

GANDHI'S DIET AND "THE OTHER" SIDE OF ORIENTALISM

by

VINCENT E. BURGESS

B.A., The Ohio State University, 2007

A thesis submitted to the
Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Colorado in partial fulfillment
of the requirement for the degree of
Master of Arts
Department of Religious Studies

2011

This thesis entitled:
Gandhi's Diet and "The Other" Side of Orientalism
written by Vincent E. Burgess
has been approved for the Department of Religious Studies

Dr. Loriliai Biernacki

Dr. Greg Johnson

Dr. Mithi Mukherjee

Dr. Hugh B. Urban

Date 7/13/2011

The final copy of this thesis has been examined by the signatories, and we
Find that both the content and the form meet acceptable presentation standards
Of scholarly work in the above mentioned discipline.

IRB protocol # N/A

Burgess, Vincent Edward (M.A., Religious Studies Department)

Gandhi's Diet and "The Other" Side of Orientalism

Thesis directed by Associate Professor Dr. Loriliai Biernacki

This paper examines the ways in which Gandhi's diet—his practice of eating meat as a young man in India, his associations with the London Vegetarian Society, his experiments in South Africa, and, ultimately, his important role in the resistance movement against the British Colonial project in India—functioned as an agentic means of constructing the subject via specific technologies of the self. It is my contention that the roots of Gandhi's social activism can be found in his dietetic practices, which were an essential component of his social philosophy as instigated, initially, as a young man in India, then developed in England, further refined in South Africa, and most famously applied in India. Throughout his life Gandhi's dietary discourse went through many discursive shifts; what remains consistent, however, throughout this dietetic history is the presence of Orientalist discursive constructions, as well as the element of resistance to modern civilization.

CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Methodology	7
Historiography	9
PART ONE: Early Experiments and England	22
PART TWO: South Africa	55
PART THREE: India	61
Conclusion	77
Bibliography	83

Introduction

Mohandas Gandhi spent a great deal of time writing on the subject of food and his dietetic experiments, and in addition to his essays and books specifically devoted to the subject, such as *Diet and Diet Reform* and *Key to Health* (originally published as *A Guide to Health*), his autobiography is full of lengthy discussions regarding his dietetic experiments. Gandhi began writing his autobiography, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, in 1925 and continued over the next few years, partially while imprisoned in Yeravda jail.¹ In one especially salient passage he writes:

I know that it is argued that the soul has nothing to do with what one eats or drinks, as the soul neither eats nor drinks; that it is not what you put inside from without, but what you express outwardly from within, that matters. There is no doubt some force in this. But rather than examine this reasoning, I shall content myself with merely declaring my firm conviction that, for the seeker who would live in fear of God and who would see Him face to face, restraint in diet both as to quantity and quality is as essential as restraint in thought and speech.²

The overtly religious nature of this passage, along with his focus on dietary restraint, are both characteristics indicative of Gandhi's later dietary discourse, after his return to India from South Africa and England before that. However, Gandhi's dietetic philosophy did not always include such overtly religious elements, such as the spiritual benefits of dietary abnegation. In fact, his personal experiments with diet went through many different phases, especially during his time as a student in England, when he transitioned from being a proponent of eating meat to an activist for vegetarianism.

In reading through his own writings and recollections, what becomes particularly apparent is the way in which his dietary philosophy was so greatly influenced by his geographic

¹ It is interesting to note that Gandhi liked to refer to Yeravda as a *mandir* (temple), and, conversely, also regularly referred to his ashramites as "inmates."

² Mohandas Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993), 273.

location and the resulting cultural (or, perhaps more appropriately, countercultural) forces which he came into contact with. This paper, therefore, seeks to offer something of a genealogy of Gandhi's dietary discourse, particularly focusing on the subjectifying influences of both negative and affirmative Orientalist discourses and cultural/countercultural forces on Gandhi's dietary ideology, experiments, and long-term practices. Gandhi's early dietary experiments were indicative of the long-term trajectory of his broader discourse of nationalism and social reform, as well as his *satyagraha* and *sarvodaya* philosophies, and they eventually became a central component of his *brahmacharya* practices.³

It is my contention that the roots of Gandhi's social activism lay not in South Africa, which is generally the focus of scholarship on the subject, but rather in his dietetic practices. Gandhi's dietary experiments began early in his life as a youth in India who ate meat in an attempt to refute British Colonialism, and then developed most significantly in Britain as a young social activist and reformer campaigning on behalf of a vegetarian diet. Later, in South Africa—before the advent of *satyagraha*—we can see Gandhi very involved in editorial campaigns on behalf of vegetarianism, as well as attempts “on the ground” to convert locals to a vegetarian diet. This paper examines the ways in which Gandhi's diet—his experiments eating meat as a young man in India, his associations with the London Vegetarian Society, his experiments in South Africa, and, ultimately, the establishment of *satyagraha* and his important role in the resistance movement against the British Colonial project in India—functioned as an agentive means of constructing the subject via specific technologies of the self.

³ Brahmacharya refers to a period in one's life when they are a celibate student, and for that reason it is often translated as “celibacy.” For Gandhi, however, brahmacharya was more about maintaining control of all bodily senses and desires.

Michel Foucault describes four major types of human technologies: 1) technologies of production, 2) technologies of sign systems, 3) technologies of power, and 4) technologies of the self.⁴ Although Foucault acknowledges that these four technologies hardly ever operate autonomously, within this examination of Gandhi's dietetic discourse it seems beneficial to specifically look at the second type (that of "sign systems," which Foucault describes as permitting one to "use signs, meanings, symbols, or signification") in tandem with the fourth (the care of the self).

Gandhi is famously known for discarding his Western style of dress and donning his signature *dhoti*, which is a rather obvious mode of self-othering enacted to discursively separate the subject from the normative boundaries of modern civilization. However, through an examination of his shifting dietetic ideology and practices, we can also see the ways in which the subjectifying forces of Orientalist discourse were agentatively inscripted not just upon, but also *within* his body as a means of articulating his resistance to modern civilization. These specific technologies of the self (I am intentionally using the plural to underscore the ever shifting nature of his dietary practices) were practiced as a mode of self-disciplining and self-construction, and thereby functioned as a protest to both the everyday practices of normative Western civilization (as seen originally via the counterculture of the London Vegetarian Society) and the Western notion of the "self" (as seen, later, in the overtly religious nature of Gandhian discourse, and the important function of sattvic principles as taken from the *Bhagavad-gita*). But even the latter, which seems on the surface to be so firmly rooted in traditional Indian philosophy, had its impetus, for Gandhi, in the West and his associations with the Theosophical Society and their affirmative Orientalist discourses regarding Indian religiosity.

⁴ Michel Foucault, "Technologies of the Self," in *The Essential Foucault*, Paul Rabinow and Nikolas S. Rose (New York: The New Press, 2003), 145.

Within the history of Gandhi's dietary discourse(s) are shifts that are directly related to cultural and ideological forces that affected him throughout his life, and generally with regards to his geographic location (for this reason I occasionally use the term "geo-cultural" to refer to the interrelated tendencies of both geography and culture). This is especially apparent regarding his associations with the Western counterculture whose discourse was overwhelmingly constructed within an arena of affirmative Orientalism in order to articulate their opposition to modern, Western civilization.

What Gandhi found in the West was not necessarily an argument in favor of a vegetarian diet that was *overtly* rooted in Indian philosophy, although significant evidence exists to suggest that such an argument was present within the Western discourse on the subject.⁵ Rather, within the Western counterculture of the day, from vegetarianism, to Theosophy, to critiques of modern (Western) civilization, Gandhi found an overt affirmation of traditional Hindu philosophy and practices. Therefore, through his shifting paradigms regarding his own dietary perspectives, practices, and overall discursive constructions, we can see a shift from his internalization of an overtly negative Orientalist discourse (through which he associated feebleness and effemininity with the vegetarian diet), to an internalization of an overtly affirmative Orientalist discourse (through which he saw, via his experiences with the Western counterculture, certain influential Western thinkers who applauded India for their vegetarianism, ethics, morality, religion, culture, etc.), and it was the latter which he "re-translated" to India and so utilized in his *satyagraha* and *sarvodaya* political endeavors.

Gandhi was greatly inspired by the West in many ways: his diet, his religious views, his communal experiments, and his famous critique of modern civilization (as seen most directly in

⁵ Tristram Stuart, *The Bloodless Revolution: A Cultural History of Vegetarianism from 1600 to Modern Times* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2007).

his essay *Hind Swaraj*). Gandhi's first encounter with the *Bhagavad-gita* and his re-discovery of his own Hindu tradition, as a whole, originally came via his association with the Theosophical Society and their Orientalist affirmation of Indian religiosity. Richard Fox deftly illustrates, in his essay "East of Said," that Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj* was inspired by his reading of Western authors. In addition to Ruskin's *Unto this Last*, the most direct influence can be seen in Edward Carpenter's *Civilization, its Cause and Cure*, in which an affirmative Orientalist discourse is utilized as a means of critiquing the perils of modern civilization. These Western works were incredibly influential for *Hind Swaraj*, as was G. K. Chesterton's negative assertion that Indian nationalism was neither very Indian nor very nationalistic (begging the question, for Gandhi: What, then, *should* an Indian nationalism—which was *both* Indian and nationalistic—look like?).⁶

Gandhi's dietary discourse eventually came to function within (at least) two broad arenas: 1) that of individual experimentation with specific dietary requirements, and 2) that of "control of the palate" as a more general ascetic practice related to the control of the senses and *brahmacharya*. The first of these arenas, Gandhi acknowledges, was derived almost entirely from Western thinkers and his own experiences in England. It has been argued, and I would concur, that it was exoticized, Orientalist conceptions of India that provided much of the impetus for Western vegetarian movements.⁷ In this way, whether he knew it or not, much of Gandhi's vegetarian zeal and dietary experiments were rooted in centuries-old Indian practices which had been "translated," through an Orientalist—and often Puritanical—lens, for Western

⁶ Richard Fox, "East of Said," in *Edward Said: A Critical Reader*, ed. Michael Sprinker (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1992), 146-148. Chesterton's piece was published in the *Illustrated London News* on September 18, 1909.

⁷This argument is clearly present within Stuart, *The Bloodless Revolution*.

consumption. The second arena, although articulated within a more overt discourse of Indian ascetic practices, was also greatly influenced by Gandhi's research of Christianity (the Sermon on the Mount and the Trappists in South Africa) and association with the Theosophical Society, which introduced him to his "own" religious culture through the eyes of the West. Furthermore, although not all Western vegetarians associated vegetarianism with asceticism, it nonetheless maintained a strong discursive current within the writings of those whom Gandhi found most influential (such as Henry Salt, Leo Tolstoy, Edwin Arnold, Edward Carpenter, and Henry David Thoreau).

Very few scholars have taken the time to thoroughly analyze the significance of Gandhi's dietary discourse, with the exception of Parama Roy's creative analysis, through the lens of literary and gender theory, on the "gastropoetics" of Gandhi's "grammar of diet,"⁸ and Joseph Alter's study of Gandhi and the colonial body (which will be discussed at length).⁹ The vast majority of secondary sources about Gandhi—of which there are many—focus on his role as a leader of the Indian independence movement, and much less (if at all) on Gandhi's dietary practices. Much of the literature pertaining to Gandhi's dietary practices has focused primarily on the practice and political functionality of his *satyagraha* fasts. Diet, however, played a very important role in Gandhi's construction of the self, both as a means of separating himself from normative dietary trends within Western civilization (and therefore normative Western civilization as a whole), and as an important aspect of his *brahmacharya* vow as a practice of controlling the palate. Furthermore, especially after his return to India, Gandhi's dietary

⁸ Parama Roy, "Meat Eating, Masculinity, and Renunciation in India: A Gandhian Grammar of Diet," *Gender & History*, 14:1 (2002): 62-91.

⁹ Joseph Alter, *Gandhi's Body: Sex, Diet, and the Politics of Nationalism* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000).

philosophy also came to function in terms of his understanding of *Samkhya* principles, as interpreted primarily from the *Bhagavad-gita*, in order to construct a pure, clean, *sattvic* body.

Methodology

Factors such as ideology and culture (and, by extension, philosophy, politics, economics, and religion) are essential to an examination of Gandhi's dietetic experiments and his overall discourse on the subject. Discourse is, of course, manifested in numerous ways beyond what one says and writes, and the body acts as something of a canvas for the expression of such discursive articulations. And, for this, the work of Foucault will be especially helpful.

I have been using the term "affirmative Orientalism," and this deserves a brief explanation. Orientalism is a mode of discourse applied to the "East," yet generally perceived to be located in the "West." According to Edward Said, Orientalism encompasses the totality of all things "Eastern" (that is to say, the *idea* of the East, its image), and is constructed and perpetuated via "supporting institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines, even colonial bureaucracies and colonial styles."¹⁰ Said identifies a few broad, interdependent modalities of Orientalism. The first is an academic mode, which applies to scholars, teachers, and researchers whose primary field is that of the Orient. The second mode of Orientalism, which is closely related to the academic mode, is more of a general style of thought which accepts and utilizes the binary distinction between "the Orient" and "the Occident." The acceptance of such a categorical distinction (that is, the *existence* of something called the "East," which exists separate of that which is called the "West") is then employed by novelists, social theorists, philosophers, and imperial administrators as a starting point for a myriad of discussions about, and discursive narratives related and applied to, what has been constructed and accepted

¹⁰ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 2.

as the Orient.¹¹ Said's third mode of Orientalism is, perhaps, more historically located than either of the first two, and is centered around the idea that the Orient does not exist in and of itself, but rather was created for the purposes of expediting colonial knowledge, power, and control.

Fox critiques Said's theory of Orientalism along with the practical limitations which modern scholarship has placed upon it. He argues that by expanding Said's original theory, perhaps even moving on from it, we can begin to accurately examine the intimate relationships "between European Orientalism's domination and the Third World's cultural resistance."¹² Fox focuses much of his essay on Gandhian discourse, and he writes that:

Gandhian utopia reacts against negative Orientalism by adopting and enhancing this positive image. It therefore ends up with a new Orientalism, that is, a new stereotype, of India, but an affirmative one, leading to an effective resistance. In this transformation, Said's theory seems to be left behind... Orientalism did not only serve European domination. Affirmative Orientalism furthered the resistance by Europeans to Western capitalism and modern industrial society. Said's theory, because it bounds West from East, misses this world system of authorship—the ramified intellectual work group composed of European utopians, Unitarians, simplifiers, vegetarians, and sexual libertarians like Ruskin, Tolstoy, Carpenter, Salt, and Kingsford, joined by Indian cultural nationalists like Gandhi, Vivekenanda, Krishnavarma, Sarvarkar, and Aurobindo, and linked through 'Indians by persuasion' like Besant and Noble.¹³

In Richard King's book *Orientalism and Religion* he engages critical responses to Said's influential theory. King points out that Said's overtly negative appraisal of Orientalism leaves little room for "indigenous appropriations of Orientalist discourses for positive, anti-colonial goals," and writes that critics of Said's work, like Fox, "have suggested that he places too much emphasis on the passivity of the native, and that he does not really discuss, nor even allow for, the ways in which indigenous peoples of the East have used, manipulated and constructed their

¹¹ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, 2.

¹² Fox, "East of Said," 154.

¹³ Fox, "East of Said," 152.

own positive responses to colonialism using Orientalist conceptions.”¹⁴ King points out that we can generally speak of two, broad forms of Orientalist discourse. The first, which Said so famously theorized, is characterized by its antagonist assertion and confidence in European superiority, and the second, as Fox and Ronald Inden, respectively, discussed as both “affirmative” and “romantic,” is characterized by its enthusiastic suggestion that India is superior to the West in certain key areas (often related to essentialized religious/cultural conceptions).¹⁵ King also argues that one should be wary of assuming that “enthusiastic portrayals of the East somehow remain untainted by the colonial enterprise,” and that such affirmations are often posited as an “implicit (and sometimes explicit) criticism of contemporary elements of the Orientalist’s own culture.”¹⁶ King also writes that:

Orientalist presuppositions about the ‘spirituality’ of India, etc., were used by reformers such as Rammohun Roy, Dayananda Saraswati, Swami Vivekenanda, and Mohandas K. Gandhi in the development of an anti-colonial Hindu nationalism. This no doubt reflects not only the level of permeation of Orientalist ideas amongst the native (and colonially educated) intelligentsia of India, but also the fact that such discourses do not proceed in an orderly and straightforward fashion, being in fact adapted and applied in ways unforeseen by those who initiated them. Thus, Orientalist discourses soon become appropriated by Indian intellectuals in the nineteenth century and applied in such a way as to undercut the colonialist agenda...¹⁷

Although scholars such as Inden, Fox, and King have pointed out the ways in which affirmative Orientalist discourse regarding India has been used by the colonized subject as a mode of anti-colonial resistance, such observations have, as far as I can tell, not been directly applied as an approach to the study of Gandhi’s dietetic practices.

Historiography

¹⁴ Richard King, *Orientalism and Religion: Postcolonial Theory, India and ‘The Mystic East’* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 86.

¹⁵ Ronald Inden, “Orientalist Constructions of India,” *Modern Asian Studies*, 20:3 (1986): 401-446.

¹⁶ King, *Orientalism and Religion*, 97.

¹⁷ King, *Orientalism and Religion*, 86.

Even though there are very few works devoted specifically to the subject of Gandhi's diet, there are, however, a handful of well-known scholars of Gandhi who do devote some—albeit relatively little—attention to the subject. Geoffrey Ashe's 1968 biography, *Gandhi*, does take note of the significance of Gandhi's early dietary experiments in England, especially with regards to his association with the London Vegetarian Society and the ways in which the vegetarian movement of the day was indicative of broader challenges to a variety of normative social practices. He writes, regarding Gandhi's influential experiences as a young man in England, that:

Some biographers, put off by an impression of faddishness, have missed the point of this phase. One of them dismisses the 'aged, crusading vegetarians' as having meant almost nothing to Gandhi. But they were not all aged, and they were far more than vegetarians. They introduced him to a circle in which he found himself at home and developed; and it was not a coterie of cranks, it was up-to-date, exciting, even fashionable.¹⁸

Ashe also writes that the “growth of a demigod began at that unlikely session in Farringdon Street,”¹⁹ and yet the remainder of his brief examination of this period in Gandhi's life does not reflect the importance that the above statement implies.²⁰ Although his observations are insightful and significant, and will be discussed further throughout this paper, Ashe ultimately devotes relatively little time within his monumental biography to the subject of Gandhi's dietetic practices, and he subsequently leaves the door open for much greater analysis on this important phase of Gandhi's life.

Another well-known biographer of Gandhi who has at least broached the topic of Gandhi and food is Erik Erikson. Erikson, in his influential 1969 psychoanalytical biography *Gandhi's*

¹⁸ Geoffrey Ashe, *Gandhi* (New York: Stein and Day, 1968), 33. Ashe does not specify who, exactly, the author is to whom he is referring.

¹⁹ Where the Central Vegetarian restaurant was located, through which Gandhi was initially introduced to the entire Western vegetarian movement.

²⁰ Ashe, *Gandhi*, 30.

Truth, deals with Gandhi's dietary philosophy mostly as a means of examining Gandhi's relationship with his mother, especially in light of the three vows (not to eat meat, not to drink, and not to have sex) he took for the benefit of his mother before setting off to England.²¹ Erikson is one of the scholars—as Ashe points out—who describes Gandhi's preoccupation with food as “obsessive and faddish.”²² Erikson writes that “we must recognize his dietary struggle also as a fundamental solution to an existential problem,” namely the physical and psychological separation from his mother.²³ Erikson's methodological approach—of psychoanalyzing Gandhi—means that most of his analysis is, as one would expect, focused on a rather Freudian examination of Gandhi's mental development (specifically his personality and notions of identity) with regards to his personal experiences and familial relationships, and one should therefore not fault him for spending little time on Gandhi's broader discursive articulations.

Judith Brown, one of the foremost scholars on Gandhi, writes in her 1972 book *Gandhi's Rise to Power*, that:

Unlike other Indian nationalist leaders Gandhi did not grow to maturity through experience of public in his own country, but laid the spiritual and political foundations of his leadership in a foreign land. South Africa taught him the techniques with which he was to combat the might of British imperialism in India...²⁴

And in *Gandhi and South Africa: Politics and Principles*, a 1996 book she edited with Martin Prozesky, she once again points to “the two decades of his African life which were crucially formative to him as a person and as a political visionary and leader.”²⁵

²¹ Erik Erikson, *Gandhi's Truth: On the Origins of Militant Nonviolence* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1969).

²² Erikson, *Gandhi's Truth: On the Origins of Militant Nonviolence*, 154.

²³ Erikson, *Gandhi's Truth: On the Origins of Militant Nonviolence*, 154.

²⁴ Judith Brown, *Gandhi's Rise to Power* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 1.

Brown is right to draw attention to Gandhi's experiences in South Africa, which was a crucial period for his development and, as this paper will illustrate, it was indeed in South Africa where religion became a central component of his discourse. However, to say that Gandhi's political foundations were laid in South Africa is to neglect the important role which his previous dietary experiments played in his political and ideological development and the formation of the subject of "Gandhi," as a whole.

Brown's work is not entirely without mention of his role within the London Vegetarian Society. In her 1989 biography, *Gandhi: Prisoner of Hope*, she writes that "[h]e found himself on its executive committee and so began his first experience of voluntary, organized activity, and included not only the conventions of committee work but also writing for the society's journal."²⁶ Brown also writes that "[t]hus began a concern for an interlocking approach to diet, health and religion which lasted a lifetime," and that such concerns "were integral to the vision Gandhi was to evolve of a new India founded on healthy, self-supporting village communities."²⁷ These sentiments are echoed throughout the secondary scholarship on this period in Gandhi's life, but, like other scholars, Brown has little more to say on the subject.

One of the most intriguing pieces of secondary scholarship on this subject is not from a work focused on Gandhi at all, but rather in a cultural history of vegetarianism from the medieval to the modern period. Tristram Stuart's *The Bloodless Revolution: A Cultural History of Vegetarianism from 1600 to Modern Times* (it is significant to point out that the original, English publication was subtitled *Radical Vegetarians and the Discovery of India*, which is,

²⁵ Brown, "Perspectives and Prospects," in *Gandhi and South Africa: Principles and Politics*, eds. Judith Brown and Martin Prozesky (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), 2.

²⁶ Judith Brown, *Gandhi: Prisoner of Hope* (New haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 25. My italics.

²⁷ Brown, *Gandhi: Prisoner of Hope*, 24-25.

perhaps, more fitting), spends a significant amount of time examining the impact that the West's encounter with India had upon the development of Western vegetarian ideologies and movements. Stuart's remarkably thorough survey of Western encounters with the East (specifically India) argues, in much the same way as certain arguments concerning religiously motivated asceticism, that virtually all documented Western manifestations of vegetarianism (dating, perhaps, as far back as Orpheus, Pythagoras, and Plato) were originally derived from India. Stuart illustrates the reactions (from overt disgust to esteemed reverence) that Western travellers had with regards to Indian cultural and religious practices. However, whether the East was subsequently vilified or revered, the inherently Orientalist discourse of "the other" was at work. Stuart writes that:

Inevitably, Christian writing about India was distorted by religious bigotry and underwritten by Europe's nascent political agenda, but some seventeenth-century travellers examined Indian culture with remarkably open minds and even downright admiration. . . Readers at home developed such an insatiable craving for Eastern knowledge that ideas taken from Indian philosophy were incorporated into debates about religion, science, history, human nature and ethics. At times, Hindu culture appeared so awesome that it shook Europe's self-centredness to its core.²⁸

Stuart also illustrates that late eighteenth-century Orientalist depictions of India as an idealized land where man existed in union with nature stimulated Western "Romanticism and informed the early philosophies of environmentalism."²⁹

Although Stuart does, for the most part, focus on the vegetarian aspects of Indian dietary customs (as this appeared the most exotic to the West), he does, briefly, acknowledge that such a diet was by no means the norm. Stuart writes, regarding medieval India, that:

Among the things that fascinated Europeans the most were the vegetarians. In fact, only certain groups of Hindus were vegetarian. Most Brahmins upheld their caste purity laws by

²⁸ Stuart, *The Bloodless Revolution*, 40.

²⁹ Stuart, *The Bloodless Revolution*, 210.

abstaining from meat and to some Europeans this gave them an aura of austere sanctity...Many Banians, the trading caste, were strict vegetarians especially on the Western coast in Gujarat, and some of those joined the all-vegetarian Jains.³⁰

This is virtually all that Stuart has to say on the subject of meat-eating in India. This may be understandable since his book pays particular attention to the ways in which this seemingly exotic (albeit by no means universal) dietary custom of India was received in the West, and further illustrates the degree to which Indian cultural and religious customs were often essentialized (and thereby misrepresented) within Western Orientalist discourses. Stuart, however, does little to engage the overtly Orientalist project of reducing the complexities of Indian dietary practices merely to the realm of the exotic (that is, vegetarianism).

It is important to underscore Stuart's brief point. That is, vegetarianism is by no means normative in India. Present statistics say that about 31% of Indians are vegetarians (with another 9% only consuming eggs). Vegetarianism is most common amongst Jain and upper-caste Hindu communities, of which roughly half reported being vegetarian,³¹ while other surveys suggest that as little as 20% of Indians are vegetarians.³² It is interesting that Stuart points to the Bania caste and Gujarat as being a social group and region historically prone to a vegetarian diet, since this is both the caste to which Gandhi belonged and the region where he was born and raised. So, at least in terms of dietary practice, the image of India which Gandhi came to promote was simultaneously derived from the West, and yet firmly rooted in his own cultural upbringing.

In his epilogue to this extensive study, Stuart spends a relatively brief amount of time looking at Gandhi's vegetarian discourse, but he nonetheless makes a rather profound

³⁰ Stuart, *The Bloodless Revolution*, 50.

³¹ "The Food Habits of a Nation," *The Hindu*, August 14, 2006. <http://www.hinduonnet.com/2006/08/14/stories/2006081403771200.htm> . Accessed on July 20, 2011.

³² FAO, <http://www.fao.org/WAIRDOCS/LEAD/X6170E/x6170e09.htm> USDA, <http://www.fas.usda.gov/htp/highlights/2001/india.pdf> . Both accessed on July 20, 2011.

observation. Stuart argues that “Western vegetarianism had been heavily influenced by Indian culture for more than 300 years; in Gandhi’s hands it was re-exported to India as a core element in the great national freedom struggle.”³³ Stuart also acknowledges that Gandhi’s previous belief in meat-eating was most likely derived from “the old European dogma that vegetarianism made the Indians weak and feeble.”³⁴ Stuart, surprisingly, makes no mention of the presence of Orientalism within Gandhian discourse, and stops short of any further analysis. Within this paper, however, I hope to build off of his insightful observations in order to further examine the ways in which Gandhi’s re-exportation, re-translation, and re-articulation of Western arguments in favor of vegetarianism is indicative of the ways in which Orientalist narratives served to construct Gandhi’s own dietary experiments, practices, and overall discourse.

By far the most significant work of secondary scholarship on this subject is Joseph Alter’s book *Gandhi’s Body*.³⁵ Alter accurately acknowledges the vast array of secondary works on Gandhi, but also points out that very few directly focus on Gandhi’s notions of bodily health. Alter points out that earlier biographers, such as Ashe³⁶ and Robert Payne,³⁷ assumed that Gandhi’s philosophy of *satyagraha* existed independently from his “personal preoccupation with diet, sex, and hygiene.”³⁸ Alter writes that, when reading the primary sources, “a distinction cannot be made between his personal experiments with dietetics, celibacy, hygiene, and nature cure and his search for Truth; between his virtual obsession with health, his faith in nonviolence,

³³ Stuart, *The Bloodless Revolution*, 424.

³⁴ Stuart, *The Bloodless Revolution*, 424.

³⁵ Joseph Alter, *Gandhi’s Body*.

³⁶ Geoffrey Ashe, *Gandhi*.

³⁷ Robert Payne, *The Life and Death of Mahatma Gandhi* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1969)

³⁸ Alter, *Gandhi’s Body*, 4.

and his program of sociopolitical reform.”³⁹ Also salient to this paper is Alter’s acknowledgement of the “explicitly syncretic” nature of Gandhi’s social experiments, and he specifically mentions Havelock Ellis, Bertrand Russell, Henry David Thoreau, and Paul Bureau as being especially influential.⁴⁰ The Western thinkers whom Alter mentions, and others who will be discussed in this paper, were, culturally, Western, and yet sought to question and reform normative patterns within Western civilization. It was this act of questioning, reforming, and, I would argue, resisting the normative patterns of everyday life in the West which Gandhi found so appealing and influential to his own experiments—both somatic and broadly social—and discursive articulations.

Alter’s overall approach to, and focus on, Gandhi’s bodily practices breaks significantly from the previously limited scholarship on the matter, and his argument that Gandhi’s bodily reform programs were an application of “biomoral reform” which comprised an essential component of *satyagraha* and his broader political endeavors plays a significant role in my own analysis within this paper. Alter argues that Gandhi’s bodily practices and philosophies did not exist in isolation from *satyagraha* and his political philosophies, but were inherently connected, as health reform, for Gandhi, was a matter of vital national interest. Within this argument, which is applied broadly to include all of Gandhi’s bodily practices (not just diet), Alter’s observations concerning Gandhi’s dietary discourse are particularly insightful, as he points out the many practical, “scientific” ways in which Gandhi sought dietary reform in India.⁴¹

³⁹ Alter, *Gandhi’s Body*, 4.

⁴⁰ Alter, *Gandhi’s Body*, 6.

⁴¹ Alter, *Gandhi’s Body*, 20-21.

Alter approaches his subject matter from the perspective of a medical anthropologist, and his study is therefore more concerned with Gandhi's broader bodily practices—not just diet and celibacy, but his approach towards modern medicine and experiments with nature cure as well. Although the methodological significance of studying Gandhi's somatic practices, as a whole, is apparent, the result is that Alter ultimately spends very little time devoted specifically to Gandhi's dietary practices and the development of his dietary philosophy, including the important ways in which Gandhi was influenced not simply by the "West," but rather by specific countercultural philosophers and groups within the West. In this way, Alter's insightful interpretations of Gandhi's bodily practices remain within a somewhat limited physiological arena, while paying almost no attention to the Western, countercultural social and religious influences on Gandhian bodily discourse.

All that being said, Alter's work has been extremely influential to this paper in many respects. This provides the impetus to both build off of Alter's scholarship, as well as look more closely at the shifts in Gandhi's dietary practices and related discourse with specific regards to the geo-cultural contexts and subjectifying forces (especially the different Orientalist discourses he encountered throughout his life) which so greatly influenced him. My approach, therefore, is to closely examine only Gandhi's discourse which specifically relates to his dietary practices and philosophies (purposefully side-stepping his overtly political fasts in favor of discursive articulations related to more "everyday practices") in order to better understand the syncretic nature of Gandhian discourse, specifically with regards to the presence of Orientalist frameworks.

It is also necessary to consider Gandhi's relationship with the West in terms of Indian nationalism. Ashis Nandy, in his 1983 book *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self*

under Colonialism, presents an examination of the psychological tolls on India and Britain (colonized and colonizer) during the colonial and post-colonial periods. Nandy writes that:

It was colonial India, still preserving something of its androgynous cosmology and style, which ultimately produced a transcultural protest against the hyper-masculine world view of colonialism, in the form of Gandhi. Gandhi's authenticity as an Indian should not blind us to the way his idiom cut across the cultural barriers between Britain and India, and Christianity and Hinduism. Albeit a non-Westerner, Gandhi always tried to be a living symbol of the other West.⁴²

Although Nandy does not directly examine Gandhi's dietary practices, many of his above observations are directly applicable. Much of Nandy's analysis deals with conceptions of masculinity, and here he specifically mentions the "hyper-masculine" world view of colonialism, to which India (especially Indian men) were often seen as the binary opposite, initially by the British and then by themselves. It was within this Orientalist paradigm that Gandhi began to eat meat in order to become more masculine, like the British, and thus defeat them. It is significant to note that other nationalist leaders, before Gandhi, acted within a similar paradigm. For instance, Nandy points out that Vivekananda said that the salvation of the Hindus lay in the three "B"s of "beef, biceps, and Bhagavad-Gita." Nandy also examines the ways in which reformers like Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay and Dayanand Saraswati sought to reinterpret Hindu theology in a way that infused it with masculinity by associating it more closely with Western elements and imagery.⁴³ Nandy argues that, in this way, "colonialism tried to supplant the Indian consciousness to erect an Indian self-image which, in its opposition to the West, would remain in essence a Western construction."

⁴² Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983), 48.

⁴³ Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy*, 26, 47.

Parama Roy, in her essay “Meat-Eating, Masculinity, and Renunciation in India: A Gandhian Grammar of Diet,” pays particular attention to the role of gender within Gandhi’s dietary practices, and discusses the perceived relationship between meat-eating and masculinity. Roy writes that, for Gandhi, “[m]eat-eating, or a kind of culinary masculinity... would nourish, in the most literal sense, not just Indian resistance to British rule but an entry into modernity and a condition of *post*-coloniality.”⁴⁴ In this way, when Gandhi does, overtly, transition to an ideology of vegetarianism he is also departing from the nationalistic approach of previous reformers (like Bankim, Vivekananda, and Saraswati) and breaking from a negative Orientalist paradigm in which “Hindus” and “Hinduism” had to be reinterpreted with regards to a Western conception of masculinity and strength in order to have the power to defeat the colonizers. Nandy’s above quote points out that Gandhi’s approach reaffirmed India’s “androgynous cosmology and style,” and, in many ways, Gandhi’s ideological adoption of a vegetarian diet was the first steps of a discursive effeminization which would come to characterize much of his later discourse. Nandy writes that:

Colonialism replaced the normal ethnocentric stereotype of the inscrutable Oriental by the pathological stereotype of the strange, primal but predictable Oriental—religious but superstitious, clever but devious, chaotically violent but effeminately cowardly. Simultaneously, colonialism created a domain of discourse where the standard mode of transgressing such stereotypes was to reverse them: superstitious but spiritual, uneducated but wise, womanly but pacific, and so on and so forth.⁴⁵

And it is precisely within this latter domain that Gandhian discourse operated. Although Gandhi’s approach to nationalism and colonial resistance differed from other reformers in terms of practice, it nonetheless operated within an Orientalist discursive domain made possible by

⁴⁴ Roy, “Meat Eating, Masculinity, and Renunciation in India: A Gandhian Grammar of Diet,” 66.

⁴⁵ Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy*, 72.

colonialism. However, just as vegetarianism is the discursive inversion of meat-eating, Gandhi's pragmatic approach to nationalism within this discursive domain was the inverse of reformers such as Bankim, Roy, Saraswati, and even Vivekananda.

Partha Chatterjee, in his book *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?*, similarly examines the differences in Gandhi's approach to nationalist politics from other nationalist reformers. Chatterjee utilizes the categories of the "thematic" (the theoretical, or broader narrative domain) and the "problematic" (perhaps best understood as the practical or pragmatic) in order to analyze these differing approaches to anti-colonialism. Chatterjee begins by illustrating the ways in which the thematic and the problematic operate within an Orientalist framework.⁴⁶ He then examines three "moments": those of departure, manoeuvre, and arrival, and he argues "that for nationalist thought to attain its paradigmatic form, these three are *necessary* ideological moments."⁴⁷ Chatterjee examines the moment of departure through the figure of Bankim, who accepted the thematic of Orientalism (an essential cultural difference between East and West), but altered the pragmatic by asserting that the East was superior in its spirituality, and therefore India merely needed to combine its inherent spirituality with the materiality and technological progress of the West. He then examines the moment of manoeuvre as seen in Gandhi's approach to nationalism. And, finally, he looks at the moment of arrival ("when nationalist thought attains its fullest development. It is now a discourse of order, of the rational organization of power") in the writings of Jawaharlal Nehru.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?*, in *The Partha Chatterjee Omnibus* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2009), 37-38.

⁴⁷ Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World*, 50.

⁴⁸ Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World*, 51.

The moment that is most salient to this paper is that which Chatterjee examines through the thought of Gandhi, the moment of manoeuvre. Gandhi, according to Chatterjee, departed from Bankim in important ways, namely in his belief that India was not colonized because it lacked the necessary cultural, technological, or modern attributes to compete with the British, but because India had been seduced by such modern attributes and therefore allowed the British to remain.⁴⁹ Chatterjee argues that, unlike Bankim (who accepted the thematic of Orientalism, but departed in his problematic), Gandhi departs from *both* the thematic and the problematic of a nationalism rooted in Orientalist discourse. Chatterjee writes that:

What appears on the surface as a critique of Western civilization is, therefore, a total moral critique of the fundamental aspects of civil society. It is not, at this level, a critique of Western culture or religion, nor is it an attempt to establish the superior spiritual claims of Hindu religion. In fact, the moral charge against the West is not that its religion is inferior, but that by whole-heartedly embracing the dubious virtues of modern civilization, it has forgotten the true teachings of the Christian faith. At this level of thought, therefore, Gandhi is not operating at all with the problematic of nationalism. His solution too is meant to be universal, applicable as much to the countries of the West as to nations such as India.⁵⁰

I agree that Gandhi was not arguing that Hinduism was superior to Christianity, or any other religion (in fact, although not the focal point of this paper, Gandhi was greatly influenced by Christian accounts of the Sermon on the Mount, as well as aspects from the Koran), and therefore, in addition to the ways previously discussed, departed significantly from the problematic put for the by reformers such as Bankim. Furthermore, Gandhi was tremendously influenced by his experiences in the West and his reading of certain Western thinkers who articulated approaches to social philosophy (including dietary practices) that ran counter to normative, “Western” practices. In this way Gandhi did not necessarily articulate a discourse of “Occidentalism” (which would have reduced and essentialized the traits and characteristics of the

⁴⁹ Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World*, 85-86.

⁵⁰ Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World*, 93.

“West”), as he remained entirely aware that the West was not ideologically monolithic, it just so happened that the modern civilization which he was protesting originated in the geographic West.

However, even though Gandhi may not have argued that Hinduism was superior to Christianity, etc., he nonetheless articulated his discourse (once he returned to India) in overtly Indian—generally Hindu—terminology and categories. Within Gandhi’s broader discourse, non-modern India was presented as exemplary of the sort of society which could successfully counter the perils of modern civilization as imported from the West. As a result, many aspects of non-modern, traditional Indian society were reinterpreted, reduced, and essentialized within a discursive framework of affirmative Orientalism.

Part One: Early Experiments and England

Gandhi eventually came to be an outspoken critic of the Indian elite’s close relationship with the British, and the many ways in which they were collaborative products of modern civilization. The irony is, however, that Gandhi was very much a part of this same class of Western educated Indian elites. Gandhi’s family was part of the Bania caste (which generally related to merchant professions), and Modh Bania subcaste. Gandhi liked to say that he came from a family of grocers, but for three generations from Gandhi’s grandfather they were Prime Ministers in several Kathiawad states.⁵¹ Bania’s generally wear the sacred thread after the twice born (*dvijya*) initiation (as is characteristic of upper castes and varnas), as well as abstain from meat. Since many Indians and Hindus do not abstain from meat, this latter point is most likely attributed to the fact that most Bania’s affiliate with Vaishnava or Jain sects, or a combination of the two.

⁵¹ Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, 3.

Although Gandhi writes that his father was not highly educated and did not accumulate great wealth, he was, nonetheless, a member of the influential Rajasthanik Court, he served as Prime Minister for a time in both Rajkot and Vankaner, and he was the pensioner for the Rajkot state when he died.⁵² Such a family history indicates that the Gandhi's held a certain position of social influence.

Gandhi writes that his father did not have a great deal of religious education, but would visit temples and attend religious discourses, and, later in his life, took to reading the Bhagavad-gita. Gandhi's mother, on the other hand, is portrayed as being an extraordinarily religious woman. She would visit a Vaishnava temple daily, and regularly observed fasts with the utmost devotion. Gandhi writes that the "outstanding impression my mother has left on my memory is that of saintliness."⁵³

Gandhi's dietary experiments went through many changes during his early life, and in many ways this period is the most salient with regards to his long-term dietetic practices. During one short period, when he was in high school, a friend convinced Gandhi that the English were able to rule over India due to the strength they acquired through eating meat.⁵⁴ In addition, a Gujarati poet named Narmad also had an influence on Gandhi with a poem that went "Behold the mighty Englishman/ He rules the Indian small,/ Because being a meat-eater/ he is five cubits tall."⁵⁵ He eventually became convinced that eating meat was beneficial for improving one's strength and "if the whole country took to meat-eating, the English could be overcome."⁵⁶

⁵² Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, 3-4.

⁵³ Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, 4.

⁵⁴ Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, 20.

⁵⁵ Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, 21.

Gandhi writes that his decision to start eating meat was conceived entirely around a desire for physical and mental strength, primarily in the hopes of overthrowing the British, and it “was not a question of pleasing the palate.”⁵⁷

The ideological impetus for his notion that the British could only be matched via a nation of meat-eaters was more than likely rooted in centuries old, Orientalist conceptions of Indians as weak, feeble, and effeminate. Both Stuart and Roy have engaged this issue of negative self-conception, to varying degrees, and Roy writes that “[t]he self-conception of feebleness was, perhaps, strongest among Bengali Hindu males, but was also effectively internalized by colonized in other parts of India.”⁵⁸ In this way, Gandhi, at a young age, internalized a discourse of colonial resistance (that was rooted in a negative Orientalist paradigm), years before the advent of *satyagraha*. Interestingly, his first dietary experiments (eating meat) in India would be characterized (through a Gandhian lens) as inherently violent in at least two respects. Firstly, by lying to his parents he was violating his later vow of ahimsa and reverence for “Truth.” Secondly, by eating meat he was participating in an overtly violent dietary practice. Gandhi’s dietary discourse was, however, nonetheless enacted upon his body as the first instance of social protest.

Gandhi’s brief experiment with eating meat had to be kept secret from his relatives, and generally filled him with remorse. It is, once again, important to point out that most Hindus do not strictly abstain from meat, however, as Vaishnavas who also observed many elements of Jainism, abstaining from meat was very important for Gandhi’s family and caste. Over the course

⁵⁶ Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, 21.

⁵⁷ Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, 21.

⁵⁸ Roy, “Meat Eating, Masculinity and Renunciation in India: A Gandhian Grammar of Diet,” 65.

of about a year he writes that he ate meat perhaps six times before he decided that deceiving his parents was worse than not eating meat, but upon their deaths he had every intention of starting again, and firmly believed that eating meat was the most direct way for Indians to build up the strength necessary to defeat the British. In this well-known example of Gandhi's early dietary perspective one can see the ways in which Gandhi internalized negative Orientalist conceptions of Indians as passive, weak, effeminate, and superstitious, and thereby sought to overcome such inferiorities via the consumptions of meat, all the while operating within the discursive paradigm of Orientalism.

Traveling to England was problematic with regards to a multitude of religious issues. For one, Gandhi's uncle (who, after his father's death, was the eldest male in their immediate family) was hesitant to support Gandhi's overseas studies because he did not believe it was "possible for one to stay in England without prejudice to one's own religion."⁵⁹ That is, his uncle believed that other Indians who had travelled abroad abandoned much of their Indian culture and picked up English ways, such as smoking cigars and not minding their diets. Another issue was the crossing of the seas, often referred to as the *kala pani* ("black waters"), which was seen as fundamentally impure and resulted in the loss of caste. His uncle eventually transferred the decision to Gandhi's mother, who shared his reservations, and only (albeit reluctantly) allowed Gandhi to leave for England after he took three vows (to abstain from wine, sex, and meat) for her in the presence of a Jain monk, who was also a close family friend and advisor.⁶⁰

Although his mother granted him permission, when Gandhi was in Bombay preparing to sail to England, he was met with opposition by representatives of his "caste-people." They, like his uncle and mother, believed that it was not possible for him to keep his religion in England,

⁵⁹ Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, 37.

⁶⁰ Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, 39.

and that crossing the sea was in direct violation of their caste principles. Gandhi, refusing to alter his plans, was subsequently outcaste. He writes that the “order had no effect on me, and I took my leave.”⁶¹

Here we can see that Gandhi, who came from an influential family and an upper-caste, was well educated and given the relatively rare opportunity to travel to England to study for the bar. In the process, however, he was disowned by his caste, yet seems to have been relatively unaffected. As we will see, religion did not become a matter of importance to Gandhi until later in his life, and at this point his devotion to his mother was of much greater importance. Furthermore, Gandhi’s position as an outcaste, just as he was to embark to England, is symbolic of a shedding of Indian identity in an attempt to assimilate to British identity. It is precisely this mode of behavior, as seen in Indian elites (especially in Congress), which Gandhi would eventually come to criticize so vehemently. Even though, as a result of his experiences in England and South Africa, Gandhi would come to embrace a decidedly non-modern Indian identity as a mode of opposition to the pervasiveness of modern civilization generally seen in the Indian bourgeois elite, Gandhi nonetheless began his journey as a member of that very same class of Indian elites and, in many ways (such as his education, his travels, his position as a barrister, etc.), always remained a member of the upper class, Indian elite. This observation is in no way intended to question the sincerity with which Gandhi sought to represent lower classes in India, however, one cannot help but be reminded of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s observation in her influential work *Can the Subaltern Speak?*, that, if the subaltern is speaking through the mouth of the elite, are they really speaking at all?

⁶¹ Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, 41.

Gandhi's time in England was the most formative period in his life with regards to his dietary experiments, and it was there that he experienced a drastic ideological shift with regards to his dietary philosophy. Later in his life, while in India, Gandhi writes in the introduction to his book *Ashram Observances in Action* that he was "indebted to the West" for his dietary practices.⁶² The driving influence for this ideological shift was Gandhi's involvement in the Western vegetarian movement, and the works of those affiliated with the vegetarian movement in the West, and the London Vegetarian Society in particular. It was during this time that he actually internalized his commitment to vegetarianism, which was previously simply an empty vow taken to placate his mother while he was otherwise firmly committed to his belief in meat-eating as a means of acquiring the necessary strength to resist British Colonialism.

When Gandhi first moved to England in 1888 his goal was to become, culturally, an Englishman, and he tried to do so by altering his clothing, taking elocution lessons, attempting ballroom dancing, and taking up the violin.⁶³ His strict adherence to a vegetarian diet, however, proved alienating at times, and he eventually found a popular vegetarian restaurant in London, called The Central Restaurant, which became not only his regular eating place, but a counter-cultural retreat that functioned as a bookstore and meeting place as well.⁶⁴ At the Central Restaurant Gandhi read, and was tremendously influenced by, Henry Salt's *A Plea for Vegetarianism*, Howard Williams' *The Ethics of Diet* (a, more or less, biographical dictionary of prominent vegetarians), and Anna Kingsford's *The Perfect Way in Diet* (which presented a

⁶² Gandhi, *Ashram Observances in Action* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1955), 8.

⁶³ Ved Mehta, *Mahatma Gandhi and His Apostles* (New York: Viking Press, 1977), 86-87. Mehta also references Louis Fischer's 1950 biography, *The Life of Mahatma Gandhi* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1965).

⁶⁴ Mehta, *Mahatma Gandhi and His Apostles* 88.

review of the food habits of various nations, including India), and the writings of Dr. T. R. Allison who fit vegetarianism into a broader program of the “Simple Life.”⁶⁵

According to Ashe, “[t]o be a vegetarian was to align oneself with the vegetarians of England,” and Gandhi soon did just that.⁶⁶ By eating in “their” restaurants, Gandhi soon came into contact with the very people whose writings had so inspired him, such as Salt and Williams, as well as many other influential figures within the English vegetarian movement.⁶⁷ Martin Green writes that “by refusing to eat the roast beef of old England, the vegetarians refused to join the hearty rituals of English power.”⁶⁸ Ved Mehta writes in his book *Mahatma Gandhi and his Apostles* that “[t]o be an Indian student in London in the late Victorian period was to move on the fringes of English society,” and he adds that “Gandhi seems to have developed an early taste for eccentrics of all kinds.”⁶⁹ Gandhi subsequently met a variety of individuals who subscribed to alternative ideologies—many influenced by Darwinism and Marxism and included feminism, anarchism, Fabianism, and atheism—that challenged normative Western modes of everyday life.⁷⁰ Cultural historian of England Keith Thomas points out in his book *Man and the Natural World*, that “[i]n 1847 the Vegetarian Society of Great Britain was founded, but fifty years later its membership was still only about 5,000.” Judging by these numbers, the countercultural disposition of the vegetarian movement in England during this period is further supported by the

⁶⁵ Ashe, *Gandhi*, 31.

⁶⁶ Ashe, *Gandhi*, 33.

⁶⁷ Mehta, *Mahatma Gandhi and His Apostles*, 88.

⁶⁸ Martin Green, *Gandhi: Voice of a new Age Revolution* (New York: Continuum, 1993), 94.

⁶⁹ Mehta, *Mahatma Gandhi and His Apostles*, 91.

⁷⁰ Mehta, *Mahatma Gandhi and His Apostles*, 91.

paucity of membership in such societies.⁷¹ Furthermore, Mark Thomson, in his book *Gandhi and his Ashrams*, writes that “English society labeled them as ‘eccentric’ but for Gandhi they were a source of inspiration, reinforcing his belief that a life in harmony with nature and society was the purest expression of truth and morality.”⁷² Similarly, Nandy writes that “Gandhi’s spirited search for the other culture of Britain, and of the West, was an essential part of his theory of salvation for India. It is true that ‘Gandhi was a living antithesis set up against the thesis of the English’,⁷³ but that antithesis was latent in the English, too.”⁷⁴

Gandhi eventually became an enthusiastic activist promoting a vegetarian diet, and was very involved with the London Vegetarian Society, eventually sitting on the group’s executive committee and writing many pieces for their journal *The Vegetarian* and their sister journal *The Vegetarian Messenger*.⁷⁵ Mehta writes that “Gandhi and other members went from house to house preaching vegetarianism and peace, and showing people how to prepare good vegetarian meals.”⁷⁶ This is very significant in that it illustrates the ways in which Gandhi’s involvement with the vegetarian movement helped to hone his skills as a social activist.

Early in 1891—the same year that he would leave England to return briefly to India (before moving on to South Africa)—Gandhi wrote a series of short pieces for *The Vegetarian*. In these articles, concerning vegetarianism in India, Gandhi briefly describes the Indian diet with

⁷¹ Keith Thomas, *Man in the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England 1500-1800* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 297. Thomas here is referencing a note in Howard Williams, *The Ethics of Diet*, 424n.

⁷² Mark Thomson, *Gandhi and His Ashrams* (New Delhi: Popular Prakashan, 1993), 13.

⁷³ Here Nandy is paraphrasing Rollo May, *Power and Innocence: A Search for the Sources of Violence* (New York: Delta, 1972), 112.

⁷⁴ Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy*, 49.

⁷⁵ Mehta, *Mahatma Gandhi and His Apostles*, 89.

⁷⁶ Mehta, *Mahatma Gandhi and His Apostles*, 89.

reference to religion, geography, time of day, and climate, ultimately arguing that strength of certain groups of Indian vegetarians illustrates that those consuming a vegetarian diet “will compare quite favorably to any meat-eater so far as bodily strength goes.”⁷⁷ This illustrates the significant departure from Gandhi’s previous belief that only if India became a nation of meat-eaters could they muster the physical strength to defeat the British. Gandhi’s previous conception of the physical benefits of eating meat was firmly rooted in a negative Orientalist paradigm as applied to the colonized subject. Here, however, we see clear evidence of his internalization of an affirmative Orientalist paradigm as put forth by the Western vegetarian discourse that he first encountered in England. Further examples of affirmative Orientalism within the discourse of the Western vegetarian movement will be examined in the coming pages, however it is important to also point out here that regardless of negative/affirmative Orientalism, or their respective practical manifestations for Gandhi as meat-eating/vegetarian, there remained an imperative of resistance: first, as a potential physical resistance to colonialism via meat eating (thus building the strength necessary to fight the colonizers through violent means), and second as a broader resistance to normative cultural practices within the West, as representative of modern civilization.

I have previously pointed out that not all Indians are vegetarians, and yet much of the Orientalist discourse (affirmative or otherwise) overwhelmingly portrayed them as such. Gandhi, in fact, may have even helped to perpetuate this misconception through somewhat hyperbolic statements made within this essay. Gandhi writes that:

The common belief among the Englishmen who have not been to India, or who have taken very little interest in Indian matters, is that all Indians are born Vegetarians. Now this is true

⁷⁷ Gandhi, *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*. “Indian Vegetarians,” 2/7/1891-3/14/1891 in *The Vegetarian* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Press and The Government of India, 1958), 1, 24-37. Henceforth abbreviated *CWMG*.

only in part. Indian people are divided into three main divisions, viz., the Hindus, the Mahomedans, and the Parsis... The Hindus are again divided into four chief castes, viz., the Brahmins, the Kshatriyas, the Vaishyas, and the Shudras. Of all of these, in theory, only the Brahmins and the Vaishyas are pure Vegetarians. *But in practice almost all Indians are Vegetarians.* Some are so voluntarily, and others compulsory. The latter, though always willing to take, are yet too poor to buy meat.⁷⁸

Although this statement is not inaccurate (recent surveys estimate that up to 70% of Indians are functionally “vegetarian,” not because of ideology, but because they cannot afford to buy meat),⁷⁹ it could easily prove misleading if taken out of context.

Furthermore, these writings illustrate the degree to which Gandhi continued to identify as an Indian in England and attempted to educate people on matters of Indian culture and customs (pertaining to food and beyond). Maintaining an Indian identity was always important to Gandhi. Originally, before discovering the Central Restaurant and enthusiastically internalizing his vegetarian ideology, keeping his vow to his mother by maintaining a vegetarian diet was an important way for Gandhi to hold onto this Indian identity (even if he did not, at the time, agree ideologically with the vow which he was keeping.)⁸⁰ Here, in the above writing, we see him continue his affiliation with an Indian identity by writing authoritatively on Indian culture related to food. It is also important to keep in mind that his Indian heritage no doubt carried a certain social capital within a counterculture so enamored with India, and we will see further evidence of this later on when I discuss his association with the Theosophical Society. Before moving on, I also want to point out that his voice in the above pieces is, however, distinctly objective and removed from any sense of overt affiliation with a specific mode of traditional Indian religious

⁷⁸Gandhi, *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, 1, 25. My emphasis.

⁷⁹ The Food habits of a Nation, *The Hindu*, August 14, 2006.
<http://www.hinduonnet.com/2006/08/14/stories/2006081403771200.htm> . Accessed on July 20, 2011.
 FAO, <http://www.fao.org/WAIRDOCS/LEAD/X6170E/x6170e09.htm>
 USDA, <http://www.fas.usda.gov/htp/highlights/2001/india.pdf> . Both accessed on July 20, 2011.

⁸⁰ Green, *Gandhi: Voice of a New Age Revolution*, 88.

practice, and his overall argument does not utilize any specific South Asian philosophical interpretation regarding the benefits of a vegetarian diet, but rather uses the vegetarian diet, as seen in India, to make a broader case concerning the universal benefits of such a diet to his intended audience in England.

Henry Stephens Salt played a very prominent role within the vegetarian movement in England during this period, and, it is interesting to point out that he was born in India as the son of a British army colonel in 1851, but he only lived there for a year before travelling to England in 1852. Salt, along with his associates in the movement, “carried on a tradition deriving from Shelley, of whom he was an authority.”⁸¹ Stuart writes a great deal of Shelley’s influence for the vegetarian movement in England, far too much to thoroughly recount here. But, overall, Stuart portrays Shelley as an enthusiastic, and highly influential, radical personality who constantly advocated on behalf of a vegetarian diet and a “return to nature.”⁸² In addition to being called a Pythagorean, as Western vegetarians in the early eighteenth century were often referred, Shelley was also known as “Brahminical,” which obviously points to the Romantic Orientalist elements present within the vegetarian imagery of the day.⁸³ Long after his untimely death, Shelley’s writings, as well as his larger-than-life persona, remained very important for the vegetarian movement. Stuart writes that “Shelley’s charged works brought rhetorical concision and political insight to the collaborative manifesto of his vegetarian community.”⁸⁴ Salt was an expert on Shelley, and wrote five books about him, in addition to editing a version of Shelley’s *Vindication*

⁸¹ Ashe, *Gandhi*, 33,

⁸² Stuart, *The Bloodless Revolution*, 372-398.

⁸³ Stuart, *The Bloodless Revolution*, 374.

⁸⁴ Stuart, *The Bloodless Revolution*, 374.

of *Natural Diet*.⁸⁵ Stuart writes that Salt's "enthusiasm for Shelley's call for non-violent radical vegetarian protest (itself inspired by Hinduism) evidently rubbed off on Gandhi who mentioned both Salt and Shelley in his writings."⁸⁶

Ashe points out that Salt's pamphlet was a "challenge to British folkways," and that it provided for Gandhi "what the West alone could then give—a fresh statement of the doctrine in reasoned terms, with no childish appeals to incredible authorities."⁸⁷ By this Ashe is referring to the relatively empty vows which Gandhi had taken to simply appease his mother and receive permission to travel to England, as Ashe writes, "he had accepted a Hindu dogma without inward assent, as the only means of getting to England."⁸⁸ Through his discovery of a community of Western vegetarians, however, Gandhi's ideological perspective transitioned from a meat-eater maintaining a vegetarian out of respect for a vow, to that of a vegetarian zealously campaigning on behalf of a vegetarian diet in an effort to bring about social change.

Salt, in the opening to his essay, acknowledges that he, himself, is a vegetarian, and seems to take a certain pride in writing that:

This is a rather formidable admission to make, for a Vegetarian is still regarded, in ordinary society, as little better than a madman, and may consider himself lucky if he has no worse epithets applied to him than humanitarian, sentimentalist, crotchet-monger, fanatic, and the like. A man who leaves off eating meat will soon find that his friends and acquaintances look on him with strange and wandering eyes; his life is invested with a mysterious interest⁸⁹

This passage, citing his perceived non-normative—even odd—behavior, is indicative of many individuals who are members of a counterculture and take solace in the fact that their everyday

⁸⁵ Stuart, *The Bloodless Revolution*, 425.

⁸⁶ Stuart, *The Bloodless Revolution*, 425.

⁸⁷ Ashe, *Gandhi*, 31.

⁸⁸ Ashe, *Gandhi*, 31.

⁸⁹ H. S. Salt, *A Plea for Vegetarianism and Other Essays* (Manchester: The Vegetarian Society, 1886), 7.

practices serve to articulate a discursive separation from normative society. Salt goes on to write that vegetarianism is often seen as a new religious movement, and is therefore grouped together with “Mormonism, Spiritualism, Anglo-Isrealism...and possibly Atheism itself.”⁹⁰

In his argument in favor of a vegetarian diet, Salt cites economic factors (meat is expensive), the inhumaneness of animal slaughter as a general affront to “aesthetic” sensibilities, and he disputes arguments that meat-eating is necessary for bodily strength and mental acuity. Salt ends his short essay by writing, “[t]o bring a question to the test is, however, a process which to most people is particularly disagreeable. They greatly prefer the easier and more expeditious method of shaping their ideas in accordance with the time-honoured traditions of custom and ‘society.’”⁹¹ Here, once again, we can see Salt’s subtler critique of normative social practice, further illustrating the extent to which the vegetarian movement was, indeed, a counter-cultural force which sought to resist and reform what it saw as the destructive practices of modern civilization.

Although there are not direct references to Indian culture within Salt’s short pamphlet, the broader vegetarian discourse in the West historically relied heavily upon such Orientalist narratives, and the lingering traces can be seen in *A Plea for Vegetarianism*’s opening epigraph quoting Thoreau: “I have no doubt that it is part of the destiny of the human race, in its gradual improvement, to leave off eating animals, as surely as the savage tribes have left off eating each other, when they came into contact with the more civilized.”⁹² Although Salt’s essay takes a relatively pragmatic style of argumentation, this quote is telling. We have already seen how Salt

⁹⁰ Salt, *A Plea for Vegetarianism and Other Essays*, 10.

⁹¹ Salt, *A Plea for Vegetarianism and Other Essays*, 20.

⁹² Salt, *A Plea for Vegetarianism and Other Essays*.

was tremendously influenced by the radical Romanticism of Shelley, and here, once again, Salt invokes a passage from Thoreau, whose transcendentalism (incorporating a significant amount of Orientalism), return to nature discourse, and non-violent philosophy of civil disobedience were tremendously influential to the vegetarian movement in the West and, eventually, to Gandhi's political ideology as well. Stuart writes that:

Salt was Thoreau's greatest champion in England and clearly regarded Gandhi as Thoreau's representative on Earth, for in 1929, having to his delight found that Gandhi in his *Autobiography* treated reading the *Plea for Vegetarianism* as a pivotal moment in his life, he wrote to him—by now a hero of political freedom movements across the world—humbly enquiring whether 'you had been a reader of Thoreau, and had been at all influenced by him, as on many subjects your views and Thoreau's seem rather akin.' Gandhi replied by relating how he had translated parts of 'Civil Disobedience' into Gujarati for his journal *Indian Opinion* and that later he read Walden and Salt's biography of Thoreau 'with great pleasure and equal profit.'⁹³

Gandhi was introduced to Thoreau through the English, vegetarian counterculture. He found inspiration in Thoreau's belief in the power of "individuals resisting unjust governments," and later stated that his 'Civil Disobedience' contained the essence of his own political philosophy, both as India's struggle for independence, as well as the relationship between the citizenry and the government.⁹⁴ The fact that Salt, who was perhaps the most influential figure with regards to Gandhi's dietary experiments, was so influenced by Shelley and Thoreau, and the fact the Gandhi was introduced to Thoreau's philosophies through vegetarianism, Salt, and the broader countercultural movement within England, is just one small example of the multitude of ways in which Gandhi's early experienced with diet proved highly influential for the development of his long-term political ideology.

⁹³ Stuart, *The Bloodless Revolution*, 428.

⁹⁴ Stuart, *The Bloodless Revolution*, 428-429.

Martin Green writes that both Edwin Arnold and Edward Carpenter both traveled to “the Orient,” after which they regularly attended the weekly vegetarian teas organized by Salt (which, Green imagines, were probably attended by Gandhi as well). Green puts it rather bluntly when he writes simple that: “Vegetarianism and Orientalism went together.”⁹⁵ More overt references to Indian religious culture can be seen in the work of Anna Kingsford. Kingsford’s *A Perfect Way in Diet: A Treatise Advocating a Return to the Natural and Ancient Food of our Race*, is always cited alongside Salt’s work as being especially influential for Gandhi.⁹⁶ Kingsford is noted for her involvement in the Theosophical Society, and Ashe describes her as “one of those occasional mystics who go through the Catholic Church and out the other side, not into atheism, but into Catholic-flavoured occultism.”⁹⁷ However, because Kingsford’s book was written primarily for her doctoral thesis, she writes in the preface that “I have dwelt chiefly on the aspects, physical and social, of my subject, and touched but lightly on those moral and philosophical, is not, assuredly, because I regard these last as of lesser importance, but because their abstruse and recondite nature renders them unsuitable to a work intended for general reading.” That being said, the religiosity which so inspired much of her discourse is not entirely omitted for this work, as she begins with a poem from Edwin Arnold’s treatise on the Buddha, *The Light of Asia*, that relies heavily on Eastern imagery, and undoubtedly illustrates elements of affirmative Orientalism present within the Western vegetarian discourse of the day:

*‘Thus the king’s will is:
There hath been slaughter for the sacrifice
And slaying for the meat, but henceforth none
Shall spill the blood of life nor taste of flesh,*

⁹⁵ Green, *Gandhi: Voice of a New Age Revolution*, 95.

⁹⁶ This work is an expanded version of her doctoral thesis, and was originally published in 1881.

⁹⁷ Ashe, *Gandhi*, 63.

*Seeing that knowledge grows, and life is one,
And mercy cometh to the merciful.*
So ran the edict, and from those days forth
Sweet peace hath spread between all living kind,
Man and the beasts which serve him, and the birds,
On all those banks of Ganga where our Lord
Taught with his saintly pity and soft speech.⁹⁸

Although Salt's work is generally regarded as being the most influential for Gandhi's dietetic practices, Ashe writes that Kingsford's work, especially her more religiously oriented pieces, were very interesting for Gandhi, at least for a short time. Ultimately, according to Ashe, Gandhi found Kingsford's support for her interpretation of Esoteric Christianity too "cliquish" and "theoretical," and he eventually found much greater inspiration in the works of Tolstoy.⁹⁹

The history of European vegetarian societies, and of vegetarianism in the West as a whole, is fascinating, and although a thorough examination of Western vegetarian societies would detract from the focus of this short paper, certain key points deserve mentioning.¹⁰⁰

Colin Spencer, in his book *The Heretic's Feast: A History of Vegetarianism*, points out that the late-nineteenth century saw a tremendous rise in vegetarian restaurants throughout England (thirty-four in London alone). He refers to Salt and his associates as "vegetarian radicals,"¹⁰¹ and accredits this new interest in vegetarianism to social change and movements which began during the mid-nineteenth century. He writes that "the emergence of the lower-middle classes...The rise of socialism, the Fabian movement, the idea of the simple life, the

⁹⁸ Anna Kingsford, *The Perfect Way in Diet* (1881), Proem from Edwin Arnold, *The Light of Asia*. This resource was accessed online: http://www.anna-kingsford.com/english/Works_by_Anna_Kingsford_and_Maitland/Texts/02-OAKM-I-PWayDiettxt-web.htm

⁹⁹ Ashe, *Gandhi*, 64.

¹⁰⁰ For more information of the subject see: Colin Spencer, *The Heretic's Feast* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1995), Tristram Stuart, *The Bloodless Revolution* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 2006), James Gregory, *Of Victorians and Vegetarians* (New York: Taurus Academic Studies, 2007), and Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983).

¹⁰¹ Spencer, *The Heretic's Feast*, 292.

return of the myth of the pastoral, and finally the world figure of Tolstoy lifted the image of the movement from provincial eccentricity to lofty idealism.”¹⁰² Spencer also mentions Gandhi, and writes that—in addition to his newfound zeal for vegetarianism—it was during this period that “concepts of civil disobedience and non-violence became clarified in his mind as possible courses of protest.”¹⁰³

Furthermore, Tristram Stuart describes the ways in which Hinduism, in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries,

became the object of veneration as a new wave of Orientalists travelled to India, learned Indian languages and translated Sanskrit texts to the delight of Western audiences. Some East India Company servants were so overcome by the benevolence of Indian culture that they relinquished the religion of their fathers and employers to embrace Hinduism as a more humane alternative. This played into the hands of radical critics of Christianity, such as Voltaire, who used the antiquity of Hinduism to land a devastating blow to the Bible’s claims, and acknowledged that the Hindu’s treatment of animals represented a shaming alternative to the viciousness of European imperialists. Even those more dedicated to keeping their Christian identity, such as the great scholar William Jones, found themselves swayed by the doctrine of *ahimsa*¹⁰⁴

One of Stuart’s most interesting examples is his chapter devoted to John Zephaniah Holwell, a surgeon with the East India Company and temporary Governor of Bengal in 1760-61. Holwell acknowledged that he “prayed to Hindu deities and regarded Hinduism as the greatest religion on earth,”¹⁰⁵ and Stuart credits him with writing the first full-scale defense of Hinduism in Europe, in which he espoused his theory that Hinduism was the oldest religion and the original source for all subsequent religions.¹⁰⁶ Holwell’s writings, according to Stuart, “were among the most

¹⁰² Spencer, *The Heretic’s Feast*, 275.

¹⁰³ Spencer, *The Heretic’s Feast*, 292.

¹⁰⁴ Stuart, *The Bloodless Revolution*, xxiv-xxv.

¹⁰⁵ Stuart, *The Bloodless Revolution*, 275.

influential sources on Indian religion for decades,” and were an inspiration for James Burnett (“Lord Monboddo”) and Voltaire, amongst others.¹⁰⁷ Most relevant for this study is the way in which Holwell combined his background in Western medicine with his newfound religiosity to construct his arguments in favor of vegetarianism (due to his description of an Indian procedure, it became standard practice in Europe to prepare patients for smallpox injections with an all-vegetable diet).¹⁰⁸ Voltaire utilized Holwell’s work in order to further his argument regarding his own views of vegetarianism and animal-rights, thus introducing Holwell’s interpretation of Hindu religion and culture to a much wider audience than it otherwise would have reached. Stuart writes that “through Voltaire, Holwell provided a bridge between the seventeenth deists’ use of Hinduism and the later eighteenth-century radicals who embraced India as an alternative to the brutal oppression the saw in European culture.”¹⁰⁹

Another significant example of an author who utilized affirmative Orientalist discourse to further the agenda of the Western vegetarian movement is George Nicholson (1760-1825). Nicholson forged a certain unity amongst the various vegetarian philosophical trends of his day by, somewhat syncretically, bundling the writings of a wide array of authors together within a single anthology. This style served to bring formerly disparate voices together to further his arguments on behalf of animal rights.¹¹⁰ In this way, Nicholson’s work is often more of a compendium of works by other authors, rather than comprised of his own analysis. What this

¹⁰⁶ Stuart, *The Bloodless Revolution*, 277-278. Holwell’s work was entitled “A Dissertation on the Metempsychosis of the Brahmins, of Transmigrations of the fallen Angelic Spirits; with a Defence of the original Scriptures of Brahmah, and an occasional comparison between them and the Christian Doctrines.”

¹⁰⁷ Stuart, *The Bloodless Revolution*, 277.

¹⁰⁸ Stuart, *The Bloodless Revolution*, 280.

¹⁰⁹ Stuart, *The Bloodless Revolution*, 290.

¹¹⁰ Stuart, *The Bloodless Revolution*, 342.

offers, however, is a marshaling of influential arguments in favor of vegetarianism taken from a variety of sources.¹¹¹ Furthermore, in addition to vegetarianism and animal rights, Nicholson advocated on behalf of similar, “radical” issues throughout his life, such as popular education, women’s rights, and democratic government.¹¹² In the following passage—much of which was either taken directly, or paraphrased, from John Oswald’s popular “The Cry of Nature”—from *The Primeval Diet of Man*, Nicholson writes that:

The felicity of the golden age is still, at certain intervals, celebrated in the East Indies, at the temples of Jaggernat and Mamoon... During these seasons of festivity the several castes mix together indiscriminately in commemoration of the perfect equality that prevailed amongst mankind in the age of innocence. Misled by the *ignis fatuus*¹¹³ of science, man forsook the sylvan gods, and abandoned the unsolicitous, innocent, and noble simplicity of the savage, to embrace the anxious, oporose, mean, miserable, and ludicrous life of civilized man.¹¹⁴

In this passage one can clearly see an example of Nicholson’s, vis-à-vis Oswald, idealization of India and Orientalist discourse revering the “noble simplicity of the savage,” as well as a derision of modern civilization which would become characteristic of a wide range of authors influential to Gandhi (such as Thoreau, Ruskin, Tolstoy, and Carpenter). Nicholson (although still—in his peculiar style—relying heavily on Oswald) goes on to write:

Famed for wisdom, Hindostan never affected those pernicious arts,¹¹⁵ on which we wish to establish a proud pretence to superior intelligence... The merciful Hindoo, diffusing over every order of life his affections beholds, in every creature, a kinsman; he rejoins in the welfare of every animal, and compassionates his pains; for he knows and is convinced, that the essence of all creatures is the same, and that one eternal First Cause is the Father of all. Hence the

¹¹¹ Rod Preece, *George Nicholson’s On The Primeval Diet of Man* (New York: The Edwin Mello Press, 1999), v-vi.

¹¹² Preece, *George Nicholson’s On The Primeval Diet of Man*, ii.

¹¹³ Rod Preece, the editor and annotator of this collection, describes this as a “delusion or deceptive attraction; literally ‘foolish fire’. It is used to describe the phosphorescent light seen in the air above marshy ground.” 8n2.

¹¹⁴ Nicholson, *George Nicholson’s On The Primeval Diet of Man*, 8.

¹¹⁵This is referring to wide-ranging characteristics of modern, Western civilization which Nicholson sees as negative.

merciful Hindostan is solicitous to save every species of animal, whilst the cruel vanity and exquisite voraciousness of other nations are ingenious to discover in the bulk, or taste, or smell, or beauty of every creature, a cause of death, an incentive to murder. Thus the prejudices of religion concur to protect the mute creation from those injuries which the powerful are but too prone to inflict upon the weak. Disgusted with continual scenes of slaughter and desolation, pierced by the incessant shrieks of suffering innocence, and shocked by the shouts of persecuting brutality, the humane mind averts abhorrent from the view, and turning her eyes to Hindostan, dwells with heart-felt consolation on the happy spot, where mercy protects, with her right hand, the streams of life, and every animal is allowed to enjoy in peace the portion of bliss which nature prepared it to receive.¹¹⁶

In this way, the vegetarian movement of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was very much an Enlightenment era project that utilized affirmative Orientalist interpretations of Indian philosophical discourse in order to support their claims for the superiority of vegetarianism. This passage is exemplary of much of the Orientalist discourse of the vegetarian movement, also a central element in the writings of Shelley and Holwell (as well as countless other authors, philosophers, and artists of the day), which idealized India as something of a paradise, where humans and animals lived in perfect harmony. This, of course, was not an accurate representation, but rather perpetuated idyllic stereotypes of “the East,” which became ingrained within the imagery of the vegetarian movement, and still persist to this day. Although affirmative Orientalist discourse praises the culture of “the East,” it nonetheless contributes to Western hegemony over “The Other.”¹¹⁷

In his epilogue, Stuart focuses specifically on the “politics of ecology,” and posits that the Indian inspired vegetarianism and non-violent social movements of the West (including Thoreau’s interpretation of civil disobedience) was internalized and re-introduced to India via Gandhi. Stuart argues that “[w]hat has not been recognized sufficiently (even perhaps by Gandhi) is that the vegetarian tradition he picked up in England was already infused with Indian

¹¹⁶ Nicholson, *George Nicholson’s On The Primeval Diet of Man*, 9-10.

¹¹⁷ King, *Orientalism and Religion*, 231, n51.

philosophy.”¹¹⁸ Stuart illustrates that the “Western” movements and traditions that were so influential to Gandhi were often inspired, over the previous centuries, by contact with India.¹¹⁹ Therefore, when Gandhi was re-introducing these movements for an Indian audience he was actually re-translating Indian philosophical notions that had been translated through an inherently Orientalist paradigm for the West. Here we see a relatively normative mode of Indian life—the vegetarian diet—transported to Europe and, eventually America, in which it found an audience with countercultural social activists whose discourse regularly chastised normative Western practices and modern, Western civilization as a whole.

Negative Orientalism pertaining to India portrayed the vegetarian diet as contributing to weakness, and it was within this operative paradigm that Gandhi took to eating meat in order to build up his strength to fight the British. This act was violent (within a Gandhian lens of *ahimsa*) in two ways, first that he was lying to his family about eating meat, which is seen as an act of violence, and second, in the obvious way that eating meat necessitated the death of another creature. Within the Western vegetarian movement, however, Gandhi not only discovered a newfound zeal for vegetarianism (countercultural in the West, normative to his Indian heritage), but did so within a countercultural arena which was posing a challenge to mainstream Western civilization. In this way, and under the subjectifying influences of a new form of Orientalism, Gandhi was able to both continue his resistance to the British (now articulated as the normative West, or, more accurately, modern civilization) and do so within an inherently non-violent paradigm of resistance, which is, of course, indicative of his long-term political philosophy of resistance. So it is interesting (perhaps even ironic) that within the West we can see the roots of a

¹¹⁸ Stuart, *The Bloodless Revolution*, 427.

¹¹⁹ Stuart, however, stops short of any further analysis of what, exactly, this may mean for the broader development of Gandhian discourse.

Gandhian discourse which sought to challenge Western civilization via “traditional” Indian modes of everyday life.

Gandhi writes of his newfound, internalization of a strong vegetarian ideology that “A convert’s enthusiasm for his new religion is greater than that of a person born with it.

Vegetarianism was then a new cult in England, and likewise for me, because, as we have seen, I had gone there a convinced meat-eater, and was intellectually converted to vegetarianism later.”¹²⁰ In his book *Diet and Diet Reform*, Gandhi writes of this period that:

I had all along abstained from meat in the interests of truth and the vow I had taken, but had wished at the same time that every Indian should be a meat-eater, and had looked forward to being one myself freely and openly some day, and to enlisting others in the cause. The choice was now in favour of vegetarianism, the spread of which henceforward became my mission¹²¹

Alter writes that Gandhi’s adoption of vegetarianism was more than mere personal choice, and it was motivated by something very different from any “brahmanical rationale for purity and Jain spirituality.”¹²² In addition, Roy writes that:

In his incarnation as a prodigy of alimentary abstinence, Gandhi has persistently been identified with a certain elemental Indianness, or, more properly, Hinduness. This is a misconception; Gandhi turned to vegetarianism out of moral conviction, rather than out of fealty to a filial vow. However strongly this turn might have been founded in a belief in the biomoral character of various foods (a belief that was not, as is often believed, peculiar only to Hinduism or Jainism)—it articulated in important ways his critique of colonial modernity and must be read against a *global* horizon, through the lens of diaspora.¹²³

Up until he was introduced to Western thinkers who argued on behalf of vegetarianism Gandhi had considered himself a meat-eater who was merely respecting his mother by following her wishes. In England, however, Gandhi was introduced to members “of the enlightened ruling

¹²⁰ Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, 58.

¹²¹ Alter, *Gandhi’s Body*, 10. Quote taken from Gandhi, *Diet and Diet Reform* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Press, 1949, 1987), 5.

¹²² Alter, *Gandhi’s Body*, 10.

¹²³ Roy, “Meat Eating, Masculinity, and Renunciation in India: A Gandhian Grammar of Diet,” 81.

race”¹²⁴ who did not eat meat, and the irony, Ashe points out, is that “English progressives were extolling vegetarianism precisely when Hindu ones were attacking it,”¹²⁵ and Stuart writes that “[v]egetarianism had been for Gandhi a badge of colonial humiliation; he now converted it into a symbol of resistance. Reviewing his attitude to the ancient Indian customs he had been taught to despise, Gandhi now clung to them as an antidote to the malaise of Western civilization.”¹²⁶

The movement is characterized not merely for their promotion of a vegetarian diet, but for “[r]ejecting civilization as it stood,”¹²⁷ a theme which would come to characterize Gandhian discourse as a whole as he further incorporated the discursive elements of resistance to modern civilization he was introduced to via the Western vegetarian movement (including broader social theories put forth by vegetarians such as Thoreau, Carpenter, Tolstoy, and Ruskin) into his political philosophy of *satyagraha* and, perhaps most evidently, his essay *Hind Swaraj*.

Vegetarianism, according to Ashe, was only the most visible manifestation of this broader countercultural movement, and he writes that “[t]hey insisted on re-examining the basic things, food and sex and religion, and they subjected standard notions about all three to impartial probing.” Another important aspect of the movement was a return to the “Simple Life,” and in this way the work of Thoreau and Tolstoy were particularly influential (Tolstoy even corresponded with Salt on the subject of vegetarianism, and wrote the preface to a translated edition of Williams’ *The Ethics of Diet*).¹²⁸

¹²⁴ Ashe, *Gandhi*, 31.

¹²⁵ Ashe, *Gandhi*, 34.

¹²⁶ Stuart, *The Bloodless Revolution*, 425.

¹²⁷ Ashe, *Gandhi*, 33.

Opinions varied on certain social issues, and the subject of sex, in particular, was challenged with some vying for free-love, and others for celibacy and restraint. The same debates arose around the issue of religion, even though established Christianity was seen as something of a “common enemy,” some—Salt included—were supporters of agnosticism,¹²⁹ while others were in favor of new religious movements, such as those incorporating various degrees of radical Christianity (including esotericism and Gnosticism), as well as the newly popular Theosophical Society. There was a great deal of overlap between the vegetarian movement in London and many other, concurrent social reform and new religious movements. Gandhi was, therefore, also introduced to religious movements that were relatively alternative to those which he was accustomed. Erikson points out that Gandhi was not only greatly influenced by his interactions with the Vegetarian Society in England, but also through the various theological perspectives which he encountered in the West:

In London, as we have seen, Gandhi could use his vow as a bridge to a vital contemporary movement, vegetarianism, and could thus combine a more intellectual approach with archaic aspects of Hindu religiosity, which was still very much alive in the Indian masses—and in him. The vegetarian movement also brought him into first contact with such vital Christian and Western writers as Tolstoy, Ruskin, and Thoreau...and, in fact, introduced him to some of the classical Hindu scriptures.¹³⁰

There was a good deal of overlap between the vegetarian movement in London and Madam Blavatsky’s Theosophical Society. Anna Kingsford eventually became an active member of the Theosophical Society, and when Salt formed a “Humanitarian League” (in an apparent attempt to synthesize many of the broader social goals of those within the vegetarian movement),

¹²⁸ Ashe, *Gandhi*, 34. The influence which Tolstoy had on the development of Gandhi’s political thought was remarkable. This relationship is thoroughly examined by Martin Green in his 1978 book *The Challenge of the Mahatmas* (New York: Basic Books, 1978).

¹²⁹ Ashe, *Gandhi*, 34.

¹³⁰ Erikson, *Gandhi’s Truth*, 156-157.

it was done with the support of famed Theosophist Annie Besant (who, at the time, was an organizer of women workers).¹³¹ Ashe writes that “[m]any Theosophists were also vegetarians...all these people knew each other, stimulated each other, and cited each other’s books.”¹³² Green writes that “Theosophy was perhaps the major institutional form of a widespread orientalizing mood.” Gandhi was incredibly influenced by Theosophy in many respects, not least of which was his introduction to the *Bhagavad-gita* and the philosophy of the Buddha through Edwin Arnold’s translations. However Gandhi was never entirely on board with every aspect of the movement. Green writes of the Theosophical Society, and Gandhi’s tangential association therewith, that “if its one face was close to Unitarianism and Transcendentalism, the other was close to magic, alchemy, and witchcraft. (Only the first face was attractive to Gandhi.)”¹³³ Green writes that:

An essay by Madame Blavatsky entitled “Civilization the Death of Art and Beauty” shows us the aspect of her thinking that most appealed to Gandhi. It warned Asian societies not to imitate Western models. “Like a hideous leprosy, our Western civilization has eaten its way through all quarters of the globe and hardened the human heart...It is canting and deceitful, from its diplomats down to its custodians of religion, from its politics down to its social laws, selfish, greedy and brutal beyond expression in its grabbing characteristics.”¹³⁴

And Green goes on to point out the obvious similarities to Gandhi’s *Hind Swaraj*, saying that:

This attack on Western civilization, in the name of Eastern spirituality, was immensely gratifying to Indians like Gandhi...Blavatsky’s essay is quite like his pamphlet of 1910, *Hind Swaraj*, in content. We know that he read her Key to Theosophy, of 1890, which was written as a dialogue, quite like his pamphlet in form; and which he said had been a powerful influence in sending him back to Hinduism. There too we find much to remind us of Gandhi in her attack on modern civilization; on materialism, in the misery and wretchedness of great

¹³¹ Ashe, *Gandhi*, 34.

¹³² Ashe, *Gandhi*, 35.

¹³³ Green, *Gandhi: Voice of a New Age Revolution*, 99.

¹³⁴ Green, *Gandhi: Voice of a New Age Revolution*, 100. This essay was published in her journal *Lucifer*, in May, 1891, and Green points out that this was both the year of her death, and the year in which Gandhi returned briefly to India, before moving to South Africa.

cities, and on modern education; which breeds envy and jealousy, and trains people only to pass examinations.¹³⁵

In *Hind Swaraj* Gandhi thoroughly articulates his critique of Western civilization in general and British civilization in particular (although he does not fault the English people themselves, but recognizes that they are subjects of modern “Western” civilization, which is essentially immoral). Throughout *Hind Swaraj* Gandhi often refers to the “intoxicating” effects of Western civilization;¹³⁶ describing it both as an attractive, hypnotizing vortex and a deceptive dream in which one “is undeceived only when he is awakened.”¹³⁷ Gandhi goes on to criticize the Western conception that progress and modernity are inherently beneficial; citing examples of modern clothing, weapons technology, a general dependency on machinery for everything from travel to preparing food, and the “enslavement of temptation” by money and all the material goods which money can buy.¹³⁸ Gandhi writes that “this civilization takes note neither of morality nor of religion... This civilization is irreligion”¹³⁹ and it is this assessment of, and reaction to, Western civilization which can be clearly seen within the discourse of Gandhi’s social movement. Gandhi’s counter-paradigm to Western civilization was constructed vis-à-vis Indian spiritual philosophy, and offered an absolute alternative to the Western narrative of civilization.

¹³⁵ Green, *Gandhi: Voice of a New Age Revolution*, 100.

¹³⁶ Gandhi, “Hind Swaraj,” in *The Penguin Gandhi Reader*, ed. Rudrangshu Mukherjee (New York: Penguin Books, 1996), 16, 18.

¹³⁷ Although I have come across no specific comparisons to the Hindu conception of *maya* (illusion) or *samsara*, Gandhi’s description of the intoxicating effects of Western civilization and his comparison to a dream state may coincide with such an interpretation.

¹³⁸ Gandhi “Hind Swaraj,” 17.

¹³⁹ Gandhi “Hind Swaraj,” 17, 18.

Gandhi writes in his autobiography that he met a young Christian vegetarian who suggested he read the Bible, and even though Gandhi found the Old Testament insufferable, he was very influenced by the New Testament, especially the “Sermon on the Mount.” Gandhi writes that “[m]y young mind tried to unify teaching of the *Gita*, *The Light of Asia*¹⁴⁰ and the Sermon on the Mount. That renunciation was the highest form of religion appealed to me greatly.”¹⁴¹ Although Gandhi writes that it was not until he was living in South Africa that religious beliefs and practices became an important component of his discourse, and Ashe also points out, significantly, that “[t]hus far it was the health aspect of food reform that chiefly interested him. No religious motive was asserting itself yet.”¹⁴² One can nonetheless see certain abnegative principles that would later become central to Gandhian discourse began to be articulated via these early experiments with diet in England, especially as Gandhi became “convinced that one should eat only articles that sustained the body.”¹⁴³ The vegetarian diet for Gandhi during this period was already about much more than merely not eating meat, and he writes that during this period he stopped eating the sweets and condiments he received from home and that “such experiments taught me that the real seat of taste was not the tongue but the mind.”¹⁴⁴ This approach towards food, however, could be an ascetic tendency towards abnegation that was more firmly rooted in English utilitarianism, rather than any overtly religious motivation. We have seen how Salt anchored much of his vegetarian argument in terms

¹⁴⁰ Sir Edwin Arnold, *The Light of Asia*. Arnold was also the author of *The Song Celestial*, which was an English translation of the *Bhagavad-gita* and Gandhi’s the first version of the text which Gandhi read. It is very significant that, in many ways, Gandhi’s first significant interaction with Indian religious philosophy was presented through the eyes of a Western author.

¹⁴¹ Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, 68.

¹⁴² Ashe, *Gandhi*, 32.

¹⁴³ Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, 56.

¹⁴⁴ Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, 56.

of its economic benefits, and Gandhi himself writes much in his autobiography about his frugality during this period.

Gandhi's use of the term "experiments" is especially accurate with respect to his diet. Within this relatively short period in England Gandhi experimented with numerous diets that were advocated by various reformers of the day, such as diets that required giving up all starchy foods, eating only bread and fruit, or living on only cheese, milk and eggs. This latter diet lasted less than two weeks, as eggs are, in India, equated with meat, and Gandhi soon realized that eating eggs was violating the vow he made to his mother, regardless of how eating eggs was viewed within Western modes of vegetarianism. This is exemplary of Gandhi's maintenance of an inherently Indian identity, which was previously discussed, but deserves to be underscored. Although he was incredibly influenced by the Western discourse of vegetarian dietetics, it was a discourse that was simultaneously scientific, humanitarian, and yet ultimately laden with affirmative Orientalist imagery, making it especially attractive for a young Gandhi who was both incredibly influenced by the authority he placed in Western hegemony (as evidenced by the earlier effect that negative Orientalist discourse had on his dietary philosophy), while nonetheless seeking a mode of resistance to that very same hegemonic force, first in the form of colonialism, and then, more broadly, in the form of modern civilization. In the Western vegetarian movement Gandhi found a discourse that articulated everything he had been seeking, a means of resisting normative Western social practices while maintaining his vow to his mother and, therefore, his Indian identity, which was all the more respected due to the affirmative Orientalism present within the movement's discourse. Gandhi writes in his Autobiography that:

As soon as, or even before, I made I made alterations in my expenses and my way of living, I began to make changes in my diet. I saw that the writers on vegetarianism had examined the question very minutely, attacking it in its religious, scientific, practical and medical aspects. Ethically they had arrived at the conclusion that man's supremacy over the lower animals

meant not that the former should prey upon the latter, but that the higher should protect the lower, and that there should be mutual aid between the two as between man and man. They had also brought out the truth that man eats not for enjoyment but to live. And some of them accordingly suggested and effected in their lives abstention not only from flesh-meat but from eggs and milk. Scientifically some had concluded that man's physical structure showed that he was not meant to be a cooking but a frugivorous animal, that he could take only his mother's milk and, as soon as he had teeth, should begin to take solid foods. Medically they had suggested the rejection of all spices and condiments. According to the practical and economic argument they had demonstrated that a vegetarian diet was the least expensive. All these considerations had their effect on me, and I came across vegetarians of all these types in vegetarian restaurants.¹⁴⁵

I have quoted the entirety of this rich passage because it includes so many of the various aspects of Gandhi's dietary discourse that have appeared throughout this paper. It is interesting, however, that when Gandhi is discussing his impressions of the vegetarian discourse in the West, there is hardly any mention of religion (although his discussion of vegetarian ethics in the above passage reflects an affirmative Orientalist conception of the idyllic East). And, yet, every aspect mentioned above remained central to his dietary discourse throughout his life, but would later be incorporated into an overtly religious paradigm. The "truth" that man eats only to live can be seen in the "control of the palate" that was such a central element to Gandhi's *brahmacharya* practices. Gandhi's propensity towards, what would later be called, a vegan diet is fascinating as well. Eggs are equated with meat in India, but milk and other dairy products hold such cultural, even religious, prominence in India that Gandhi's discursive denouncement of milk is rather surprising at first. He eventually came to abstain (off and on) from dairy due to both the stimulant effect on the body and the senses (which disrupts his *brahmacharya* practices), and the cruel nature of the treatment of the cows and buffaloes from whom the milk is taken. So here we can see what was, originally, internalized as an overtly medical argument, re-articulated within

¹⁴⁵ Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, 55-56.

an overtly religious and ethical paradigm of non-violence.¹⁴⁶ Such discursive shifts are central to the topic of this paper.

Gandhi writes that he went to England a “convinced meat-eater” who, at least initially, only followed a vegetarian diet due to the vows made to his mother.¹⁴⁷ It was only later that he was “intellectually” converted to the diet, and that his various experiments with the vegetarian diet while in England were conducted from the point of view of “economy and hygiene” (although he does not elaborate on exactly what he means by this).¹⁴⁸ We have seen how influenced Gandhi was by negative Orientalist discourse which connected vegetarianism with weakness, and then the ways in which he sought to become, culturally, English upon his arrival in London. Gandhi during this period was both struggling to somehow fit into English society, while also remaining separate due to his dedication to vegetarianism and the vows made to his mother (albeit half-hearted in terms of internalized ideology, he was nonetheless zealous with regards to keeping his vows). When, seemingly to his surprise, he came across authoritative arguments, from upper-class, well-educated English society, that both supported the vegetarian lifestyle and the separation from normative society that came with it.

One’s diet is capable of fulfilling a strategic social function of both affiliating one with a specific social group, and/or separating an individual or group from others (for instance, the role of a strict observance of vegetarianism within the Gandhis’ Modh Bania subcaste). What this amounts to is an internalized process of subject formation that makes changes to, and thereby aides in the creation of, the self. This practice is referred to by Foucault as “the care of the self,”

¹⁴⁶ This non-violence is not merely in the paradigm of cruelty, but also exists with regards to Gandhi’s understanding of the successful practice of *brahmacharya*.

¹⁴⁷ Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, 58.

¹⁴⁸ Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, 58.

and, as seen here, is a significant mode of “self-othering” oneself and/or a broader subgroup from other socio-cultural groups. According to Foucault, the care of the self is characterized by, 1) an attitude towards the self, others, and the world (this may be best understood as an *episteme* of the self), 2) looking away from the world, and toward oneself, and this is related to both exercise and meditation, 3) the arena of “action,” whereby one utilizes practices in order to take “responsibility for oneself and by which one changes, purifies, transforms, and transfigures oneself.”¹⁴⁹ Foucault goes on to say that the care of the self is an extremely important phenomenon in the “history of subjectivity itself or, if you like, in the history of practices of subjectivity.”¹⁵⁰ Furthermore, Foucault writes in his essay “Technologies of the Self,” that these actions, practices, and/or technologies which function as the primary mode of performing the care of oneself, and are so related to the history of subjectivity, “permit individuals to effect by their own means, or with the help of others, a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls.”¹⁵¹

If one applies Foucault’s ideas to the “subject” of Gandhi, we can see how his dietary experiments were technologies of constructing the self, quite literally, through food, but also constructing a self that reflected his broader ideological conceptions at the time. Initially, Gandhi was influenced by a negative Orientalist discourse that convinced him to become a meat-eater, and then he was influenced by the remnants of an affirmative Orientalist discourse that convinced him to become a vegetarian. These ideological conceptions, of course, existed as external discourses, and in this way we can clearly see what Foucault meant by “the help of

¹⁴⁹ Michel Foucault, *Hermeneutics of the Subject* (New York: Picador, 2001), 10-11.

¹⁵⁰ Foucault, *Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 11.

¹⁵¹ Foucault, “Technologies of the Self,” 145.

others,” and how the care of the self functions as an interrelated mode of a broader, and more complex, pattern of subjectivication.

In this way the body also functions as a canvas for the discursive articulation of certain ideological positions, and directly relates to the second of Foucault’s types of technologies, that of the sign system. Although Gandhi’s signature *dhoti* may function as a more obvious sign (that is, one could look at Gandhi and immediately *see* the sign, the *dhoti*, whereas the same could not be said of what Gandhi had for lunch), in many ways one’s dietary ideology is even more effective because it literally constructs the body, thereby defining the very arena of articulation, or, if you will, the field upon which discourse is to become manifested and articulated in material terms, *vis-à-vis* the very ideology that is to be articulated. In other words, the transmission of external signs (such as the *dhoti*) become all the more powerful because the very means of transmission (the body) is an ideological construct of Gandhi’s dietary discourse.

One must also acknowledge the overt ways in which such discursive articulations on, and “in,” the body may also function as significant modes of resistance. Gandhi initially sought to overcome his Indian weaknesses by eating-meat, and thereby imitating the British in order to become as strong as them and eventually defeat them. This was an act of colonial resistance via cultural assimilation, and brought about by the internalization of negative Orientalist discourse. In the West, individuals who argued on behalf of a vegetarian diet were often influenced by an affirmative Orientalist discourse that essentialized Indian religion, culture, and customs as superior to the West. In this way, Western vegetarians utilized a technology of the self in order to resist the normative, Western cultural practice of eating meat via their own dietary practices of vegetarianism. And, since dietary reform was often only one of many countercultural positions held by Western vegetarians, it acted as a means of (literally) constructing the vehicle (the body)

through which all other discursive positions could be articulated. Therefore, although Gandhi was a vegetarian by vow even before his association with the Western vegetarian movement, the arguments made by Westerners on behalf of a meat-less diet were the catalyst for an ideological shift within Gandhi. He internalized his conversion to vegetarianism. Now, in England, the West was *still* setting the terms of his care of the self, and—because the vegetarian diet was being utilized as an important mode of articulating resistance to normative, Western cultural practices—Gandhi’s dietary practices were *still* operating as a mode of resistance to the normative West. Included within the shift from meat-eating to a meat-less diet was, respectively, a shift from a negative Orientalist construction of the self to an affirmative Orientalist construction of the self (at least to the extent that affirmative Orientalist constructions of India were historically embedded within the vegetarian discourse of the day). In both instances, for Gandhi, “the Other” remained the broader hegemony of the Colonial West (later articulated as “modern civilization). Throughout the history of the Western vegetarian counterculture, “the Other” was, initially, India and the revered East, but then, as proponents began to self-identify (via technologies of the self) with their essentialized constructions of Indian culture, “the Other” became the normative West. Within this Orientalist paradigm, in which the East existed as separate from the West, the application of an essentialized Eastern technology of the self, vegetarianism, was a mode of “self-othering” that created a discursive arena in which the practitioner was able to articulate a discourse of resistance to the normative West. For Gandhi, however, who, as an Indian in England, was already “the Other,” the affirmation of a vegetarian diet, and its utilization as a countercultural mode of resistance, further served to articulate an identity that challenged the basic tenets of modern, Western civilization.

My understanding of discourse, following Foucault, is that it is, of course, much deeper and pervasive than merely the written word. That being said, the written word cannot be separated from subtler discursive articulations of ideology, and it is in no way my intention to reduce the complex nature of discourse (as multitudinous manifestations of ideology) to simply the written word, nor is it to somehow argue that Gandhi was *directly* “influenced” by the Orientalist conceptions of India present within the above writings. What I am attempting to illustrate, however, is a certain *genealogy* of affirmative Orientalism which was historically present within the Western counterculture—specifically related to vegetarianism, but also present in new religious movements such as the Theosophical Society as well as other, broader countercultural philosophies which regularly overlapped with the vegetarian movement—and the ways in which such affirmative Orientalism continued to maintain a significant presence within the discourse. The presence of affirmative Orientalism, both explicit and implicit, within this discourse is fascinating, and although it is difficult to pinpoint or quantify exactly “how” or in “which ways” this may have influenced Gandhi, it seems clear that such essentialist imagery was, 1) present within the Western discourse of the time, and 2) present within Gandhi’s later discourse, in India. It should therefore not be ignored or easily dismissed.

Throughout his life Gandhi would remain “indebted to the West” for much of his dietary experiments, and, therefore, in many ways the essentializing nature of this affirmative Orientalism would remain within his dietary discourse, and can be seen, even more overtly, in his broader political and social discourse. Gandhi’s unique interpretations of Indian religiosity in many ways essentialized and idealized those positive qualities which were directly related to Gandhi’s broader political teleology. This, as Fox points out, is illustrative of the ways in which affirmative Orientalism—by utilizing any number of traditional cultural elements—can be

discursively employed by the native as a mode of resisting the Colonizer. Gandhi's dietary philosophy, however, did not begin to incorporate any overt elements of a religious nature until he moved to South Africa.

Part Two: South Africa

Gandhi's experiences in England marked the beginning of his experiments with the vegetarian diet, but his religious worldview was not significantly integrated into his dietary discourse until he moved to South Africa.¹⁵² That being said, we have nonetheless seen the ways in which essentialized depictions of Indian religiosity were historically integrated into the Western discourse of vegetarianism which Gandhi came into contact with in England. This section will examine the changes seen in Gandhian discourse during this influential period in South Africa, the further development of his role as a social activist on behalf of vegetarianism, and the ways in which religious elements became a central component of his dietary discourse.

In 1894, while living in South Africa, Gandhi wrote a letter to the editor of *The Vegetarian* urging vegetarian Indians in England to join the London Vegetarian Society and subscribe to *The Vegetarian*, and Stuart writes that "Gandhi saw vegetarianism as a bridge that could unite the peoples of East and West."¹⁵³ Gandhi presented multiple arguments for this, including cross-cultural solidarity based on a vegetarian diet and increased sympathy for Indian independence amongst English vegetarians. He writes that by joining the London Vegetarian Society:

- (1) You will thereby encourage and aid the creed you profess.
- (2) That will be an expression of the bond of sympathy that should exist between a Vegetarian and a Vegetarian in a land where there are so few of them.
- (3) The Vegetarian movement will indirectly aid India politically also, inasmuch as the

¹⁵² Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, 58.

¹⁵³ Stuart, 425.

English Vegetarians will more readily sympathize with the Indian aspirations (that is my personal experience).

(4) Looking at the question even from a purely selfish point of view, you will thereby be able to have a large circle of Vegetarian friends who ought to be more acceptable than others.

(5) Your knowledge of the Vegetarian literature will enable you to remain firm in your principles in a land where you are exposed to so many temptations, which have in very many cases proved irresistible, and you will, in case of illness, be able to get the aid of Vegetarian doctors and drugs, whom and which you will know very easily, having joined the society and subscribed to its paper.

(6) That will help your fellow brothers in India a great deal, and be also a means of dispelling the doubt that still lingers in the minds of our parents as the possibility of existence under a Vegetarian diet, and thus facilitate the way of other Indians to England a great deal.

(7) If there were a sufficient number of Indian subscribers, the Editor of *The Vegetarian* may be induced to devote a page or column to India, which, you will admit, cannot but result in benefit to India.”¹⁵⁴

In this piece we can see many of Gandhi’s feelings regarding the benefits of his own association with the London Vegetarian Society, and the broader vegetarian movement itself. Amongst other points, under point three we can see the ways in which he felt sympathy within the movement for India (not surprising, given the romantic conceptions of India implicit within the movement’s history), and under point four he acknowledges the cultural benefits of surrounding oneself with individuals who share one’s ideology.

This seems to be a relatively rare instance during this period of Gandhi addressing a piece specifically to an Indian audience. In the majority of Gandhi’s more public writings on behalf of vegetarianism from this period there is a continued reference to inherently Western authoritative sources, such as Western philosophers, the Bible, and the vegetarian community of Trappist missionaries. The latter—combining elements of asceticism, vegetarianism, and communal living—had a great deal of influence on Gandhian discourse, as evidenced in a rather extensive piece for *The Vegetarian*, which Gandhi wrote in 1895, detailing his encounter with a

¹⁵⁴ Gandhi, *CWMG*, 1, 87-89. Letter published in *The Vegetarian*, 4/28/1894.

community of Trappist missionaries in South Africa, and explaining how greatly influenced he was by their lifestyle and interaction with the surrounding communities.¹⁵⁵

Gandhi's letter to the editor of *The Natal Mercury* is interesting as it is, perhaps, the most salient illustration of Gandhi's attempts to reach out to an audience of non-vegetarians (as opposed to his many pieces published in *The Vegetarian*) to argue on behalf of dietary reform.¹⁵⁶ In this piece Gandhi's argument functions on multiple levels to potentially influence as many readers as possible, as he cites both Western intellectuals and scientists alongside quotes from the bible and references to the vegetarian Trappist Christian mission. As he begins his letter, Gandhi briefly mentions, as something of a lineage, a number of prominent vegetarians to support his argument, including the Buddha, Pythagoras, Plato, the Greek philosopher Porphyry, Christian Theologian and founder of Methodism John Wesley, Percy Shelley, Thomas Edison, and, the developer of Pitman Shorthand, Sir Isaac Pitman¹⁵⁷ (Pitman may not seem extraordinarily noteworthy, however he is also remembered as a fervent Swedenborgian, further illustrating the extent to which a vegetarian diet in the West during this time was associated with a variety of "fringe" and "eccentric" countercultural movements). It is interesting to note that, with the exception of the Buddha, all the figures listed above are Western intellectual figures.

Gandhi goes on in his letter to particularly urge Christians to adopt a vegetarian diet, and, once again, cites the Trappists, and their vegetarian lifestyle, as the most successful Christian missionary organization in South Africa. Gandhi also includes a quote from the Old Testament (Genesis 1:29) from before the "Fall" of Adam and Eve, in which God proclaims that herbs,

¹⁵⁵ Gandhi, *CWMG*, 1, 180-186.

¹⁵⁶ Gandhi, *CWMG*, 1, 289-292. Published in *The Natal Mercury*, 2/4/1896.

¹⁵⁷ Gandhi, *CWMG*, 1, 289.

trees, and seed-bearing fruits have been made available as “meat.”¹⁵⁸ Gandhi argues that the state of modern, “born-again,” Christians should surely “be equal, if not superior, to that of the people before the ‘Fall.’”¹⁵⁹ Gandhi also quotes Isaiah 11:6, which presents a prophetic image of the times of “Restitution,” during which, amongst other things, “[t]he wolf shall also dwell with the lamb...[a]nd the lion shall eat straw like the ox...[t]hey shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountains,” and he urges Christians to anticipate such times, doing everything within their power to hasten them, although they may be far off.¹⁶⁰

There are a multitude of elements at work within Gandhi’s dietary discourse as illustrated in this letter. When Gandhi arrived in England he was not an overtly religious person, and through his association with the vegetarian counterculture he was introduced, with an open mind, to a multitude of religious perspectives, many of them variations of Christianity. He is most definitely mindful of his intended audience, as he cites extensively from Western authoritative sources, but we also see an increased presence of religiosity and religious imagery within his argument, which is perhaps most notable due its overt lack of any Hindu or Indian sources of authority to support his argument. This lack which is not only strategic due to his understanding of his intended—that is, Western—audience, but also reflects his numerous associations and influences drawn from various Christian friends, acquaintances, and movements.

Another letter, published in *The Vegetarian*, gives a further example of Gandhi’s active promotion of a vegetarian diet, in this case on the conversion of children. He recounts an episode

¹⁵⁸ Gandhi, *CWMG*, 1, 291.

¹⁵⁹ Gandhi, *CWMG*, 1, 291.

¹⁶⁰ Gandhi, *CWMG*, 1, 292.

in which a young boy asked him why he did not eat meat during a dinner, and during their conversation Gandhi discusses his views on kindness towards animals. Gandhi writes that:

ever since that time, I am told, the boy has not taken meat...His parents, though not themselves vegetarian, are believers in the virtue of Vegetarianism, and did not mind my talking to their boy about it...I write this to show how easily you can convince children of the grand truth, and induce them to avoid meat if their parents are not against the change.¹⁶¹

Letters such as this, directed towards Indians in the West, Christians, and the ease of converting children, were all written before what most consider the advent of *satyagraha*. What this illustrates is not only the manifestation of Gandhi's enthusiasm for social activism, specifically on behalf of advocating a vegetarian diet, but as a direct result of his previous experiences with the vegetarian movement in England, and can be traced as far back as his youth in India and the importance he placed on the social efficacy of dietary practices even then.

Gandhian discourse during this period was not static, as his time in South Africa was a period in which his philosophies on numerous subjects were developing in significant ways. Although one can clearly see increased references to a variety of religious philosophies within Gandhi's dietary arguments and experiments, during this period he also began to abandon his "spiritual seeking"¹⁶² and exploratory inquisitiveness with regards to Theosophy and various Christian movements, and began to embrace more traditional Indian religious systems to an extent not seen earlier. Gandhi found in Theosophy an increased reverence for many elements of Hindu philosophy.¹⁶³ Gandhi's increased tendency to overtly identify with philosophical aspects of traditionally Indian religious systems can be seen in his regular correspondence with his Jain friend and spiritual mentor Raychandrabhai and his eventual adoption of the *brahmacharya* vow.

¹⁶¹ Gandhi, CWMG, 1, 89. Published in *The Vegetarian*, 5/5/1894.

¹⁶² Robert Wuthnow, *After Heaven: Spirituality in America since the 1950s* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998).

¹⁶³ Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, 68.

Throughout his exploration of Theosophy and radical Christian movements of the day, Gandhi was always most taken with notions of abnegation and self-denial present within virtually all of the religious systems he researched.¹⁶⁴ The *brahmacharya* vow, and the associated philosophical and cosmological notions which Gandhi extrapolated from the practice, became essential components to virtually every aspect of Gandhian discourse, including his dietary practices and the *satyagraha* movement.

Gandhi's experiments with *brahmacharya* began in South Africa, and it was at Phoenix Settlement where he took the vow in 1906.¹⁶⁵ For Gandhi, *brahmacharya* was about much more than sexual abnegation, but also incorporated a totality of control of the body, the senses, the mind, one's actions, and all related desires.¹⁶⁶ This, of course, included desires related to diet, as Gandhi writes that "[c]ontrol of the palate is the first essential in the observance of the vow." Gandhi's experiments with diet began to be conducted not solely from a vegetarian perspective, but rather from a broader, spiritual perspective as a component of his *brahmacharya* practices and a means of controlling all the senses, including the palate. The incorporation of Gandhi's dietary practices with his interpretation of Indian religiosity will be further discussed in the following section.

Part Three: India

Gandhi's experiences in both England and South Africa were marked by specific cultural and countercultural interactions. In England Gandhi quickly became immersed within the vegetarian countercultural movement of the day, and subsequently began to oppose many

¹⁶⁴ Thomson, *Gandhi and His Ashrams*, 21.

¹⁶⁵ Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, 209.

¹⁶⁶ Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, 210.

normative practices and ideological trends within Western civilization. This discursive tendency of course continued throughout his life, and was perhaps most clearly articulated within his 1909 essay *Hind Swaraj* (which was, interestingly, written while he was travelling back to South Africa from a trip to England, six years before returning to India).

In South Africa religious philosophies were much more prominent within articulations of his discourse, both dietary and otherwise. Although during this period in South Africa he began to identify much more overtly with Indian modes of religiosity, he was nonetheless significantly influenced (and, I would argue, culturally subjectified via his cultural experiences—both counterculture and normative—in the West) by the discourse of the “fringe” movements that he was associated with in England and South Africa, including not only dietary based philosophies and experiments but also his familiarity with alternative religious movements (both alternative within a Western context, and alternative to his own cultural upbringing).

In India Gandhi’s dietary discourse became, in many ways, much more reliant upon an Orientalist presentation of India as a nation whose traditions existed in sharp contrast to those of modern civilization. The reach of modern civilization was not limited to the West, of course, and was very active in creating an Indian elite who were often viewed as being more “Western” than Indian. The origin of such a Westernized elite in India can be traced back, at least, to 1835 and Thomas Macauley’s “Minute on Education.” Macaulay argued that Britain not only had a mission to create a class of Indians who were well versed in English in order to help Britain rule India, but, furthermore, Britain also had a mission to create a class of Indians who were, in fact, “English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect.”¹⁶⁷ This is also the impetus for Chesterton’s observation that Indian nationalism was not very “Indian” at all.

The observation that Indian elites were culturally “Westernized” (at least to the extent that they adopted aspects of modern civilization, which were characteristic of the West), and that Gandhian discourse sought to critique said Westernization (that is, modernization) of India, is in no way new.¹⁶⁸ Neither is the argument that Orientalism functioned as a mode of resistance within Gandhi’s essentialization of India. This paper is about the varying degrees to which Orientalist narratives and a discourse of resistance remained a significant aspect of Gandhi’s dietary discourse throughout his life. Having already looked at the ways in which an Orientalist narrative of the colonized subject motivated Gandhi to eat meat, as well as the ways in which essentialized Orientalist images of India were an intrinsic component of the vegetarian movement within the West, this section will examine Gandhi’s dietary discourse after his return to India, and the ways in which it even more overtly incorporated Orientalist conceptions of traditional Indian cultural and religious categories.

In certain statements from Gandhi, regarding specific Indian philosophical texts, we can see the ways in which his own dietary practices often varied from traditional practice and did not rely on previous interpretations and texts. For instance, while living at Phoenix Settlement in South Africa, Gandhi’s wife, Kasturbhai, became very ill. Her doctor insisted that she be given beef broth, or else she was to be removed from his care because he could not watch her die under his roof.¹⁶⁹ Gandhi, resolute in his vegetarian ideology, moved her back to Phoenix, where he was visited by a Swami who attempted to convince Gandhi that it was okay, according to the

¹⁶⁷ Barbara and Thomas Metcalf, *A Concise History of Modern India* (New York: Cambridge university Press, 2007), 82.

¹⁶⁸ Partha Chatterjee and Ranjit Guha have famously engaged this notion, albeit with different conclusions regarding Gandhi’s motivation and role in the nationalist struggle. It is important to note that Gandhi was careful not to criticize the West, as a monolithic cultural entity, but rather those elements of modern civilization which were often pervasive within the West, and subsequently introduced to India via colonialism.

¹⁶⁹ Mohandas Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, 323.

Manusmriti, to eat meat. Gandhi does not specify which verses he referred to, however, even though the vast majority of the text's discussion of food promotes abstinence from animal flesh, chapter five focuses specifically on lawful and forbidden foods, and does describe instances in which meat may be eaten without spiritual harm. Characteristic verses are as follows:

One may eat meat when it has been sprinkled with water, while Mantras were recited, when Brahmanas desire (one's doing it), when one is engaged (in the performance of a rite) according to the law, and when one's life is in danger.¹⁷⁰

The Lord of creatures (Pragapati) created this whole (world to be) the sustenance of the vital spirit; both the immovable and the movable (creation is) the food of the vital spirit.¹⁷¹

The eater who daily even devours those destined to be his food, commits no sin; for the creator himself created both the eaters and those who are to be eaten (for those special purposes).¹⁷²

He who eats meat, when he honours the gods and manes, commits no sin, whether he has bought it, or himself has killed (the animal), or has received it as a present from others.¹⁷³

In his autobiography, Gandhi writes that:

I did not like his carrying on this disputation in the presence of my wife, but I suffered him to do so out of courtesy. I knew the verses of the *Manusmriti*, I did not need them for my conviction. I also knew that there was a school which regarded these verses as interpolations: *but even if they were not*, I held my views on vegetarianism independently of religious texts.¹⁷⁴

Later in his life, when Gandhi himself was ill while living in India, he once again defends his dietary ideology against interpretations of traditional Indian philosophy. He writes:

The many medical advisors overwhelmed me with advice, but I could not persuade myself to

¹⁷⁰ G. Buhler, *The Laws of Manu*, Chapter 5, Verse 27.
<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/india/indiasbook.html> Accessed on July, 10, 2011.

¹⁷¹ G. Buhler, *The Laws of Manu*, Chapter 5, Verse 28.

¹⁷² G. Buhler, *The Laws of Manu*, Chapter 5, Verse 30.

¹⁷³ G. Buhler, *The Laws of Manu*, Chapter 5, Verse 32.

¹⁷⁴ Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, 325. My italics.

take anything. Two or three suggested meat broth as a way out of the milk vow, and cited authorities from Ayurveda in support of their advice...For me the question of diet was not one to be determined on the authority of the Shastras. It was one interwoven with my course of life which is guided by principles no longer depending upon outside authority.¹⁷⁵

It is significant here that Gandhi specifically mentions his “course of life,” which is the broader focus of this study. As we have seen, Gandhi’s dietary discourse was overwhelmingly influenced, and constructed, via his time in the West and his association with Western vegetarian ideologues. In this rich quote we can see his direct acknowledgement of the ways in which those earlier influences trumped any arguments or ideological derivations taken from traditional Indian dietary discourse and interpretations.

Gandhi’s association with the English counterculture of the day did not end with his involvement in the vegetarian movement, as he was also very interested in exploring religious systems which were, on the one hand, very different from those in which he was raised and yet, on the other hand, seemed to correlate particularly well—at least in certain aspects—with his *own* ethical and moral philosophy, which, as we have seen, existed independently from interpretations of traditional Indian texts. Gandhi, as a result, associated with members of the Theosophical Society and various, radical Christian movements. Gandhi writes in his autobiography that in 1889, near the end of his second year in England, he met two Theosophists who wanted to talk to him about the *Bhagavad-gita*. They were reading Sir Edwin Arnold’s English translation *The Song Celestial*, and wanted his assistance in reading the Sanskrit original. He admits never having read the *Bhagavad-gita*, either in Sanskrit or Gujarati, before his interaction with Theosophy. Arnold’s English translation is believed to have been his first reading of the text, although Gandhi admits to not studying it closely until years later, when “it

¹⁷⁵ Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, 452.

became a book of daily reading.”¹⁷⁶ Although Gandhi rarely relied on traditional Indian texts as a source of authority, the *Bhagavad-gita* would prove to make a profound impact on virtually every aspect of Gandhi’s social and political philosophies, and he writes that he came to regard it “as the book *par excellence* for the knowledge of Truth.”¹⁷⁷

Gandhi writes that, as a result of his dietary experiments, he believed that the best diet for a brahmachari was one comprised of “limited, simple, spiceless, and, if possible, uncooked” foods.¹⁷⁸ It is significant that this is a reflection of his earlier commentary regarding a medical argument for eliminating “spices and condiments” from one’s food, although here it is presented in overtly religious terms as an essential component of *brahmacharya*. Gandhi’s favored diet while living in South Africa was comprised entirely of fruit and nuts (again, a diet which Gandhi originally found to be promoted in England), and he writes that the “immunity from passion I enjoyed while I lived on this food was unknown to me after.”¹⁷⁹

In the above passage we can see how, through his dietary experiments (care of the self), Gandhi was not only maintaining a discursive separation from normative, Westernized civilization, but he was also gaining a very specific sort of insight about himself and the effects of certain foods on his spiritual practices of *brahmacharya*. As Gandhi’s dietary discourse becomes dependent on religious interpretation and ascetic practices, Foucault’s theories become all the more salient. Foucault refers to spirituality as the set of “researches, practices, and experiences, which may be purifications, ascetic practices, renunciations, conversions of looking, modifications of existence, etc., which are, not for knowledge but for the subject, for the

¹⁷⁶ Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, 67.

¹⁷⁷ Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, 67.

¹⁷⁸ Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, 209.

¹⁷⁹ Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, 209.

subject's very being, the price paid for access to the truth."¹⁸⁰ This "truth" is different from knowledge, and (within the paradigm of spirituality) can only be accessed through modifications to the subject (as described above), resulting in the subject becoming "other" than him or herself through certain technologies of the self. Foucault's discussion of this "truth," which can only be accessed via practices of the self, is especially significant to Gandhian discourse due to his own equation of the term "Truth" with God and the soul (*satyagraha* is probably best translated as "Truth-force," although is often translated as "soul-force."). Foucault goes on to write that once these practices have been successfully implemented, and the subject is granted access to the "truth," the subject feels a sense of enlightenment or beatitude.

One could argue that even in England, when Gandhi insisted that his dietary practices had no religious motivations, they were nonetheless, according to Foucault, spiritual practices, and had been all along due to their ascetic and abnegative nature and the ways in which they, literally, modified the subject. In this instance, however, within the overtly religious tone of Gandhi's later dietary discourse, and, most importantly, the religious/spiritual paradigm within which he conducted his experiments (dietetic and otherwise) and searched for his conception of the "Truth," we can clearly see an approach to the self as an object capable of bringing forth "truth." To simplify Foucault's argument (perhaps, even, over-simplify), this approach to the self (as an object necessitating specific practices, technologies, of care in order to gain access to the "truth") is not generally seen in the modern West. All other ideological and cultural aspects aside, for the moment, we can see in Gandhi's discursive approach to the subject (his body) a mode of accessing the "t/Truth" that is, at the very least, decidedly different from that generally seen in modern, Western civilization. The articulation of his dietary experiments, which were

¹⁸⁰ Foucault, *Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 15.

originally derived from the West, within an overtly Indian religious context is especially interesting given Gandhi's love for the *Bhagavad-gita*. The relationship between this text, Gandhi's diet, and his *brahmacharya* practices are especially salient.

Talks given by Gandhi between February 24th and November 27th, 1926 at the *Satyagraha* Ashram on the subject of the *Bhagavad-gita* have been transcribed and published in the book *The Bhagavad-gita According to Gandhi*. Within these talks one can see Gandhi's interpretation of certain principles from Samkhya philosophy as seen in the *Bhagavad-gita*. Sattva, the purest of the three gunas, can have many definitions, but is generally translated as "pure," "light," "buoyant," and "shining."¹⁸¹

In his discussions, Gandhi says that "the *sattvic* man is one who works with peace in his mind,"¹⁸² and the broader role of diet within his cosmological interpretation of the self can be seen in his statement that "[t]hose persons who food, recreation, and thoughts are *sattvic* are healthy. A person who merely eats *sattvic* food but is not *sattvic* in his general way of living and in his thoughts should be looked upon as a diseased person."¹⁸³ In this interpretation one can see the extent to which traditional Indian philosophy and cosmological notions of the "self" were incorporated into Gandhi's dietary discourse.

Gandhi goes on to say that "[i]f a person overcomes *rajas* and *tamas*, he can create *sattva*. All three exist in us. We should make a specific effort to cultivate that which we want to strengthen,"¹⁸⁴ and that the only way to transcend the three gunas is to cultivate *sattvic* qualities

¹⁸¹ Gerald Larson, *Classical Samkhya* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1969), 262.

¹⁸² Mohandas Gandhi, *The Bhagavad-gita According to Gandhi* (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2009), 37.

¹⁸³ Gandhi, *The Bhagavad-gita According to Gandhi*, 165.

¹⁸⁴ Gandhi, *The Bhagavad-gita According to Gandhi*, 166.

to the greatest extent possible; “[t]he most, therefore, that we can do is to be *sattvic* in the highest degree possible.”¹⁸⁵ These quotes are characteristic of numerous comments made throughout his commentary regarding the spiritual benefits of cultivating *sattva* in one’s self. The notion of *sattva*, although at times associated with particular types of food, of course extends much further than one’s diet, and is equated with the highest form of action as discussed throughout the *Bhagavad-gita* (that which is self-less and not in any way concerned with fruits of one’s action.)

In Gandhi’s interpretation and commentary it seems to also have a direct reference to notions of renunciation which continuously characterized his life experiments, especially regarding his diet. He says that the “sattvic state has no room for attachment or aversions” and that work “will be *sattvic* if he does it in the spirit of *yajna* [sacrifice].”¹⁸⁶ In response to one section in particular, regarding the benefits of being sparse in diet, Gandhi replied:

I observe the vow of not taking more than five articles in my daily food, but even if I keep it literally, I have not succeeded in keeping it well. Haridas gave me some dates as a gift. He watched my mood and offered me one to eat. I relished it, and immediately became conscious of a lapse. I told myself, ‘You eat more than others do.’ I ate the date and it stuck in my throat... To be *laghvashi* [sparse in diet] does not mean merely to be moderate in eating, but to be satisfied with one article when we feel we can make do with two.¹⁸⁷

After taking the *brahmacharya* vow, and especially after his return to India, Gandhi increasingly equates his dietary discourse to what he calls “control of the palate,” and in this way control of the palate is an aspect of control of the senses and is, for Gandhi, equated with his vow of *brahmacharya*.

Sattvic foods themselves, however, are defined rather broadly in the *Bhagavad-gita* as those which are savory, rich, and substantial (as opposed to being predominantly characterized

¹⁸⁵ Gandhi, *The Bhagavad-gita According to Gandhi*, 170.

¹⁸⁶ Gandhi, *The Bhagavad-gita According to Gandhi*, 192, 193.

¹⁸⁷ Gandhi, *The Bhagavad-gita According to Gandhi*, 200.

by any extreme essence of salty, sour, bitter, spicy, etc.), and thus elicit qualities of strength, vitality, health and overall happiness.¹⁸⁸ Gandhi, therefore, clarifies his own position on the above definition of sattvic foods by saying that:

Lovers of *ladua* [a popular sweet] have included *ladus* in *sattvic* food. *Ladus* do not help one to safeguard one's *Brahmacharya*... In the present age, there is no need for eating foods containing fat. If here we start eating *ghee* [clarified butter], our food will not be *sattvic* or *rajasic*, but such as a demon would love.¹⁸⁹

In this instance, not only is Gandhi articulating his own interpretation of what types of food should, or should not, be considered sattvic by eliminating the traditional incorporation of foods containing sugar or fat, but he is also relating his dietary philosophy of the broader practice of *brahmacharya*. The direct association of dietary practices with his notion of “control of the palate” and, therefore, to *brahmacharya*—which in his interpretation is not merely relegated to sexual control, but a more general practice of controlling all the organs of sense—is characteristic of much of Gandhi's dietary discourse from this later period of his life.

In 1930, during his incarceration in Yeravda Central Prison, Gandhi wrote weekly letters to members of the *Satyagraha* Ashram in which he examined in detail each of the eleven ashram vows which were to be observed.¹⁹⁰ In the letter entitled “Control of the Palate” Gandhi reiterates the connection between dietary regulation and *brahmacharya*, as he writes, “I have found from experience that the observance of celibacy becomes comparatively easy, if one acquires mastery over the palate.”¹⁹¹ He goes on to acknowledge that such dietary regulations do not “figure

¹⁸⁸ *Bhagavad-gita*, 17.8. ed. Barbara Stoller Miller (New York: Bantam, 2004), 132. Gandhi, *The Bhagavad-gita According to Gandhi*, 183.

¹⁸⁹ Gandhi, *The Bhagavad-gita According to Gandhi*, 184.

¹⁹⁰ Mohandas Gandhi, *From Yeravda Mandir: Ashram Observances* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1957, 4th Edition)

¹⁹¹ Gandhi, *From Yeravda Mandir*, 15.

among the observances of time-honored recognition,” but in the ashram they have “elevated it to the rank of an independent observance.”¹⁹² He writes that food should be thought of solely as medicine, without regard to taste or pleasure, and that, just like medicine, too much or too little can be detrimental.

It is very interesting that here, as opposed to his earlier dietary discourse as seen in England and South Africa, there is no mention of any specific foods one should eat. His dietary discourse is, with regards to ashram discipline, presented only with regards to self-control and *brahmacharya*. Even in his above commentary on the *Bhagavad-gita*, reference to specific foods not to be eaten (sugar and fats) was presented with specific regards to the practice of *brahmacharya*. As previously mentioned, Gandhi writes in the introduction to his book *Ashram Observances in Action* that he was “indebted to the West” for his dietary practices, which commenced in 1888 when he traveled to England. He writes that the experiments were undertaken with three objectives in mind; “(1) to acquire control of the palate as a part of self-control in general; (2) to find out which diet was the simplest and the cheapest so that by adopting it we might identify ourselves with the poor; and (3) to discover which diet was necessary for perfect health, as maintenance of health is largely dependent on correct diet.”¹⁹³

Gandhi characterizes these three objectives as being continually present throughout his dietary experiments (that is, throughout his life, from England to South Africa to India). Interestingly, Gandhi adds that “the Ashram too joined in, though these experiments were not a part of Ashram discipline.”¹⁹⁴ It would appear from this statement that although “control of the

¹⁹² Gandhi, *From Yeravda Mandir*, 15.

¹⁹³ Gandhi, *Ashram Observances in Action*, 9.

¹⁹⁴ Gandhi, *Ashram Observances in Action*, 9.

palate” was a separate ashram vow, any specific dietary experiment or regulation was not compulsory. This illustrates that Gandhian dietary discourse was functioning on at least two levels in India (and, arguably, in South Africa once *brahmacharya* became a significant aspect of Gandhi’s philosophy): a level involving specific foods which should or should not be consumed (and it was this aspect of dietary discourse for which Gandhi was indebted to the West), and a spiritual level of “control of the palate” on which specific foodstuffs were not significant and rarely mentioned.

Judging by his autobiographical writings, his fruit and nut diet became prominent around 1912, while living at Tolstoy Farm, when he and his close friend Hermann Kallenbach both decided to abstain from milk after many discussions regarding its “harmful effects.”¹⁹⁵ Gandhi’s relationship with milk has comprised a very interesting aspect of his dietary history as he interprets it as a stimulant (his friend and mentor Raychandrabhai first told him about milk as a stimulant¹⁹⁶) which, for him, undoubtedly arouses sexual passions in those who consume it.¹⁹⁷ The harmful effects which Kallenbach and Gandhi discussed were related both to the issue of milk as a stimulant, as well as to the inhumane treatment which cows and buffaloes were subject to in the interests of economic production.¹⁹⁸ Milk, however, holds a very important ritualistic and dietary significance for devotees of Krishna, and is generally seen as a sattvic dietary staple within the Samkhya philosophy articulated within the *Bhagavad-gita*, and even more prominently within later Vaishnava religious literature such as the tenth book of the *Bhagavatam*

¹⁹⁵ Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, 329.

¹⁹⁶ Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, 328.

¹⁹⁷ Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, 209, 329.

¹⁹⁸ Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, 328. Gandhi attributes this discovery to “some literature” he received from Calcutta, but is not specific.

Purana and the *Gitagovinda*. Gandhi makes some mention of this in an earlier essay on Indian vegetarianism he wrote while living in England, which was previously discussed. He points out that the vegetarian diet in India does not mean the “vegetarianism excluding milk” diet (which was popular in the West). He writes that:

[U]nlike some of the Vegetarian extremists here, they¹⁹⁹ not only do not abstain from milk and butter, but consider them sacred enough to be used on what are called ‘fruit days’, which occur every fortnight, and which are generally observed by the high caste Hindus; because, as they put it, they do not kill the cow in taking milk from her. And certainly the milking of the cow, which, by the way, has been the subject of painting and poetry, cannot shock the most delicate feelings as would the slaughtering of her.²⁰⁰

For Gandhi, the issue of milk consumption continued to be a matter which he struggled with personally. He writes in his autobiography that observing *brahmacharya* “has been a matter of great difficulty since I began to take milk” but adds:

Let no one deduce from this that all brahmacharis must give up milk. The effect on *brahmacharya* of different kinds of food can be determined only after numerous experiments. I have yet to find a fruit-substitute for milk which is an equally good muscle-builder and easily digestible. . . . Therefore, though I know milk to be partly a stimulant, I cannot, for the time being, advise anyone to give it up.²⁰¹

Even though Gandhi’s opinion on milk—as that which may or may not be necessary for proper health—shifts over time, his belief that it is a stimulant which makes the vow of *brahmacharya* difficult to observe remains consistent. In *The Moral Basis of Vegetarianism* (a collection of writings compiled on the subject of diet), an excerpt from Gandhi’s *Key to Health* (itself compiled from pieces written in *Young India*, and originally published as *A Guide to Health*) embodies Gandhi’s ongoing ideological struggle with milk, as it reads:

¹⁹⁹ Although Gandhi’s observation here is by and large accurate, his use of the all-inclusive pronoun “they” to refer to all vegetarians in India may be misleading, as one should not assume that every individual in India who consciously observes a vegetarian diet would necessarily share this perspective.

²⁰⁰ Gandhi, *CWMG*, 1, 25.

²⁰¹ Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, 209.

Milk is an animal product and cannot by any means be included in a strictly vegetarian diet. It serves the purpose of meat to a very large extent. In medical language it is classified as animal food...I have always been in favor of pure vegetarian diet. But experience has taught me that in order to keep perfectly fit, vegetarian diet must include milk and milk products such as curds butter, ghee, etc. This is a significant departure from my earlier idea.²⁰²

Also, in *Ashram Observances in Action*, Gandhi includes an entire chapter devoted to the subject of dairy. He writes that the “Ashram ideal is to do without milk, as it holds that the milk of animals like meat is no food for mankind,” but eventually dairy had to be introduced due to health concerns.²⁰³ Similarly, Gandhi writes in his autobiography that “[i]t is my firm conviction that man need take no milk at all, beyond the mother’s milk that he takes as a baby. His diet should consist of nothing but sunbaked fruits and nuts.”²⁰⁴ At one point shortly before the Rowlatt *Satyagraha*, however, Gandhi was very ill and his doctors told him that without drinking milk they could not guarantee that he would recover his strength. Gandhi at this point had, technically, only vowed not to drink cow and buffalo milk, so he, hesitantly, took goat’s milk and recounts that he immediately began to feel better and his strength returned. In response to this event, Gandhi writes:

I would therefore urge those who, on the strength of the theory propounded by me, may have given up milk, not to persist in the experiment, unless they find it beneficial in every way, or unless they are advised by experienced physicians. Up to now my experience here has showed me that for those with a weak digestion and for those who are confined to bed there is no light and nourishing diet equal to that of milk.²⁰⁵

Gandhi’s views on milk seem to oscillate wildly throughout his life. Earlier, we saw a perspective, firmly rooted in the perspectives of the Western counterculture that viewed milk as entirely unnecessary beyond infancy. Then, in South Africa, Gandhi, through his dietetic

²⁰² Gandhi, *The Moral Basis of Vegetarianism* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing, 1959), 3.

²⁰³ Gandhi, *Ashram Observances in Action*, 93.

²⁰⁴ Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, 272.

²⁰⁵ Mohandas Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, 273.

experiments, came to believe that milk was a stimulant which made the successful practice of *brahmacharya* almost impossible. Furthermore, the torture inflicted upon cows and buffaloes in order to extract the milk was in complete violation of his ethical sensibilities. In this perspective we saw a perpetuation of the Western dietary discourse, but now shrouded in an overtly religious and ethical ideological construction, and one that, being culturally opposed to the dairy rich diet of much of India, was indicative of Gandhi's unique interpretation of Indian religiosity within his dietary discourse. Gandhi seems to, however, completely change his position on milk, as it comes more in line with traditional Indian dietary regulations. This may very well be illustrative of the ways in which Gandhian discourse, as a whole, became more aligned with normative Indian cultural practices.

Judging by his extensive writings on the subject, Gandhi seems genuinely conflicted over the milk issue. In a letter written to R. B. Gregg ("Govind") on November 11, 1947 (relatively late in his life), this question was still of great concern to him. He writes:

By the way, has vegetarianism a real foothold in America or is it merely a fad of cranks like you and me? Have the dietetic reformers found anything which can be described as a complete substitute for milk? I must confess that I have failed miserably in that direction and, in the absence of the discovery of a complete substitute, I have come to the conclusion some form of animal fat or animal protein is necessary for human sustenance in health.²⁰⁶

I must point out what I assume to be a humorous, perhaps even prideful, reference to himself as a "crank." I also cannot help but wonder how Gandhi would have felt about the accessibility of numerous "milks" available to consumers today. From soy, to coconut, and a variety of nut milks (which I believe Gandhi would have been especially fond of), one can only imagine how this innovation may have altered his discourse on the subject.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁶ Gandhi, *CWVG*, 97, 279.

In an even later letter on the subject, written on January 6, 1948 to his son Manilal, Gandhi writes:

I am forced to the conclusion that your health has suffered because of lack of curds and milk in your diet. In the wide vegetable kingdom nothing has been discovered so far which can serve as a substitute for milk. As long as one keeps fit, one does not feel the need for animal foods, but once the health goes down it cannot be rebuilt without such foods.²⁰⁸

On January 20th of that same year, and just ten days before his assassination, he wrote about his recovery from a recent fast (undertaken in Delhi, in order to combat communal violence between Hindus and Muslims), saying “I can take only liquid diet, which may be milk or fruit juice. Milk can of course sustain a man all his life.”²⁰⁹

It is interesting that his perspective on dairy represents, perhaps, one of the clearest examples of his shifting dietary discourse. On the one hand, he remains steadfast in his conviction that with regards to the ethical treatment of animals and, especially, the successful practice of *brahmacharya*, one is better off without milk. On the other hand, however, his position changes significantly after his return to India, his sickness, and further empirical observations regarding the milk’s necessary role in maintaining one’s health, at least in India.

Even though Gandhi himself acknowledges that he remained indebted to the West for the general trajectory of his dietary experiments, it is completely in line with the subjectifying nature of one’s cultural surroundings to undergo a discursive shift with respect to one’s geo-cultural position. And although Gandhi’s shifting position on the subject of milk remains consistent with his experimental nature (relying on empirical observations to garner access to the “truth” via experiments/practices/technologies of the self), this discursive shift is not without its political

²⁰⁷ I use the term innovation only to refer to the *availability* of such milks, as they have existed for centuries. Perhaps Gandhi was simply unaware of them.

²⁰⁸ Gandhi, *CWMG*, 98, 182.

²⁰⁹ Gandhi, *CWMG*, 98, 274.

utility. It has never been my objective within this paper to question Gandhi's motivations or his sincerity at any point in his life, but it is also worth pointing out the utility of, and social capital gained by, bringing his dietary discourse more in line with normative Indian dietary practices.

Fox acknowledged the broad ways in which Gandhi's nationalist discourse relied heavily on affirmative Orientalist projections that ultimately essentialized the positive qualities of Indian culture which benefitted said discourse. Affirmative Orientalist discourses created an image of India that inverted previous, negative conceptions, thereby fostering an effective means of resistance to colonialism. Fox writes that:

These stereotypes butted up against the negative image of India and reversed it. What appeared in pejorative Orientalism as India's ugliness now became her beauty; her so-called weaknesses turned out to be her strengths. Otherworldliness became spirituality, an Indian cultural essential that promised her a future cultural perfection unattained in the West.²¹⁰

It may be a stretch to infer all of this simply from Gandhi's shifting position on the benefits of milk. Such a discursive shift, however, is illustrative of the ways in which Gandhi may have felt he should not be seen as resisting normative, everyday practices in India. Martin Green, in his book *Gandhi: Voice of a New Age Revolution*, cites interesting correspondences between Gandhi and his English friend C. F. Andrews. Andrews, in 1914 shortly after Gandhi's return to India, asks him how he could stand back in silence regarding the slaughter of animals at the Kali puja in Calcutta. Gandhi responded that he "writhed in agony" at the mere thought, but he also said that "I cannot speak or write about it."²¹¹ A few years later, in 1921, Andrews asked him about the Untouchables problem in India, and, Green writes, "Gandhi replied again that it was too sensitive an issue for him to take up; he could talk about a British crime like the

²¹⁰ Fox, "East of Said," 152.

²¹¹ Green, *Gandhi: Voice of a New Age Revolution*, 11.

massacre at Amritsar, but not an Indian one of even greater magnitude.”²¹² Although Gandhi did, eventually, “take up” the issue of untouchability, he did so within a decidedly Indian paradigm that sought to *sanskritize* the *harijan*.

Perhaps Gandhi’s shifting perspective towards milk came about as an empirical observation, simply as a result of his dietary experiments, and his above writings appear to demonstrate his sincerity on the subject. However, given Gandhi’s past experiments with dairy and the strength of his previous convictions against the consumption of milk, it seems as if the geo-cultural context of India may have also contributed to his shifting perspective.

Conclusion

Dietary practices were an essential component of Gandhi’s countercultural social philosophy as instigated, initially, as a young man in India, then developed in England, further refined in South Africa, and most famously applied in India. Throughout his life Gandhi’s dietary discourse went through many discursive shifts, what remains consistent, however, throughout this dietetic history is the presence of Orientalist discursive constructions, as well as the element of resistance to modern (generally Western) civilization.

When Gandhi was a young man in India he became an avowed meat-eater via the subjectifying influence of a negative Orientalist discourse. While Gandhi was in England his dietary philosophy was primarily constructed via the available terms set forth by the vegetarian counterculture of the West, such as Henry Salt and Ann Kingsford. In South Africa Gandhi’s dietary discourse became increasingly articulated in religious categories. And, when arguing on behalf of a vegetarian diet, Gandhi generally referenced Western sources to support his arguments, specifically Western social and political philosophers like Ruskin, Thoreau, and

²¹² Green, *Gandhi: Voice of a New Age Revolution*, 11.

Tolstoy.²¹³ Gandhi also explored many religious systems which were alternative to the Hindu and Jain culture in which he was raised, and these influences can be seen when, while writing for a Western audience, he would often cite Bible verses and reference the vegetarian communal lifestyles of groups like the Trappist missionaries in South Africa.

Once in India, however, his discourse was predominantly based within Indian cultural and religious categories and Hindu concepts (such as *brahmacharya* and control of the self, control of desire, via control of the palate) and certain influential Hindu texts, such as the *Bhagavad-gita*. This illustrates not only the shifting paradigms within which Gandhi based his dietary philosophy and discourse, but also the degree to which Gandhi's dietary discourse was influenced by shifting cultural contexts. Religion was almost entirely absent from the discourse surrounding his dietary experiments in England. Although significant evidence exists within the primary sources to suggest a burgeoning identification with Hinduism while in South Africa, Gandhi's religious affiliation was left relatively ambiguous during this period, as illustrated by his close association and inspiration drawn from the Theosophical Society and various Christian movements. When Gandhi was a youth in India his diet was constructed via a colonial discourse of negative Orientalism (albeit with the ultimate goal of resisting said colonialism), while in the West his discourse can be seen as constructed by the Western counterculture, including essentialized elements of affirmative Orientalist discourse regarding the "East" that functioned as a mode of resisting normative, Western practices of meat-eating and general tendencies of modern civilization, and while in India it shifted to be overwhelmingly constructed within Gandhi's interpretation of a traditional Indian cultural paradigm—still maintaining an affirmative Orientalist discourse that was a beneficial mode of resistance to the British colonial project and

²¹³ Virtually every secondary scholar who has written on this period of Gandhi's life mentions the influence which these authors had on the development of Gandhi's philosophy.

modern civilization, more broadly. Within all of these various shifts there remains the continual presence of 1) a subjectifying Orientalist discourse, and 2) a narrative of resistance to hegemonic influences. The roots of this mode of social resistance can be directly traced back to Gandhi's youth and the periods of his life that are generally glossed over by most historians as relatively insignificant when compared to his later life. What I have attempted to illustrate, however, is that much of Gandhi's later, more well-known, discourse of social resistance was directly influenced by the complex ideological negotiations and dietary experiments of his youth.

Even though this paper has specifically looked at Gandhi's dietary discourse, the broader themes relate to issues of cultural resistance and the ways in which everyday practices of the self can serve to create a subject capable of articulating an "identity" of resistance to a wide variety of cultural norms.

Although this study has focused mostly on dietary practices with regards to the creation of the "self," it could easily be expanded to look at the formation of larger social group identity, and the subjectifying forces present within various socio-cultural subgroups (in addition to the London Vegetarian "Society" and the vegetarian "movement" mentioned here, there is a long history of dietary restrictions applied to larger social groups, which, for instance, have long served to separate various religious communities from one another). In addition, although time and space limitations have prevented me from doing so, Pierre Bourdieu's study of the creation and function of individual/group "taste" as related to class would also prove illuminating if applied to a similar study.²¹⁴

Furthermore, even though I have limited myself to the arena of diet, a brief reference was made to Gandhi's *dhoti*, and in this way I hope to illustrate that there is also a broad, and

²¹⁴ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984).

complex, network of *external* signs and signifiers (such as clothing, hair, bodily markings, etc.) which can be utilized in order to create a subject identity.²¹⁵ Although this paper, following Foucault, has overtly focused on *internal* modes of subject formation (specifically diet, but bodily and ascetic practices, meditation, etc. would also be included here), this does not mean that there is, necessarily, such a clear division between these two broad “modes” of subject formation, at least in practice.

Although the scholarly lines between cultural studies and religious studies are often blurred (and arguments persist that they should be erased altogether), I am not unaware that the explicit role of religion within this paper was often relocated to the background. This does not mean, however, that this study has limited applications within the field of religious studies. Minority religious movements often articulate broader, alternative social philosophies (such as vegetarianism) in addition to alternative theologies. This paper has illustrated many ways in which religious discourse (Esoteric and Radical Christianities, Theosophy, Transcendentalism, etc.) permeated the narrative of vegetarianism in the West, and many of these religious discourses were derived from new, alternative, or otherwise reinterpreted religious movements. Studies such as this could, therefore, easily complement Bruce Lincoln’s theories regarding the relationship between the dominant, “religions of the status quo,” and the minority (often countercultural) “religions of resistance.”²¹⁶ In this way, many religious movements could (and, I would argue, *should*) be studied with the same critical lens which social theorists have long applied to “secular” countercultural movements, with particular attention paid to the ways in

²¹⁵ On this subject I would recommend work on social theory from the “Birmingham School.” Particularly Stuart Hall’s body of work on cultural representations and articulation theory, such as *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (London: Sage Publications and Open University, 1997), as well as Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (New York: Routledge, 1979).

²¹⁶ Bruce Lincoln, *Holy Terrors* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

which modes of subject formation (internal and external) are utilized in order to signify a separation from normative elements within the general society (elements of the “status quo”).

Bibliography:

- “The Food Habits of a Nation,” *The Hindu*, August 14, 2006.
<http://www.hinduonnet.com/2006/08/14/stories/2006081403771200.htm> . Accessed on July 20, 2011.
- FAO, <http://www.fao.org/WAIRDOCS/LEAD/X6170E/x6170e09.htm>
- USDA, <http://www.fas.usda.gov/http/highlights/2001/india.pdf> . Both accessed on July 20, 2011.
- Alter, Joseph. *Gandhi's Body: Sex, Diet, and the Politics of Nationalism*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000.
- Asad, Talal. *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993.
- Ashe, Geoffrey. *Gandhi*. New York: Stein and Day, 1968.
- Brown, Judith. *Gandhi's Rise to Power*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972.
- Brown, Judith. *Gandhi: Prisoner of Hope*. New haven: Yale University Press, 1989.
- Brown, Judith. “Perspectives and Prospects.” In *Gandhi and South Africa: Principles and Politics*, edited by Judith Brown and Martin Prozesky, 1-6. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984.
- Butler, G, translator. *The Laws of Manu*. <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/india/indiasbook.html>
- Chakrabarty, Bidyut. *Social and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi*. Great Britain: Routledge, 2006.
- Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?* In *The Partha Chatterjee Omnibus*, 1-181. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- De Certeau, Michel. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. USA: University of California Press, 1984.
- Desai, Mahadev, trans. *Gandhi an Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments with Truth*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1993.
- Dumont, Louis. *Homo Hierarchicus*. Great Britain: University of Chicago Press, 1966, 1970.
- Dumont, Louis. *Religion/Politics and History in India*. Netherlands: Ecole Practique des Hautes Etudes and Mouton & Co, 1970.

- Embree, Ainslie T. *Imagining India: Essays on Indian History*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989.
- Erikson, Erik. *Gandhi's Truth: On the Origins of Militant Nonviolence*. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1969.
- Feldmann, Allen. *Formations of Violence*. USA: University of Chicago Press, 1991.
- Fischer, Louis. *The Life of Mahatma Gandhi*. Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1965.
- Foucault, Michel. *Archeology of Knowledge and The Discourse on Language*. New York: Vintage, 1982.
- Foucault, Michel. *The Order of Things*. New York: Vintage Books, 1994.
- Foucault, Michel. *Hermeneutics of the Subject*. New York: Picador, 2001.
- Foucault, Michel. "Technologies of the Self." In *The Essential Foucault*, Paul Rabinow and Nikolas S. Rose, 144-169. New York: The New Press, 2003.
- Fox, "East of Said." In *Edward Said: A Critical Reader*, edited by Michael Sprinker, 144-156. Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1992.
- Gandhi, Mohandas. *Diet and Diet Reform*. Ahmedabad: Navajivan Press, 1949.
- Gandhi, Mohandas. *Ashram Observances in Action*. Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1955.
- Gandhi, Mohandas. *From Yeravda Mandir, Ashram Observances*. Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1957.
- Gandhi, Mohandas. *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*. Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing, 1958.
- Gandhi, Mohandas. *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*. Ahmedabad: Navajivan Press and The Government of India, 1958.
- Gandhi, Mohandas. *The Moral Basis of Vegetarianism*. Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing, 1959.
- Gandhi, Mohandas. "Hind Swaraj." In *The Penguin Gandhi Reader*, edited by Rudrangshu Mukherjee. New York: Penguin Books, 1996.
- Gandhi, Mohandas. *Non-Violent Resistance (Satyagraha)*. Mineola, New York: Dover Publication, Inc., 1961, 2001.

- Gandhi, Mohandas. *The Bhagavad-gita According to Gandhi*. Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2009.
- Green, Martin. *The Challenge of the Mahatmas*. New York: Basic Books, 1978.
- Green, Martin. *Gandhi: Voice of a new Age Revolution*. New York: Continuum, 1993.
- Gregory, James. *Of Victorians and Vegetarians*. New York: Taurus Academic Studies, 2007.
- Hall, Stuart. *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. London: Sage Publications and Open University, 1997.
- Hausner, Sandra. *Wandering With Sadhus*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2006.
- Hebdige, Dick. *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*. New York: Routledge, 1979.
- Hobsbawm, E. J. "The Social Function of the Past: Some Questions," *Man* 55 (1972): 3-17.
- Heesterman, J.C. *The Inner Conflict of Tradition*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1985.
- Inden, Ronald. "Orientalist Constructions of India." *Modern Asian Studies*, 20:3 (1986): 401-446.
- Johnston, E. H. *Early Samkhya*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1937, 1974.
- Khandelwal, Meena, Sondra L. Hausner, and Ann Grodzins Gold. *Women's Renunciation in South Asia*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006.
- King, Richard. *Orientalism and Religion: Postcolonial Theory, India and 'The Mystic East.'* New York: Routledge, 1999.
- Anna, Kinsford. *The Perfect Way in Diet* (1881). This resource was accessed online: http://www.anna-kingsford.com/english/Works_by_Anna_Kingsford_and_Maitland/Texts/02-OAKM-I-PWayDiettxt-web.htm
- Larson, Gerald J. *Classical Samkhya*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1969.
- Lincoln, Bruce. *Discourse and the Construction of Society*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1989.
- Lincoln, Bruce. *Holy Terrors*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006.

- Ludden, David ed. *Making India Hindu*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996, 2005.
- Madan, T. N. ed. *Way of Life: King, Householder, Renouncer*. New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1982.
- May, Rollo. *Power and Innocence: A Search for the Sources of Violence*. New York: Delta, 1972.
- Mehta, Ved. *Mahatma Gandhi and his Apostles*. New York: The Viking Press, 1977.
- Metcalf, Barbara D. and Thomas R. Metcalf. *A Concise History of Modern India*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Mukherjee, Mithi. "Transcending Identity: Gandhi, Nonviolence, and the Pursuit of a 'Different' Freedom in Modern India." *American Historical Review* 115:2 (2010) 453-473.
- Mukherjee, Rudrangshu, editor. *The Penguin Gandhi Reader*. United States: Penguin Books, 1993.
- Nandy, Ashis. *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983.
- Nicholson, George. *George Nicholson's On The Primeval Diet of Man*. Edited by Rod Preece. New York: The Edwin Mello Press, 1999.
- Olivelle, Patrick. *Collected Essays II: Ascetics and Brahmins: Studies in Ideologies and Institutions*. Florence: University of Florence Press, 2006.
- Olivelle, Patrick. *Rules and Regulations of Brahmanical Asceticism*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995.
- Olivelle, Patrick, trans. *Samnyasa Upanishads: Hindu Scriptures on Asceticism and Renunciation*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992.
- Olivelle, Patrick. *Renunciation in Hinduism*. Vienna: The De Nobili Research Library, 1986.
- Payne, Robert. *The Life and Death of Mahatma Gandhi*. New York: E.P. Dutton, 1969.
- Pinch, William. *Peasants and Monks in British India*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996.
- Pinch, William. *Warrior Ascetics and Indian Empires*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- Roy, Parama. "Meat Eating, Masculinity, and Renunciation in India: A Gandhian Grammar of Diet." *Gender & History*, 14:1 (2002): 62-91.

- Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books, 1979.
- Salt, H. S. *A Plea for Vegetarianism and Other Essays*. Manchester: The Vegetarian Society, 1886.
- Spencer, Colin. *The Heretic's Feast*. Hanover: University Press of New England, 1995.
- Stuart, Tristram. *The Bloodless Revolution: A Cultural History of Vegetarianism from 1600 to Modern Times*. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2007.
- Thomas, Keith. *Man and the Natural World Changing Attitudes in England 1500-1800*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1983.
- Thomson, Mark. *Gandhi and his Ashrams*. New Delhi: Popular Prakashan, 1993.
- Walters, Kerry S. and Lisa Portmess, eds. *Religious Vegetarianism*. USA: SUNY press, 2001.
- Wimbush, Vincent L. and Richard Valantasis eds. *Asceticism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- Wuthnow, Robert. *After Heaven: Spirituality in America since the 1950s*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998.