear... The police rushed out and methodically and mechanically beat down the second column. There was no fight, no struggle: the marchers simply walked forward until struck down.

Finally the police became enraged by the non-resistance, sharing. I suppose, the helpless rage... for not fighting back. They commenced savagely kicking... in the abdomen and testicles... Hour after hour stretcher-bearers carried back a stream of inert, bleeding bodies (Chicago Daily News, May 22, 1930: 2, 193ff).

These words reached audiences throughout the world and their criticism of British rule in India grew stronger and louder (Sharp 1960: 141-142, 151). During the following weeks, satyagrahis initiated more salt raids at Dharasana, despite Naidu’s arrest, while the civil disobedience movement continued in other parts of India (with salt depot raids in Karnataka, Maharashtra, Shiroda, and Wadala), most of them remaining nonviolent in the face of savage police assaults (Weber 1997).

After several rounds of negotiations between Congress leaders and the Viceroy, the Salt March campaign ended in 1931. On India’s unofficial Independence Day, January 26, Irwin released imprisoned satyagraha leaders and on March 5, following a few personal meetings, Irwin and Gandhi signed a pact calling for the conclusion of the civil disobedience movement in exchange for constructive dialogue—as equal parties—about the future of India (Gazette of India Extraordinary, March 5, 1931; Sharp 1960: 213-219). That evening, Gandhi held a press conference for journalists from India, Great Britain, the United States, and numerous other countries to explain this historic settlement:

For a settlement of this character, it is not possible nor wise to say which is the victorious party. If there is any victory, I should say it belongs to both....In the very nature of things the Congress has a definite goal to reach, and there can be no question of victory without reaching the goal....I hope, therefore, that the million who have taken part in this struggle of suffering during the past twelve months will now, during the period of conference and construction, show the same willingness, the same cohesion, the same effort and the same wisdom that they have, in an eminent degree, shown during what I would describe as a heroic period in the modern history of India....

Suffering has its well-defined limits. Suffering can be both wise and unwise, and, when the limit is reached, to prolong it would be not unwise but the height of folly.

It would be folly to go on suffering when the opponent makes it easy for you to enter into a discussion with him upon your longings. If a real opening is made, it is one’s duty to take advantage of it, and in my humble opinion, the settlement has made a real opening....

The goal of the Congress is not to get a redress of past wrongs, important though they are, its goal is Purna Swaraj which, indifferently rendered in English, has been described as complete independence. It is India’s birthright, as it is of any other nation worthy of that name, and India cannot be satisfied with anything less... (CWMG 51: 207-208; see also, Sharp 1960: 219-225).
In September of the same year, Indian representatives traveled to Great Britain for the Round Table Conference to discuss Indian self-government. But once again, the British government broke its promise and failed to take India’s independence seriously (Alexander 1969: 71-82). Soon after his return, the British authorities in India incarcerated Gandhi and when they released him in 1933, he retired from mainstream politics, resigned his membership of Congress, toured the villages, and focused on constructive work—just as he had done a decade earlier (idem: 90-106).

Although the Gandhian repertoire of nonviolent contention did not achieve its fundamental political aim, Indian independence, it reached new heights during the Salt March campaign of 1930 and 1931—heights that it would never reach again. For the first time, satyagraha involved anti-systemic rebellion by the entire tapestry of Indian society without causing serious internal violence (Hutchins 1973: 68; Hutchins 1967; Brown 1977); for the first time, it translated suffering at the hands of the government’s police forces into worldwide and sustained public sympathy; and for the first time, it was able to mold external conditions in its favor and produce victory (although the victory turned out to be a Phyrric one). In short, during these years, the flexible and multifaceted qualities of the Gandhian repertoire enabled collective action that was moral, disciplined, and effective. This unprecedented power did not derive from one particularly groundbreaking action form, organizational style, or discursive argument. Instead, it resulted from an accumulative process of trial and error as well as from a unique way of combining and implementing familiar routines.

Many of the Salt March campaign’s action forms had emerged earlier, either in South Africa or India. Breaking the salt laws, boycotting foreign cloth, refusing cooperation with government institutions, organizing pickets at shops selling intoxicating products, and participating in mass marches were tactics that Indian activists had grown accustomed to over the years. One new aspect of this event, though, was that the constructive program represented an integral rather than a secondary part of the Gandhian repertoire. Consequently, community work in areas such as hand spinning, religious harmony, alcohol abuse, untouchability, village development, practical education, language, and female participation was no less important than more dramatic means of nonviolent protest, even during direct action campaigns. The incessant waves of raids on
the salt depots—first at Dharasana, later also elsewhere—represented another innovative addition to the Gandhian repertoire of nonviolent action forms (Brown 1977).

The organizational styles applied during these years both facilitated and emanated from collective struggle. By instigating satyagraha with a small group of faithful marchers deeply steeped in the ashram way of life, Gandhi tightly controlled the first phase of satyagraha. Unlike during the noncooperation movement, Congress members initially served to maintain discipline among the masses and later, after his arrest, replaced Gandhi at the forefront of direct action (Kane 1944). The Salt March campaign evolved according to the same steps as previous campaigns: negotiation, agitation and demonstration, ultimatum, and group preparation. Indian leaders shared their objectives and strategies with British authorities, and left room for resolving issues before nonviolent direct action. Activists took part in the Purna Swaraj Day and the National Week to communicate their intentions to the widest possible audience. Gandhi wrote Viceroy Irwin several letters to indicate when events would occur and what he could do to prevent them. And finally, Gandhians ensured the readiness of the Indian population by developing even more extensive and specific rules of behavior, and encouraging hands-on involvement in constructive work before participating in nonviolent direct action (Brown 1977).

The Gandhian repertoire’s discursive language during this event justified and set the stage for particular action forms and organizational styles. It continued to stress the importance of wearing khadi as a symbol of the national unity within India and the legitimacy of the nationalist movement. It also broke new ground with the Purna Swaraj resolution and the choice of the salt tax as primary target. Gandhi’s interpretations of (and statements on) the declaration of “Complete Independence” and the British monopoly on Indian salt were more radical and explicitly anti-British Empire than ever before (Sharp 1960: 93). Moreover, Gandhi made clear that—contrary to the Rowlatt campaign and the noncooperation movement—he would not suspend the Salt March campaign, even if the Indian population unexpectedly reverted to violence (idem: 117). In the contemporary climate, he argued, abrupt cancellation of satyagraha would only improve the position of extremist forces within India and lead to larger-scale destruction.

Erikson (1969: 445) refers to this organizational method as “ashram-in-motion.”
The following years would prove Gandhi correct.

IV. The origins of the Gandhian repertoire’s decline in India

As had become customary, satyagrahis returned to their constructive work in the Indian villages after the Salt March campaign (Alexander 1969: 90-106). But when World War II broke out in September 1939, Congress leaders publicly stated that they could only support the British Empire and Allied forces in return for national independence following the war (CWMG 76: 430-431, 433-438). As soon as it became clear that the British government and the viceroy (by now Lord Linlithgow) refused to make such a promise, Gandhi organized a series of individual disobedience campaigns, leading to the arrest of devoted Gandhians such as Vinoba Bhave and prominent political figures like Jawaharlal Nehru (CWMG 80: 27, 358-359). By May 1941, the authorities had imprisoned more than 2,500 activists, despite the fact that no mass demonstrations had taken place (Alexander 1969: 110). Ignoring British officials’ efforts to negotiate their way out of the conflict, the Congress Working Committee then passed a resolution on July 14, 1942 that called for the immediate withdrawal of colonial rule. If its plea went unanswered, Congress would embark on another satyagraha campaign under the leadership of Gandhi (CWMG 83: 445-447).

At the request of Congress, Gandhi drafted instructions for “civil resisters” and developed plans for a hartal, disobedience of the salt tax, lines of command, the role of students, and the rules of behavior. Besides these familiar precautionary measures, his draft also outlined how to settle the constitution after British withdrawal, stressed the autonomy of individual Indians, and raised the possibility of refusing to pay land tax (CWMG 83: 169-172). A few days later, on August 8, 1942, the All-India Congress Committee (AICC) in Bombay endorsed and ratified the Quit India Resolution written by Gandhi:

The Committee resolves...to sanction, for the vindication of India’s inalienable right to freedom and independence, the starting of a mass struggle on non-violent lines on the widest possible scale, so that the country might utilize all the non-violent strength it has gathered during the last twenty-two years of peaceful struggle...The Committee appeals to the people of India to face the dangers and
hardships that will fall to their lot with courage and endurance, and to hold together under the leadership of Gandhi and carry out his instructions as disciplined soldiers of Indian freedom. They must remember that nonviolence is the basis of this movement. A time may come when it may not be possible to issue instructions or for instructions to reach our people, and when no Congress committees can function. When this happens, every man and woman who is participating in this movement must function for himself or herself within the four corners of the general instructions issued. Every Indian who desires freedom and strives for it must be his own guide urging him on along the hard road where there is no resting place and which leads ultimately to the independence and deliverance of India (CWMG 83: 454).

In his speech at the AICC meeting, Gandhi formally accepted the leadership of the Quit India campaign, pledged that "we shall either free India or die in the attempt; we shall not live to see the perpetuation of our slavery," and encouraged India to adopt a new mantra: "do or die!" (CWMG 83: 197).

The next morning, the police arrested hundreds of prominent nationalist leaders throughout the subcontinent, including Gandhi, and imprisoned them without trial. Although his arrest took him by surprise, Gandhi had prepared the Indian population for such a situation: "Let every man and woman live every moment of his or her life hereafter in the consciousness that he or she eats or lives for achieving freedom and will die, if need be, to attain the goal" (Tendulkar 1960, vol. VI: 161; CWMG 83: 170). The remaining Congress members came together in Bombay and formulated an action program based on Gandhi's plans. Meanwhile, however, younger and more extremist Indian groups had reacted to events by forming an underground movement aimed at undermining the entire apparatus of British rule in India. Participants in this "spontaneous revolution," which lasted about four months, destroyed government property, burned public institutions, demolished lines of communication, and tore up the rail system—all the while shouting "Gandhiji-ki-jai" [Victory to Gandhi] or "Swaraj Ho Gaya" [Independence has come] (Hutchins 1973: 246, 217-281; Alexander 1969: 107-124; Arnold 2001).

Obviously, the Gandhian repertoire of nonviolent contention did not prescribe the violent eruptions that took place at the end of 1942. Afterwards, however, Gandhi directed most of the blame to the government, which had prevented Indian satyagrahis from exerting a restraining influence. According to Francis Hutchins (1973: 279), moreover, his criticism of the activists who had ignored the rules of nonviolent behavior was relatively mild:
He applauded their motives (for the Quit India Resolution still stood); he applauded their courage: he asserted that their movement had furthered the nationalist cause. Violent resistance was, he said, on balance a positive contribution, but it was nonetheless regrettable in that it was a much weaker contribution than could have been made by the use of pure non-violence.

Although he still condemned cowardly violence and preferred courageous nonviolence, he condoned violence as a final resort against a criminal colonial system by those unable to remain nonviolent (idem: 202). But when the underground movement had run its course, Gandhi (who was still in jail) regained control of the situation by announcing a twenty-one day fast on February 10, 1943 (CWMG 83: 282-285, 293-294). Through this individual application of satyagraha, he symbolically held the government and particularly the viceroy responsible for the turmoil, ended the need for further mass protest, and reunited the various groups of Indian nationalists behind a common goal: independence. Following his hunger strike, British officials finally recognized that they had no other choice but to quit India (Hutchins 1973: 290).

In the second half of the 1940s, as the long-awaited moment of national liberation came closer, the influence of Gandhi and the Gandhian repertoire declined (Brown 1989). Nehru took over as leader of India and emphasized power politics, economic modernization, and bureaucratic centralization instead of nonviolent action or constructive work in the villages. While the country celebrated independence on August 15, 1947, therefore, Gandhi prayed and fasted in private, worried about the effects of Partition (CWMG 96: 229-235; Fischer 1962: 352; Alexander 1969: 155-159). Although another one of his fasts temporarily stopped riots between Hindus and Muslims in Calcutta, the unrest continued in other cities. Realizing that his appeals for communal harmony fell on deaf ears, he once again began a “fast-unto-death” on January 12, 1948 to encourage the Indian population to end the fighting and change its attitudes, and to urge Hindu and Muslim leaders to find a solution (Fischer 1962: 355-356). After about a week, representatives of both communities signed a declaration that satisfied Gandhi and persuaded him to break his fast (CWMG 98: 223-227, 229-230, 233-239, 244-247, 253-257, 259-262; Sharp 1960: 227-289). The national spirit of reconciliation did not last long, though: on January 25, after a prayer meeting, Gandhi himself became a victim of extremism when Nathuram Vinayak Godse, a Hindu fundamentalist, killed him for his
support of Muslims and his unorthodox views of Hinduism (Fischer 1962: 368; Alexander 1969: 175).

Ironically, the Gandhian repertoire's most visible political results materialized after its role in India had already started to decrease. Although Gandhi initiated the Quit India campaign, the "spontaneous revolution" that emerged after August 9, 1942 evolved without guidance from the action forms, organizational styles, and discursive language associated with satyagraha. Despite the fact that Gandhi carefully specified the required tactics, institutions, and symbols for engaging in massive and nonviolent direct action, the Indian activists who took charge of events after his arrest applied their own methods and formulated their own rhetoric. As India moved toward independence, moreover, Indian politicians and British rulers basically ignored Gandhi's opposition to Partition and a separate Muslim state—despite Gandhi's status as the symbolic "father of the nation." Rather than relying on the Gandhian repertoire of nonviolent contention, these leaders reverted to traditional forms of political bargaining and constructed states driven by military and material power. With organized Gandhian action out of favor in his own country, Gandhi shifted to defensive and individualist (and, according to most scholars, coercive) satyagraha campaigns to persuade fellow Indians to cease communal violence (Brown 1989). By this time, India was clearly no longer an appropriate setting for collective applications of satyagraha. Fortunately, though, activist groups on the other side of the Pacific Ocean were willing to experiment with the Gandhian repertoire of nonviolent contention during these years.

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As it evolved from an idea—satyagraha—to a comprehensive set of guidelines and practices, the "whole" of the Gandhian repertoire grew into considerably more than the sum of its distinct "parts." Particularly during the Salt March campaign, its multifaceted and flexible assortment of action forms, organizational styles, and discursive language demonstrated an ability to adapt continuously to changing circumstances without necessarily contradicting Gandhian principles. In the 1920s and especially the 1930s, it became clear that the Gandhian repertoire of nonviolent contention was not merely a
spin-off of the Moderate and Extremist repertoires that had previously dominated the Indian political environment, but a significant innovation in its own right. Although the Gandhian repertoire included some of the "civility" of Moderates and some of the "militancy" of Extremists, the meaning and scope it gave nonviolent protest was unprecedented in India, South Africa, as well as other parts of the world. Yet the Gandhian repertoire's development in India was never linear or self-propelling; it went through various ups and downs before unexpectedly reaching its zenith, and it became irrelevant during the 1940s despite Gandhi's immense popularity among the Indian people. Without denying its complexity or volatility, this chapter concludes with a brief summary of the Gandhian repertoire's main characteristics in order to give a more concrete answer to my first research question: what diffused from the Indian independence movement to the American civil rights movement?

After his miscalculations during the Rowlatt campaign and the noncooperation movement, Gandhi realized more than ever that satyagraha had to incorporate action forms related to the long-term objectives of the constructive program as well as the transformative aims of nonviolent direct action. One fundamental characteristic of the Gandhian repertoire was, therefore, that painstaking community building at the grassroots level—which in India primarily involved activities promoting hand spinning and religious harmony, on the one hand, and preventing alcohol abuse and untouchability, on the other—was an integral part of dramatic and nationwide protest. It was certainly not an alternative to (or "safety valve" against) confrontational means of mass resistance such as strikes, boycotts, non-cooperation, and civil disobedience (Shridharani 1939: 149, 3-47; Rudolph and Rudolph 1983; Mukherjee 1993). Depending on the particular target and context, though, Gandhian activists could invent new methods to put this general guideline into practice. The raids on the Dharasana salt works in 1931, for instance, were the first of its kind (Sharp 1960: 138-151; Weber 1997: 433-455).

The Gandhian repertoire's organizational styles and discursive language were closely linked to its action forms. Its organizational styles stressed the importance of

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35 As such, the Gandhian repertoire incorporated the forms of community building favored by proponents of the "moderate repertoire" in the Indian National Congress as well as the forms of direct action favored by proponents of the "extremist repertoire" among Marxist and orthodox-Hindu nationalists without reverting to the gradualism and elitism of the former camp or the violence and short-sightedness of the latter camp.
ongoing preparation in daily life for the individual and collective discipline required during community development or nonviolent direct action campaigns. Both in South Africa and in India, satyagrahis first learned the preliminary steps and codes of conduct in ashrams, and then communicated them to other participants. During the most successful events, this well-trained group of satyagrahis—or “ashram-in-motion”—took the lead and managed to persuade other participants to obey the Gandhian rules of behavior (Erikson 1969: 445; see also, Shridharani 1939: 143-162; Kumar 1971). And finally, the Gandhian repertoire’s discursive language aimed at clarifying the distinction between nonviolence and violence, the relationship between nonviolent means and truthful ends, the difference between hating an evil British system and loving good British people, and the practical purpose of movement activities and institutions. It also sought to highlight the Indian population’s “unity-in-diversity” as well as the interests of poor peasants and untouchables through tangible symbols such as khadi clothing and Gandhi caps (Rudolph and Rudolph 1983; Parekh 1989; Fox 1989; Mukherjee 1993; Tarlo 1996; Hick 1999; Lal 1999; Arnold 2001).

Based on this understanding of what the Gandhian repertoire of nonviolent contention entailed, the next five chapters consider its transnational diffusion to the United States. From now on, the main questions will be: How did the dissemination process evolve, and how did American receivers respond and react to Gandhian ideas and practices? Why did transnational diffusion move forward in certain times and places, but not others, and why did it take thirty-five years before the American civil rights movement fully implemented the Gandhian repertoire? Chapter three provides some initial answers by focusing on the inception of the diffusion item’s journey during the 1920s.