

# FINAL ENCOUNTER

## The Politics of the Assassination of Gandhi

Even in his death there was a magnificence and complete artistry. It was from every point of view a fitting climax to the man and to the life he had lived . . .

Jawaharlal Nehru<sup>1</sup>

Godse was to Gandhi what Kamsa was to Krishna. Indivisible, even if incompatible. Arjuna never understood Krishna the way Kamsa did . . . hate is infinitely more symbiotic than love. Love dulls one's vision, hate sharpens it.

T. K. Mahadevan<sup>2</sup>

### I

Every political assassination is a joint communiqué. It is a statement which the assassin and his victim jointly work on and co-author. Sometimes the collaboration takes time to mature, sometimes it is instantaneous and totally spontaneous. But no political assassination is ever a single-handed job. Even when the killer is mentally ill and acts alone, he in his illness represents larger historical and psychological forces which connect him to his victim.<sup>3</sup>

Robert Payne's biography of Mahatma Gandhi, perhaps more than any other writing on the subject, brings out this element of collaboration in the assassination of Gandhi.<sup>4</sup> It was an assassination, Payne seems to suggest, in which apart from Gandhi and a motley group of dedicated but clumsy assassins, crucial indirect roles were played by Gandhi's protectors in the Indian police and its intelligence branch, by the bureaucracy, and by important parts of India's political leadership including some of Gandhi's most dedicated followers.

But why was there this joint endeavour? Where did the minds and interests of so many people converge?

To answer this question I shall first define the quintessence of Gandhi's political style and then describe the psychological and social environment in India at the time of his death in January 1948.

Gandhi was neither a conservative nor a progressive. And though he had internal contradictions, he was not a fragmented, self-alienated man driven by the need to compulsively conserve the past or protect the new. Effortlessly transcending the dichotomy of orthodoxy and iconoclasm, he forged a mode of self-expression which by its apparently non-threatening simplicity reconciled the common essence of the old and the new.<sup>5</sup> However, in spite of his synthesising skills, the content of the social changes he suggested, and the political activism he demanded from the Indian people, were highly subversive of the main strain of Indian, particularly Hindu, culture. Even though few intellectuals in his time thought so,<sup>6</sup> many conservatives who had a real stake in the old and the established sensed this subversion. As his conservative assassin was to later complain, 'All his experiments were at the expenses [sic] of the Hindus'.<sup>7</sup>

Particularly dangerous to the traditional authority system in India were two elements of the Gandhian political philosophy. The first was his continuous attempt to change the definitions of centre and periphery in Indian society; the second was his negation of the concepts of masculinity and femininity implicit in some Indian traditions and in the colonial situation. Both these attempted changes had important psychological components and the drama of Gandhi's death cannot be told without reference to them.

The first element can be crudely called a distinctive Gandhian theory of social justice. The theory rejected the role of the modernist, westernized, middle-class intelligentsia as a vanguard of the proletariat. Till the advent of Gandhi, it was this gentlemanly class which dominated Indian politics and was the main voice of Indian nationalism. Gandhi, however, was always afraid that in the name of the poor and the exploited, the 'advanced-thinking', ideologically guided, middle-class intellectuals would only perpetuate their own dominance. So the first thing he tried to do was to de-intellectualize Indian politics. I should not be misunderstood: Gandhi was not against intellectuals *qua* intellectuals. He was against giving importance to intellectual activities and ideologies in a culture which believed intellection to be ritually purer and more Brahmanic, and where the primacy of idea over action had a sacred sanction behind it. Therefore, anticipating Mao Tse-Tung who faced a somewhat similar literati tradition, Gandhi would not

even grant the existence of progressive elements within the traditionally privileged sectors of India.

As a part of the process of de-Brahmanization through de-intellectualization, Gandhi was constantly trying to pass off many aspects of the low-status, non-Brahmanic, commercial and peasant cultures in India as genuine Hinduism. While stressing the 'syntheticism' of Gandhi, one must not ignore his attempt to make certain peripheral aspects of the Hindu culture its central core, exactly the way he tried to do with Christianity in a more limited way.

To effect this cultural restructuring Gandhi evolved what for his society was a new political technology. He began emphasising the centrality of politics and public life in an apolitical society and mobilizing the periphery of the Hindu society, apparently for the nationalist cause so dear to the urban middle classes, but actually to remould the entire cultural strata within Hinduism. It is thus that Gandhi bridged the pre-Gandhian hiatus that had arisen between mass politics and social reform movements in India.<sup>8</sup>

This new political technology also incidentally challenged the basis of the colonial system which rested on the assumption that the British were ruling India with the consent of the majority of Indians in the countryside, her 'martial races' and their 'natural leaders' in the Kshatriya princelings, the rajas and maharajas who owed allegiance to the British crown. Gandhi's mobilizational technique of social and political change challenged this assumption and threatened to cut the support-base of the British-Indian government.

British colonialism also predicated that the only vociferous dissenters in the colonial system were the urban middle-class babus, alienated from the real India and from the society's 'natural' leadership, and that colonial subjugation established the cultural inferiority of the Indians whose burden it was the white man's Christian duty willingly to carry. Having an acute sense of power, Gandhi accepted the first proposition as valid and took his fight against the Raj to India's villages. Concerned with the loss of self esteem in Indians, he refused to accept that it was the Indians' responsibility to model themselves on their rulers, to be self-deprecating or defensive about their society. What at first sight seems Gandhi's obscurantism was actually his attempt to disprove the civilizing role attributed to colonialism (which at the time was

closely associated with modern science, industrialism, high technology and intellectually dominant theories of progress), so that colonialism could openly become a name for racism and exploitation.

The second major element in Gandhi's philosophy was his rediscovery of womanhood as a civilizing force in human society.

Gandhi tried to give a new meaning to womanhood in a peasant culture which had lived through centuries with deep-seated conflicts and ambivalence about femininity.<sup>9</sup> All his life Gandhi had wanted to live down, within himself, his identification with his own outwardly powerful but essentially weak, hedonistic, semi-modernized father and to build his self-image upon his identification with his apparently weak, deeply religious, traditional but self-confident and powerful mother. Apparently his mother was the first *satyagrahi* he knew who used fasting and other forms of self-penalization to acquire and wield womanly power within the constraints of a patriarchal family. Thanks to a number of sensitive psychological studies of Gandhi, these are now reasonably well-known facts.<sup>10</sup> I restate them only to stress what has been always recognized in such analyses, namely, Gandhi's deep need to come to psychological terms with his mother by incorporating aspects of her femininity in his own personality.<sup>11</sup>

Gandhi's ambivalence towards his father was overt and his respect for his mother was total. But underlying this respect, the various studies of Gandhi's personality themselves suggest, there was—as one would expect in the case of such imputation of total goodness — a great deal of latent ambivalence towards her. And, not unpredictably, the aggressive elements of this ambivalence were associated with some degree of guilt and search for valid personal and social models of atonement.

This personal search fitted the needs of some aspects of the Indian personality too. The Indian had always feared woman as the traditional symbol of uncertain nature and unpredictable nurture, of activity, power and aggression. In consequence, he had always feared womanhood and either abnegated femininity or defensively glorified it out of all proportion.<sup>12</sup> As in many such cases, here too an internal psychological problem had its counterpart in cultural divisions within the Indian society. The greater Sanskrit culture tended to give less importance to woman and to value her less in comparison to the little cultures of India. Simultaneously, the

colonial culture too derived its psychological strength from the identification of rulership with male dominance and subjecthood with feminine submissiveness.

It would therefore seem that Gandhi's innovations in this area also tended to simultaneously subvert Brahmanic and Kshatriya orthodoxy and the British colonial system. He challenged the former so far as it depended upon the Indian man's fears of being polluted by woman and contaminated by her femininity; he challenged the latter in so far as it exploited man's insecurity about his masculinity and his consequent continuous potency drive.

In other words, Gandhi attacked the structure of sexual dominance as a homologue of both the colonial situation and the traditional social stratification. He rejected the British as well as the Brahmanic-Kshatriya equation between manhood and dominance, between masculinity and legitimate violence, and between femininity and passive submissiveness.<sup>13</sup> He wanted to extend to the male identity — in both the rulers and the ruled — the revalued, partly non-Brahmanic, equation between womanhood and non-intrusive, nurturant, non-manipulative, non-violent, self-deemphasising 'merger' with natural and social environments.

That is, Gandhi was trying to fight colonialism by fighting the psychological equation which a patriarchy makes between masculinity and aggressive social dominance and between femininity and subjugation. To fight this battle he ingeniously combined aspects of folk Hinduism and recessive elements of Christianity to mark out a new domain of public intervention. In this domain the rulers and the ruled of India could share a new moral awareness, an awareness that the meek would not only inherit the earth but could make femininity a valued aspect of man, congruent with his overall masculinity. In other words, defiant subjecthood and passive resistance to violence — militant non-violence, as Erik Erikson calls it — became in the Gandhian worldview an indicator of moral accomplishment and superiority, in the subjects as well as in the more sensitive rulers who yielded to non-violence. Gandhi not only wanted to be a trans-sexual *mahatma* or saint in the Indian sense; he also wanted to be a bride of Christ—a St Francis of Assisi — in the Christian sense. His goal was to become an *alter ego* for his potency-seeking rulers and to align with their superegos too. Honour, he asserted, universally lay with the victims, not the aggressors.<sup>14</sup> It is evidence of how much he was

in tune with some of the emerging though marginal strands of consciousness in the European intellectuals that at the same time that he was establishing his primacy in Indian politics, Romain Rolland was writing to his admirer Sigmund Freud, 'Victory is always more catastrophic for the vanquishers than for the vanquished.'<sup>15</sup>

These two basic constructions — centrality of the periphery of Indian culture and acceptance of femininity — Gandhi pronounced not through written or spoken words, a form of dissent for which there was legitimacy in the Brahmanic culture. His means were large-scale mobilization, organizational activism and constant demands on the Indian for conformity to an internally consistent public ethic. These means were largely alien to the Brahmanic culture which was tolerant of—and self-confident *vis a vis*—ideological dissent but became insecure when ideological dissent was supported by such lowstatus, non-Brahmanic means as active social intervention and mass politics.

In spite of erecting this elaborate and magnificent structure of dissent, Gandhi never claimed he was a revolutionary or a reformer, someone consciously reinterpreting traditional texts to justify new modes of life, as many social reformers in India had previously done. He was convinced that he was a *sanatani* Hindu, a genuine, orthodox, full-blooded Indian, not a social reformer out to alter Hinduism and Indian culture. He was, he seemed to argue, a counter-reformist, a revivalist, and a committed traditionalist.<sup>16</sup> According to him, he represented continuity and the Brahmanic, educated, Westernized middle classes represented change. He was, he claimed, the insider; the upper echelons of the Hindu society, the Brahmanic cognoscenti, were the interlopers. And again, not only did Gandhi indulge in this 'inner speech', he went on to give it institutional forms. He mobilized the numerically preponderant non-Brahmanic sectors of the Hindus, the lower strata of society, and the politically passive peripheries: the low castes and untouchables, the peasants and villagers. Taking advantage of numbers, he began legitimizing a new collective ethic that threatened to challenge the traditional Indian concepts of individual salvation, responsibility, and action geared to the value of self-awareness; the concepts of private knowledge and self-knowledge; political non-participation and the belief that the political authorities were not central to life.

It was a remarkable achievement of Gandhi that so many sensitive intellectuals took him at his word. What the Mahatma was doing did not seem very revolutionary to them at first sight, and in fact, they were not entirely wrong. Gandhi's political innovations overtly did seem compatible with Hindu orthodoxy and there was nothing intrinsically non-Indian about his social and political theories. However, it must be remembered that like all major civilizations, the Indic included a plethora of cultural strains. The distinctive identifier of a major civilization is always the composite whole that it makes of its diverse, contradictory constituents, by giving different emphases or weights to the various norms and subcultures within it.

The danger that Gandhi posed to the greater Sanskritic tradition was exactly this. He introduced a different system of weightages and threatened to alter the basic characteristics of Indian society by making its cultural periphery its centre. †

## II

It is surely not accidental that Gandhi's assassin, Nathuram Vinayak Godse (1912–49), was a representative of the centre of the society that Gandhi was trying to turn into the periphery.

I want to concentrate on Godse among the conspirators who planned the assassination because, first of all, it was his finger which ultimately pulled the trigger on 30 January 1948. By his own choice and partly against the wishes of his collaborators, he killed Gandhi single-handed because he felt 'history showed that such revolutionary plots in which several persons were concerned had always been foiled, and it was only the effort of a single individual that succeeded.'<sup>17</sup>

Godse with Narayan Apte also constituted the core of the band of conspirators. The other actors in the group were minor and 'arrived late on the scene and were unknown to each other until a few weeks before the murder. There was something strangely anonymous about them, as though they had been picked up in random.'<sup>18</sup> It was as if two dedicated opponents of Gandhi had mobilized the larger faceless society to eliminate Gandhi from the Indian scene.

But why Godse? I shall try to give my answer as simply as possible.

Firstly, Godse and all his associates except one came from Maharashtra, a region where Brahmanic dominance was particularly strong. He also happened to be from Poona, the unofficial capital of traditional Maharashtra and a city renowned for its old-style scholarship and for the rich, complex culture which the high-status Chitpavan or Konkanasth Brahmans had built there. Godse, himself a Chitpavan Brahman like the other figure in the inner core of conspiracy, was by his cultural inheritance a potential opponent of Gandhi. (There had been three known unsuccessful attempts to kill Gandhi — all in Maharashtra. The first was in Poona in 1934 when Gandhi was engaged in an anti-untouchability campaign there. The second, a half-hearted one, took place in Sevagram and involved members of the Hindu Mahasabha. That was in 1944. In 1946, once again near Poona, some unknown persons tried to derail the train in which Gandhi was travelling.)<sup>19</sup>

The Chitpavans, traditionally belonging to the western coast of India, were one of the rare Brahman communities in India which had a long history of valour on the battlefield. This fact gave them, in their own eyes, a certain historical superiority over the Deshasth Brahmans belonging to the plains of Maharashtra. In the absence of martial castes like Rajputs in the region, the Chitpavans could thus combine the traditional prerogatives of the priestly Brahmans and the kingly Kshatriyas. Though a few other communities, mainly the Marathas, did claim a share of the Rajput glory in the state, the social gap between the Brahmans and the non-Brahmans was one of the widest in the region, and nowhere more so than in Poona.

The Maharashtrian Brahmanic elites also had a long history of struggle against the Muslim rulers of India in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It is true that they were associated with powers that were essentially marauders and large parts of Hindu India too were victims of their aggressiveness. But by the beginning of the twentieth century, the Maharashtrian Brahmans had reinterpreted their history in terms of the needs of Hindu nationalism. They saw themselves as the upholders of a tradition of Hindu resistance against the Muslim occupation of India. It was on this reconstructed and self-created tradition that a part of the Maharashtrian elite built up their anti-British nationalism. Like the Bengali nationalists — simultaneously, their sympathizers, ego-ideals and admirers — they did not see themselves as morally



superior individuals, nonviolently—and, therefore, ethically—trying to free themselves and their British rulers from a morally inferior colonial system, as Gandhi wanted them to do. They saw themselves as the previously powerful, now weakened, competitors of the British. So terrorism directed against the Raj came naturally to them. Their aim was the redemption of their lost glory.<sup>20</sup>

Naturally, much of Gandhi's charisma did not extend to the Chitpavans. To the extent Gandhi rejected the Kshatriya identity by his constant emphasis on pacifism and self-control, he posed a threat to the warrior cultures of India. In addition, by constantly stressing the feminine, nurturing, nonviolent aspects of men's personality, he challenged the Kshatriya identity built on fear of woman and of the cosmic feminine principles in nature, and the no less acute fears of becoming a woman and of being polluted by woman. (In other words, he posed more or less the same kind of threat to India's martial cultures as to her priestly cultures.) Thus, given the absence of Kshatriya competition, the Maharashtrian Brahmans not only enjoyed greater status than they would have otherwise done, they incorporated — as traditional rulers, landowners and warriors — elements of the Kshatriya identity and lived with many of the Kshatriya fears and anxieties relating to womanhood.

Nathuram Godse came from this background. So did most of his co-conspirators including his younger brother Gopal.<sup>21</sup>

Gandhi's assassin was born in 1910, in a small village in the margin of the Bombay–Poona conurbation. He was the eldest son and the second child in a family of four sons and two daughters. His father was Vinayak R. Godse, a petty government official who worked in the postal department and had a transferable job which took him to small urban settlements over the years. Three sons had been born to him before Nathuram and all three had died in infancy. Both Vinayak and his wife were devoted and orthodox Brahmans and, understandably, they sought a religious solution to the problem of the survival of their new-born son. The result was the use of a time-honoured technique: Nathuram was brought up as a girl. His nose was pierced and he was made to wear a *nath* or nose ring. It is thus that he came to acquire the name Nathuram, even though his original name was Ramachandra. Such experiences often go with a heightened religiosity and a sense of being chosen. In this instance, too, the child soon enough became a devotee of the family gods. He sang *bhajans* before the

deities and, according to his family, acquired the ability to occasionally go into a trance and speak as an oracle.

Neither the burden of living a bisexual role nor the oracular religiosity, however, stood in the way of Nathuram becoming a 'strapping young man', given to physical culture and other 'masculine' pursuits. Perhaps in his culture such early experiences of socially imposed bisexuality had a clear-cut meaning and instrumentality, and it was not specially difficult to contain the diffusion of one's gender-specific self-image. Perhaps it was given in the situation that Nathuram would try to regain the lost clarity of his sexual role by becoming a model of masculinity.

Whatever the inner tensions, they did not show. By all accounts, Nathuram was a well-mannered, quiet, humble young man (unlike his flamboyant, elegant, well-placed collaborator Apte whose father was a reputed classics scholar and uncle a popular novelist; Apte himself was a science graduate with a good academic record and, in spite of his Hindu nationalism, an erstwhile holder of a King's commission in the Royal Indian Air Force and a teacher at an American mission school). Nathuram's quiet interpersonal style was associated with an early interest in public affairs and good works. Biographical accounts mention the help he often gave to his neighbours and the interest he took in informal social work. However, as the span of his social interests widened, his oracular abilities declined. According to his brother, by the age of sixteen he had lost his concentration and ceased to be the medium between the family deity and the family. None the less, a certain natural intellectual brightness persisted in spite of the absence of formal higher education, and so did — as a biographer puts it — a certain natural dignity. In a religious family, even a lapsed oracle cannot fail to acquire a sense of being chosen.

There is some evidence that some of these qualities became more noticeable in Nathuram after he killed Gandhi. Some who saw him in his pre-assassination days thought him poor in verbal and social skills. They were genuinely surprised by his competence and serene composure after the murder of Gandhi and the legal skill and self-confidence with which he argued his own case in English, a language he supposedly did not know well.<sup>22</sup> It was as if the assassination gave meaning and drive to a life which otherwise was becoming increasingly prosaic. This was perhaps the reason why Godse was eager to play out his full role as the assassin of

Gandhi.<sup>23</sup> Until he went to the gallows, his one fear was that the Government of India, goaded by Gandhi's family and many Gandhians, might have 'pity' on him and he might have to live the rest of his life with the shame of it. He did not want an anticlimax of that kind. As he put it, 'The question of mercy is against my conscience. I have shown no mercy to the person I have killed and therefore I expect no mercy.'<sup>24</sup> Others who knew him in jail authenticate this attitude. 'The common feeling was that even if he were thrown out of jail and given a chance to flee, he would not have taken advantage of it.'<sup>25</sup>

However, there was one Brahmanic trait in him which predated his encounter with Gandhi. Though he had failed to matriculate, Godse was a self-educated man with first-hand knowledge of the traditional religious texts. He knew for instance the entire Bhagavad Gita by heart and had read texts such as *Patanjali Yogasutra*, *Gnyaneshwari* and *Tukaram Gatha*.<sup>26</sup> In addition he had a good command over written and spoken Marathi and Hindi and was widely read in history, politics, sociology and particularly in Gandhi's writings. He was also well-acquainted with the works of some of the major figures of nineteenth- and twentieth-century India, including Vivekananda, Aurobindo, Tilak and Gokhale.

Conforming to the psychologist's concept of the authoritarian man, Godse was highly respectful towards his parents, attached to conventional ideas of social status and afraid of losing this status. While facing death, his one fear was that his execution as Gandhi's murderer might lower the social status of his parents and, in his letters to them, he sought elaborate justifications from sacred texts and the Puranas to legitimize his action. He was not worried about his parents' reaction to the loss of a son.

Well-built, soft-spoken and like most Chitpavans fair-complexioned, Nathuram thus projected the image of a typical member of the traditional social elite. But there was a clear discrepancy between this image and his life story till the day of the assassination. The Godses may not actually have been poor, but they were haunted with the fear of it throughout Nathuram's younger days. So much so that at the early age of sixteen he had to open a cloth shop to earn his livelihood. This is less innocuous than it may at first seem: business was not merely considered highly demeaning for a Brahman; in lower middle-class Brahman families entry into business was an almost sure indicator of academic failure. To make

things worse, Nathuram's shop failed and he had to turn to tailoring, traditionally an even more lowly caste profession than business.

In sum, there was an enormous gap between Nathuram's membership of a traditionally privileged sector of the Indian society on the one hand and his actual socio-economic status and experiences in adolescence on the other.

It is from this kind of background that the cadres of violent, extremist and revivalist political groups often come.<sup>27</sup> Not surprisingly, after a brief period in Gandhi's civil disobedience movement in 1929-30, Nathuram became at about the age of twenty an active and ardent member of the Hindu Mahasabha, a small political party, and of the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh, at that time virtually a paramilitary wing of the Mahasabha with all its key posts occupied by Maharashtrian Brahmans. Overtly both groups supported the cause of Hindu revivalism and tried to articulate the Hindu search for self-esteem. Covertly however, for the Maharashtrian Brahmans who constituted their main support base, both groups had aspects of a millennial movement which promised to reinstate the hegemony of the traditional social leadership or at least contain its humiliation. The idiom of these political groups suited Nathuram's world view in other ways too. He was extremely religious, and he read into the sacred texts what one would expect a man from a traditional martial background to read into them. For instance in the case of the Gita, 'Unlike Gandhi he was convinced that Krishna was talking to Arjuna about real battles and not battles which take place in the soul.' Predictably, in the ardent politics of the Mahasabha he found a more legitimate expression of the Hindu search for political potency. Predictably too, he did well in the party, becoming within a few years the secretary of its Poona branch. However, he did not find the RSS militant enough, so, within a year or so, severing his links with the RSS, Godse formed a new organization, the Hindu Rashtra Dal.

In 1944, Godse purchased the newspaper *Agrani*, with the help of donations given by sympathizers, to propagate his political views. But soon the government proscribed the paper because of its fiery tone. Godse revived the paper under a new name, *Hindu Rashtra*. This time he took financial help from Narayan Apte, who became the paper's managing editor. *Hindu Rashtra* was even more violently anti-Gandhi than its predecessor and it arti-

culated the belief popular among some sections of Indians, particularly among the Bengali and Maharashtrian middle-income upper caste elements, that Gandhism was 'emasculating' the Hindus. However, notwithstanding its shrillness, the newspaper did not give its editor any money and he continued to be a tailor. In fact, he had to start a coaching class in tailoring to supplement his income.

Whatever else *Hindu Rashtra* did or did not, it helped crystallize some of Godse's main differences with Gandhi at the level of manifest political style.

However, it is impossible to speak about these differences without stating the many manifest similarities between the two men. Both were committed and courageous nationalists; both felt that the problem of India was basically the problem of the Hindus because they constituted the majority of Indians; and both were allegiant to the idea of an undivided free India. Both felt austerity was a necessary part of political activity. Gandhi's asceticism is well-known, but Godse too lived like a hermit. He slept on a wooden plank, using occasionally a blanket and even in the severest winter wore only a shirt. Contrary to the idea fostered by a popular Hollywood film on him, *Nine Hours to Rama*, Godse neither smoked nor drank. In fact, he took Gandhi's rejection of sexuality even further; he never married and remained a strict celibate. Like Gandhi, Godse considered himself a *sanatani* and, in deference to his own wishes, he was cremated according to *sanatani* rights. Yet, and in this respect too he resembled Gandhi, he said he believed in a casteless Hindu society and in a democratic polity. He was even in favour of Gandhi's attempts to mobilize the Indian Muslims for the nationalist cause by making some concessions to the Muslim leadership. Perhaps it was not an accident that Godse began his political career as a participant in a civil disobedience movement started by Gandhi and ended his political life with a speech from the witness stand which, in spite of being an attack on Gandhi, none the less revealed a grudging respect for what Gandhi had done for the country.

But the differences between the two men were basic. Godse was in the tradition of the Westernized upper-caste elements in the tertiary sector of the Indian society who had dominated the Indian political scene in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.<sup>28</sup> He was particularly impressed by the terrorist traditions of urban

middle-class Bengal, Punjab and Maharashtra which, sharing the values of India's imperial rulers, conceptualized politics as a ruthlessly rational zero-sum game in which the losses of the opponents must constantly be actively maximized. Like a 'normal' human being anywhere in the world, he considered totally irrational Gandhi's emphasis on political ethics, soul force and the moral supremacy of the oppressed over the oppressor.

Godse's Hinduism too was essentially different from Gandhi's. To Gandhi Hinduism was a life style and an open-ended system of universal ethics which could continuously integrate new inputs. He wanted to organize the Hindus as part of a geographically defined larger political community, not as a religious group. To semi-Westernized Godse, unknowingly impressed by organized Western Christianity and Islam and by the aggressive self-affirmation of the church and the *ulema*, the salvation of Hindus lay in giving up their syncretism and ideological openness and in being religious in the fashion of politically successful societies. He wanted Hindus to constantly organize, compete and 'self defend', to become a single community and a nation.

Finally, Godse looked at history as a chronological sequence of 'real' events. So he saw the one thousand years of domination of India by rulers who were Muslims or Christians as a humiliation of the Hindus which had to be redressed. Gandhi, in tune with mainstream Hinduism, never cared for chronologies of past events. History to him was a contemporary myth which had to be interpreted and reinterpreted in terms of contemporary needs. The long Muslim domination of India meant nothing to him; in any case defeat for him was a problem for the victor, not for the defeated.

These differences account for Godse's saying :

Gandhiji failed in his duty as the Father of the Nation. He has proved to be the Father of Pakistan. It was for this reason alone that I as a dutiful son of Mother India thought it my duty to put an end to the life of the so-called Father of the Nation who had played a very prominent part in bringing about vivisection of the country — our Motherland.<sup>29</sup>

But there were other historical reasons for Godse's antipathy towards Gandhi behind these fantasies of a mother who becomes a victim of rapacious intruders, a weak emasculated father who fails in his paternal duty and collaborates with the aggressors, and an allegiant mother's son who tries to redeem his masculinity by

protecting the mother, by defeating the aggressors in their own game and by patricide. Let us now turn to them.

Godse's humble personal history was endorsed for him by the history of his community, particularly the encroachment which the British colonial culture was making upon the traditional self-definitions of the Chitpavans. Even before he was born, the Chitpavan — and for that matter Brahmanic — domination of the Maharashtrian society had ceased to be automatic. First, they had forfeited their prerogatives as a ruling caste and they had to use their traditional Brahmanic skills to compete in the alien world of colonialism to earn a part of their social status.<sup>30</sup> Secondly, the burgeoning commercial culture of metropolitan Bombay, the capital of the state, was gradually rendering peripheral the culture of Poona, opening up the stronghold of Chitpavans to a wider world and simultaneously forcing the Chitpavans all over Maharashtra to gradually become mainly a group of lower middle-class professionals and petty government officials. Third, the Chitpavans had increasingly begun to feel the growing presence and power of the upwardly mobile sectors of the Maharashtrian Hindus such as the Marathas and Mahars, the commercial success of non-Maharashtrians like the Gujarati Baniyas (they included the Hindu commercial castes, to one of which Gandhi belonged, and Muslim merchant communities) and Parsees.<sup>31</sup> In fact the language of commerce in Bombay was Gujarati and the language of administration under the Raj was, naturally, English. Marathi, in spite of its highly developed literary and scholarly traditions, was nowhere in the picture. Even more galling must have been the growing professional dominance in Bombay of the Gujaratis and Parsees, communities largely identified in the minds of the Maharashtrian with commerce.

So the ambivalence of the Chitpavans towards the changing social environment was deep and deeply anxiety-provoking. And the community was clearly split. A few did very well under the new dispensation; they saw the cultural advantages of the Chitpavans in the tertiary sector. Others saw British colonialism as an unmitigated evil which was eroding the Chitpavan's traditional self-definition. This ambivalence, too, was a part of Godse's heritage.

Gandhi, who started his political career in India in Godse's formative years in the 1920s, was a threat to his last antagonist in two ways. First, Gandhi was trying to make the social periphery

(which, as we have seen, was a periphery first of all to the Chitpavans) a part of the political centre (which was a centre first of all to the Chitpavans). Second, while Godse was one of those who competed with the British within the same frame of discourse, Gandhi never offered political competition to either the traditional system or the 'modern' colonial establishment. Truly speaking, he competed with nobody; he was always seeking complementarities.<sup>32</sup> Those who speak of Gandhi either as a totally atypical Indian or as a genuine son of the soil tend to miss that what he basically offered was an alternative language of public life and an alternative set of political and social values, and he tried to actualize them as if that was the most natural thing to do. This also must have been a threat to those who wanted to offer clear resistance to the colonial system on unmixed nationalist grounds.

To come to the other major theme in Gandhi's dissent which bonded him and his assassin. Consciously or not, a recent best-seller tries simple-mindedly to provide a clue to this psychological link between Nathuram Vinayak Godse and Gandhi.<sup>33</sup> The book claims, on the basis of the authors' interviews with Gopal Godse, that Nathuram and his political mentor and father's namesake, Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, had had a homosexual experience. The book also seems to hint that by the time he participated in the assassination, Nathuram had become an ascetic misogynist. Finally, it adds that Apte, the 'brains' behind the assassination, was a womanizer.

All this may or may not be true. Gopal Godse has denied that he had ever mentioned his brother's homosexuality while being interviewed by the authors. Savarkar, some others claim, was a known womanizer. We know he had spent long stretches of time inside jails, often in solitary confinement, for his political activities.<sup>34</sup> His sexuality may have been distorted and found an outlet either in homosexuality or in promiscuity. But in either case he would have represented a heightened sensitivity to man-woman relationships and problems centering around masculinity and femininity. And whether he was involved in the conspiracy or not — the existing evidence tends to be in his favour legally, not morally<sup>35</sup> — he did serve as the assassins' ego ideal.<sup>36</sup> For many of them the mighty elder revolutionary was the male prototype, vigorously protesting the reduction of the Hindus to a passive, quasi-feminine role, constantly fearing the further encroachment



of femininity on their masculine self due to the 'rapaciousness' of the Muslims and the British.

The same thing applies to Nathuram Godse. Whether he had willingly joined Savarkar in a political and sexual bond or not, he articulated concerns about his sexuality, often by aggressive denial of it and by his conspicuous asceticism, often by his conflicts centering around his sexual identification and an acute sensitivity to the definitions of masculinity and femininity. If Collins and Lapierre have built a myth, they have mythologized what there was in reality. Godse's political speeches and conversations were studded with imagery which constantly reminded the sensitive listener of the equation which Godse made between Indian or Hindu subjugation and passive femininity. His writings were punctuated by references to the British and Muslims as 'rapists', and Hindus as their raped, castrated, deflowered victims.<sup>37</sup>

Apte, the alleged womanizer who planned the logistics of the assassination, only strengthens this interpretation. At one plane, the womanizer and the homosexual both articulate, through diametrically opposite kinds of sexuality, the same sensitivities. One tries to constantly reaffirm his masculine self and prove to himself and to others that he is a man; the other fears woman as a sex object and is uncertain about his masculinity. The main point is this: Godse belonged to a group which was deeply conflicted about sexual identity and had learnt to politicize some of these conflicts.

In sum, Godse not only represented the traditional Indian stratarchy which Gandhi was trying to break, he was sensitized by his background to this process of elite displacement. Similarly, he also sensed the other coordinate of the Gandhian 'revolution': the gradual legitimacy given to femininity as a valued aspect of Indian self-definition. This revaluation of femininity, too, threatened to deprive the traditional elite like Godse of two of their major scapegoats: the Muslims and the British, who had defeated and emasculated the Hindus and made them *nirveerya* or sterile and *napungsak* or impotent. The theory of action associated with such scapegoating was that the Hindus would have to redeem their masculinity by fighting and defeating the Muslims and the British. Now the new Gandhian culture of politics had made this theory irrelevant. This culture placed on the victims of aggression the responsibility of becoming authentic innocents, wise as the serpent

to the exploitative situation, rather than pseudo-innocents colluding with the aggressors for secondary gains from the exploitative situation.<sup>38</sup> This self-redefinition, Gandhi seemed to argue, could not be attained by reaffirming one's masculine self—he was shrewd enough to know the might of the British empire and violence invariably associated with such reaffirmation of masculinity—but by militant nonviolence, which totally refuses to recognize the defeat in violent confrontation to be defeat. No victory is complete unless the defeated accepts his defeat. The Godses had lost to the British, Gandhi seemed to argue, because they conformed to the martial values of the victors. He promised to win because he could draw upon the non-martial self of the apparent victors and create doubts about their victory in them.

So Godse was not a demented killer. Jawaharlal Nehru, soon after Gandhi's death, claimed that Godse did not know what he was doing. I contend that more than any other person Godse did know. He sensed with his entire being the threat Gandhi was to the traditional lifestyle and world view of India. K.P. Karunakaran, a political scientist who has worked on Gandhi for a number of years, once lamented that only two persons in India had correctly assessed the power of Gandhi: Godse, who killed him, and G. D. Birla, India's biggest business tycoon, who gave him unconditional financial support in pre-independence India and reaped its benefits in post-independence India. I am afraid, at least in this one instance, the political scientist is more right than the political functionary. Nehru was wrong. Godse *did* reveal a surprisingly acute sensitivity to the changing political-psychological climate in India, by killing Gandhi. I can only add that the heightened sensitivity of Godse reflected the latent awareness of dominant sections of the Indian society of what Gandhi was doing to them. In that sense, Godse's hand was forced by the real killers of Gandhi: the anxiety-ridden, insecure, traditional elite concentrated in the urbanized, educated, partly Westernized, tertiary sector whose meaning of life Gandhian politics was taking away. Gandhi often talked about the heartlessness of the Indian literati. He paid with his life for that awareness.

Ten days before his assassination, on 20 January 1948, Madanlal Pahwa, one of Godse's co-conspirators, threw a bomb in a prayer meeting Gandhi was holding, and was apprehended. His intended victim pleaded with the police and the audience to

have mercy on Madanlal and instead of harassing the young man, to search their own hearts.<sup>39</sup>

### III

One final question needs to be raised: how far did Gandhi and his political heirs in the Indian government collude with the assassins?

We know Gandhi was depressed in his last days in Delhi and was fast losing interest in living.<sup>40</sup> The partition of India was hard on a person who had once said:

I can never be willing party to the vivisection. I would employ non-violent means to prevent it. . . My whole soul rebels against the idea that Hinduism and Islam represent two antagonistic cultures and doctrines. To assent to such doctrine is for me denial of God. . . If the Congress wishes to accept partition, it will be over my dead body.<sup>41</sup>

The primitive sadism of the pre-and post-partition Hindu-Muslim riots too had destroyed Gandhi's earlier publicly-expressed wish to live for 125 years.<sup>42</sup> He could see the dwindling interest and attendance at his daily prayer meetings and must have also noticed that many of those who did attend the meetings did so as a daily ritual.<sup>43</sup> Somehow Gandhi, as if anticipating and agreeing with the accusations Godse would later make, held himself responsible for what was happening to India and felt that God after deliberately blinding him had awakened him to his mistake.<sup>44</sup>

He now openly yearned for a violent death while preaching pacifism. As he became fond of telling Manuben, his grandniece and constant companion of his last days, he now only wanted to die bravely; he felt that could turn out to be his final victory. Another time he said to her that if he were to die of an illness, he would prove himself a false Mahatma.<sup>45</sup> But if he was felled by an assassin and could die with Rama's name on his lips, he would prove himself a true Mahatma. Thus, it is not surprising that Gandhi's last fast at Delhi, though ostensibly directed against communal violence, was by his own admission directed against everybody.<sup>46</sup>

His death wish found other expressions too. He now began to have forebodings of his end. He even specified, correctly as it later turned out, the religion of his future assassin and his own last words after being struck by an assassin's bullet.<sup>47</sup> His health,

too, was fast deteriorating. In addition to ailments such as an almost chronic cough, he showed psychosomatic symptoms such as recurring giddiness and nightmares.<sup>48</sup>

He also became totally careless about his physical security. All his life he 'had been reckless of his own safety, and in Delhi he found abundant opportunities to place his life in danger.'<sup>49</sup> He was accustomed to hearing the slogan 'Death to Gandhi'.<sup>50</sup> Now, he seemed to be daring his detractors to act out their wish. There had been, as I have mentioned, a bomb explosion only a few days before his assassination at one of his prayer meetings, the handiwork of the same group of men who ultimately killed him. But Gandhi explicitly rejected all offers of police protection.

Those in charge of his safety too, strangely enough, did little, and this in spite of the fact that bomb-thrower Pahwa was immediately caught and was 'willing' to talk. But there was little communication between the Delhi, Bombay and Poona police. Deliberately or not, each of these police forces sabotaged the investigation. Twenty years later, the Kapur Commission of Enquiry unearthed largescale bureaucratic inefficiency and sheer lethargy in the police who had failed to pursue the clear clues they had to the existence of a dedicated band of conspirators.<sup>51</sup> To pass off the inefficiency and lethargy as the characteristics of individuals will not do.<sup>52</sup> One must consider these important and inherent characteristics of the culture of the modern sector of India which, in effect, colluded with the conspirators. The police officers of Delhi who later cheated and forged documents, as the Kapur Commission established, to show that the police had tried to protect Gandhi—or the police officers at Bombay and Poona, who failed to break up the conspiracy even when supplied with the names and occupations of some of the conspirators—were a part of the environment which felt menaced by Gandhi. They had worked too long for the Raj as antagonists of Gandhi, and had not been touched by his vision of a different kind of society.

The Hindu-Muslim riots which had destroyed Gandhi's will to live and turned him into a self-destructive depressive, also coloured the psychology of the investigating police, constantly exposed to the slogan of 'Let Gandhi die' during Gandhi's last 'fast unto death' to establish communal peace in Delhi. Anti-Muslim feeling was high in the predominantly Hindu police assigned to protect Gandhi. Most of them were drawn from the various Kshatriya

subtraditions or upwardly mobile social groups claiming Kshatriya status and saw Gandhi not merely as pro-Muslim but as a stereotypical model of passive Hindu submission to non-Hindu aggression. Moreover, the Indian police had already resigned from their role as secular arbiters of law. In the communal riots, the police on the subcontinent had shown itself to be particularly vulnerable to communal passions. Most policemen had supported their respective communities, and their officers had openly tolerated and colluded with the killing of people of other communities. Belonging to castes and communities which had traditionally either lived by the sword or had culturally built-in acceptance of Dionysian rules of interpersonal and public conduct, these officers must have seen in Gandhi, in the charged atmosphere of the post-partition riots, a person identifying with a part of their feared superego which had been overtaken by primal impulses of violence, retribution and fear.<sup>53</sup>

Finally, though to his political heirs he remained a father figure, the successful completion of India's freedom struggle ending in independence had taken its toll. Statecraft and new responsibilities took up much of the time of the leaders. The chaos and near-anarchic situation in post-independence India kept them busy. If anything, they found Gandhi's style slightly anachronistic and Gandhi somewhat unmanageable.<sup>54</sup> For instance, Susanne Rudolph feels 'Patel . . . often wished that the Mahatma would leave him alone, especially in matters where they differed greatly — as in Hindu-Muslim relations and Patel's cold-eyed *Realpolitik* orientation'.<sup>55</sup> But leaving him alone was the one thing Gandhi would not do. Did Home Minister Patel's failure to protect Gandhi express his unconscious rejection of the relevance of Gandhi and his interfering style, as an important first-hand witness and a major political figure of the period, Abul Kalam Azad, seems to imply?<sup>56</sup> One does not know, but it is not perhaps a coincidence that the last fast of Gandhi was directed as much against violent communalism as against Nehru and Patel refusing to a hostile Pakistan its share of the funds of undivided India on grounds of *realpolitik*.

Let us not forget that Gandhi's inability to conform to the principles of *realpolitik* was one of the main reasons Godse gave for killing Gandhi. Gandhian politics, Godse said in his last speech, 'was supported by old superstitious beliefs such as the

power of the soul, the inner voice, the fast, the prayer and the purity of mind.’<sup>57</sup>

I felt that the Indian politics in the absence of Gandhiji would surely be practical, able to retaliate, and would be powerful with the armed forces. . . . People may even call me and dub me as devoid of any sense or foolish, but the nation would be free to follow the course founded on reason which I consider to be necessary for sound nation-building.<sup>58</sup>

In the course of the same speech Godse also said that Gandhi’s non-violence consisted in enduring ‘the blows of the aggressor without showing any resistance either by weapon or by physical force. . . . I firmly believed and believe that the non-violence of the type described above will lead the nation towards ruin.’ He had an example to give, too: the ‘problem of the state of Hyderabad which had been unnecessarily delayed and postponed has been rightly solved by our government by the use of armed force — after the demise of Gandhi. The present government of remaining India is seen taking the course of practical politics.’<sup>59</sup> It is an indication of how much latent support there was for this line of thinking in the country that the government of India prevented the publication of this speech lest it arouse widespread sympathy for the killer of Gandhi.

Perhaps the same thread of consciousness or, if you like, unconsciousness, ran through the inaction of B. G. Kher and Morarji Desai, Chief and Home Ministers respectively of the state of Bombay, where the conspiracy to kill Gandhi was hatched. They did not follow up vigorously enough the first-hand information given to them ten days before the assassination by Jagadish Chandra Jain, a professor in a college at Bombay and father-confessor of Madanlal Pahwa. Anyone reading the tragicomic exchanges between Jain on the one hand and Kher and Desai on the other cannot but be impressed by the callous, self-righteous and yet guilt-ridden ineptitude of the two politicians in this matter.<sup>60</sup>

Obviously the living Gandhi had already ceased to be a relevant figure for a large number of Indians. To some of them he had already begun to seem a threat to Hindu survival, a fanatical supporter of Muslims and, worse, one who rejected the principle of zero-sum game in politics. If not their conscious minds, their primitive selves were demanding his blood.

Godse reflected this desire. He was confident that millions in

India (particularly Hindu women, subject to Muslim atrocities) would shed tears for his sacrifice; and he lived the months before his execution with the serene conviction that posterity would vindicate him. In his last letter to his parents he wrote that he had killed Gandhi for the same reasons for which Krishna had killed the evil King Sishupal.<sup>61</sup>

He was not wholly wrong in his estimate of public reactions. This is how, according to Justice Khosla, the public reacted to the killer of Gandhi after Nathuram had made his final plea as a defendant:

The audience was visibly and audibly moved. There was a deep silence when he ceased speaking. Many women were in tears and men were coughing and searching for their handkerchiefs. The silence was accentuated and made deeper by the sound of an occasional subdued sniff or a muffled cough. . . . I have . . . no doubt that had the audience of that day been constituted into a jury and entrusted with the task of deciding Godse's appeal, they would have brought in a verdict of 'not guilty' by an overwhelming majority.<sup>62</sup>

#### IV

On 30 January 1948 Nathuram Godse fired four shots at point-blank range as Gandhi was going to his evening prayer-meeting in Delhi. Before firing the shots he bowed down to Gandhi to show his respect for the services the Mahatma had rendered the country. The killer made no attempt to run away and himself shouted for the police, even though in the stunned silence following the killing he had enough time at least to attempt an escape. As he later said, he had done his duty like Arjuna in the *Mahabharata* whom Krishna advised to kill his own relatives because they were evil.<sup>63</sup>

So Gandhi died, according to his own scenario, at the hands of one who was apparently a zealot, a religious fanatic, a typical assassin with a typical assassin's background: educated and intelligent, but an under-achiever; relatively young; coming from the middle class and yet from a group which was a displaced elite; and with a long record of failures. Here was a man fighting a diffused sense of self-definition with the help of a false sense of mission and trying to give through political assassination some meaning to his life.<sup>64</sup> One might even note, for psychologists, that there was also in Godse the authoritarian man's fear of sexuality, status seeking, idealization of parents, ideological

rigidity, constriction of emotions and even some amount of what Erich Fromm would diagnose as love of death.<sup>65</sup>

In other ways, too, it was an archetypal assassination. Not only the background of the assassin, but everything else too fell into place. There was the hero who became the victim; the villain, motivated by values larger than him but also, at one plane, driven by fate and maniacal; and a Greek cast of characters who invited the tragedy. There were even eloquent mourners in the Nehrus, Einsteins and Shaws.

Finally, like many assassinations, this one too had as its immediate provocation something history had already passed by, namely, the partition of India in 1947. To both Gandhi and Godse partition was the greatest personal tragedy. Both blamed Gandhi for it; one sought retribution, the other expiation. Partition however was irreversible and, politically, the assassination — and the martyrdom the two antagonists sought through it — was pointless. In this sense Mahadevan is right: in the confrontation between Godse and Gandhi there could be no loser and no winner; it was like two batsmen walking into the field after the stumps had been drawn.<sup>66</sup>

Is this, then, the whole story? At another level, was it not also a case of the dominant traditions within a society trying to contain a force which, in the name of orthodoxy, threatened to demolish its centre, to erect instead a freer society and a new authority system using the rubble of the old? Did not Godse promise to facilitate his fellowmen's escape from this freedom that Gandhi promised? If Gandhi in his depression connived at it, he also perhaps felt — being the shrewd, practical idealist he was — that he had become somewhat of an anachronism in post-partition, independent India; and in violent death he might be more relevant to the living than he could be in life. As not a few have sensed, like Socrates and Christ before him, Gandhi knew how to use man's sense of guilt creatively.

## NOTES

1. Quoted in Tapan Ghose, *The Gandhi Murder Trial* (New York: Asia), 1973, pp. 316–17.
2. T. K. Mahadevan, 'Godse Versus Gandhi', *Times of India*, 12 March 1978,



*Sunday Magazine*, p. 1.

3. See on this theme Ashis Nandy, 'Invitation to a Beheading: A Psychologist's Guide to Assassinations in the Third World', *Quest*, November-December 1975, pp. 69-72.
4. *The Life and Death of Mahatma Gandhi* (New York: Dutton, 1968).
5. To effect this reconciliation, Gandhi frequently used his own contradictions and derived strength from his own inner battles against authoritarianism, his own masculine self and aggression. This also was, in the context of the dominant ethos of the Indian civilization, a major deviance. The tradition here was to use social experiences for purposes of self-enrichment, not to act out personal experience in social intervention.
6. It is an indicator of the strength of the subliminal revolution of Gandhi that as late as in 1972, while reviewing Payne's and Erikson's books on Gandhi, a psychoanalyst mentioned as instances of Gandhi's irrationality, Gandhi's hostility to modern technology, mass education, industrialization and science. H. Robert Black, 'Review of *The Life and Death of Mahatma Gandhi* by Robert Payne and *Gandhi's Truth* by Erik H. Erikson', *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, 1972, 41, 122-9. In about 1977, in an ecologically sensitive world discussing zero growth rates and intermediate technologies, the fundamental criticisms of formal education ventured by educationists like Ivan Illich and Paulo Freire, and the deglamourization of much of modern science, Gandhi seems less backdated on these issues than the reviewer.
7. Ghose, *Gandhi Murder Trial*, p. 218.
8. In pre-Gandhian colonial India, as is well-known, one group of modernizers pleaded for the primacy of social reform, over political freedom; another insisted that the nationalist movement should have priority over reform movements. The first group, dominating the Indian political scene in the nineteenth century, gradually gave way to the second at the beginning of this century.
9. See 'Woman Versus Womanliness', in this book.
10. On the frequently discussed psychological dynamics of Gandhi's childhood, particularly the identification models available to him, see Lloyd and Susanne Rudolph, *The Modernity of Tradition* (University of Chicago, 1967), Part 2; E. V. Wolfenstein, *The Revolutionary Personality* (Princeton University, 1967), pp. 73-88; and Erik H. Erikson, *Gandhi's Truth* (New York: Norton, 1969).
11. In a recent paper Rowland Lorimer has explicitly recognized the centrality of this aspect of Gandhi. See 'A Reconsideration of the Psychological Roots of Gandhi's Truth', *Psychoanalytic Review*, 1976, 63, 191-207. An unsophisticated but touching interpretation of Gandhi from this point of view is by his grandniece and the constant companion of his last years, Manuben. See her *Bapu—My Mother* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 1962).
12. See a discussion of this in 'Woman Versus Womanliness'; and 'Sati: a Nineteenth Century Tale of Women, Violence and Protest', in this book.
13. See on this subject the sensitive writings of Rudolph and Rudolph, *The Modernity of Tradition*; and Erikson, *Gandhi's Truth*.
14. It was this assumption of the universality of his political ethics which prompted Gandhi to give his notorious advice to the European Jews to offer non-violent, passive resistance to Hitler. But of course Gandhi was concerned with human normalities, not abnormalities. When he felt that *satyagraha* would work in the

Europe of the thirties and forties, he was showing greater respect for European civilization than those who have since correctly doubted his political acumen on this point. If the Nazis did not deserve Gandhi, Gandhi also did not deserve the Nazis.

It is interesting that the political groups which produced the assassin of Gandhi were open admirers of the Nazis and, at least in the early thirties, wanted to treat the Muslims the way Hitler treated the Jews. In turn, Gandhi had for this very reason rejected these groups as totalitarian and attacked even their courage, nationalism and diligence as fascist. Pyarelal, *Mahatma Gandhi — The Last Phase, 2* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan), p. 440. Evidently Gandhi's technique failed with some varieties of Indian fascism too.

15. D. J. Fisher, 'Sigmund Freud and Romain Rolland: The Terrestrial Animal and His Great Oceanic Friend', *American Imago*, 1976, 33, 1-59, quote on p. 4.
16. This is probably the explanation for his hostile comment on modern India's first social reformer, Rammohun Roy. See Stephen Hay, 'Introduction to Rammohun Roy's *A Tract Against Idolatry*' (Calcutta: Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, 1963).
17. Statement of co-conspirator Vishnu R. Karkare, quoted in G. D. Khosla, 'The Crime of Nathuram Godse', in *The Murder of the Mahatma* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1963), pp. 201-45. Quote on p. 230.
18. Payne, *Mahatma Gandhi*, p. 612.
19. J. C. Jain, *The Murder of Mahatma Gandhi: Prelude and Aftermath* (Bombay: Chetana, 1961), p. 45; Pyarelal, *Mahatma Gandhi*, pp. 750-1.
20. There was in the Maharashtrian Brahmanic elites an emphasis on cynical hardheaded pure politics which was antagonistic to the essence of Gandhism. Yet Gandhi was patently beating them at their own game. He was winning over and politically organizing the numerically preponderant non-Brahmanic sectors of Maharashtra itself. No wonder the cornered Brahmanic elites began to regard 'Gandhi's political leadership and movement of nonviolence with a strong concentrated feeling of antipathy and frustration which found expression in a sustained campaign of calumny against Gandhiji for over a quarter of a century.' Pyarelal, *Mahatma Gandhi, 2*, p. 750.
21. There were three exceptions. One was Madanlal Pahwa, a Punjabi Hindu belonging to the Khatri or business community. He had failed the entrance examination for the Royal Indian Navy and, as a victim of the partition riots, had held a number of odd jobs and moved from place to place. He however obviously played second fiddle in the conspiracy. Other exceptions were the South Indian servant of one of the conspirators, Shankar Kistayya, ultimately acquitted as only a marginal member of the group and Digambar Badge, who turned government approver. The conspirators included a doctor, a bookshop-owner, a small-time restaurateur cum municipal councillor, an army store-keeper cum illegal arms-merchant. That is, except for Pahwa and Kistayya all the conspirators were middle class, educated, semi-Westernized professionals and job-holders.

The facts of Nathuram's early life are borrowed mainly from Manohar Malgaonkar's *The Men who Killed Gandhi* (Delhi: Macmillan, 1978), Chapter 2.

22. Payne, *Mahatma Gandhi*, p. 616.
23. V. G. Deshpande in Ghose, *Gandhi Murder Trial*, pp. 280-1; also Gopal Godse,

*Panchavanna Kotinche Bali* (Poona: Vitasta, 1971), Chapter 6.

24. Gopal Godse, *Gandhihatya ani Mee* (Poona: Asmita, 1967), p. 221; and Ghose, *Gandhi Murder*, p. 280. One of Nathuram's avowed purposes in killing Gandhi was to help the rulers of India break the Mahatma's spell and conduct statecraft on the basis of ruthless *realpolitik*. He thought the government's mercilessness towards him a good beginning of this. See also Nathuram's letter to G. T. Madholkar, 'Why I Shot Gandhi', *Onlooker*, November 16-30, 1978, pp. 22-4.
25. Godse, *Gandhihatya*, p. 306.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 221.
27. Harold D. Laswell and Daniel Lerner eds., *World Revolutionary Elites* (Cambridge: MIT, 1965); and I. L. Horowitz, 'Political Terrorism and State Power', *Journal of Political and Military Sociology*, 1973, 1, 147-57.
28. Probably the best indicator of this was Godse's intention virtually to the end of his days, to appeal to the Privy Council, which in 1948 was still the final court of appeal for Indians. He felt that if he could somehow take this case to England he would get an international hearing.
29. Godse, *Gandhihatya*, p. 228.
30. This was a situation analogous to that of the Bengali babus. Understandably, Maharashtrian Brahmans and Bengali babus were the two subcultures to which Gandhi's charisma never fully extended.
31. The Parsees in fact had gone one better. Increasingly concentrated in metropolitan Bombay, they had begun to compete successfully with the Chitpavans in exactly those areas where the Chitpavans specialized: in the professions and in government service. In fact, they had already taken fantastic strides exploiting their faster pace of Westernization, their marginality to the Indian society, and their almost total identification with the British rulers. E. Kulke, *The Parsees of India* (New Delhi: Vikas, 1975).
32. That is why his declared *gurus* included liberals like B. G. Gokhale and Rabindranath Tagore. Even his declared political heir was the Westernized Nehru, who differed perhaps the most from Gandhi in life-style and world-view, and not Patel who had a social background similar to Gandhi and was more at home in the Indian village.
33. Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre, *Freedom at Midnight* (New Delhi: Vikas, 1976), Chapter 16.
34. In fact, sixty-five at the time of assassination, he had already spent nearly half his life in British jails and in the penal colony in the Andamans. Notwithstanding his religious fanaticism, Savarkar was a courageous self-sacrificing nationalist. He was one of the main builders of the anti-British terrorist movement in Maharashtra and, as such, no stranger to physical violence and conspiratorial politics. He was also the mainstay of the Hindu Mahasabha, the rump of a party openly propagating a Hindu polity for India. See Dhananjay Keer, *Veer Savarkar* (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1966).
35. A good impartial summary is in Payne, *Mahatma Gandhi*. For the opposite point of view see Ghose, *Gandhi Murder Trial*; also Khosla, 'Nathuram Godse'. Justice Khosla was one of the judges who tried the assassins.
36. It may be of interest to the more psychologically minded that three out of half-a-dozen or so aliases used by the conspirators involved the first name of

Savarkar.

37. See Godse, *Gandhihatya*, Chapter 12, to get some idea of Nathuram's idiom; also his letter to Madholkar.
38. The concepts of authentic innocence and pseudo-innocence are Rollo May's. See his *Power and Innocence* (New York: Norton, 1972).  
The secondary gains were of two types. Those who submitted partook of the crumbs from the colonial table. Their incentives were firstly material and secondly the psychological returns of passivity and security. Those who defied the Raj through terrorism also made secondary gains. Even in defeat they got their masculinity endorsed. They were men, it seemed to them, in a society of eunuchs.
39. Jain, *Mahatma Gandhi*, p. 64.
40. Brijkrishna Chandiwalla, *At the Feet of Bapu* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 1954), quoted in Payne, *Mahatma Gandhi*, p. 573.
41. Jain, *Mahatma Gandhi*, p. 52.
42. Manuben, *Bapu — My Mother*, p. 49; Pyarelal, *Mahatma Gandhi — The Last Phase*, 2 (Ahmedabad: Navajivan), p. 460.
43. N. K. Bose, *My Days with Gandhi* (Bombay: Orient Longman), p. 250.
44. Manuben, *Last Glimpses of Bapu* (Delhi: S. L. Agarwala, 1962), p. 81.
45. *Ibid.*, pp. 81, 234, 252, 297–8.
46. *Ibid.*, p. 114.
47. *Ibid.*, pp. 297–8.
48. Payne, *Mahatma Gandhi*, pp. 550, 552.
49. *Ibid.*, p. 549.
50. For example, Jain, *Mahatma Gandhi*, p. 62–3, Pyarelal, *Mahatma Gandhi*, 2, p. 101.
51. J. L. Kapur, *Report of the Commission of Enquiry into the Conspiracy to Murder Mahatma Gandhi*, Vols. 1–6 (New Delhi: Government of India, 1970).
52. There is a double-bind in most antipsychologism in the arena of social interpretation. Psychological interpretation in terms of shared motives is countered by the argument that the behaviour of key individuals in a historical episode is random. Psychological interpretation in terms of individual psychodynamics is countered by the argument that the characteristics of aggregates determine all of individual behaviour.
53. No wonder that Gandhi himself was suspicious of some of the police officers in charge of communal peace. See for example his comment on I.G.P. Randhawa of Delhi in Manuben, *Last Glimpses of Bapu*, pp. 170–1.
54. To some extent, Nehru does not fit the mould. Himself never fully given to *realpolitik*, he also was never much impressed by the search for political *machismo*.
55. 'Gandhi's Lieutenants — Varieties of Followership', in P. F. Power ed., *The Meanings of Gandhi* (Honolulu: The University Press of Hawaii, 1971), pp. 41–58, see p. 55.
56. A. K. Azad, *India Wins Freedom* (Bombay: Orient Longman's, 1955). It has been suggested that Patel never recovered from his sense of guilt over the whole episode and died a broken man soon afterwards. If so, he was only epitomising the moral crisis that Gandhi wanted to precipitate in all Indians by his death. In the case of Patel the crisis might have been further sharpened

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by his own alleged softness towards some of those associated with the assassination. See on this theme Gopal Godse, *Gandhihatya*, p. 229, 237-8.

57. Quoted in Ghose, *Gandhi Murder Trial*, p. 229.
58. Quoted in Khosla, *Nathuram Godse*, p. 242.
59. Quoted in Ghose, *Gandhi Murder Trial*, p. 228, 229.
60. Jain, *Mahatma Gandhi*, Part 2, Chapters 1 and 5. Further details of such acts of carelessness all around could be found in Kapur Commission *Report*.
61. Godse, *Gandhihatya ani Mee*, pp. 221-3.
62. Khosla, *Nathuram Godse*, p. 243.
63. Godse, *Gandhihatya ani Mee*, pp. 46, 221.
64. See Horowitz, *Political Terrorism and State Power*; and Ashis Nandy, 'Invitation to a Beheading'.
65. See Fromm's *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1973). I have not dealt with them in this paper, but on Godse's search for self-esteem and meaning in death, see Godse, *Gandhihatya*, pp. 222.
66. Mahadevan, 'Godse Versus Gandhi'.