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Dwaipayan Banerjee (2017) *The mahatma in the machine*, *Contemporary South Asia*, 25:4, 435-438, DOI: 10.1080/09584935.2017.1398217

In *Unconditional Equality*, Skaria achieves that most improbable and difficult of goals – to write with originality and inventiveness about Gandhi. Gandhian scholarship has passed through several well-trodden paths, and as Skaria tracks, some have been more productive than others. For example, there is the liberal appropriation, in which Gandhian non-violence is translated as an internal critique of imperfect but perfectible institutions, coupled to an implicit reaffirmation of the state’s monopoly of violence. In contrast, Skaria’s work joins an exciting counter-tradition of scholarship that has refused to shy away from Gandhi’s insistence on religion as a condition of politics. Yet, even as Skaria joins this tradition of scholarship, he travels further down the rabbit hole of Gandhi’s conservatism that most others have ventured.

This requires some elaboration. *Unconditional Equality* is animated through and through by Gandhi’s rejection of theological secularism. By such a theological secularism, Skaria means the familiar and fabular division between public reason and the private faith, or more precisely, the modern grounding of faith and sovereignty in autonomous reason. In the shadow of this tradition, Gandhi’s insistence on a politics grounded in faith and religious categories (rather than the other way around) have led to readings of him as untimely, romantic, traditionally conservative and/or communitarian. For Skaria, the most convincing of such prior readings are those in the tradition of subaltern studies that describe Gandhi’s ability to open up a vast peasant-communal consciousness for appropriation by bourgeoisie nationalism. Yet, as the same tradition of work recognized, the disjuncture between the message of the Mahatma, Gandhi’s thought, and the practices of nationalism were never closed. The gap between religion and politics, between private conscience and public responsibility, remained a domain of unfinished negotiations.

The originality of Skaria’s intervention in *Unconditional Equality* (and indeed his departure from much previous scholarship) is to dwell within this vast gap, where available concepts such as liberalism, conservatism, secularism, fundamentalism, and nationalism find themselves inadequate to the task of measuring Gandhian thought. While Skaria recognizes Gandhi’s willingness to ally with such political traditions, Skaria goes beyond their categories as anchoring points. What sets Gandhian thought apart is his insistent refusal of any politics of sovereignty – grounded as they might be towards the ends of reason, faith, secular freedom or divine realization. Thus unmoored, Skaria argues that to understand Gandhi’s thought requires an exit not only from liberal and secular problematics, but from theological and communitarian ones as well. And as becomes clear, such a complete exit from sovereignty, and its consequent upturning of conceptual vocabularies, leads to a sort of derangement of thought, an impropriety and uprooting of being from which there is no return. It is this space that Skaria makes his own.

For Skaria, it is this radical (in the sense of a deep uprooting) orientation of Gandhi’s thought that renders it durably resistant to the widest range of available philosophical categories. While perhaps resonating most closely with modern conservatism, in aspiration to

ultimately destroy any sovereign form, it arrives at a new kind of equality – unconditional and immeasurable –that finally uproots even conservative traditions. Most proper to Gandhian thought is then its orientation towards a radical equality with all being (life not limited by shifting liberal configurations of the animal-human), coupled to a practice of surrender that rejects subordination to sovereign forms – be they of faith or reason. The telos of *satyagraha*, even as it rejects the thought of telos, is the transaction of a pure gift: an unconditional disavowal of the self that is neither comprehensible within liberal vocabularies of rights and freedoms, nor assimilable to conservative traditions of faith and hierarchy.

No doubt, this is a politics built on confrontation with sovereignty, cohering most clearly in the moment of its rejection of sovereign forms. It is no surprise then that outside the terms of such a confrontation, Gandhi's thinking does not give itself over easily to systematicity or coherence. More precisely, the *satyagrahi's* life is a constant practice of self-ciphering, of the transformation of the self so that it may be sacrificed without intention, without even its own or the recipient's knowledge of such a surrender. True to this force, Skaria draws out the immense inconsistencies, contradictions and incompleteness within Gandhi's writings – as it shapes and reshapes itself across his lifetime and his two languages – Gujarati and English. Thus, Skaria's achievement is not the discovery of an 'early', 'late', 'Gujarati' and/or 'English' Gandhi. Rather, what Skaria achieves is a rendition of Gandhi that does not shy away from dwelling in the dizzying orientation of Gandhi's thought that propels itself towards its own destruction, and in so doing, enacts the destruction of familiar philosophical concepts. Its horizon is a vertiginous non-conceptuality, non-thought rather than the self-knowledge proper to other traditions of askesis.

Such a fundamental exit from problematics of faith, reason, self-formation and sovereignty opens Gandhi's writing up to some of Skaria's most fascinating readings. Take for example his reading of the machine and automaticity. Gandhi's criticism of machines in *Hind Swaraj* is well-known: simultaneously a critique of colonial deindustrialization, as well as of the machine as an abstract means that masters both the object that is its end, and the subject that wields it. But what is the self-ciphering of the *satyagrahi* if not itself a kind of machinic automaton? The pure gift of the *satyagrahi* demands a non-knowledge of giving and receiving, beyond intention and debt. It follows then that it is only as a machine set into automatic motion, devoted to the task at hand, that the *satyagrahi* can truly become inert, non-knowing, sacrificing not only the self, but also self-mastery. This is far from the machine as instrumental means to an end in *Hind Swaraj*; rather, it is a new thought of a machinic automaton that dissolves the instrumental relation itself. In other words, while this is not a submission to the machine as an abstract means, it is submission nonetheless: a seizure of self through automaticity after an intense abjuration of free-will, choice, action and autonomy.

The broader implications of such a reading of Gandhi radically reformulates the means-end question. In Skaria's reading, when calculable ends are pursued with an incalculable intensity, ends may themselves become suffused with incalculability. It is this intense pursuit of incalculable surrender (beyond means-end as given, towards a 'pure means') that allows him to align his *sadhana* of spinning and *ahimsa* with Hitler's *sadhana* of war, or even the British

pursuit of colonial rule. Skaria shifts emphasis away from the means-end question to this process through which their duality is overcome. In such a reading, non-violence shifts from the center of Gandhi's politics. Indeed, Gandhi is able to admire Raja Harischandra's mythic near execution of his beloved Taramati, because in that act, Harischandra surrenders his own will, desire and attachment to a greater faith. At one level, this is a counter-reading of Gandhi that works against prior scholarship that emphasize the tight-knit relation between means and ends, such that his insistence on means becomes a non-compulsory exemplary politics. At another, it is also a move away from a criticism of such readings that instead pose the means-end relation as intensely dialogic, where attentiveness to means becomes an externally-directed vigilance of shifting political consequences. The exit from the problematics of sovereignty and agency, decision and consequence could not be more complete.

Not self-contained, not consequentialist, but untimely. Skaria's shift of emphasis from Gandhi the actor to Gandhi the writer is tied up with his discernment of Gandhi's desire to exit from contemporaneous (and contemporary) problematics. As Skaria is well aware, Gandhi's thought comes across then as untimely in a double sense: at odds with the theological secularism of his and our time, and at odds with his political and personal practice on the other. Skaria gestures at these misalignments, describing its untimeliness as a shadow summoning our readings, as 'exceeding' his and our time, as a recessive force 'bursting forth' from his explicit formulations. And as Skaria acknowledges, this shadow that threatens to break forth is a discomfiting force, testing Skaria's commitment to the 'secular inheritance' he has no desire to abandon. What then are the stakes of this almost too faithful reading of Gandhi's writing and thought? This is a question that Skaria must inevitably confront (along with many projects that push the contradictions within liberal secularism). And of course, there is the problem of 'reading' Gandhi from the vantage point of the secular tradition in the first place. Skaria describes Gandhi's practices of reading (where *what* is read is less important than *how* it is read) as a reframing of the relationship between reader and text (the transformation of the hermeneut into the devout bhakt) which in the end, is the dissolution of secular reading. Yet, it is precisely this confrontation between secular and non-secular practices of writing, reading and thinking that gives this book its force.

Skaria is of course no apologist for Gandhi: his discussion of Gandhi's commitment to propriety and place does not disguise the caste and gender domination instituted and reified by the practice of *satyagraha*. Read from the perspective of the contemporary, what might we make of this rendering of Gandhi's thought? What Skaria allows us a glimpse of in Gandhi is a force of thought whose horizon is its own undoing, as well as the undoing of the fundamentals of theological secularism. In this, it is allied with, but not reducible to anti-foundationalist thought within Euro-American philosophy. But further, it provincializes Euro-American reason by not only pushing against its internal contradictions, but by entirely exiting the problematic and producing another universalism. If Spivak cautions that Derridian "deconstruction cannot found a political program of any kind" other than the work of decentering, perhaps offered here is another way? Skaria's reading of Gandhi offers a possibility of a politics of faith and conviction that observes a radical notion of equality without measure. It opens up a space for faith and conviction in the public sphere, without grounding it (necessarily) in a religious order.

In its own autoimmunity (a feature it shares with liberal secularism), it espouses a radical equality with all thought and being. And, getting past the self-delusion of liberal secularism of its own groundlessness, it grounds such a commitment to radical equality in faith. Religious faith, certainly, but a faith that allows for no exercise of sovereign domination – be that of its own, or of other forms. At a time when conservative movements across the world seem to have become custodians of political faith and conviction, while the liberal hope of limiting faith to the private sphere seems to be coming undone, might such a reading not open up a different reordering of the relation between politics and affect? Of course, such a temptation is as dangerous as it is attractive, and is by no means what Skaria suggests. And perhaps this is asking for too much, or really, for too little: the discovery here is perhaps not of new answers, but something rarer, a new way of asking old questions.

Finally, I must mention another fascinating thread of ideas that Skaria alludes to: the notion that Gandhian thought practices a ‘ruination of the concept’. Through the text, Skaria sometimes uses concept as simply Gandhi’s concept of *x*, but at other times, where under the force of Gandhi’s thinking, the notion of ‘concepts’ (within quotes) reveal the imprint of their own duress. Alongwith ‘ruined’ concepts, there are also fascinating gestures to ‘concept-metaphors’ ‘quasi-concepts’ and the differentially available ‘power to conceptualize’. The discomfort with concepts are no doubt rooted in a discomfort with sovereign truth of the writer, and more subtly, even with the sovereignty of the reader. It is then not sufficient to shift the weight of concept onto the metaphor, or to say that concepts are always also metaphors. Skaria is adamant that a turn to metaphor does not loosen up the problem of textual sovereignty. One continues to wonder then what kind of concepts, concept-metaphors, or metaphor-allegories, can bear the weight of non-thought and non-knowledge that is the horizon of the *satyagrahi*?