

## Religion and History: Gandhi-Bankim Controversy on Bhagvadgītā\*

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One after the other, three leading nationalists of India; namely, Tilak, Bankim and Gandhi, came out to interpret the *Bhagvadgītā*. Though not a direct participant in the freedom struggle, Bankim was no less nationalist than Tilak and Gandhi. He contributed to the national struggle with the help of his writings. Though an officer in the British Government, his writings created national awakening. Why were these nationalists attracted towards the *Gītā*? The *Gītā* is a classic with a difference. In this work a struggle, a war against an enemy was converted into a war of *dharma* against *adharma*. War against the British required a similar treatment. The struggle in which the nationalists were involved was of a similar kind. Therefore, it is no surprise that Tilak, Bankim and Gandhi took up the interpretation of the *Gītā*. This was a remarkable way in which they were contacting the masses of India. Of course, all the three differed in their interpretations of the *Gītā*. Before giving his own interpretation, Gandhi had already read Tilak and Bankim. Gandhi read Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's *Kṛṣṇacarita* 'during his imprisonment in Yervada.'<sup>1</sup> Bankim has shown that Kṛṣṇa was a historical person, and the *Mahābhārata* was a real war that occurred in Kurukṣetra.<sup>2</sup> Gandhi, however, considered the *Gītā* as a move in *dharma*, i.e., a move in religion and morality, rather than a move in history. Any attempt to make it a piece of history would deprive the *Gītā* of its status as a religious text of the Hindus. Thus a controversy arises between the views of Gandhi and Bankim.

My discussion should not be considered as a move from the *Bhagvadgītā*, but it is only a move *about* that great work. For I do not have the abilities either of the past masters like Śaṅkara or of the present masters like Tilak, Gandhi and Bankim. As an admirer of Gandhi's thought, I have attempted to defend his interpretation of the *Gītā* as a religious text against the attack launched by the Western

oriented modern Indian scholars. In order to reject Gandhi, they have sided with Bankim. Bankim appears as an excuse to condemn Gandhi's thought and action.

The *Gītā* is quite unique in the history of the classical literature of religions. Consider the Bible and the Christian religion. First, the religious and moral teachings of Christianity were recorded in the Bible. Later the Biblic people started their wars, their crusades against the non-Christians. The same thing happened with Islam and the *Qur'ān*. Religious and moral teachings of Islam were recorded in this Holy Book. Later Islam started its holy wars, its *jihād* against *kāfirs*. So the wars, in spirit supposed to be holy, were the consequences of the teachings, moral and religion of Christianity and Islam. But in the case of the *Gītā*, a war like situation had priority over its religious and moral teachings. It was the ensuing war between Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas that led Kṛṣṇa to teach Hindu philosophy, religion and morality to Arjuna. Arjuna represents the Hindu masses, and Kṛṣṇa as the paramount teacher. The word 'Hindu' is of recent origins, however, it has come to be identified with the people of India who were its original inhabitants since ages.

War-situation is quite unlike any other human situation. In this situation the very human existence is at stake. Suppose I am quite sure that I will die within a few seconds. My enemy has put his finger on the trigger, and soon the bullet will be discharged from his gun. What would I do with religion or morality or anything else of this world in such a situation? The *Gītā* teaches us that religion and morality are the garments that the human child had to wear as soon as he takes birth, and he had to continue wearing them till his last breath. Immediately after his death in this world, he will take a new birth, if he has not already acquired *mokṣa*. And the quality of his new birth depends on the *karmas* done in this life. These *karmas* have to be done according to one's own *dharma*, only then a good quality of future life is assured. Since Hinduism accepts rebirth, and the *Gītā* has affirmed it, war-situation seems to be better than any other human situation to teach religion and morality. War-situation brings out the highest crisis in one's life. One should not give up one's duties in whatever crisis one is involved in.

In order to put the *Gītā* on a high religious plane, it has been compared with the Bible and the *Qur'ān*. It is commonly used in the law courts of North India for the sake of Hindu witnesses. However, a little care is required about the Hindu approach to the *Gītā*. The Bible

brought Christianity into existence, so if one loses one's faith in the Bible, one is no more a Christian. Belief in the Bible is one of the foundational beliefs of Christianity, no less foundational than belief in resurrection. So also is true of Islam; it was brought into existence by the *Qur'ān*. If the *Qur'ān* is rejected, Islam is rejected, and one is no more a Muslim. Though an extremely favoured religious text of Hindus, the *Gītā* has not brought Hinduism into existence. Hinduism was already there when Kṛṣṇa gave a discourse to Arjuna. Hinduism is a Vedic religion, and Vedas are supposed to have no beginning.

Whatever be the present status of the *Gītā* in the Hindu psyche, this text succeeds in showing that there was a religious and moral dilemma in Hinduism during the time of the *Mahābhārata*. Kṛṣṇa's teachings were meant for removing that crisis. Arjuna's depression and dejection at the battlefield, his laying down of arms and refusing to use them against the enemy, shows clearly that he forgot the Vedic *dharma*, more precisely, he forgot the distinction between military-code and the civil code. In civil life, killing someone is a crime, it is a violation of civil code. Following the civil code, the killer would be arrested, tried and punished by the civil court. He may be hanged for his crime. But the military code is different, so different that killing, which is a crime in civil life, becomes a praiseworthy duty in the military life. If in the battlefield you try to run away rather than fight and kill or lay down your arms, then you are violating the military code. In the present day military language, you deserve to be court martialled. Your status becomes the same as that of an enemy. The military court would try you in the same fashion as it tries an enemy. On reaching the battlefield, Arjuna forgot his military code, he forgot his *dharma*, the *dharma* of a *kṣatriya*. Though he was standing on the ground where Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas were soon to involve in a massive war, he thought that he was standing in front of his palace, surrounded by his cousins, uncles, teacher, *et al*. How could he wage a war against his own family members? In civil life killing one's family members is a bigger crime than killing the outsiders. Arjuna failed to see that he was surrounded by his enemies, therefore, he laid down his bow and arrows. What Kṛṣṇa did was something like reminding Arjuna about the distinction between military code and civil code. He persuaded Arjuna to see that the battlefield allows only the following of military code. If you try to run away from the battlefield or lay down your arms, you will be penalised and your own warriors will shoot you down. Therefore, you should perform only those actions which suit the battlefield. It is your duty to

kill your enemies. See that in the battlefield you are surrounded only by your enemies. Once they have come to the battlefield they are no more your cousins and uncles, they are your enemies. In order to activate Arjuna, Kṛṣṇa was led to remind him about the whole set of Vedic religious and moral rules. Therefore, though the *Gītā* starts from the scene of the battlefield, it goes through all the aspects of the Vedic form of life. This is the reason that Hindus came to give as much importance to the *Gītā* as is given to the Vedas.

If one goes through Gandhi's "Hind Swarāj", even superficially, he would surely discover that Gandhi was a great votary of ancient Indian civilization. He reached this civilization *via* villages of India. These villages, he saw, govern themselves without much external help. Further feature that he discovered about these villages is the popularity of the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Gandhi identified himself with the villages of India, not only in his dress but also in his thoughts and actions. Whenever in distress of any kind, the poor villager of India goes under the shelter of *Rāmanāma*. This is the only truth, everything is false. And the people are reminded of this truth while carrying their dead. Gandhi used to suggest *Rāmanāma* to anybody in distress. According to him 'There is no better *mantra* than *Rāmanāma*.'<sup>15</sup> And his native or rural interest in the *Mahābhārata* becomes evident by his interpretation of the *Gītā*, which has become the Veda of the common people of India. Even *carikhā* (spinning wheel), an indigenous product, was quite popular in Indian villages, that Gandhi took up as a symbol of protest against the British. Gandhi preferred the Indian, i.e., *swadeshi*, technology to the technology generated in the West. If India had to stand on her own feet, she is bound to reject the Western technology and the products of that technology. This was one of the reasons that led him to reject the Manchester machine and the product of that machine. And prefer the *swadeshi* machine, the *carikhā*, and its product. Though the call for non-Cooperation given by him failed him in 1922, *carikhā* did not fail him. While interpreting the *Gītā* in 1926, he informed the inmates of his *satyāgraha āśram* that their *āśram* 'will go on doing its work even when the rest of the country goes to sleep. And we shall, as I have said, get *swarāj* through the spinning-wheel.'<sup>16</sup> Gandhi was well aware of scepticism about the power of *carikhā* to bring *swarāj*. Yet his faith in the power of *carikhā* was never shaken. 'Sleep' in this context refers to scepticism. Elsewhere he refers to this sleeping state in terms of scepticism - 'With scepticism all around us', he persuaded the *āśramites*, 'to go on spinning with the faith that it

would bring *swarāj*.'<sup>7</sup>

Faith is what characterises adherence to a religious or moral belief. It opens unlimited possibilities, whereas science contemplates about only limited possibilities. Therefore, Gandhi came to reject historical explanation given to the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*, for history is a science, or supposed to be science. Soon after his lectures on the *Gītā*, Gandhi remarked in response to a letter, 'I do not regard Rāma and Kṛṣṇa as historical characters as depicted in the books. Rāvaṇa represents passions, as Kauravas represent evil in us. The burden of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* is to teach *ahimsā*.'<sup>8</sup> It is one thing to say that Rāma and Kṛṣṇa were not historical figures, and quite another that the wars that they waged were examples of *ahimsā*. How could a war be an example of *ahimsā*? *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa* were great wars, perhaps the former was a greater war than the latter. Much blood flowed in these wars, unlimited number of women became widows, so also unlimited number of children became orphans. Several tribes and races were eliminated from the face of India. Yet Gandhi maintains that the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa* teach *ahimsā*? Gandhi has converted *ahimsā* into an ambiguous notion. What kind of *ahimsā* is preached by Gandhi that accommodates *himsā*? Gandhi's response was: 'If a man cannot defend his country by non-violent means, he will be justified in using violent means rather than surrender in a cowardly manner.'<sup>9</sup> So the great Epics in question were teaching *ahimsā* only in an indirect fashion. *Himsā* that was done in these wars was really not *himsā*, it was *ahimsā*, for it was done when the non-violent means failed. Gandhi equates *ahimsā* with courage, only a courageous person can be non-violent. A believer of non-violence is certainly not a coward. Whether or not Gandhi succeeded in explaining what is meant by *ahimsā*, he did succeed in explaining his own strategy against the British. Perhaps, the failure of non-Cooperation in 1922 changed his attitude towards the British. He started entertaining doubts about the non-violent means. The 'do or die' call that Gandhi gave in 1942 was not that innocent as the orthodox Gandhians have made it. It smells violence. It took him two decades to give this call. One is surprised: How could Gandhi take up the interpretation of the *Gītā* which smacks of violence, when Gandhi was committed to non-violence? Though the *Gītā* teaches violence, yet only when non-violent means failed. Violence is the last step, and not the first or the middle. When Kauravas refused to give an inch of land to Pāṇḍavas, only then the war was declared. And then the Pāṇḍavas were the legal heirs of

the land that was denied to them. Gandhi applied the situation of the *Gītā* to the colonial situation. Indians were refused the ownership of India. Following the teachings of the *Gītā*, Gandhi prepared himself to take the step that he took in 1942. Since 1926 the *Gītā* became Gandhi's guiding force. Prior to that time his steps were not based on any solid foundation, the foundation of a religious belief, i.e., a belief which is free from all doubts and uncertainties. The strategy that emerged was to demoralise the British, and diminish their hold over India, like Kṛṣṇa who demoralised his enemies and made them weak. Like Kṛṣṇa encouraging Arjuna to fight, Gandhi succeeded in capturing the Indian mind for their struggle against the British. Not even a decade had passed after the failure of non-Cooperation that the British recognised Gandhi as the *de facto* ruler of India. Gandhi-Irwin pact of 1931 gave a stamp over the success of Gandhi's strategy, and the diminishing hold of the British over India. There was a big leap from non-Cooperation to the Civil Disobedience. And the leap occurred within the span of ten years. The new decade after the leap of 1931 heard Gandhi calling for 'do or die'. The lessons of the *Gītā* were slowly unfolding. The old man was not in a hurry. He converted the whole country, from Bengal to Baluchistan, and from Kashmir to Kanyakumari, into a potential volcano. The voice of *swarāj* was echoing from all directions of the country.

Gandhi, however, never accepted that Kṛṣṇa was a historical figure, that in following Kṛṣṇa he was following any great warrior of the past. He was following only an ideal image, created by the religious tradition of India. His actions were the outcome of religion, not the stimulation given by history. History can lead one only to doubt, to the wavering of his mind, and not to the firm belief that religion can provide. Further, those who create history, those who create something new, say, a new piece of art, a new voyage, a new social order, a new political system, etc., would have to overlook history. Those who *create* history are different from those who only *follow* history. Gandhi was destined to create history. He was not satisfied merely with the status of being its faithful follower. If he had been simply its faithful follower his name would have never occurred in history.

According to Gandhi, 'The *Gītā* did not drop down from heaven.'<sup>10</sup> It was composed by a human mind. The human mind in question was the mind of the sage Vedavyāsa. In creating the *Mahābhārata*, he created a history. So long as people continue reading *Mahābhārata*, the name of Vyāsa would remain on their tongues. The

same credit goes to the sage Bālmiki for his creation of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. But the fact that the sages, Vyāsa and Bālmiki, were historical figures does not mean that the characters that they created in their compositions, the characters of Kṛṣṇa and Rāma, were also historical figures. According to Gandhi, 'The *Mahābhārata* is not history, it is a *dharma-graṇtha*.'<sup>11</sup> And as a *dharma-graṇtha*, i.e., as a religious text, it belongs to the tradition of the Vedas and the Upaniṣadas, rather than to the tradition of *Rājataranṅinī* or even to the tradition of Purāṇas that are supposed to exhibit Indian way of history-writing. As a religious text the *Gītā* exhibits a remarkable study of human mind. The human mind is a store-house of good and evil forces. These forces operate through human desires, inclinations, etc. The good in us is always in conflict with the evil in us; there is always a battle going on within us. The *Mahābhārata*, according to Gandhi, 'is not a battle which took place so many thousand years ago; it is one raging all the time, even today.'<sup>12</sup> The essential features of human mind have remained the same; they have not changed since the time of Vyāsa. The *Mahābhārata* describes 'the battle ever raging between the countless Kauravas and Pāṇḍavas dwelling within us. It is a battle between the innumerable forces of good and evil which become personified in us as virtues and vices.'<sup>13</sup> *Dharma* lies in siding with the good in us, and *adharmā* in siding with the evil. 'Duryodhana rode on the chariot of *adharmā*, and Arjuna that of *dharma*.'<sup>14</sup> What about the battlefield? Is it not Kurukṣetra, which is now a part of Haryana state, where the battle occurred? Certainly not, according to Gandhi. 'It is the human body that is described as Kurukṣetra, as *dharmakṣetra*.'<sup>15</sup> No war occurred outside in the external world, war occurred only inside the human mind, and its recurrence has not yet stopped.

Gandhi compares the *Mahābhārata* with Aesop's *Fables* and our *Pañcāntra*. The authors of these works 'have created conversations among birds and animals to impart moral teaching, so in the *Mahābhārata* virtues and vices are personified and great moral truths conveyed through those figures, . . . the *Mahābhārata* itself was not composed with the aim of describing a battle.'<sup>16</sup> If the aim had been the description of a battle, then the *Gītā* would have easily been left out. It was in no sense a part of the battle, it was what happened before the battle. But what would have been the *Mahābhārata* without the *Gītā*? The *Gītā* is the soul of the *Mahābhārata*, though not an actual part of that battle. Had the soul departed, the *Mahābhārata* would have fallen as a dead body. But the aim of the *Gītā* is certainly not the

description of the battle. Its aim is to unfold the nature of *dharma*, to unfold the nature of Hindu philosophy, religion and morality. So the *Mahābhārata* has been created for the sake of the *Gītā*, and the *Gītā* for the sake of unfolding the religio-ethical rules of Hindu *dharma*. The description of war is secondary. Though secondary, the question arises: Whether it is the description of an actual war that occurred in ancient India, if not in Kurukṣetra, then in some other place? There is good amount of material in the *Mahābhārata* that simply cannot be explained in scientific terms, that lies beyond the realm of scientific possibility. History, being a science, would exclude what lies beyond the scientific possibility. Gandhi hints at that stuff to justify his view that the *Mahābhārata* is not a work of history, it is a *dharma-gran̄tha*. Gandhi points out that in the *Mahābhārata*, 'the warriors were, on the one side, the sons of Dharma, Vāyu, Indra and Aśvinikumārs and, on the other, a hundred brothers all born at the same instant. Have we ever heard of such a thing actually happening?'<sup>17</sup> Consider the case of hundred Kauravas. Is it scientifically possible that a woman gives birth to a hundred sons in one stroke? Why not? It is quite possible that a woman produces a hundred ova, and all of them get fertilized. But then the result would not be very interesting. She would certainly not give birth to a hundred warriors, it would be the birth of a hundred weaklings. But the Kauravas, though defeated, were great warriors. They had the courage to fight against incarnate of Viṣṇu, Kṛṣṇa, and the sons of all kinds of gods. In the case of Pāṇḍavas, gods are required to assume human forms in order to generate them. But the nation of 'God' is excluded from the terminology of science.

The realm of religious possibility is 'open-ended', it is not bounded like the realm of science. So also the vision of a religious person is 'open-ended', it is not limited like the vision of a scientist. Only a miracle, or a set of miracles, can explain the birth of Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas. To contemplate about the physical or physiological causation in the context of the *Mahābhārata* is pointless. As Gandhi reacts, referring to the birth of Pāṇḍavas, 'Karna had the sun-god as father. Everyone of the characters had a miraculous birth.'<sup>18</sup> But no science, whether history or physiology, can accommodate 'miracles'. They are accommodated only in religion. They form the backbone of religion. The rejection of miracles would be the rejection of religion, so also it would be the rejection of the *Mahābhārata*, for the epic without miracles is a dead body. To convert it into a history book, i.e., to convert it into a scientific treatise, so much editing is required that



it would no more remain the work that inspired Hindus for several centuries. Only the research oriented scholars, if any, had inspired Hindus for several centuries. Only the research oriented scholars, if any, would be inspired by its edited version, the *Mahābhārata* that is converted into a scientific treatise, free from the religious impurities.

Gandhi's introductory remarks on the *Gītā* are devoted to show that the *Gītā* is a religious text, against Bankim's interpretation. Bankim has provided a historical context for the *Gītā*, accepting the *Mahābhārata* as a great war that occurred in India in her ancient times. It is in the spirit of an historian that Bankim raises doubts about sons of Draupati. 'Bankimchandra says that it is doubtful whether Draupati had five sons.' Gandhi's reaction is that 'it is difficult to decide.'<sup>19</sup> The difficulty is logical, therefore, it cannot be removed. For Draupadi is the creation of the text, therefore, it cannot be removed. For Draupadi being the creation of the text, thus, no extra-textual evidence is possible. The demand for five sons is logical, rather than physiological. Since Draupadi had five husbands, so the minimum requirement for carrying the tradition is to have five sons (or daughters?). If the text does not clarify it, then nothing else can clarify it. Bankim's doubt is misplaced. A doubt that he has sense in the context of history, has no sense in the context of a non-historical composition.

Gandhi, however, could not convince the revolutionaries of India with his interpretation; they preferred Bankim to Gandhi. He himself writes, 'When I was in London, I had talks with many revolutionaries. Shyamji Kṛṣṇa Verma, Savarkar and others used to tell me that the *Gītā* and the *Rāmāyaṇa* taught quite the opposite of what I said they did.'<sup>20</sup> Savarkar refers to Vinayak Damodar Savarkar who later became the founder of Hindu Mahāsabhā. It seems that the revolutionaries were interested in enriching the Hindu history of India. Conversion of Kṛṣṇa and Rāma into historical figures would certainly enrich the past of Hindu history. But in doing so the revolutionaries would be degrading the status of the great characters of the Epics. Courage and bravery of a man of history is quite limited. One can respect him, but one can surrender himself only before God. Once Rāma and Kṛṣṇa are converted into the men of history, they would lose their status as gods, and a time would come when they are dethroned like Lenin or even like Gandhi. Everyday Gandhi's prestige is lowering, because he was a man of history. People's memory is short, and they have already started forgetting his contribution to the freedom struggle. Of course, the alien forces that got humiliated through Gandhi are now busy in

getting Gandhi humiliated through the instrumentality of the newly born Indian intelligentsia that is Indian only in name.

There is a sense in which Gandhi, with his interpretation of the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*, has served Hinduism more than the revolutionaries like Sarvarkar and Shyamji Kṛṣṇa Verma. The Epics became a make-belief for the propagation of the myth of the Aryan invasion of India generated by the indologists of Germany. This myth has led to the Aryan/Dravidian divide, consequently to create a schism between the Aryan North and the Dravidian South. Rāvaṇa was converted into a Dravidian king. This myth has very successfully divided Hindus.<sup>21</sup> But if Rāma and Rāvaṇa have their existence only in us, and not in the outside world, then the myth of the Aryan invasion of India loses its foothold. All of us are Rāmas and all of us are Rāvaṇas whatever our spatio-temporal position may be in the country.

Gandhi would deny that there is any political motive behind his interpretation of the *Gītā*, that he wished to unite the Hindus. So he gave the kind of interpretation that he gave. If at all he wished to unite, then he wished to unite the Indians in general against the British, and not only the Hindus. The lessons of the *Gītā*, he discovered, are quite helpful in converting the freedom struggle into a *dharmayudha* (righteous war). Perhaps, this was also the motive of Tilak and Bankim when they decided to take up the interpretation of the *Gītā*. But in order to convert the freedom struggle of India into a *dharmayudha*, it is not required that a *dharma-grantha*, i.e., a religious text, should be converted into a history-book as Bankim has done. For a war of *dharma*, a *dharma*-book would be more effective than a history-book. Reacting to the views of the revolutionaries who opposed him, Gandhi remarked, 'If what we describe as the very quintessence of all *śāstras*, as one of the upaniṣadas, can be interpreted to yield such a wrong meaning, it would have been better for the holy Vyāsa to have taken another, more effective, illustration to teach the sacred truths.'<sup>22</sup> What Gandhi means is that a belief appropriate to a sacred truth, a religious truth, is qualitatively different from a belief appropriate to a scientific truth, a historical truth. If the *Gītā* is converted into a system of truths of history, i.e. the truths of science, then the belief connected with it could not be a religious belief. Therefore, to retain the religious belief in connection with the *Gītā*, the interpretation of the *Gītā* in terms of history must be rejected, or else, some new illustration is provided, different from the illustration of war. For the holy Vyāsa 'has drawn Arjuna and Śrī Kṛṣṇa so vividly that we are inclined to regard them as

historical figures.’<sup>23</sup> The difficulty which Gandhi felt in connection with the interpretation of the *Gītā* was very similar to the difficulty that was later felt by Wittgenstein in connection with the interpretation of Christianity. Wittgenstein remarked, ‘Christianity is not based on a historical truth; rather it offers us a (historical) narrative and says: now believe! But not, believe this narrative with the belief appropriate to a historical narrative, rather; believe, through thick and thin, which you can do only as the result of a life. Here you have a narrative, don’t take the same attitude to it as you take to other historical narratives! Make a quite different place in your life for it.’<sup>24</sup> According to Gandhi, the *Gītā* is not based on a historical truth. In a similar voice Wittgenstein maintains that Christianity is not based on a historical truth. Though expressed in the idiom of history, the *Gītā* is a *dharmaśāstra*, not a work of history. So is true about Christianity. It is also expressed in the idiom of history. Approach the *Gītā* with a religious attitude, and not with the attitude of an historian. Wittgenstein has cautioned the Christians in a similar fashion. Wittgenstein detached religion from science so much so that a religious belief has hardly anything to do with a scientific belief.

Gandhi’s opposition to the intrusion of history into religion, into the *Gītā* and the *Mahābhārata*, has recently been attacked by Vinay Lal of California. By profession he is an historian, so he has come to the rescue of history. In order to oppose Gandhi, he has come to support Bankim’s interpretation of the *Gītā* and the *Mahābhārata*. Of course, in condemning Gandhi he goes beyond Bankim. His target is Gandhi’s *Hind Swarāj* coupled with his rejection of historical explanation for the *Gītā* and the *Mahābhārata* are valid clues to think that Gandhi exhibited ‘profound indifference to history, historical knowledge, historical writing or even historical consciousness’.<sup>25</sup> All these characteristics demonstrate that Gandhi was a perfect Hindu. For Hindus lack, not only history, they lack even the consciousness of history. According to Vinay Lal, ‘A tradition of historiography has not existed in India until very recent times.’<sup>26</sup> The ‘recent time’ to which Vinay Lal refers is the time that coincides with Bankim. He has come to this naked truth about Hindus after studying the views of Alberuni, Gibbon, Elliot, Mill, Macaulay and so many other Western scholars. He has also scanned the views of so many Indian scholars of repute, starting from Rev. Krishna Mohan Banerjee, reaching to Romila Thapar. He has quoted so profusely from their writings that one would feel that the major theme of his writing is the exposé of the Hindus that they

have no historiographic tradition. It is only when one reaches the climax of Vinay Lal's paper, i.e., the VIth and the last section of the paper, that his real target becomes visible. The real target is Gandhiji. He has been presented as a person who is profoundly indifferent to history. This kind of indifference is the very character of the Hindu culture and civilization. Bankim has been presented in the section III of the present paper as a contrast to Gandhi. If Gandhi represents the East, Bankim has been presented as representing the West. If Gandhi exhibits the spirit of India in his rejection of history, Bankim exhibits the spirit of the West in his profound interest in history. While referring to Bankim's keen interest in the origin of the life of Kṛṣṇa, Vinay Lal writes that Bankim betrayed, 'an emblematically European anxiety about origins.'<sup>27</sup> Consciousness of history takes birth only in such anxieties.

Though no direct quotation from Tilak has occurred in the whole of his paper, Vinay Lal has placed Tilak on the same platform as Bankim. Concerning both Tilak and Bankim, Vinay Lal says that they exhibited 'glorification of the hyper-masculinity, the imitation of the West, and the fabrication of history.'<sup>28</sup> Hyper-masculinity refers to the masculinity of Kṛṣṇa. Vinay Lal's views on Tilak have no sort of authenticity, because Tilak's 'fabrication of history', his thesis that the original home of the Aryans was in the Arctic region, is well-known to the historians of ancient India. Tilak undoubtedly meddled with history. But so did Gandhi. Gandhi meddled with history in a far more significant way than either Tilak or Bankim. In attacking history in his *Hind Swarāj*, Gandhi has shown that he was the first subaltern historian of the world, finding the whole discipline of history suffering from elitism. Exposing the elite character of history, Gandhi remarked, 'History as we know it, is a record of the wars of the world. . . . How kings played, how they became enemies of one another, how they murdered one another, is found accurately recorded in history.'<sup>29</sup> Gandhi considered this history not worth taking note of. Though he has not used the elite/subaltern jargon—it was not fashionable then—he meant that this kind of history—and there was no other kind at that time—just has no interest in the subaltern classes. There is no record in this history of the resistance (violent or non-violent) given by the common people against their exploiters.

Current elitism in history goes back to the fathers of history, the Greco-Roman historians. Danys Hay, a post-Gandhian British historian, writes about the Greco-Roman historians that they lived 'in alargely

illiterate world and their concern for writing history they constituted an elite within an elite.<sup>30</sup> Hay calls Greco-Roman historians elite on the ground that for 'them public affairs were predominantly, almost exclusively, the only things that mattered and by public affairs they meant the military conquests of Greek and then Roman imperialists and the struggle between prominent leaders and their faction. The poor, the merchant, even the spiritual leaders were more or less totally ignored.'<sup>31</sup> Was not Gandhi right in rejecting history as it has been so far written since the time of Greco-Roman historians? Could Gandhi make the generalization about history which he made if he was 'indifferent to history', 'has not studied historical writings' and has 'no knowledge of history' or 'lacked historical consciousness? Vinay Lal's charges against Gandhi are superficial, lacking the depth of a historian. Gandhi was no less endowed with historical consciousness than were Tilak and Bankim. Rather Gandhi stood on a firmer footing than either Tilak or Bankim. Tilak produced a highly questionable thesis concerning the origin of Aryans. There are hardly any takers of his thesis even in India. Similarly, though a nationalist of a very high order, his attempt to convert Kṛṣṇa into a historical figure has made Bankim's position quite weak. Since India lacked valiant people, one may argue, Bankim has converted a character of mythology into a historical person. But Gandhi's attack on elitism in history has now become a common theme of history. Attempts are going on to rewrite history from the subaltern point of view, from the point of view of the common people who were neglected in history.

The fact that Gandhi and Bankim exhibited 'historical consciousness' does not mean that they were imitators of the West. Not only Gandhi, who was a well-known critic of the Western culture and civilization, even Bankim would have been shocked if he knew that he was an imitator of the West. For both, Gandhi and Bankim, stood for the classical values of India, they were interested in reviving the ancient culture of India. If one studies Gandhi's *Hind Swarāj* and Bankim's *Ānand Math*, one would find that both of them rejected the colonial rule and the Western civilization. In their own fashion they were asserting their national identity. Being neo-classicists they wished to revive the classical values of India. It is certainly not Gandhi who deserves to be rejected. It is Vinay Lal's analysis of 'historical consciousness' that deserves to be rejected. He is blindly accepting the Western scholarship. One marked difference between the Indian and the Western scholarship is that one cannot dare attack the West if one

occupies a spatial position in the West. But one can attack India from any position that one occupies, whether in India or outside India. The Western scholarship has free access to India. The form of Indian invasion by the West has now drastically changed. But India continues to be invaded.

Vinay Lal says things about history which would disturb even Plato. For Plato gave highest importance to sciences like mathematics and logic, and kept empirical sciences at the lowest level. History has not yet acquired even the status of a fulfilled empirical science. The disappearance of 'schools' is the mark of a science, history continues to have 'schools'. Yet, following some English historian Vinay Lal writes, 'If an engagement with history was a measure of England's greatness, the dearth of history reading in other societies . . . was just as surely a measure of their impoverishment, and even of their fitness to be enslaved.'<sup>32</sup> Though this remark has been made in the context of Ireland, it equally applies to India. For Vinay Lal is quite convinced that India lacked a tradition of history writing and reading. So the English were justified in enslaving India. And later Macaulay was right in introducing history in education in India. Praising Macaulay for his introduction of history in education in Indian schools and colleges, Vinay Lal speaks through the mouth of a fellow-traveller, Gauri Visva-Nathan that 'historical analysis became . . . the principal method 'for teaching colonial subjects to identify error in their own system of thought and, simultaneously, confirm Western principles of law, order, justice and truth.'<sup>33</sup> So the study of history led to the removal of Indian thinking which was erroneous in nature, and in its place was installed the Western thinking. Study of law, order and justice gave Bankim a chance to become a Government servant. The study of history converted him into the writer of historical fictions. Though Gandhi had the same kind of education as Bankim, he kept the windows of his mind closed, so continued rejecting history. Has Vinay Lal written in praise of Bankim or in praise of the British rule over India?

Greeks in general and Aristotle in particular have also become the target of Vinay Lal. Of course, he does not know that he is doing so. His gun is aimed at India, but the bullet also goes through the Greek body. For Aristotle poetry has supreme importance. It goes deeper than metaphysics, therefore, he was led to write *Poetics*. He honoured Plato by calling him poet, his *Dialogues*, the best examples of poetic pieces. Greek poetry and drama had deep connection with Greek mythology. Greek, Indian and Egyptian mythologies are

supposed to be the best mythologies of the world. Vinay Lal has a remarkable strategy to attack India. He attacks India only through the mouth of Western scholars, and does not feel the necessity of shutting those mouths. In attacking Indians for their devotion to poetry and mythology, Vinay Lal takes the help of Mill who is supposed to have said that 'all rude nations neglect history, and are gratified with the productions of mythologists and poets.'<sup>34</sup> It is not only the Indians who have produced great mythologists and poets, the Greeks did the same. Shall we say that Greece was a rude nation like India? We cannot, for Greece has always remained the European paradise of virtues. Then the Greece produced, not only mythologists and poets, but also historians. In this respect also the Greeks were not very unlike Indians. The charge against the Indian historical accounts is that they are all mixed up with mythology. They are not purely historical accounts, they have all kinds of impurities in them. But so also is Greek history mixed up with all kinds of impurities. 'In the Western tradition, the ancient historians,' according to Professor D.P. Chattopadhyaya, 'wrote on history but, during the time, as in India, the distinction between myth, legend, antiquities, literature and history as recognised today was not clearly demarcated.'<sup>35</sup> So the Greeks were as bad as the Indians. They produced mythologists, poets and impure historians. Even Vinay Lal is not willing to accept the Greeks as pure historians. He notes, 'It is not my claim that Thucydides, and much less Herodotus, were 'historians' in the sense in which that might be understood today. Even from the standpoint of Mill, there was too much of 'myth' in the writings of these Greeks.'<sup>36</sup> Yet the Greeks were called historians, Indians were not, though they suffered from the same virtues and vices. Whether someone is or is not an historian depends on the European vote.

What is the special feature of history, absence of which makes a man barbarian, uncivilized, rude etc? From Vinay Lal's writing it appears that a man may know mathematics, logic, Vedas, Upaniṣads, etc., yet would remain a barbarian if he has not studied history. History has been converted into the essence of all knowledge, therefore, those like Gandhi who reject history, reject the essence of knowledge. They should be condemned. (We should not forget that Gandhi's rejection of elite history has been equated by Vinay Lal as the rejection of history). Writings of Mill, Macaulay, Marx and some others have led Vinay Lal to find a connection between history and action. This connection is missing in the case of knowledge of logic, mathematics, Vedas, etc.

Lord Acton has been quoted by Vinay Lal, saying that history 'Is an instrument of action and a power that goes to the making of the future.'<sup>37</sup> Similarly, according to Mill, as quoted by Vinay Lal, history 'could be used as "guidance of the future".'<sup>38</sup> These quotes have the purpose of showing that the Indians suffered from inaction, from the terrible disease of inaction, because they were deprived of history, they kept no records of their past. If they had history, i.e. if they had records of their past, they would have been impelled to act. So the absence of history is the reason that the Indians remained slaves of foreign invaders since the time of the Greek invaders. The failure of Indians to read and write history resulted into their slavery, slavery of the foreign invaders. But what historical records, what history-books, did Ginghesh Khan have when he set out to conquer the world? Incidentally, he conquered several parts of the world where Alexander the Great failed to reach. Yet Alexander became 'The Great' and 'The World Conqueror' whereas Ginghesh Khan remained an 'Asiatic barbarian' and 'a plunderer'. The Europeans award the titles of bravery, and they prefer to give those awards to their own people. Consider further, what historical records, what history-books, did the Muslims have when they plundered and captured the Greco-Roman world, soon after the birth of Islam. The Greco-Roman world produced, not only the fathers of history but also the fathers of philosophy, of mathematics and so on. When the Muslim invaders came their knowledge of Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Herodotus, Thucydides, Caesar, Sallust, Tacitus simply evaporated. The land of the world conquerer, Alexander the Great, was conquered by the unknown Muslim invaders. History totally failed, it proved an impotent discipline. So why should it shock one if there came a time when the land that produced Rāma, Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna was plundered by the foreign invaders? There are no rules of history that are observed in the game of war. Wars have no rules of any kind since the rise of the Western warmongers. The only target is victory, how it is achieved is not their concern.

Indians were defeated by the foreign invaders, they were enslaved by them, not because they had no records of their past, but because they continued with the records of their past. War was like a game for the ancient Indians; it was like the cricket that is played today. Just as the cricket game is played today with limited overs, the war game of the ancient Indians was also played with limited overs. Sunrise and the sunset were the limits. After sunset no arrow would be fired, then the enemy is treated as a friend, a family member. After sunset the



warring parties used to visit each other's camps, even there was exchange of condolences. Though the warriors were wounded and killed, the war had the spirit of a game. When the Western invaders arrived, war no more remained a game; the game-spirit was killed. The enemy had only one target—victory—and the victory was to be achieved by whatever means. End justified the means. Indians were not acquainted with the kind of war in which the Westerners were involved. So they were defeated, not because they lacked courage, not also because they were ignorant of their past, but because they were ignorant of the way of the wars were fought by the Westerners. Muslims brought to India a new way of fighting, a fight for extending the horizon of Islam. This kind of war was different from the kind that was conducted by the Greek invaders. And the British added several new dimensions to the war, the most important new dimensions to the war, the most important new dimensions were lying, cheating, treachery, deception, betrayal, etc. It is certainly not the failure of courage on the part of Indians that India became enslaved. These are the new dimensions to war that the foreign invaders gave that India was enslaved. Indians had yet to learn that every action is just in love and war.

The British attempted to introduce in India, not history and historiography but myths and mythography. In this enterprise they were supported by the German indologists. Of course, all this was done in the name of developing the 'historical consciousness' of Indians. The propaganda that the Indians had no history was to proceed before the introduction of mythography. Consider Vinay Lal's appreciation of the British contribution to India through the mouth of an American scholar. He remarks that 'an American scholar of India notes with evident pride that India's colonial rulers were the engine of India's intellectual growth, as they both historicised the Indian past and stimulated a consciousness of history in the Indian intellectual.'<sup>39</sup> The aim of the British was certainly not to historicise the Indian past, it was to mythologise the Indian past. What was given to the Indian intellectual was not a historiography but a mythography of the Indian past. The past in question refers to the pre-Ṛgvedic age. After studying the ancient scripts of the Mesopotamians and the Babylonians, it was discovered that the Hittites, Mitannis and the Kassites, who inhabited these regions, were the Sanskrit speaking Aryans. They worshipped the Ṛgvedic gods; namely, Indra, Mitra, Nasya and Varuṇa. Their dyanasties of kings had Aryan or Sanskrit names. Their religion

coincided with the religion of the Ṛgveda.<sup>40</sup> All this research and investigation led the Anglo-German scholars to introduce the myth that the Sanskrit speaking Aryans migrated from Mesopotamia and Babylonia to India *via* Iran. There are similarities between the Ṛgveda and the *Avesta*, so the passage from Iran was accepted. From where did the Aryans reach Mesopotamia and Babylonia? They came from the Eurasian steppe. They were nomads, in search of grazing grounds for their cattle. They already domesticated the horse. After settling down in Asia Minor, the Hittites discovered iron around 2000 BC, and became the masters of iron-technology. It is these Aryans who migrated to India. After reaching India they composed the Ṛgveda, the thoughts of which were already with them when they were in Mesopotamia and Babylonia. This is the grand mythology that was handed over by the Anglo-German scholars to the Indian intellectuals who accepted their masters' views. Gandhi made an interesting remark about this kind of historical research, and the attitude of the Indian scholars towards such a research. He remarks that these historians 'indulge in novel experiments. They write about their own researches in most laudatory terms and hypnotise us into believing them. We in our ignorance then fall at their feet.'<sup>41</sup> Even now the Indian historians continue to remain in the hypnotic state. Freedom from the alien rule has not yet brought freedom from the alien thought.

Referring to the expansion of Aryans Toynbee writes, 'The inventors of pastoral nomadism on the Eurasian steppe seem likely to have been the primary Sanskrit speakers who, beyond the Southern bounds of the steppe made a temporary mark on Babylonia and on Mesopotamia and a permanent mark on India.'<sup>42</sup> Is this history? There is a big flaw in this fiction. These who have been described by Toynbee as the primary Sanskrit speakers had also scripts to express themselves. It is through these scripts that their identity in Mesopotamia and Babylonia is disclosed. But the matured Sanskrit speakers, the speakers of Ṛgveda, were deprived of any script. For several centuries Sanskrit remained only an oral language in India. The Vedic knowledge was transferred from one generation to the other only orally. Therefore, there were *śrutis* and *smṛtis*. How is it that the Aryans, when they left Mesopotamia and Babylonia, forgot all their scripts after reaching India, and started an oral tradition? There is always a transition from an oral tradition to a script one. But the invasion myth, manufactured by the Anglo-German scholars, involves the transition from the script tradition to the oral tradition. How strange? It seems that the Aryans, after

reaching India, developed script-amnesia. India's colonial rulers were certainly not historicising the Indian past, as Vinay Lal thinks that they were, they were mythologizing the Indian past. Mythology was superimposed over history. It is far more logical and coherent to believe that the Sanskrit speaking Aryans were evolved in India. Some of these Aryans, when they had only oral hold over Sanskrit language and rudimentary knowledge of the Ṛgveda, migrated to Mesopotamia and Babylonia *via* Iran. Iranians became hostile to them, they were foreign invaders, therefore, the enemies of the Aryans, the *Asuras* (*Ahuras* for the *Avestans*) became gods for them. Later, after some centuries, the Ṛgvedic Aryans were driven out of Iran by the Avestans, that led them to reach Mesopotamia and Babylonia. They picked up the local scripts to express their Ṛgvedic religion. It is not the Aryans from Eurasian steppe, but the Aryans from India, some where from the northern part of the Indus Valley, who were migrants to Mesopotamia and Babylonia. It is a scientifically approved fact that the transition is from oral to script, not from script to oral delivery. However, the colonial rulers of India were not interested in teaching truths to the Indians. They were interested in distorting their past, in distorting their real identity. So the real invaders of the Near-East were converted into the invaded. Historiography was withdrawn and mythography was given to the Indians. Macaulay saw to it that the education of Indian children begins with this mythography from their kindergarten stage. Further, slaves should never become united. Once united they may revolt as happened with Roman Gladiators. So the Dravidians were installed as the original Indians, and the Aryans as the foreign invaders. It ultimately led to the North-South divide. Thus, the mythographical consciousness helped the British to rule. It is easier to rule if the people remain divided.<sup>43</sup>

Vinay Lal has also connected the lack of historical consciousness among Hindus with the lack of consciousness about monotheism. He says, 'Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, all monotheistic faiths, have been marked by an acute sense of history because they failed to acquire faith in monotheism. He praises the colonial rule for installing the 'historical consciousness' among Hindus. This became possible because of the entry of monotheism among Hindus. As he says, 'Hinduism of some Hindus has now begun to acquire new characteristics.'<sup>45</sup> New characteristics mean the characteristics of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Perhaps, the colonial rule coincided with the infusion of monotheistic blood in Hinduism. But what about the ancient Greco-

Roman historians? They were neither Jews nor Christians nor Muslims, yet they wrote history, and became the founders of the discipline of history. 'Historical consciousness' and monotheism' do not seem to have a necessary connection, otherwise, not only polytheists and pantheists would have lacked historical consciousness, the atheists too would have been deprived of this quality. The historical materialism of Karl Marx would have become impossible, for he was an atheist. Sometimes it becomes very difficult to understand whether Vinay Lal is a historian or a religious propagandist. If a religious propagandist, he is propagating for the Semitic religions. All the wrongs of Gandhi can be axiomatically deduced from the fact that he was born in a Hindu family.

Not only that the pre-colonial Hindus lacked 'historical consciousness', they were also marked cowards. And this, perhaps, was also one of the reasons, according to Vinay Lal, that they were enslaved by the British. He quotes one Mr. Robert Orme, whom he describes as the 'first British historian of India, saying in 1782, 'If an European sailor brandishes his stick in sport, (he) puts fifty Indians to flight in a moment.'<sup>46</sup> Vinay Lal has certainly not ascertained whether or not it is a case of White man's lie. He attacks the pre-colonial Indians, and also the colonised Indians like Gandhi, through the known or unknown white man's mouth, without making any effort to close that mouth. It is in the context of Gandhi that the remark of Robert Orme was quoted, implying that Gandhi's non-violence is true to the Indian spirit of 'non-resistance and cowardice'. Physical death of Gandhi is not sufficient, he should also have his spiritual death, and that is possible only by converting Indians into cowards. The failure of non-violent resistance is assured, because that requires brave and courageous people.

To review the progress made so far in order to conclude this discussion, an attempt was made to justify Gandhi's interpretation of the *Bhagavadgītā* as against Bankim's interpretation, though both these interpretations were the result of deep nationalism. The diversity of Indian nationalism is quite attractive, perhaps, not found anywhere else in the world. India saw non-violent resistance coexisting with violent resistance; both had cordial relations, respected each other. If Gandhi symbolises the non-violent resistance, Bankim symbolizes the violent resistance. The coexistence of violent resistance with non-violent resistance was possible because they had a common enemy, the British colonial rule. Gandhi was coming nearer to Bankim when he allowed

the possibility of a violent revolt in case the non-violent revolt failed. Neither Gandhi's non-violence nor Bankim's violence allowed cowardice. Cowards could not be the participants in the national struggle for freedom. After a few decades of India's freedom a generation has taken birth which has started questioning the role of Gandhi in the freedom struggle. Some of them have gone to the extent of questioning his role in the history as such, accepting that history has rejected him. Vinay Lal is one of them. In order to attack Gandhi, he has attacked the whole culture and civilization of India, converting Gandhi into its true representation.

Vinay Lal has concluded his article with Gandhi, so we would also conclude this discussion with Gandhi. According to Vinay Lal, Gandhi assassinated history, so history took revenge and assassinated him. As he says, 'Gandhi, who dismissed history to the periphery of human knowledge, has in turn been dismissed by history as an anachorism to the periphery of human knowledge.'<sup>47</sup> How wrong is Vinay Lal! History knows its makers; Gandhi was one of them. If Gingshesh Khan and Alexander captured the world through sword, Gandhi captured it through his message of truth and non-violence. Before his assassination Gandhi was not so well-known to the world; his impact was restricted to the British. His assassination converted him into the central figure of history. History knows its makers, so Gandhi was given the respect that he deserved. Gandhi never rejected history; he only cleaned and polished it. He removed the dirt of elitism from history. Of course, he totally rejected 'mythography' (This is Germanic interpretation of Indology?). The Germans fathered this curious being and forwarded it to the British to look after its health. Gandhi was quite disturbed to see that 'our Gods even are made in Germany.'<sup>48</sup> A lover of the *Gītā*'s gods can never digest the alien gods, be they as great as God. As a maker of history, Gandhi disliked conversion of mythography into historiography. So also he rejected the conversion of a religious text like *Bhagavadgītā* into a history-book. Religion should not be confused with history. This was the uniqueness of Gandhi's interpretation of *Bhagavadgītā*. He also found the *Gītā* teaching him the lessons of *ahimsā*.

#### NOTES ND REFERENCES

1. *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. 32. See the note of the editor on page 97.
2. Gandhi delivered his lectures on the *Gītā* during prayer meetings at the Ashram,

- Ahamdabad, from 24 February to 27 November 1926. These are included in the *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. 32, pp. 94-374. The lectures on the *Gītā* came after the failure of non-Cooperation Movement.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 94.
  4. *Ibid.*, p. 141.
  5. *Ibid.*, p. 209.
  6. *Ibid.*, p. 69.
  7. *Ibid.* Opposite of non-violence is cowardice. It is courage that characterises non-violence. Gandhi defines *ahimsā* in such a way that one may feel that he dissolves the distinction between violence and non-violence.
  8. *Ibid.*, p. 274.
  9. *Ibid.*, p. 95.
  10. *Ibid.*
  11. *Ibid.*
  12. *Ibid.*
  13. *Ibid.*
  14. *Ibid.*, p. 102.
  15. *Ibid.*, p. 95.
  16. *Ibid.*, p. 97.
  17. *Ibid.*
  18. *Ibid.*, p. 102.
  19. I have exploded the myth of the Aryan invasion on India in my recent articles and lectures. See 'Historiography of Indian Civilization: Harappans, Dravidians, Aryans and Gandhi's Freedom Struggle', *JICPR* (Special Volume on Historiography of Civilization), June 1996. In the same year lectures were delivered at IAS, Shimla, Delhi University, Delhi and Butler Palace, Lucknow.
  20. *Collected Works of Gandhi*, Vol. 32, p. 102.
  21. *Ibid.*
  22. *Culture and Value* (ed.), Von Wright, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1977, p. 32. It may be a sheer coincidence that Wittgenstein's views are similar to those of Gandhi.
  23. See 'History and the Possibilities of Emancipation: Some Lessons From India', *JICPR* (Special Issue), June 1996, p. 124
  24. *Ibid.*, p. 128.
  25. *Ibid.*, p. 128.
  26. *Ibid.*
  27. *Hind Swaraj, Collected Works*, Vol. X, p. 47.
  28. Danys Hay, *Annalists and Historians: Western Historiography from the VII- XVIII Century*, London, 1977.
  29. *Ibid.*
  30. Vinay Lal, p. 99.
  31. *Ibid.*, p. 98.
  32. '*Itihāsa, History and Historiography of Civilizations*', *JICPR*, June 1996, p. 8. Incidentally, this article appeared in the same issue of *JICPR* in which Vinay Lal's article appeared.
  33. Vinay Lal, p. 131. See fn. no.16.
  34. *Ibid.*, p. 100.
  35. *Ibid.*, p. 98.

36. Ibid., p. 106.
37. For a detailed account see, T. Burrow, *The Sanskrit Language*, 1973, London, 'Introduction'.
38. 'Hind Swarāj', *Collected Works*, x, p. 31.
39. Arnold Toynbee, *Mankind and Mother Earth*, London: OUP, 1976, p. 93.
40. I raised several such issues in my lectures on the *Historiography of Indian Civilization*, delivered at the Indian Institute of advanced study, Shimla, in 1996.
41. Vinay Lal, p. 123.
42. Ibid.
43. Vinay Lal, p. 124.
44. Ibid., p. 129.
45. 'Hind Swarāj', *Collected Works*. Vol. X, p. 59.

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

In this paper there are certain philosophical issues which need to be analysed. In order to understand the singular contribution of Jīhām, it is necessary to discuss critically and analytically these philosophical questions. First, in the 'Introduction' the general problem of the present paper has been broached. And in other sections it is proposed to enunciate the other issues one by one. These questions have been segmented into different sections so as to have in-depth understanding of the present problem. What is the concept of great Man as Creative Being? What is Spiritual Voluntarism and Reality of Time (Itihāsa)? Voluntarism: theme and praxis? These will be explored directly to discern the underlying hermeneutical meanings in the Jīhām and historical consciousness manifested in the tradition. And then shall be covered under them.

From the ontological standpoint Jīhām is neither a crude materialism of Charvaka nor an abstract idealism of the Vedānta and the Buddhist School of Sākyas. It is a kind of realism because the phenomenal world is considered real. The ephemeral world is emergent. The metaphysical foundation of Jīhām is dynamic. Thus, in Jīhām there is a metaphysical ontology in management the emergent world and live at the earthly (laukika) realm of spirituality. Gita

<sup>1</sup>The Jīhām cannot have been interpreted in the traditional manner in terms of passages in which the author has written about English but being of the Jīhām tradition.