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# On the Origins of Gandhi's Political Methodology: The Heritage of Kathiawad and Gujarat

HOWARD SPODEK

AS the Gandhi literature multiplies at an astonishing pace, the most provocative interpretation of the Mahatma's career finds the development of his personal strength and his ability to inspire the Indian nation to hinge on his reaffirmation of his identity as a Gujarati *bania*, a man with a homeland and a caste orientation. The political scientists Lloyd Rudolph and Suzanne Hoeber Rudolph have developed this theme as Gandhi's contribution of a "New Courage" to India—the courage of being at ease with one's own cultural tradition, even in a politically subject state.<sup>1</sup> More recently Erik Erikson, psychoanalyst and historian, has argued similarly that by integrating the various segments of his personal and cultural identity, Gandhi drew the strength to assess his adversaries shrewdly and from a position of equality. Secure in his understanding of himself and his culture, Gandhi fully expected and often attained political victory by applying psychological insight and moral persuasion.<sup>2</sup> The present paper will examine more precisely and more critically Gandhi's selectivity in emphasizing some aspects of his Gujarati bania tradition and his rejection of others in the formation of his political methodology. It will emphasize the keen *political* sense behind Gandhi's adaptation of the Gujarati bania role and will indicate not only the successes it enabled him to win, but also the defeats to which it exposed him.

## *The Political Heritage of Kathiawad*

Gandhi's *Autobiography* discusses his choice of Ahmedabad as his Indian residence, 1915–1930, and Erikson and the Rudolphs rightly seize upon this as a crucial decision in his career committing him to his own language area, to an historic center of handicrafts, to a cohesive and proud city, and to the stronghold of the bania financiers of India's second-largest textile center, after Bombay. For a man seeking to identify himself as a Gujarati and a bania it was perhaps a perfect choice. But Gandhi's settlement in Ahmedabad was in fact the choice of a new home rather than a homecoming, for Gandhi had been raised not in mainland Gujarat but rather in the Kathiawad peninsula. Moreover, though banias are known as commercial castes, Gandhi's father and grandfather had been employed not in business but in statecraft—not an uncommon profession among the banias of Kathiawad's fragmented states. The city in which Gandhi spent his school years (and the birthplace of his wife) was not Ahmedabad, the capital of Gujarat, but Rajkot, the capital of Kathiawad.

Kathiawad is part of the Gujarati linguistic area that today forms the western

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<sup>1</sup> Lloyd Rudolph and Suzanne Hoeber Rudolph,

*The Modernity of Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968).

<sup>2</sup> Erik Erikson, *Gandhi's Truth* (New York: Norton, 1969).

portion of Gujarat State, but it is an area of very different political traditions with little of the self-direction and drive of Ahmedabad.<sup>3</sup> It was ruled by a most divisive form of indirect rule, through some 220 nominal princes ruling over a total of 21,000 square miles and 2,500,000 people. This political system encouraged castes, classes, and courtiers in their perpetual bickering and severely hindered the development of any unified opposition to British rule. Power in native courts hinged largely on the ability to win personal favor either with the local ruler or, more decisively, with the local British representatives of the paramount British power. *Khatpat*, or intrigue, dominated local politics as palace factions in each of the many local *darbars* fought for the limited power and wealth remaining in Indian hands by means more often foul than fair.<sup>4</sup> Nowhere in all of the peninsula was this fragmented and colonial status more graphically evident than in Rajkot, which served both as the local capital of British rule and as the capital of a second class Kathiawad state of sixty villages. The city was divided legally and culturally into two parts, a civil station and cantonment of 800 acres with 6000 inhabitants under direct British rule and Rajkot town proper with most of its 15,000 inhabitants cramped within the 137 acres of the old walled city.<sup>5</sup> Later a railway line divided British Rajkot from Indian Rajkot, but even during Gandhi's years in the city, the differential in wealth, power, and spaciousness commanded by the two areas must have been clearly apparent.

When Gandhi was a child, his father moved to Rajkot from Porbandar and assumed two new political positions, one with the local government and one with the British government. He became *diwan*, or prime minister, to the ruler of Rajkot State and he also became a member of the Rajasthanik Court which had been established by the British in 1873 especially to decide legal disputes among landholders and princes.<sup>6</sup> This court introduced to Kathiawad a legal forum which transcended the separate local *darbars* and allowed, indeed compelled, local rulers to settle their disputes peacefully and in a relatively impartial setting.<sup>7</sup> The young Gandhi grew up in an atmosphere steeped in local politics and must have seen at close range the effects of British policy on local political as well as social life.

Having completed his primary and secondary education in Rajkot as well as a few months of college in the Kathiawad city of Bhavnagar, Gandhi sailed for England to undertake a legal education which was to prepare him for an eminent position in Kathiawad statecraft.<sup>8</sup> On returning from England as a degree-holding barrister, however, he rejected a career in the courts of Kathiawad. Failing to cut a figure in Bombay, he returned to Rajkot in 1892, found "the intriguing atmosphere of Kathiawad was choking"<sup>9</sup> to him, and quickly left for legal work in South Africa. Again in February 1902, thinking his work in South Africa to be complete, he settled down to legal practice in Rajkot, but by July he had quit the city and transferred to Bombay.<sup>10</sup> Shortly thereafter he returned to South Africa.

<sup>3</sup> *Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency, VIII, Kathiawar* (Bombay, 1884).

<sup>4</sup> George Le Grand Jacob, *Western India: Before and during the Mutinies* (London: Henry S. King and Co., 1872) and Ranchodji Amarji, *Tarikh-i-Sorath* (Bombay: Education Society Press, 1882).

<sup>5</sup> Map from *Kattywar Survey*: "The Town and British Cantonment of Rajkot," season 1873-74. India Office Library map room L.IX.9.

<sup>6</sup> Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, *Autobiography*

(Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1927), pp. 1 and 3.

<sup>7</sup> *Gazetteer*, pp. 310 and 331.

<sup>8</sup> Gandhi, *Autobiography*, p. 26.

<sup>9</sup> M. K. Gandhi, *Satyagraha in South Africa* (Triplicane, Madras: S. Ganesan, 1928), p. 67.

<sup>10</sup> *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1958), III, 474-75.

Gandhi turned his back on contemporary Kathiawad, but he found in South Africa and later in India that several of the pre-British political and administrative methods of the peninsula could be adapted as powerful tools of political and social protest. Before the British had established their paramountcy in Kathiawad between 1802 and 1822, and even as late as the 1860's and 1870's when they institutionalized courts of law as the only sanctioned recourse to justice, Kathiawadis had employed the fast, self-punishment, passive resistance, and even a form of guerilla warfare as means of political leverage for use both by the government and against it. Some of these methods were used in other parts of India as well,<sup>11</sup> but the relatively late interference of British power and the continuing existence of local princely government kept them alive longer in Kathiawad, both in practice and in folklore.

When chieftains enforced tribute payments from their vassals, they would station a member of the distinguished Bhat caste at the vassal's residence as security. If the tribute was not forthcoming, the Bhat would fast until it was paid. If fasting did not bring adequate pressure, the Bhat began to perform *traga* or infliction of wounds on himself. The technique, like Gandhi's use of the fast later, was not used where the Bhat and the vassal were enemies or even strangers to one another, but it proved effective where the two were mutually friendly and respectful so that the Bhat's sufferings would move the recalcitrant vassal.<sup>12</sup>

Methods of protest against the government were divided into two types: a kind of guerilla warfare called *baharvatiya*, literally a going outside the law which implied the use of violence; and *risaamanu*, indicating the temporary severing of relations between intimate friends or family members in order to emphasize one's grievance which when applied to politics led to peaceful protest and petition. In the small Kathiawad states, the local prince combined in himself legislative, executive, and judicial powers. A person with a grievance against the prince, especially over land rights, had no recourse to impartial justice; he could protest and petition only to the ruler himself. If he chose violent protest, he would raise a band of followers with similar grievances and become an outlaw against the state, attacking its property and stealing its wealth. Ordinarily the outlaws did no harm to private individuals, and frequently they gained popular reputations as "Robin Hoods." As the states were small and frequently unfriendly, an outlaw often found sanctuary in a neighboring state. In the end, the prince would either successfully hunt him down or, alternatively, compromise on some of the demands. *Baharvatiya* was sanctioned by Kathiawadi tradition as an appropriate means of redress of grievance in the context of existing local government.<sup>13</sup>

In contrast to *baharvatiya* stood peaceful methods of protest, *risaamanu*, which played on the emotions and psyche of the antagonist.<sup>14</sup> These methods included fasting and *traga*—which could be turned against the prince as well as used by him—and sitting *dharna*, or stationing oneself near the ruler's palace or in some other prominent place so as to call public attention to, and hopefully invoke public sym-

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Henry Yule and A. C. Burnell, *Hobson-Jobson* (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1968), pp. 315-317 and 937.

<sup>12</sup> *Selections from the Records of the Bombay Government* (Bombay, 1856), XXXIX (New Series) Part I, 277-78 and Alexander Kinlock Forbes, *Ras*

*Mala* (London: Richardson and Co., 1878), p. 558.

<sup>13</sup> C. A. Kincaid, *The Outlaws of Kathiawar and Other Studies* (Bombay: Times Press, 1905).

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Jhaverchand Meghani, *Sorathi Bahaarvatiya*, in Gujarati (Ahmedabad: Gurjar Granthratna Kaaryaalaya, 1929), III, 17.

pathy for one's cause. Fasting, *traga*, and sitting *dharna* were most commonly used as individual means of protest. Unlike *baharvatiya* they relied on the compassion and justice of the prince for a response. In their nonviolence they were consonant with the Vaishnava and Jain traditions which emphasized fasting and self-suffering as means of self-purification.<sup>15</sup> Such protest was appropriate in the setting of Kathiawad where states were small and political relationships were personal, face-to-face, and not bureaucratized. Also in Kathiawad rights over land came in most cases from membership in the family or clan of the most recent conquerors; a great number of disputes were between blood-relatives.

Occasionally, the peaceful methods of *risaamanu* were used by groups as well as individuals. One of the most famous cases and one which occurred late enough in history to have been, perhaps, a topic of conversation in young Gandhi's home, pitted the maiya caste of landholders against their Junagadh ruler in seeking the removal of a levy which the state had imposed upon them. In December 1882—when Gandhi was already thirteen years old—in Keshod, about sixty miles from Rajkot, the maiyas began to sit *dharna*. Going just outside the Junagadh borders and jurisdiction, several hundred maiyas climbed Kanera hill and there waited for the Junagadh *darbar* to reach an agreement with them or for the British government to enforce a compromise. The tactic in this case failed; on the twenty-ninth day of the encampment the Junagadh armed forces rode out and massacred them, killing seventy-one and wounding seven. The maiyas did have a few weapons with them and they managed to wound seven Junagadh men, killing none.<sup>16</sup>

A few Kathiawadi scholars have cited these local methods as direct ancestors of Gandhi's techniques. Thus the maiya case of sitting *dharna* while in possession of some arms was transformed by Kathiawad's most eminent folklorist, Jhaverchand Meghani, into a tale in which the maiyas rejected armed resistance on principle, preferring to be slaughtered with the name of the Lord Ram on their lips.<sup>17</sup> Citing Meghani's story in preference to court records, Shambhuprasad Desai, a local historian, has recently argued that this was an early instance of *satyagraha*.<sup>18</sup>

Gandhi, it seems clear, did call on Kathiawadi techniques of protest in formulating his political methodology. His use of the fast, his program of noncooperation with government, his seeking of maximum publicity and public support for his campaigns, his willingness to be jailed and beaten rather than surrender his principles, and his ideal of affecting political change through an appeal to the justice and compassion of the rulers seem clearly to derive from his Kathiawadi background. But before these techniques could be molded into *satyagraha* and into nationwide forces, two adaptations were crucial. First, Gandhi insisted on the inviolable principle of nonviolence, thus emphasizing a clear choice for *risaamanu* and against *baharvatiya*. Second, Gandhi forged the necessary financial and organizational base from which to project essentially local and personal methods of petition and protest onto a vast national mass movement. In the creation of this base, Gandhi's choice of Ahmedabad was crucial.

<sup>15</sup> Gandhi, *Autobiography*, p. 2.

<sup>16</sup> Vallabhdas S. Ved, comp., *Government Resolutions in Giras and Political Cases* (Ahmedabad: Dwarakadas V. Ved, 1910), III, 96-136.

<sup>17</sup> Meghani, pp. 3-22.

<sup>18</sup> Shambhuprasad Harprasad Desai, *Saurashtrano Itihas*, in Gujarati (Junagadh: Sorath Shikshan ane Sanskruti Sangh, 1968), pp. 716-17.

*The Economic Heritage of Ahmedabad*

Indulal Yajnik, who transcribed from Gandhi's dictation the first thirty chapters of *Satyagraha in South Africa*, maintained that the South African campaigns in which Gandhi used methods of noncooperation, civil disobedience, and public demonstrations as well as fasting<sup>19</sup> to press for the rights of the minority Indian community ruined Gandhi for work in India. Gandhi, he claimed, never ceased thinking of himself as the leader of a small group fighting individual local battles and using localized methods rather than as the leader of all India against a small group of British imperialists.<sup>20</sup> Gandhi's choice of Ahmedabad as his new home in India belies Yajnik's thesis. In choosing Ahmedabad, Gandhi chose to exploit a wholly new aspect of his Gujarati bania heritage, the economic side, in order to support his drive for political leadership of the entire subcontinent. Ahmedabad, and especially its bania community, provided Gandhi with necessary financial backing as well as a long tradition of political self-assertiveness and of social service. In choosing Ahmedabad as his headquarters, Gandhi rejected the backwaters of Kathiawad and moved into a dynamic urban center while still essentially on home grounds.

Years before Gandhi came to settle, Ahmedabadi businessmen had plainly seen that control over their own economy could not be achieved without political independence. In 1903 they had established an Indigenous Articles Protection Association to encourage the use of indigenously produced *swadeshi* goods and to advertise where such goods could be purchased.<sup>21</sup> When the partition of Bengal in 1905 precipitated a nationwide boycott of British goods and a campaign to promote the use of *swadeshi* products, the Ahmedabad mill-owning community found both nationalistic and business opportunities. In contrast to the response in Bengal itself, they emphasized the latter and expanded their industry. The number of mills, which was 32 in 1905 and 33 in 1906, rose to 52 by 1910. Similarly, the 1905 spindleage of 577,166 rose to 917,590 by 1910; the loomage from 7197 to 15,526; and the daily work force from 21,585 to 30,013. The year of the largest single rise was 1907 to 1908, probably the year when the construction plans of 1905 could reach completion. In that one year, ten new mills opened.<sup>22</sup>

Gandhi thus expected to find in Ahmedabad not merely a congenial culture but also personal and financial support for his national campaigns, and he was not disappointed. When Gandhi had first arrived in Ahmedabad, he was accomplished, beloved, famous—and a police suspect for having challenged the order in South Africa, another link in the British empire. Many prominent citizens had feared to house him while he was establishing his own residence. But Mangaldas Girdhardas, one of the leading millowners of the day, warmly welcomed him.<sup>23</sup> Later in the year when Gandhi opened his ashram to untouchables, many former supporters

<sup>19</sup> "The first public fast that I undertook was in South Africa in connection with the sufferings of the indentured who had joined the satyagraha struggle in South Africa." M. K. Gandhi, *The Indian States Problem* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1941), p. 206.

<sup>20</sup> Indulal Yajnik, *Gandhi as I Know Him* (Delhi: Danish Mahal, 1943), pp. 56–57.

<sup>21</sup> *Praja Bandhu* (January 24 and February 15,

1903) in Government of Bombay, *Source Material for a History of the Freedom Movement in India* (Bombay, n.d.), II, 618–19, 951–52.

<sup>22</sup> Natvarlal Nandlal Desai, comp., *Directory of Ahmedabad Mill Industry 1929 to 1956* (Ahmedabad: Commercial News, 1958), p. 386.

<sup>23</sup> Bansidhar Govardhandas Parekh, *Sheth Mangaldas Girdhardas*, in Gujarati (Ahmedabad: Sheth Mathuradas Mangaldas, 1955), p. 84.

deserted him. But, as Gandhi reports in his *Autobiography*, a wealthy Ahmedabad industrialist appeared and donated Rs. 13,000 to save the ashram. The industrialist was Ambalal Sarabhai, managing agent of Calico Mills and one of the most important businessmen in the city.<sup>24</sup>

Kasturbhai Lalbhai, another textile magnate, found his earliest acquaintance with Gandhi in the field of social work and famine relief. In 1918 with Sardar Patel and G. V. Mavlankar, Kasturbhai, as secretary of the Gujarat Famine Relief Committee, trekked the famine stricken Gujarati villages to bring some measure of relief after collecting cereals and grains from more fortunate areas.<sup>25</sup> Other industrialists like Nandas Haridas of Vijaya Mills, Ambalal Himatlal of Ahmedabad Sarangpur Mills, and Vadilal Lalubhai Mehta of Sayaji Mills attended the Vidyapeeth, the university established by Gandhi.<sup>26</sup> Ranchhodlal Amritlal of the Ahmedabad New Cotton Mill served as President of the Indian National Congress in 1930.<sup>27</sup>

Most significantly, the Ahmedabad millowners led by Kasturbhai and Sarabhai were among the leading financial supporters of Gandhi's movement. Together they donated and collected millions of rupees to help finance the struggle.<sup>28</sup> Many pledged to use only handspun, handwoven domestic cloth even though they themselves ran textile mills. Kasturbhai with Amritlal Hargovandas, another industrial leader, provided early financial support for the Ahmedabad Education Society which formed to build nationalist colleges in the 1930's and continued to sponsor new colleges even after independence. Kasturbhai also led the fights in the Legislative Assembly in New Delhi for the removal of the cotton excise duty and for the extension of tariff protection for Indian industry.<sup>29</sup>

Ambalal Sarabhai channeled his nationalist work into Indianizing the management cadres of Calico Mills. He chose the best of university graduates for extensive training in management. He at once sought to bring new quality to management and to Indianize the administration of his enterprise. Sarabhai's success in this endeavor was complete, though some time was necessary and a very few positions continued to be filled by Britishers even after independence.

The greatest manifestation of nationalist spirit in the Ahmedabad mills came late in 1942, when, hoping to effect the immediate withdrawal of the British from India, Gandhi urged complete noncooperation and civil disobedience. Kasturbhai urged Kandubhai Desai, leader of the Textile Labor Association, to send as many workers as possible out of Ahmedabad to their native villages. Kasturbhai simultaneously contacted the millowners to suggest an indefinite shutdown of production even though the demands of World War II promised great profits. A strike was declared which continued for three and a half months, finally terminating because of the suffering of the workers. This demonstration of the owners' and the workers' will remained a local high point of the independence struggle.

After securing a base in Ahmedabad, Gandhi began to extend his warm rela-

<sup>24</sup> Erikson, pp. 70-71.

<sup>25</sup> *Rise of Individual Entrepreneurship (An Interview Account of Kasturbhai Lalbhai)* (Ahmedabad: Indian Institute of Management, 1964), cyclostyled copy.

<sup>26</sup> Natvarlal Nandlal Desai, pp. 17 and 337.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 152.

<sup>28</sup> For many years the Indian National Congress

was out of government favor and even outlawed. Records of contributions are not available. My information comes from interviews, especially with Kasturbhai Lalbhai.

<sup>29</sup> *Indian Quarterly Register* (1924), I, 71, 114. Cited in R. J. Soman, *Peaceful Industrial Relations: Their Science and Technique* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1957), p. 213 n.

tionships with the business community far beyond the city. He enlisted the support of such leaders as Jamnalal Bajaj of Jaipur who served for many years as an executive of a number of Gandhian groups and acted as President of the Indian National Congress in 1934.<sup>30</sup> One of Gandhi's closest relationships was with Ganshyamdas Birla, scion of a Marwari family resident in Calcutta and one of India's most important and wealthiest industrialists. Birla's *In the Shadow of the Mahatma* describes the basis of this friendship. Birla, like all the industrialists, knew that Gandhi espoused cottage industry because it gave productive work to India's millions, rather than large-scale industry which provided jobs for relatively few people. He also noted Gandhi's austere style of living contrasted with his own enjoyment of luxury. Nevertheless he found great warmth in their personal friendship. Birla wrote,

I would attribute this mainly to his greatness and generosity. I have not come across many men possessing the charm, the affection and the devotion to their friends that Gandhi had. A saint is not very difficult for the world to produce, and political leaders are put forth in plenty, but real men are not to be found in abundance on this earth. Gandhi was a man among men, a rare specimen not produced by the world even once in a century.<sup>31</sup>

Birla also noted Gandhi's "acute and practical competence in business,"<sup>32</sup> a competence certain to be appreciated by business people.

Businessmen across India, as in Ahmedabad, gave tangible expression to their feelings by contributing substantially to Gandhi's programs. In 1921-23, during the Tilak Swaraj Fund campaign which Congress conducted to raise money for the nationalist program and for social service work, "the Parsi and Marwari businessmen made really large contributions. They represented a previously untapped source, and Gandhiji was able to make them open their purses for the national cause."<sup>33</sup> Specific contributions included Rs. 200,000 from Jamnalal Bajaj; Rs. 300,000 from Godrej, a Parsi financier and industrialist; Rs. 200,000 from Seth Anandilal Poddar, a cotton broker; Rs. 500,000 from others brokers on the Bombay stock exchange; and Rs. 100,000 from the Association of Rice and Grain Merchants of Bombay.<sup>34</sup>

As businessmen supported Gandhi, so Gandhi began to appreciate the significance of industry to the nation. His much-publicized anti-business views began to mellow shortly after his arrival in Ahmedabad. Compare his later respect for industry with the negative attitudes he had earlier expressed in *Hind Swaraj* in 1909 before he had had direct, intimate contact with Indian industry. *Hind Swaraj* had argued, "Moneyed men support British rule; their interest is bound up with its stability."<sup>35</sup> In fragmented, princely Kathiawad that was true; Ahmedabad's textile industrialists, however, chafed under British rule. At a meeting of local businessmen in 1917, Gandhi paid tribute to the Ahmedabad banias: "It is my view that until the business community takes charge of all public movements in India, no good can be done to the country. . . . If businessmen elsewhere start taking livelier interest in political

<sup>30</sup> Dattaraya Balkrishna Kalelkar, ed., *To a Gandhian Capitalist* (Bombay: Hind Kitabs, 1951).

<sup>31</sup> G. D. Birla, *In the Shadow of the Mahatma* (Calcutta: Orient Longmans, 1955), p. xv.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>33</sup> Gopal Krishna, "The Development of the Indian National Congress as a Mass Organization,"

*Journal of Asian Studies*, XXV/3 (May 1966), 426.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> M. K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1938), p. 95.



agitation, as you of Ahmedabad are doing, India is sure to achieve her aim."<sup>36</sup> His radical opposition to machine industry also was transformed. *Hind Swaraj* had declared:

It were better for us to send money to Manchester and to use flimsy Manchester cloth than to multiply mills in India. By using Manchester cloth we only waste our money; but by reproducing Manchester in India, we shall keep our money at the price of our blood, because our very moral being will be sapped.<sup>37</sup>

After thirteen years in Ahmedabad, however, Gandhi had become an advocate of protective tariffs for Indian industries! Examine his statement of 2 August 1928: "I should welcome all action that would protect them against foreign aggression or free them from foreign competition especially when the latter is grossly unfair as it is in the case of foreign shipping and [cotton] piecegoods."<sup>38</sup>

India's needs for increased production of basic necessities such as clothing required that mill production augment hand manufacture at least for a time. Meanwhile, mills were creating jobs rather than eliminating them and, despite Gandhi's earlier assertions to the contrary, it was better that the mills be in India creating local employment than in Manchester. Gandhi's *swadeshi* campaigns were therefore highly successful attempts to encourage the use of indigenous products and to boycott imports. Until an effective tariff might be introduced, the *swadeshi* movement would serve as a voluntary wall against imports.

In 1913-14 India had imported 3130 million yards of cloth. The First World War cut the total to about one-third; in 1919-21 only 990 million yards entered the country. By 1920-21, wartime restrictions had ended; imports began to increase; India imported 1450 million yards of cloth. In 1921-22 Gandhi launched his first all-India noncooperation campaign and stressed *swadeshi*. Imports dropped by 40 percent to 1,020 million yards. Indian mill production, however, rose 10 percent from 1,430 million yards in 1920-21 to 1570 million in 1921-22.<sup>39</sup>

As the first noncooperation movement ended and the *swadeshi* campaign slackened, imports throughout the 1920's rose to almost 2000 million yards annually, even after the first protective tariffs were levied in 1927.<sup>40</sup> Then in 1930, Gandhi re-intensified his efforts to gain independence. By marching from Ahmedabad to the sea at Dandi 200 miles to the south and by making salt from seawater, he broke the law prohibiting the private manufacture of salt and captured the imagination of India and the world. In launching this civil disobedience campaign, Gandhi re-emphasized the economic component of his program. Together with rapidly rising tariffs, this *swadeshi* program reduced imports of cotton piecegoods to 890 million yards in 1930-31 and further to 776 million yards in 1931-32. Indian mill production, conversely, rose to 2561 million yards in 1930-31 and 2990 in 1931-32.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>36</sup> *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, XIII, 510.

<sup>37</sup> *Hind Swaraj*, p. 95.

<sup>38</sup> J. S. Mathur and A. S. Mathur, eds., *Economic Thought of Mahatma Gandhi* (Allahabad: Chaitanya Publishing House, 1962), p. 549.

<sup>39</sup> Cited in Ramnath A. Poddar, *The Indian Cotton Mill Industry* (Bombay: Poddar Trading Co., 1959), p. 5.

<sup>40</sup> The protective tariff, once introduced, was

continually adjusted and continually criticized by the millowners as inadequate. *Report of the Special Tariff Board on the Enquiry regarding . . . the Indian Cotton Textile Industry* (Bombay, 1936), pp. 6-9 and Jal S. Rutnagar, ed., *The Indian Textile Journal Souvenir* (Bombay, 1954), pp. 56-58.

<sup>41</sup> India, Tariff Board, *Report of the Indian Tariff Board Regarding the Grant of Protection to the Cotton Textile Industry* (Calcutta, 1932), p. 27 and India, Tariff Board, *Report of the Special*

Gandhi wanted *khaddar*, handspun, handwoven goods, to fill the gap in market supply created by the boycott. India's hand-spinners and weavers could not, however, supply such an enormous market, so the organized textile industry found scope for large-scale expansion. The growth was impressive, especially in Ahmedabad. From 1920 to 1930 Ahmedabad's mills increased in number from 51 to 72; spindles increased from 1,079,996 to 1,656,202; looms from 22,718 to 38,812; and the daily work force from 43,515 to 64,480.<sup>42</sup>

Incredulous, Indulal Yajnik acknowledged the paradox between Gandhi's anti-industrial plans and his beneficial, if short-term, accomplishments. Yajnik reported that Gandhi privately proposed ordering all Indian mills to stop the manufacture of textiles, nationalization of existing mills, and the dismantling or refitting of them for other purposes so "that no machinery could pollute cotton or yarn by its impious touch in the sacred land of the Bharats." But this scheme was intended for implementation only after independence had been won and it was never made public.

And while he still continues to harbor a plan so thoroughly destructive of the textile industry that India has succeeded in building up during the last fifty years, the ever-increasing tempo of his swadeshi and boycott campaign helps to multiply the number of textile mills in the country and the profits of their masters.<sup>43</sup>

Gandhi and the banias of Ahmedabad and India found themselves in alliance.

#### *The Organizational Heritage of Gujarat*

In addition to the financial support of the millowners, mainland Gujarat was rich in viable civic, caste, and occupational organizations which provided Gandhi, who believed profoundly in the need for effective organization, with ready-made platforms for political protest and organizational structures for enforcing them. The incipient Ahmedabad Textile Labor Association, whose 1918 strike forms the centerpiece of Erikson's book, had been organized by Miss Anasuya Sarabhai before Gandhi took an active interest in it; and after Gandhi's assumption of leadership the organization became closely linked to the Indian National Congress' political struggle for independence.<sup>44</sup> The Ahmedabad Municipality under the direction of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel also provided a superb vehicle for nationalist activity as well as civic reform. Patel, a well-to-do England trained lawyer from the Kaira District thirty miles south of Ahmedabad, had been attracted to the nationalist struggle by the power of Gandhi's personality and soon became Gandhi's chief disciple in Ahmedabad's civic life. In 1921 as member of the municipality, he pushed the organization into the forefront of the noncooperation movement of the Congress. The municipality refused to allow the government to inspect the public schools and declined government grants for education. The government responded by superseding the municipality with an appointed committee of management which ruled until 1924.<sup>45</sup> When municipal elections were again permitted in 1924, Patel was

*Tariff Board on the Enquiry Regarding the Level of the Duties Necessary to Afford Adequate Protection to the Indian Cotton Textile Industry* (Bombay, 1936), pp. 32 and 37.

<sup>42</sup> The Millowners' Association, Bombay, comp., *Mill Statement for the Year Ending 31st August 1965*, unpagged.

<sup>43</sup> Yajnik, pp. 318-19.

<sup>44</sup> Shankerlal Banker, *Gandhiji ane Majooro-pravruthi* (Gandhi and Labor Activities), in Gujarati (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1965), pp. 142-150.

<sup>45</sup> Kapilray M. Mehta, ed., *Ahmedabad 1958* (Ahmedabad: Gujarat Publishers, n.d.), pp. 64-69.

elected to the presidency of the Municipal Commission. In 1928 he was reelected but resigned over a personal matter in 1929.

The municipality carried special weight because it fulfilled its own primary job of urban administration so successfully. In his five-year tenure as president, Sardar Patel began to demolish the old city walls giving the city scope for physical and psychological expansion. He began work on a new main east-west road to facilitate movement within the congested city. He had a new municipal hall and office constructed. He extended improved drainage to the entire city and increased the water supply. He initiated municipal planning for housing developments outside the old city walls and for new roads, parks, and gardens.<sup>46</sup>

Patel was not alone in his work. Among the others vitalizing Ahmedabad's civic life were Ganesh Vasudev Mavlankar, later the first Speaker of the Indian Parliament, and Balvantrai Thakore, an educational leader of Ahmedabad. The entire municipal administration with Sardar at its head served as an especially sturdy bridge between Gandhi, with his reforming ideals, and the mill-owning community. Sardar brought zest to Ahmedabad and inspired the confidence of its businessmen. In turn, he came to feel a responsibility for the industrial community and served as the spokesman for its point of view within the Indian National Congress and later in the Parliament of Independent India.<sup>47</sup> Through Patel especially, Gandhi's influence was linked to urban improvement and civic reform as well as to nationalist activity.

Not only the Ahmedabad area, but the entire mainland Gujarat region was rich in local organizational structures. The Nadiad and Surat Municipalities joined the noncooperation movement as effectively as had Ahmedabad. Nadiad began its noncooperation with government schools and courts a few months before Ahmedabad; Surat, a few months later.<sup>48</sup> In both cities the merchant community played an important role in organizing the struggle. The Kheda *Satyagraha* campaign of 1918 in which the peasants successfully struggled for more equitable tax relief in the wake of flood and famine, had been instigated by local people before Gandhi was invited to provide leadership.<sup>49</sup> When Gandhi arrived he advocated Kathiawadi techniques: publicizing the facts of the situation, noncooperation with the government in collecting taxes, refusal to yield even if the government confiscated all the protestors' property, and an abiding sense that the government would ultimately offer a fair compromise.

An unusually detailed account of the origin of the Bardoli *Satyagraha* demonstrates that here, too, local grievances and local organizations were the foundation on which Gandhi's nationalist movement built. In 1907 a group of young men of the Patidar caste, well-to-do landholders for the most part, began to organize in order to raise the level of their caste. They wanted both to improve the status of their caste by bringing its practices more into accord with accepted high-caste practices—Sanskritization—and at the same time to work through caste on a program of national revival. They began by building a college dormitory for members of their caste and by

<sup>46</sup> Narhari D. Parikh, *Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1953), I, 268–280.

<sup>47</sup> Balkrishna Govind Gokhale, "Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel: the Party Organizer as Political Leader," in Richard L. Park and Irene Tinker, eds., *Leadership and Political Institutions in India*

(Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959), pp. 87–99.

<sup>48</sup> Narhari D. Parikh, *Sardar Vallabhbhai*, in Gujarati (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1950), I, 200–219. This chapter is omitted from the English language edition.

<sup>49</sup> Parikh (English ed.), I, 82.

training leaders for the caste from among the resident students. They campaigned for lower dowries, for less lavish expenditures at caste dinners, and then for national aims. Finding a practical method of nationalism in a campaign against excessive land taxation imposed by the British, they contacted Sardar Patel, who held similar caste status, and Gandhi. To Gandhi this movement had the appeal both of conservatism and of change, of traditional Hindu caste practice with practical concerns for efficient organization and political protest. He supported no-tax campaigns similar to that of Kheda, abortively in 1922 and successfully in 1928, in the Bardoli area, forcing the government to reckon with the power of an organized local peasantry.<sup>50</sup>

### *Casualties of the Heritage*

Gandhi's eclecticism between the Kathiawadi and Gujarati cultures supplied him with exotic yet powerful techniques of political opposition, with organizational platforms, and with financial backing. In addition, he derived from his own formulations a satisfaction with his identity as a bania and as a Gujarati which enabled him to achieve a sense of his own integrity. But these significant gains were accompanied by casualties as well. To be identified as a Gujarati bania was to be disqualified from leadership in some quarters of India.

The upper-class Bengali *bhadralok*, as described in John Broomfield's recent study, rejected Gandhi's leadership.<sup>51</sup> They found him dictatorial. They feared his attempts to involve the masses in politics, even though Gandhi was no populist and required a high level of organizational discipline in the ranks. They derided his ideas of non-violence, and the religious precepts which underlay it. They saw Gandhi's religious ideal of nonviolence stemming from the Vaishnavism of Chaitanya Dev modified by Jainism. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, one of the greatest of the Bengali litterateurs had written, "The Vaishnava religion preached by Chaitanya Deva is not the real Vaishnavite religion, it is only half a religion. The Vishnu of Chaitanya Deva is love incarnate. But God is not only love incarnate, He is also infinite Power."<sup>52</sup> When Gandhi called off the nationwide noncooperation campaign of 1920-21 after the violent outbreak at Chauri Chaura, the Bengalis mocked him as weak. They saw Gandhi's rejection of the West and his conscious emphasis on the Indian heritage as philistine and anti-intellectual. Gandhi was an ascetic, and they were largely land-holding, prosperous men. Gandhi was an active organizer, while they were verbal and philosophical. Finally, most uncompromisingly, Gandhi was a Gujarati and they were Bengalis.

Opposition came not only on regional grounds, but also in opposition to Gandhi's coziness with big business and his expressed ideal of class harmony. A substantial section of the Marxist school has long seen Gandhi as an ally of India's capitalists in forging a united nationalist movement and condemned him as reactionary. M. N. Roy published the first full-scale Marxist account of Gandhi and the nationalist movement as early as 1922.<sup>53</sup> In the 1930's Indulal Yajnik, formerly one of Gandhi's followers, described him as "the champion of the Indian capitalist classes."<sup>54</sup> In 1940 the Indian journalist Rajani Palme Dutt saw Gandhi as a tool of the Indian capital-

<sup>50</sup> Anil Bhatt, "Caste and Political Mobilization in the National Movement: Role of the Patidar Yuva Mandal," (forthcoming).

<sup>51</sup> J. H. Broomfield, *Elite Conflict in a Plural Society* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of

California Press, 1968), pp. 204-243.

<sup>52</sup> Cited in Broomfield, p. 16 n.

<sup>53</sup> M. N. Roy, *India in Transition* (Geneva: J. B. Target, 1922).

<sup>54</sup> Yajnik, p. 228.

ists,<sup>55</sup> and the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R. endorsed this interpretation in *A Contemporary History of India* (1964).<sup>56</sup>

Gandhi could properly claim that his alliance with industrialists was no capitulation, that they served him as fully as he served them. They financed his programs not only for national independence but also for the uplift of untouchables, the improvement of urban services, and the propagation of his ideals. Yet while he could win over some of the left wing, finding notable success in his alliance with Nehru, he was unable to hold the entire nationalist left wing under the Congress umbrella.

Gandhi could not work with the truly aristocratic classes of India, the princes and large landholders. Despite Gandhi's advocacy of class harmony, they viewed his call for national independence as a threat to their position. For this reason his leadership was rejected by the princes of Kathiawad and their courtiers. Rajkot itself proved the greatest failure. In 1939, despite a prolonged *satyagraha* campaign in Rajkot including a public fast by Gandhi, the diwan of Rajkot State rejected unilaterally an adjudicated decision for the establishment of representative government which had been agreed upon by Rajkot State and the local Congress organization, the Kathiawad Rajakiya Parishad. Gandhi confessed defeat; other hearts might be won by *satyagraha*, but not that of the diwan of Rajkot.<sup>57</sup>

Nor could Gandhi bring the Indian Muslim community into the Congress nor ultimately into the Indian Union because much of his strength was built on the use of a Hindu tradition which they did not share.

Gandhi's political identity, in summary, was not easily forged, nor was it of a piece, nor was it a reconciliation with his childhood culture. Rather it was developed by careful eclecticism and defended in the face of strong opposition. While rejecting the setting of Kathiawad as his permanent home, Gandhi nevertheless learned from there methods of protest which had been worked out in small states with personal, face-to-face political relationships. Gandhi's adaptations wielded these methods of fasting, *dharna*, and *risaamanu* into dramatic and affecting methods of political opposition first in South Africa and then across the Indian subcontinent. From Ahmedabad and Gujarat he drew the financial, cultural, organizational, and geographic bases from which to project his political campaigns onto a nationwide scale. He thus merged the backgrounds of Gujarat and Kathiawad and the two roles of bania as political man and as economic man into what was for him a viable personal identity and a highly effective political methodology. When he reached out from this base for the cooperation of other nationalists, he found that the very identity and methodology which had served him so well now lost him the services of potential allies who broke with him over regional differences, economic and class ideology, religion, and the nature of mass politics. Gandhi had believed that from self-knowledge and purity would come a message that might win over his opponents; his experiences even with others within the nationalist camp indicated some of the limitations of that thesis.

<sup>55</sup> Rajani Palme Dutt, *India Today* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1940), pp. 307-345, 510-17, and *passim*.

<sup>56</sup> V. V. Balabushevich and A. M. Dyakov, eds., *A Contemporary History of India* (Delhi: People's

Publishing House, 1964). Also see Hemen Ray, "Changing Soviet Views on Mahatma Gandhi," *Journal of Asian Studies*, XXIX, No. 1 (November 1969), 85-106.

<sup>57</sup> Gandhi, *The Indian States Problem*.