

**Faith, freedom, friendship:
cross-cultural affective networks in the correspondence of
C F Andrews, E J Thompson, and V H Elwin,
India and Europe, 1919 to 1964**

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DEDICATION

Dedicated to the memory of John David, later Yohanan ben David, who kept me 'India's prisoner' during my student days, and also taught me by his example that, often for good reason, people may not always be what they seem.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION	2
TABLE OF CONTENTS	3
TABLE OF FIGURES	4
ABSTRACT.....	4
PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS.....	8
CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE	9
FRIENDSHIPS NETWORK MAP.....	11
INTRODUCTION	12
Research questions.....	12
Andrews, Thompson, and Elwin.....	16
Time and space	26
Letters and other sources	30
Faith and India	39
Freedom for Indians abroad and at home	51
Theorising friendship.....	58
What is the ‘postcolonial’? Might there be a postcolonial politics of friendship?	71
Discussions of the protagonists in the existing literature.....	78
Thesis plan and chapter structure.....	86
CHAPTER 1: REACTING TO VIOLENCE, 1919-1926	89
Reconstructions of a long-remembered encounter	89
News ‘trickled through the gagged silence’	99
The Hunter Committee	104
‘Indian Independence: The Immediate Need’	111
Two letters to <i>The Statesman</i>	113
‘The Other Side of the Medal’	116
CHAPTER II: THE EREMO FRANCESCANO AND THE ASHRAM OF ST FRANCIS, 1926-1949	125
A link to Gandhi.....	125
Sharing experiences	131
Breaking away	137
Cross-cultural friendships	142
‘It does make a difference’	162
CHAPTER III: A PASSAGE TO EUROPE, AUGUST-DECEMBER 1931	176
Marseille and Folkestone	176
London and Lancashire.....	183
‘Bishops and Archbishops’	189
Oxford.....	192
Paris, Villeneuve, Lausanne, Geneva	198
Rome	210
Homeward voyage	212
CHAPTER IV: ‘STONE WALLS DO NOT A PRISON MAKE’, SEPTEMBER 1931-SEPTEMBER 1945	215
‘HM’s guest in one of the numerous free hotels’	215
Fasting unto death.....	223
Building a friendship.....	230
Passage to India in time of war	239
Viceregal Mail	241

CHAPTER V: ‘THEY LIVE ON AFTER THEY HAVE DIED’, APRIL 1940-MAY 1964.....	248
‘His rare gift of spontaneous universal friendship’.....	248
‘You are often in my thoughts and strangely enough I have thought more of you than ever’	255
A friendship of politics	261
‘India changes. The old guards fade away.’	272
CONCLUSIONS.....	282
BIBLIOGRAPHY	291
Unpublished Primary Sources.....	291
Published Primary Sources	291
Published Secondary Sources	297
Theses and Dissertations.....	306
Oral History	306
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	307

TABLE OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Some friendship networks	11
Figure 2. An Indian, stripped and tied to a ladder, being flogged by a British soldier. Photograph from Horniman's <i>Amritsar: Our Duty to India</i> (London: Fisher Unwin, 1920)	103
Figure 3. Picture postcard message to Turton from Sorella Maria, Verrier Elwin, and Miriam Shaw, 12 or 13 July 1932. British Library, Ms Eur D950/7, fol. 75.....	147
Figure 4. On arrival at Marseille, 11 September 1931: from left to right, Edmond Privat hidden behind Andrews, Andrews, Yvonne Privat, Gandhi, Pyarelal, Madeleine Rolland, Mahadev, Mirabehn. Photograph at Gandhi Smriti, Rajkot, Gujarat, India	180
Figure 5. Letter from Gandhi to Thompson, 1 December 1931. Bodleian Library, MS. Eng. c. 5289, fol. 17.....	218
Figure 6. Nehru electioneering in Mangalore in 1937. The organiser of the meeting, Felix Albuquerque Pai, half hidden behind Nehru, was a Christian, a descendant of a Brahmin converted by the Portuguese. Photograph reproduced by kind permission of its owners, the Albuquerque Pai family	236
Figure 7. Dust jacket of Elwin's autobiography: portrait by Otto Kadlecovics. (Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1964)	268
Figure 8. 'Lead Kindly Light'. Cover picture from <i>Mahatma Gandhi: sketches in pen pencil and brush by Kanu Desai</i> (London: The Golden Vista Press, 1932).....	278
Figure 9. Jawaharlal Nehru's Funeral, 28 May 1964, New Delhi. Author's photograph.	280

ABSTRACT

The period from the Amritsar Massacre on 13 April 1919 to the funeral of Jawaharlal Nehru on 28 May 1964 was definitive not only for the establishment of the nation of independent India but also for the global diffusion of the teachings of Mohandas Gandhi and more generally for continuing affective relationships between Indians and Europeans. Charles Freer Andrews, Edward John Thompson, and Verrier Elwin, all three of them (like the author of this thesis) white Anglo-Saxon Protestant males, were led by their religious faith to go to India as Christian missionaries. Their experiences in India caused all three to abandon their affiliations with their churches and to dedicate themselves to the cause of Indian freedom.

Their correspondence charts first their moves from organised religion to still highly motivated activism, then their contributions to the debate on the end of empire, and then their various friendships, developing independently of agreement or otherwise on religious and political concerns. Contacts with Gandhi, his disciples, and his teaching recur. The building of these friendships is tested against the postulates of Jacques Derrida's *Politics of Friendship* and against E. M. Forster's subversive views of friendship's scope.

The starting point is an incident of violence which occurred in the Punjab under martial law following the Amritsar massacre. The emotional meeting between Andrews and the victim of this violence is examined in versions provided by Elwin, by Andrews's accompanying disciple Gurdial Mallik, and by Andrews himself. Other accounts of the incident are provided by the perpetrator's oral examination by the Hunter Committee, and by the perpetrator's privately printed memoir. Andrews's subsequent demand for full independence for India in his *Independence: The Immediate Need* is followed by Thompson's role, at Andrews's instigation and supported by

Thompson's American wife Theodosia, as a drafter and a signatory of a letter from missionaries to the British Indian press, condemning the one-sided support by the British in India for General Dyer, who had been responsible for the Amritsar massacre. Thompson's return to England is followed by the publication, with the support of Forster and of Leonard Woolf, of his revisionist account of the 1857 rebellion, *The Other Side of the Medal*.

The thesis then turns to a multi-node trans-cultural correspondence between two founder members of an unconventional Italian female religious community (the *Eremo Francescano*, still in existence today), Andrews, Gandhi, and Elwin. Their letters, complicated but also sometimes illuminated, by the need for translations, show how Elwin's regard for Gandhi's teaching on poverty led him to found his own religious community, the Ashram of St Francis, among the tribal peoples of Central India, and then, as his interest shifted to anthropology, to leave his church and withdraw from his close friendship with the Eremo.

Drawing on the writings of Gandhi's host in London, Muriel Lester, and of his secretary Mahadev Desai, the thesis argues that attendance at the second Round Table Conference, although the pretext, was only a part of Gandhi's wider aims in his 1931 visit to Europe, which were to meet with those who might share his philosophy of life, and to demonstrate that philosophy in his contacts with the people of Europe. The dimensions in terms of space and time are considered for his travels and for those of his interlocutors (for him, always 'friends'), and emphasis is placed on his meetings in France, Switzerland, and Italy, especially on his stay with Romain Rolland in Villeneuve, and his short meeting with Sorella Maria in Rome, with particular attention to what these meetings meant for his companions. These last two meetings strengthened friendships which endured.

On his return to India Gandhi was imprisoned. Recognizing prison's spatial and temporal implications and its role as a trope in the anticolonial discourse, the thesis examines what this and subsequent imprisonments meant for these friendships, for the prisoners, and for their friends. Gandhi's correspondence around his 'fast to the death' is examined in terms of his different relationships with individual friends. The thesis then moves to Nehru's imprisonments, especially his last imprisonment during the second world war. By this time, he had established a close friendship with Thompson. The two were not allowed to correspond directly but by using different subterfuges Thompson was able to remain in contact and so to relieve the black thoughts that Nehru feared.

Taking Derrida's postulate of the already composed funeral eulogy as a test of primary friendship, the thesis concludes with a discussion of the deaths of several of the protagonists together with the reactions of their surviving friends. Andrews's death is followed by the death in war of Edward and Theodosia Thompson's elder son Frank, and then by the death of Edward himself. The letters and prison diary entries Nehru wrote after and before these deaths asserted the values of memory and friendship. The thesis continues with Elwin's friendship with Nehru, and with Elwin's death, before concluding with Nehru's death and funeral in 1964.

This thesis' contributions are therefore to emphasize the historical importance of correspondence as a source for the examination of affective relationships and to demonstrate how the friendships described within it, postcolonial by virtue of their anticipation of the end of empire, existed without religious, racial, or political constraint, and serve as models for cross-cultural friendships in the postcolonial world.

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS

Individuals are identified in the text by the name in **bold** letters

Bernard Aluwihare	1902-1961	Gandhi supporter; Cabinet Minister, Ceylon
Rajkumari Amrit Kaur	1887-1964	Gandhi's secretary; Health Minister, India
Charles Freer Andrews	1871-1940	Missionary; mediator
Surendra Kumar Datta	1878-1948	YMCA Secretary; College Principal
Verrier Holman Elwin	1902-1964	Missionary; anthropologist
Edward Morgan Forster	1879-1970	Novelist; critic
William Frank Thompson	1920-1944	Poet; soldier
Mohandas Gandhi	1869-1948	Political and spiritual leader
Gopal Krishna Gokhale	1866-1915	Nationalist leader
Basil John Gould	1883-1957	Indian Civil Service, Political
Benjamin Guy Horniman	1873-1948	Journalist
Sydney Montague Jacob	1879-1977	Indian Civil Service, Agriculture
Kamala Nehru	1899-1936	Wife and mother; nationalist
Kasturba Gandhi	1869-1944	Wife and mother; nationalist
Muriel Lester	1883-1968	Philanthropist; pacifist
Madeleine Rolland	1872-1960	Translator; interpreter
Mahadev Desai	1892-1942	Gandhi's secretary; translator
Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis	1893-1972	Statistician; Tagore's bibliographer
Gurdial Mallik	1896-1970	Linguist; Hindu Quaker
Madeleine Slade (Mirabehn)	1892-1982	Gandhi's disciple; agriculturalist
Jawaharlal Nehru	1889-1964	Lawyer; Prime Minister, India
Edward Palmer Thompson	1924-1993	Historian; political activist
Edmond Privat	1889-1962	Academic; internationalist
Pyarelal Nayyar	1899-1982	Gandhi's secretary
Romain Rolland	1866-1944	Novelist, Nobel Laureate; pacifist
Susil Kumar Rudra	1861-1925	College Principal; Gandhi's host
Sarojini Naidu	1879-1949	Poet; Governor, United Provinces
Shamrao Hivale	1903-1984	Missionary; social worker
Sorella Maria (Valeria Pignetti)	1875-1961	<i>La Minore, Eremo Francescano</i>
Rabindranath Tagore	1861-1941	Poet, Nobel Laureate; educationalist
Theodosia Thompson (née Jessup)	1892-1970	Wife and mother; writer
Edward John Thompson	1886-1946	Missionary; writer
Amy Turton (Nonna Amata, Nonna Speranza)	1857-1942	Philanthropist; <i>Sorella, Eremo Francescano</i>
Archibald Percival Wavell	1883-1950	Soldier; Viceroy

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

Sunday, 20 March 1904	Andrews lands Bombay, aged 33
Wednesday, 21 December 1910	Thompson joins Wesleyan College, Bankura, aged 24
Sunday, 7 July 1912	Andrews attends readings from Tagore's <i>Gitanjali</i> in Hampstead
Friday, 14 November 1913	Thompson's first visit to Tagore's Shantiniketan Ashram
Thursday, 1 January 1914	Andrews lands Durban, touches Gandhi's feet
Sunday, 13 April 1919	Amritsar Massacre
Sunday, 20 April 1919	Flogging of Bhagwan Singh
Sunday, 27 April 1919	Horniman deported
Saturday, 31 May 1919	Tagore renounces knighthood
Tuesday, 13 July 1920	Missionaries' letter in <i>The Statesman</i>
Tuesday, 17 August 1920	Birth of Frank Thompson in Darjeeling
Sunday, 3 February 1924	Birth of Palmer Thompson in Oxford
Sunday, 20 November 1927	Elwin arrives Christa Seva Sangha Ashram, Poona, aged 25
Friday, 24 August 1928	Sorella Maria's first letter to Gandhi
Tuesday, 27 November 1928	Elwin's first letter to Turton
Saturday, 5 April 1930	Gandhi collects salt from the sea
Sunday, 25 January 1931	Gandhi released from prison
Saturday, 29 August 1931	Gandhi departs Bombay on <i>RMS Rajputana</i>
Friday, 11 September 1931	Madeleine Rolland and Andrews meet Gandhi at Marseille
Saturday, 12 September 1931	Gandhi arrives in London via Paris and Folkestone
Saturday, 24 October 1931	Gandhi stays with the Lindsays at Balliol College, Oxford
Sunday, 25 October 1931	Breakfast meeting with Gandhi at Thompsons' home
Sunday, 6 December 1931	Gandhi arrives Villeneuve to visit Rolland
Sunday, 13 December 1931	Sorella Maria meets Gandhi in Rome
Monday, 14 December 1931	Gandhi departs Brindisi on <i>SS Pilsna</i>
Monday, 28 December 1931	Gandhi lands Bombay
Tuesday, 29 December 1931	Thompson sails for India
Monday, 4 January 1932	Gandhi arrested in Bombay
Wednesday, 10 February 1932	Shamrao and Elwin arrive Karanjia
Tuesday, 12 July 1932	Elwin visits Sorella Maria in Villeneuve
Tuesday, 20 September 1932	Gandhi starts 'fast unto death'
Monday, 26 September 1932	Gandhi breaks his fast
Sunday, 16 October 1932	Elwin visits the <i>Eremo Franciscano</i>

Monday, 24 October 1932	Elwin departs Naples for Bombay on <i>SS Victoria</i>
Wednesday, 1 February 1933	Gillett and Elwin announce their intention to marry
Monday, 12 February 1934	Nehru arrested at Allahabad and imprisoned
Monday, 2 September 1935	Nehru released to see Kamala in Germany
Wednesday, 25 December 1935	Elwin's Christmas broadcast from Bombay
Friday, 28 February 1936	Death of Kamala, aged 36
Monday, 12 June 1939	Letter from Elwin to Sorella Maria written on <i>RMS Mooltan</i>
Sunday, 8 October 1939	Thompson departs Poole by air
Friday, 13 October 1939	Thompson arrives Allahabad by air, starts talks with Nehru
Monday, 23 October 1939	Thompson meets Congress Working Committee
Thursday, 2 November 1939	Thompson meets Prasanta and Rani Mahalanobis
Wednesday, 3 April 1940	Death of Andrews, aged 69
Thursday, 4 April 1940	Elwin marries Kosi
Wednesday, 30 October 1940	Nehru arrested, imprisoned Gorakhpur, then Dehra Dun
Thursday, 7 August 1941	Death of Tagore, aged 80
Wednesday, 3 December 1941	Nehru released
Sunday, 9 August 1942	Nehru and Gandhi imprisoned
Saturday, 15 August 1942	Death of Mahadev, aged 50
Tuesday, 22 February 1944	Death of Kasturba, aged 71
Saturday, 6 May 1944	Gandhi released from prison
Saturday, 10 June 1944	Frank Thompson shot, aged 23
Thursday, 14 June 1945	Nehru released from prison
Sunday, 14 April 1946	Last letter from Nehru to Thompson
Sunday, 28 April 1946	Death of Thompson, aged 59
Monday, 30 September 1946	Preface to Shamrao Hivale's <i>Scholar Gypsy</i>
Friday, 30 January 1948	Gandhi assassinated, aged 78
Sunday, 20 September 1953	Elwin marries Lila
Saturday, 5 December 1953	Elwins to New Delhi for meeting with Nehru
Sunday, 28 August 1955	Nehru visits the Elwin home in Shillong
Friday, 21 February 1964	Last meeting of Elwin and Nehru in New Delhi
Saturday, 22 February 1964	Death of Elwin, aged 61
Wednesday, 27 May 1964	Death of Nehru, aged 74
Thursday, 28 May 1964	Nehru's funeral

FRIENDSHIPS NETWORK MAP

SOME FRIENDSHIP NETWORKS

David Watson Rogers | March 1, 2022

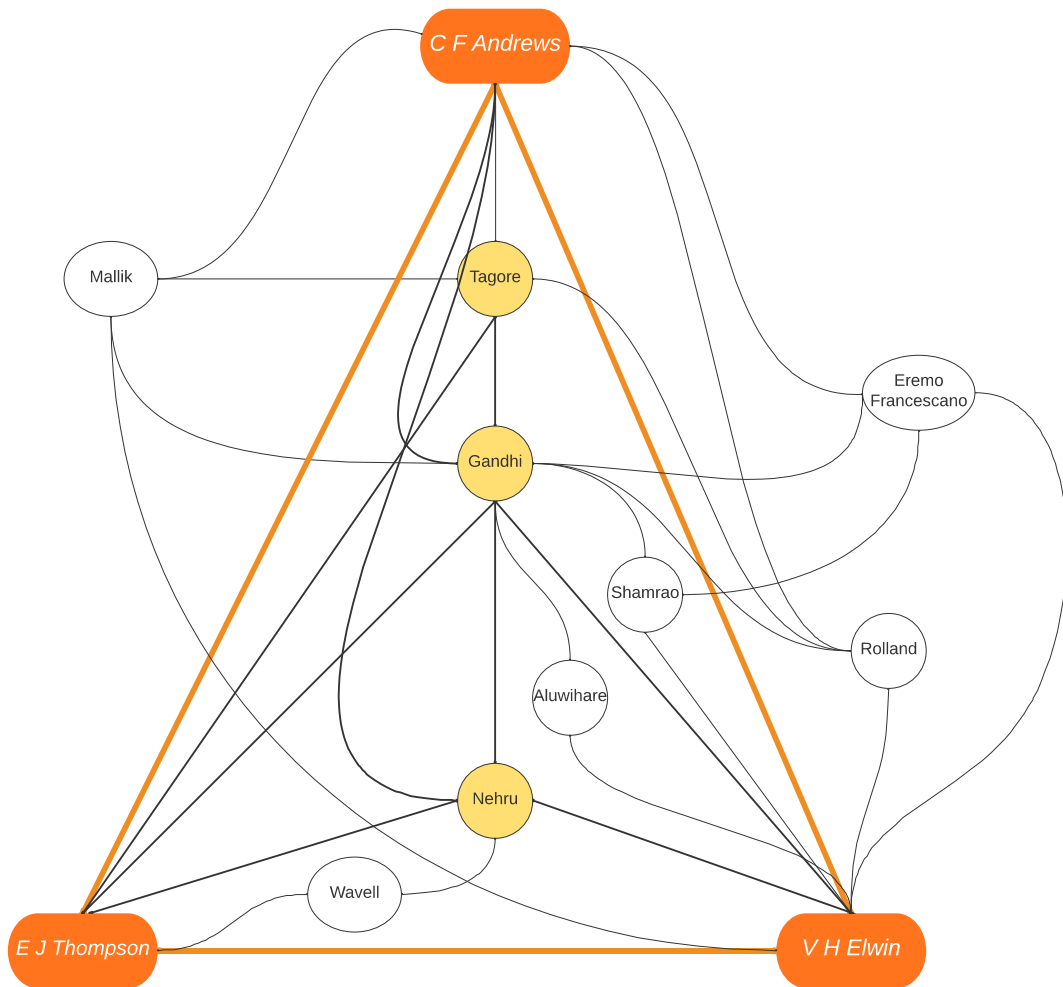


Figure 1. Some friendship networks

INTRODUCTION

Research questions

The centuries-long connections between the peoples of the Indian sub-continent and the peoples of the islands of Great Britain and Ireland continue to engage popular history and academic research. Studies of the imperial past merge into those of the postcolonial world, leavened by population movements and cultural exchange. In this context this thesis seeks to show how some networks of cross-cultural relationships, starting out from imperatives of religious faith, found common ground in the struggle to achieve Indian independence and in the Gandhian mission for *satya* (truth, truthfulness) and *satyagraha* (truth force), and in the process created sometimes lasting, sometimes later dissolving, friendships.

The thesis concerns three English clergymen, Charles Freer Andrews (1871-1940), Edward John Thompson (1886-1946), and Verrier Holman Elwin (1902-1964), who during the first half of the twentieth century felt called to India as Christian missionaries. Once in India they found that they were unable to accept the violence and the attitudes of the British raj and so they progressively aligned themselves with the independence movement. Over time they abandoned their roles in the Christian churches in which they had been ordained, and two of them abandoned their Christian faith. They developed cross-cultural affective networks of friendship, which included Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), Mohandas Gandhi (1869-1948), and Jawaharlal Nehru (1889-1964).

The thesis studies their correspondence, which as the primary means of communication of this period reveals a universe of trans-cultural networks, postcolonial by virtue of the shared presumption of India's forthcoming independence, charting first the protagonists moves from organised religion to still highly motivated activism, then

their contributions to the debate on the end of empire, and then their various friendships, developing independently of agreement or otherwise on religious and political concerns.¹ The thesis looks at the letters (and at subterfuges when letters were censored or forbidden) as subjects in their own right, not just as sources for chronology and context.² However, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to use this correspondence to contribute to the historiographical sub-discipline of the development of letter-writing.

Four themes recur and are addressed in the thesis: faith, freedom, friendship, and, as the principal source, correspondence. Faith is taken in its widest sense, without restriction to any specific creed or religion, starting from the beliefs and practices learnt in childhood, evolving through encounter and experience, and, even if abandoned as belief, continuing as an ethically driven sense of mission. Freedom is the aim of the nationalist movement, but is also considered to be the liberation of the imperial power from the burden of being the oppressor, and of the individual from family, ethnic, religious, and cultural pressures to conform. Friendship is the affective bond, linking individuals emotionally and intellectually, without coercion but with clear obligations, that develops, but may also change or weaken, over time. Letters in this period are the principal physical links joining the nodes of the networks of friendship, exchanging thoughts and emotions, and reflecting the nature and state of the relationships between the nodes. Cherished and cared for collections of these letters have enabled the historical assessment of the networks' contributions.

The protagonists may have abandoned conventional preaching of the Christian gospel, but all three continued to be driven by a sense of mission. Even before their

¹ Robert Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), p. 57.

² As in 'move from archive-as-source to archive-as-subject', Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), p. 44.

moves away from their churches they had shown their ability to make considered moves to new positions, Andrews from his father's Catholic Apostolic Church to the Church of England, Thompson from teacher to army chaplain, Elwin from Evangelical to Anglo-Catholic. Collins has shown how both Andrews and Thompson felt they had missions to apotheosize Tagore, with not always happy results. He considers it an open question whether Thompson's and Andrews's life-histories 'offer visions of a new kind of postcolonial politics'.³

This thesis will seek possible answers to Collins' open question by extending the context of his inquiry to the subsequent 'missions' of these two protagonists and to their 'intermeshed, criss-cross network of communication link-ups, and cross-national political and cultural relationships'.⁴ Tracing the nodes of this network, or perhaps, given that there are three protagonists, these three networks, immediately draws in a wealth of significant and often very independent agents, for example, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Prasanta Mahalanobis, Gurdial Mallik, Sarojini Naidu, Madeleine Slade (Mirabeau), Shamrao Hivale, Bernard Aluwihare, Theodosia Jessop, Amy Turton, Sorella Maria, Romain Rolland and his sister Madeleine, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, and even Archibald Wavell: these are included in the list of principal characters on **Page 8** and each will be formally introduced at an appropriate point of the thesis. It is the intent of the thesis to explore these 'missions' and networks to see how, and how far, the 'missionaries', working through their networks, came to participate over the course of their lives in what may be claimed to be anticipatory postcolonial politics and, independently, cross-cultural friendships.

³ Michael Collins, *Empire, Nationalism and the Postcolonial World: Rabindranath Tagore's Writings on History, Politics and Society*, Routledge/Edinburgh South Asian Studies Series, 4 (London: Routledge, 2012), p. 143.

⁴ Elleke Boehmer, *Empire, the National, and the Postcolonial, 1890-1920: Resistance in Interaction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 171.

The thesis's research questions are focussed on the three themes of its title, faith, freedom, and friendship. How did the protagonists' faith drive their alienation from the British raj? Did their alignment with the call for freedom contribute to their separation from their churches? When, how, and why did they develop their cross-cultural networks, and through these, while working through different postcolonial approaches to the needs of the looked-for Indian nation, make friendships that overcame the challenges of cultural, political, and religious difference, spatial misalignment, and temporal disconnect? What kinds of politics of friendship do these networks demonstrate? How far in participating in these networks did the protagonists escape from orientalism and racism? Given the common assumption of the impending independence of India, might the protagonists' politics of friendship reasonably be described as postcolonial?

By examining the experiences of the three protagonists this thesis will follow the development of their ideas to find out whether they moved beyond being just examples of 'The other side of the raj' and whether they made, through their networks of contacts, significant contributions, independent of their metropolitan starting points, to the debates about the form the new nation of India would take and about its future contribution to the world. Identifying the moments and the situations in which their friendships developed, it will seek to demonstrate how their networks were based on friendships which broke across dividing lines of geography, race, faith, and gender, and which valued loyalty and memory above political agreement, overcoming the challenges to friendship that these dividing lines posed.

Andrews, Thompson, and Elwin

The three protagonists of this thesis are Charles Freer Andrews,⁵ Edward John Thompson,⁶ and Verrier Holman Elwin.⁷ All three faced similar challenges: how to carry forward Christian mission under the British raj, how far to conform to the British imperial project, how to maintain loyalty in friendships that did not imply total agreement. They differed in their responses to these challenges: these responses suggest how individuals coming from within the metropolitan establishment might try to come to terms with the forthcoming postcolonial world.

All three of the protagonists were born into ecclesiastical families, albeit of different Christian persuasions. Andrews's family was the most unconventional, as his father was a priest of the Catholic Apostolic Church, created by followers of the preaching of Edward Irving (1792-1834), who believed that the second coming of Christ was imminent, and that members of their church had already been saved for eternal life in heaven. Andrews's father had taken on this role following his own father's joining the church, and it was his intent that Andrews should also be ordained in this church. But just before taking up a scholarship at Pembroke College, Cambridge, Andrews underwent a conversion experience that was to lead to his leaving his father's church and to his joining the Church of England. He was confirmed in that church in Lichfield Cathedral in 1895. At Cambridge he came under the influence of Brooke Foss Westcott (1825-1901), Church of England Bishop of Durham, who combined biblical

⁵ Autobiography: C. F. Andrews, *What I Owe to Christ*, paperback edition (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1933); Biographies: Banarasidas Chaturvedi and Marjorie Sykes, *Charles Freer Andrews: A Narrative* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1949); Hugh Tinker, *The Ordeal of Love: C. F. Andrews and India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998).

⁶ Biography: Mary Lago, *'India's Prisoner': A Biography of Edward John Thompson, 1886-1946* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2001).

⁷ Autobiography: Verrier Elwin, *The Tribal World of Verrier Elwin: An Autobiography* (Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1964); Biography: Ramachandra Guha, *Savaging the Civilized: Verrier Elwin, His Tribals, and India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001).

scholarship with commitment to social action, through friendship with the bishop's youngest son Basil.⁸ Basil Westcott (1871-1900) joined the Cambridge Mission to Delhi and the staff of St Stephen's College; when he died of cholera in 1900, Andrews took his place at St Stephen's, arriving in India on 20 March 1904, aged 33.⁹

Andrews's most dramatic encounter with India took place not in the subcontinent, but in Hampstead. He was invited to attend a poetry reading by the poet W. B. Yeats (1865-1939) of poems by Rabindranath Tagore at William Rothenstein's home on Sunday 7 July 1912, at which the poet would be present. Rothenstein (1872-1945) was an artist who had actively supported the teaching of Indian art to students in India, opposing the view that only European classical models should be used. With this aim he had been instrumental in founding the London India Society, which would publish Tagore's *Gitanjali* and *Chitra* translated into English, as well as translations by Tagore and Evelyn Underhill of poems by Kabir.¹⁰ While in Calcutta he had visited the Tagore home, where he had met Rabindranath for the first time. During Tagore's 1912 visit to London, he arranged this reading of Tagore's *Gitanjali*. Among those present, as well as Andrews, were William Pearson (1881-1923) and Evelyn Underhill (1875-1941), both of whom figure in the protagonists' networks. Andrews was overwhelmed both by the poem and by the poet (who it seemed had already heard of Andrews); he described being afterwards in a trance-like state as he stayed outside in the summer night, on his way back to the home of H. W. Nevinson (1856-1941), a recent visitor to India.¹¹ This

⁸ David Newsome, *Godliness & Good Learning: Four Studies on a Victorian Ideal* (London: Murray, 1961), pp. 234–35.

⁹ Collins, *Empire, Nationalism and the Postcolonial World*, p. 125. Collins states that Andrews went to St Stephen's in 1904 as its Principal, but from 1902-1906 the Principal was Hibbert Ware. Largely because of Andrews's lobbying, in 1906 the next Principal was not Andrews but for the first time an Indian, Susil K. Rudra.

¹⁰ 'Imaginative Art in India', *The Times*, 29 April 1911.

¹¹ Tinker, *Ordeal of Love*, pp. 56–57; Priyamvada Gopal, *Insurgent Empire: Anticolonial Resistance and British Dissent* (London: Verso, 2019), p. 188.

and subsequent meetings with Tagore led to Andrews's leaving St Stephen's College and the Cambridge Mission to Delhi and making Tagore's ashram in Shantiniketan in Bengal his Indian base for the rest of his life.¹²

Andrews had been to some extent prepared for this encounter. Before leaving for India, he had spent time in Cambridge learning about the Orient from another Fellow of Pembroke College, Edward Granville Browne (1862-1926), whose 1887-8 year in Persia, aged 25, had been characterised by an avoidance of European society and full exposure to Persian life and mysticism - and opium.¹³ On arrival in India Andrews was befriended by the Vice-Principal of St Stephen's College, Susil Rudra (1861-1925), a second-generation Bengali Christian. Rudra's wife had recently died, and as well as becoming a close friend and understanding colleague Andrews effectively joined his family, mothering, as he was wont to do to the sick and to the bereaved, Rudra's two sons and daughter.

Drawing on the Rudra family papers and other documents in the St Stephen's College Archive, Susan Visvanathan has shown how close these relationships remained and how important they were to all.¹⁴ Rudra gave Andrews an understanding of an Indian spirituality which could be compatible with their responsibilities heading a Christian missionary college, and was instrumental in launching Andrews into working with Gandhi. In turn Andrews was to support Rudra when as Principal he secured a new constitution for St Stephen's College which allowed the inclusion of non-Christians among the teaching staff.

¹² As will be further discussed, an ashram is a form of religious community of Indian origin.

¹³ Edward Granville Browne, *A Year amongst the Persians: Impressions as to the Life, Character, and Thought of the People of Persia, Received during Twelve Months' Residence in That Country in the Years 1887-8* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1893).

¹⁴ Susan Visvanathan, 'S. K. Rudra, C. F. Andrews and M. K. Gandhi: Friendship, Dialogue and Interiority in the Question of Indian Nationalism', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 37.34 (2002), 3532-41 <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/4412520>> [accessed 3 August 2018].

Rudra opened Andrews up to the possibility of learning from those of other religions. Andrews's first assignment on arrival was to go to Simla to master Hindustani and his teacher for this was the Muslim Maulvi Shams-ud-din, who remembered Andrews as exceptional among his pupils in making it 'his business to understand *my* mind, *my* outlook on the world, Indian history and politics from *my* point of view'.¹⁵ According to this account Andrews wanted to learn what thought-forms lay behind the language, to know its idioms and proverbs. Interestingly, the Maulvi recalls, Andrews was not as interested in the Urdu poets as in the everyday use of the language in, for example, 'the primitive little daily or weekly prints published in hole-and-corner places all over Northern India'.¹⁶ In his autobiographical *What I Owe to Christ* Andrews also mentions a Sikh with whom he had frequent religious conversations, the President of the Regency Council of Patiala.¹⁷

Thompson's family background was in Wesleyan Methodism. His father was a missionary in South India, who died, leaving his widow to bring up six children, when Edward was aged seven. For financial reasons Edward did not complete his time at the Wesleyan Kingswood School, leaving early to work as a bank clerk. Henceforth he was effectively an autodidact. Following his mother's wishes, he trained for the Methodist ministry, and after serving in England and being ordained, joined the Wesleyan College at Bankura, West Bengal, on 21 December 1910, aged 24, to teach English literature.

Thompson also had a dramatic early encounter with Tagore when, having first met him in Calcutta, he visited him in Shantiniketan on Friday 14 November 1913. This visit coincided with the arrival of the news that Tagore had been awarded the Nobel

¹⁵ John S. (John Somervell) Hoyland, *The Man India Loved: C. F. Andrews* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1944), p. 10. Published soon after Andrews's death, this appears to be a collection of personal reminiscences, although exactly how they were collected and translated, and how much the author/editor contributed – or imagined – are not specified.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

¹⁷ Andrews, *What I Owe to Christ*, p. 81.

Prize for Literature, creating, apparently somewhat to Thompson's embarrassment, scenes of enthusiastic celebration, as everyone present bent down to touch Tagore's feet in respect. Collins contrasts Thompson's explanation of why he did not do the same ('I could have done it myself almost; but I am an Englishman and have a stern contempt for the fools who pretend they are easterners')¹⁸ with Andrews's willingness to adopt Indian dress and custom:¹⁹ Andrews touched Tagore's feet on a visit to Shantiniketan nine days later²⁰ and the following year was famously to touch Gandhi's feet on meeting him for the first time on arrival in South Africa on 1 January 1914.²¹ The 27-year-old Thompson was still finding his way in both British and Indian society; in neither did he feel himself firmly based. He had had little in the way of preparation for social interaction with Indians or contact with Indian thought outside the context of his work, although his command of Bengali seems to have been good.²² Earlier in 1913 he had started to read Tagore's poetry with a friend of the poet, Lokenath Palit, who for a year was District and Sessions Judge for the Bankura District.²³

In his Introduction to the 1991 republication of Thompson's *Rabindranath Tagore Poet and Dramatist* Harish Trivedi enlarges on Thompson's lack of cultural sensitivity towards Tagore with convincing examples.²⁴ Thompson continued to invite Tagore to be his guest at Bankura, not understanding that Tagore's formal acceptance was in fact a polite refusal. He expected acknowledgement and payment for his translation assistance, not understanding that both were assumed by Tagore to be the prerogatives

¹⁸ Thompson's notebook, 17 November 1913, in E. P. Thompson, *Alien Homage: Edward Thompson and Rabindranath Tagore* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 111.

¹⁹ Collins, *Empire, Nationalism and the Postcolonial World*, p. 132.

²⁰ Chaturvedī and Sykes, *Andrews*, p. 92.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

²² Lago, *India's Prisoner*, pp. 76–77.

²³ E. P. Thompson, *Alien Homage*, p. 28, endnote 1.

²⁴ Harish Trivedi, 'Introduction', in E. J. Thompson, *Rabindranath Tagore Poet and Dramatist*, Paperback (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. a1–36.

of his Visva-Bharati university. He addressed his letters to Tagore as to an English equal: 'Dear Tagore'.²⁵

Meeting Tagore linked Thompson with the philosopher Brajendranath Seal (1864-1938), with whom he worked on translations of some poems of the Bengali poet Ramprasad. In Calcutta in 1916 he met a young collaborator of Tagore's, the polymath statistician Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis (1893-1972), recently returned from studying at Cambridge, who was to remain a lifelong friend.²⁶ Both Seal and Mahalanobis' families were from the Brahmo Samaj religious group, which Tagore's father Debendranath (1818-1905) had created by re-founding the Brahma Sabha group of Ram Mohan Roy (1772-1833). Thompson's contact with Tagore also led to contact with Andrews who seems to have claimed precedence in access to the poet based on his seniority and his (marginally) earlier acquaintanceship.

During Thompson's visit to Shantiniketan Tagore informally asked Thompson for his advice on translating some of his poems into English: this was to lead to a series of misunderstandings and recriminations that Thompson's second son Edward Palmer Thompson (1924-1993), Uma Das Gupta, and Collins have reviewed and discussed in detail.²⁷ At various times W. B. Yeats, Robert Bridges, Thompson, William Pearson, and Andrews all tried their hand at translating Tagore, with varying degrees of success and of approval or disapproval by Tagore. Thompson, like Andrews, recognised the genius of Tagore's poetry, but, unlike Andrews, was moved less by their spiritual qualities than by the quality of the poetry. Thompson took it upon himself to act not

²⁵ Trivedi notes only one exception, in October 1939, when Thompson started his letter 'Dear Gurudev'. Significantly this letter was written during Thompson's last visit to India. Trivedi, 'Introduction', in Thompson, *Rabindranath Tagore Poet and Dramatist* (1991), p. a24.

²⁶ Lago, *India's Prisoner*, p. 105.

²⁷ E. P. Thompson, *Alien Homage*; Uma Das Gupta (ed.) *A Difficult Friendship: Letters of Edward Thompson and Rabindranath Tagore, 1913-1940* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003); Collins, *Empire, Nationalism and the Postcolonial World*, pp. 125–37.

only as translator but also as primary metropolitan critic; his criticism would not be appreciated by Tagore.

The translation issues were to come to a head with Thompson's two books on Tagore.²⁸ The first in 1921 was dedicated without permission to Seal, who broke off contact with Thompson forthwith. After the second in 1926 Tagore made a sustained attack on Thompson, writing to William Rothenstein:

... one of the most absurd books that I have ever read dealing with a poet's life and writings. ... the author is never afraid to be unjust, and that only shows his want of respect. I am certain he would have been much more careful if his subject were a continental poet of reputation in Europe.²⁹

and to Mahalanobis's wife Rani:

But where the Bengali language is concerned, if he forgets that the language is mine, that much of it I have shaped with my own hands, then the only reason for it that I can think of is that he is an Englishman and I a Bengali ... On the one hand there is his utterly shallow acquaintance with our language, and on the other his profound contempt for our country...³⁰

Tagore's extreme reaction has been variously ascribed to the much younger Thompson's perceived insolence and lack of respect, to Thompson's judging Bengali poetry according to English criteria, and to the racial polarization of opinion in India between Indian and British following the Amritsar massacre to be described in this thesis' first chapter. One further element that might be suggested is that Tagore was seeking funding for Visva-Bharati from the English-speaking world and anything that might appear to diminish his reputation, even if this was far from Thompson's intent, would hamper such efforts.

²⁸ Edward John Thompson, *Rabindranath Tagore: His Life and Work*, Heritage of India Series (Calcutta: Association Press, 1921); Thompson, *Rabindranath Tagore: Poet & Dramatist* (London: Oxford University Press, 1926).

²⁹ Tagore to William Rothenstein, 20 April 1927, quoted and discussed in E. P. Thompson, *Alien Homage*, pp. 40–41.

³⁰ Tagore to Rani Mahalanobis, 8 April 1927, quoted in Trivedi, 'Introduction', in Thompson, *Rabindranath Tagore: Poet and Dramatist* (1991), p. a19.

Thompson's enlistment in the army as a Wesleyan chaplain in 1916, first in Bombay, and then on his insistence in Mesopotamia, was to change his social position significantly. He was pleasantly surprised by his acceptance as a comrade by the chaplains of other denominations, and after his performance under fire tending the wounded, which earned him the Military Cross, he found himself well accepted by the troops too. Thirty years later Field Marshall Archibald Wavell (1883-1950, Viceroy 1943-1947), was to comment on his good war service.³¹ But his most critical cross-cultural encounter was in Jerusalem, where he met the American Presbyterian Theodosia Jessup (Theo, 1892-1970); after an appropriately reciprocal courtship they were married from her Beirut home on 10 March 1919. After leave in England, they returned to Bankura in 1920; their first son Frank was born in Darjeeling on 17 August 1920.

Although both were from missionary families the cultural differences between them were there.³² Presbyterians in New England had higher social standing than Methodists in England; the Wesleyan College in Bankura could not compare with the American College in Beirut. Theo had completed her education, including attending the renowned Vassar College in Poughkeepsie on the Hudson River in New York State, the first secondary education college for women to be founded in the United States, while Edward had not. Theo had inherited wealth behind her, which Edward lacked. They were foreigners together in the Middle East and in India, but after their move back to England Theo had to find her way in English society.³³

³¹ Archibald Percival Wavell, *Wavell: The Viceroy's Journal*, ed. by Penderel Moon (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 11.

³² Peter J. Conradi, *A Very English Hero: The Making of Frank Thompson* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), p. 16.

³³ Theodosia J. (Theodosia Jessup) Thompson, Oxford, Bodleian Libraries, MS Eng c. 5368 fols 210, 213.

Verrier Elwin was the son of the Anglican Bishop of Freetown, Sierra Leone, who, having been appointed to the English see of Bristol, died of disease, like many of his fellow missionaries to West Africa, before he could take up this appointment; Verrier was then aged seven. Both Verrier's parents belonged to the Evangelical, Low Church, wing of the Church of England, and Verrier remained firmly within this persuasion until his university days at Merton College, Oxford, his father's college, where the chaplain and several of Verrier's friends belonged to the Anglo-Catholic, High Church, wing. At Oxford he took first class degrees first in English and then in Theology before being ordained and becoming Vice-Principal of the Evangelical, Low Church, theological college Wycliffe Hall. Within a year he had resigned, feeling that his position was incompatible with his now convinced Anglo-Catholic beliefs. Instead of seeking further academic and ecclesiastical appointments in England, he decided to go to Poona in India to join a recently founded Anglican ashram.³⁴ In his autobiography he justifies this decision as a form of reparation, remembering 'how my family had made its money, such as it was, out of India, and my countrymen had gone to India to exploit it and to rule'.³⁵ However Ramachandra Guha in his biography of Elwin sets this memory against a list of eight or nine reasons, not including reparation, included in a letter to Elwin's Merton College chaplain and theology tutor F. W. Green (1884-1953); these can be summarized as the opportunity to put himself at a distance from his (presumably over-close) mother (who approved, even if they had had 'a few dreadful scenes'), to test his missionary and monastic vocation, and to settle into his recently adopted High Church anglicanism (as against leaving the Church of England, presumably to join the Church of Rome, or to leave organized religion altogether), and as a chance to identify

³⁴ Sister Barbara Noreen, *A Wheat Grain Sown in India* (Harpenden: Barbara Noreen, 1988).

³⁵ Elwin, *Tribal World*, p. 36.

with India in a religious community run on Indian lines with a policy of ‘great sympathy, the spirit of identification, the presentation of a Christian Consummator, not an iconoclast’.³⁶ This letter was prophetic: with time he was to remain permanently distant from his mother, to abandon missionary work and monasticism, to leave organized religion altogether, and to identify with India in the fullest sense by becoming a citizen of the independent nation. He arrived in Poona on 20 November 1927, aged 25.

For Elwin it was the encounter with Gandhi and participation in the nationalist movement that led to his move away from the Poona ashram to work among the Adivasi (the aboriginal or tribal peoples), and then his encounters with the Adivasi that led him to abandon first mission and then Christianity. In his autobiography Elwin describes his first experience of visiting Gandhi’s ashram at Sarbamati in 1928 for an inter-religious conference and how naturally he became a disciple, convinced by Gandhi’s ‘inner spiritual power that ... filled the whole place with kindness and love’.³⁷ Subsequently he became closely linked politically to Gandhi, to the alarm of the government and of his ecclesiastical superiors.

It will be the argument of this thesis that these encounters, and those which preceded and followed them, resulted for each of the protagonists in a life-long identification with India that progressively nullified any remaining ‘orientalist’ approach they may have brought with them from the metropolis, enabling them to make friends and exchange opinions without the binary ‘Your people’ and ‘My people’ of the classical orientalist discourse. This identification with India led them to involvement in the debate on the political future of the subcontinent, and on what might be meant by the

³⁶ Elwin to F. W. Green, 31 July 1927, quoted in Guha, *Savaging the Civilized*, p. 29.

³⁷ Elwin, *Tribal World* p. 42.

Indian nation and the Indian people. It led them further, to their different reactions to Gandhi's teachings, and, given their different points of view, to their different contributions to the debates about these teachings during and (for Elwin) after 'the years that changed the world'.³⁸

In the background of this thesis there is another actor, the novelist Edward Morgan Forster (1879-1970), whose visits to India in 1912-13 and 1921 provided the basis for his most successful novel *A Passage to India*.³⁹ Linked like the protagonists irrevocably to Indians and India, he was also an acute observer of human relationships. While providing no instant or other solutions either to the problems of personal relationships or to the problems of India, his insights on both are perceptive, and will appear from time to time, following the rhythm of the motifs which characterize his own writing.⁴⁰

Time and space

The timeframe chosen for this thesis is from 1919 to 1964. 1919 was the year of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre in Amritsar, which occurred on 13 April. The massacre, with the subsequent reactions in India and in Britain, was a turning-point as it marked the end of a period of guarded optimism as regards the future place of India in the Empire, based on India's loyal and massive contribution in men and in materials to the Empire forces in the Great War, a contribution paid for out of Indian revenues, and on the 20 August 1917 statement in the House of Commons by the Secretary of State for India, Edwin Montagu (1879-1924), foreseeing 'the progressive realisation of responsible self-government in India as an integral part of the British Empire'. The thesis will describe how first Andrews and then, a little later, Thompson responded to

³⁸ Ramachandra Guha, *Gandhi: The Years That Changed the World, 1915-1948* (London: Penguin, 2018).

³⁹ E. M. Forster, *A Passage to India* (London: Arnold, 1924).

⁴⁰ Frank Kermode, *Concerning E.M. Forster* (London: Phoenix, 2009), p. 73.

the massacre, and particularly to its aftermath during martial law in the Punjab, by aligning themselves publicly with the nationalist cause.

With this start point the legacies of the immediately preceding First World War recur in this thesis. The Rowlatt Acts in India which created the political ferment to which the Amritsar massacre responded were an extension of the wartime limitation of freedom to peacetime India. Individuals in the thesis, such as Thompson and Sorella Maria (Chapter II), found their lives changed by their wartime experiences. Romain Rolland's rejection of war contributed to his esteem and hopes for Gandhi (Chapter III). The Second World War towards the end of the thesis (Chapters IV and V) impinges on the protagonists and takes its own toll.

The end year chosen for the thesis is 1964. Elwin died on 22 February, Nehru on 27 May. Nehru's death marked the end of the 'long' independence story, and, with the peaceful transfer of government, the coming of age of India as a democracy. These two deaths ended the last of the networks of friendship to be described in this thesis. Elwin's autobiography was published posthumously in October of the same year.⁴¹

These dates define the timespan of the thesis according to the conventional calendar. But the thesis will also consider the passage of time as perceived by its actors. 'Time is change' is almost a truism, on a par with 'survival of the fittest', but it challenges our standard measurements of time, standardised only in recent history for the movements of ships, trains, and planes, and now reinforced by the embedded clocks of computers.⁴² This changing value of time in history is described by Palmer Thompson, who uses it to demonstrate how mechanical time came to dominate the discipline of work and hence

⁴¹ Elwin, *Tribal World*.

⁴² Amrit Sorli, 'Time Is Change' <<http://www.cartesio-episteme.net/ep8/ep8-sorli.htm>> [accessed 10 June 2022].

to become a weapon in the class struggle.⁴³ A more extreme challenge is made by Elizabeth Ermarth, who sees conventional measurement of time in history as restricting its understanding to a modernist link to the physical sciences, looking always to an infinite future, thereby avoiding such issues as the inevitability of death and the unique significance of tragedy.⁴⁴ Such considerations will be addressed in this thesis, not only in the enforced durations of the sea voyages, but also in the prisoners' perceptions of the passage of time, and in the confrontation of friendship with death. The particular significance of time in relation to correspondence will be discussed in the next section of this introduction.

The thesis takes a transnational approach, based primarily on events in India, England, Italy, and Switzerland, but also taking into account the global context, which included developments immediately before and during this period in Ireland (the 1917 Easter Revolt), Russia (the 1917 revolutions), Italy and Germany (the rise of fascism and racism), Spain (the Civil War), Switzerland (resistance to conscription), Fiji and Guyana (indentured labour), and South Africa and the United States of America (racial segregation). Given that for transnational histories the 'selection of a given topic with its particular historical analysis both precedes and determines the definition of the space to be scrutinised', the two 'nations' forming this primary space have variable geographical and conceptual geometry during the period under study.⁴⁵ The metropolis, the United Kingdom, remains reasonably constant, even if battered by the secession of the Irish Republic and by two world wars, the first war strengthening, and the second

⁴³ E. P. Thompson, 'Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism', *Past and Present*, 38 (1967), 56–97 <<https://academic.oup.com/past/article/38/1/56/1454624>> [accessed 27 March 2021].

⁴⁴ Elizabeth Deeds Ermarth, *Sequel to History: Postmodernism and the Crisis of Representational Time* (Princeton: University Press, 1992), pp. 35, 36, 121.

⁴⁵ Michael G. Müller and Cornelius Torp, 'Conceptualising Transnational Spaces in History', *European Review of History: Revue Européenne d'histoire*, 16.5 (2009), 609–17 (p. 611) <<https://doi.org/10.1080/13507480903262587>>.

weakening, its claim to unite as if in one nation, ‘Greater Britain’ as it were, the ensemble of the Anglo-Dominions.⁴⁶ However, given that until 1947 the nation (as opposed to the empire) of India had not been territorially or constitutionally defined, the ‘national’ at the periphery of this transnational flow has to be considered to be changing over time. Indeed, the argument of the thesis requires discussion of ideas of India, and of what it might mean to be Indian. Further, for this thesis, the ‘national’ of ‘transnational’ includes not only geographical and political spaces, but also the different ‘nations’ of different religions, and those of elite and subaltern, and those of different castes. Further examples of these different ‘nations’ are the Adivasi, who after Independence would find themselves confronting a new metropolitan ‘nation’, manifest in the government of independent India.

As with time, space can be defined not just geographically, but also in terms of how it is perceived and imagined by the individual in particular circumstances. Stephen Legg has emphasized the centrality of scale in the consideration of space:

Whether this centrality is acknowledged and explicit, or assumed and implicit, approaches to scale across human and physical geography inform the way in which we craft and practice our research; the examples and ideas we teach; and the ways through which we imagine the worlds in which we live, visit, desire or fear.⁴⁷

Legg gives as example the ocean liners, taking the delegates to and from the Round Table Conferences of 1930 and 1931, providing a confined space in which these delegates interacted during a defined timespan. His example is relevant to this thesis’ discussion of Gandhi and his companions’ 1931 voyages between India and Europe.

⁴⁶ James Belich, *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Anglo-World, 1783-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line: White Men’s Countries and the International Challenge of Racial Equality*, *Critical Perspectives on Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

⁴⁷ Stephen Legg, ‘Political Lives at Sea: Working and Socialising to and from the India Round Table Conference in London, 1930–1932’, *Journal of Historical Geography*, 68 (2020), 21–32 <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhg.2019.12.005>>.

The present thesis also refers to other significant spaces defined by the perceptions of their inhabitants, both short and longer term, the ashrams of Gandhi and Tagore, the Christian ashrams of the Christa Seva Sangha and of St Francis, the *Eremo Francescano*, and Romain Rolland's villas at Villeneuve, as well as the prisons in which Gandhi and Nehru were incarcerated.

In his recent thesis Somak Biswas has described and discussed in detail the spaces of the ashramic communities of Gandhi (Tolstoy Farm, Phoenix Farm, Sarbamati, and Sevagram) and Tagore (Shantiniketan, and later Visva-Bharati).⁴⁸ He finds a common pattern of a community living around a guru who sought to reject the tyranny of modernity, in Gandhi's case colonial and industrial domination, in Tagore's case educational and cultural rigidity. All the communities had their disciplinary rules and led a life of simplicity: all assigned a central place to worship and prayer. Biswas sees the challenging attraction of these communities to those westerners he calls 'Indophiles', several of whom feature in the networks to be studied in the present thesis, which will look at their experiences in relation to its three themes.

Letters and other sources

The fundamental sources for this thesis have been the archives of Thompson's correspondence in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, and of Elwin's correspondence in the British Library, London.⁴⁹ The initial intent was to also consult the archives of Andrews's correspondence at Sarbamati Ashram and Visva-Bharati University, but pandemic travel restrictions made this impossible. Original letters from Andrews have

⁴⁸ Somak Biswas, 'Passages through India: Indian Gurus, Western Disciples and the Cultural Politics of Indophilia 1890-1940' (PhD thesis, University of Warwick, 2020), pp. 67–117.

⁴⁹ Thompson Papers, Oxford, Bodleian Library; Papers of Verrier Elwin, *Anthropologist* (1924-1964), London, British Library.

been found in the Thompson and Elwin archives, and also in the William McGregor and Isabel Ross archive in the Bodleian Library.⁵⁰

There are original letters from Gandhi and Nehru in the Thompson papers, and from Gandhi in the Ross papers. Their published letters are to be found respectively in their *Collected and Selected Works*, as well as in Nehru's *A Bunch of Old Letters* and Gopalkrishna Gandhi's *My Dear Bapu*.⁵¹

Close reading of the correspondence of the protagonists has allowed an analysis of its subjective and affective elements, not only in the body of the letters, but also in the salutations and sign off lines. Other indications of the state of the friendships come from accounts of face-to-face meetings, from triangulating comments in the writings of their contemporaries, and from gifts of books with their dedications and inscriptions.

Erla Huldur Halldórsdóttir has discussed some of the issues arising from the use of private letters as historical sources.⁵² First there is the issue of reliability, which for the sources used in this thesis will be discussed later in this introduction. Next there is the ethics of using these sources, if intended originally to be confidential between the writer and recipient. When access has been granted by the writer or recipient or their descendants there is implicit the concession of the letters as historical sources. But the historian must be attentive to the privacy expectations of the other writer or recipient

⁵⁰ Papers of William McGregor and Isabel Ross, Oxford, Bodleian Library.

⁵¹ *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, (Electronic Book, 98 vols, New Delhi, Publications Division Government of India, 1999), subsequently referenced as *Gandhi* <<https://www.gandhiashramsevagram.org/gandhi-literature/collected-works-of-mahatma-gandhi-volume-1-to-98.php>> [accessed 1 February 2023]; *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru* (Series 1, 15 vols, Series 2, 85 vols; New Delhi: Orient Longman and Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1972-2019), subsequently referenced as *Nehru* <<https://nehruselectedworks.com/>> [accessed 1 February 2023]; Jawaharlal Nehru, *A Bunch of Old Letters: Written Mostly to Jawaharlal Nehru and Some Written by Him*, 2nd ed. (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1960); *My Dear Bapu ...*, ed. by Gopalkrishna Gandhi (Gurgaon: Penguin Books India, 2017).

⁵² Erla Hulda Halldórsdóttir, 'Fragments of Lives—The Use of Private Letters in Historical Research', *NORA: Nordic Journal of Women's Studies*, 15.1 (2007), 35–49 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/08038740701253551>>.

and of their descendants, or of the descendants of those described, who will not have been party to the granting of access. Thirdly there is the risk of over-identification of the historian with the writer, particularly when they share the same cultural and social background, challenging the historian's objectivity, even if this shared background may help the historian to interpret the letters.

Halldórsdóttir sees the value of the letter as a 'snapshot' from a point in time, hence having advantages over a retrospective memoir, but cautions on the selection of letters for research, stressing the need to understand the context of the letter and the relationship between writer and recipient. She acknowledges the problem of the use of passionate language in letters, which may or may not indicate a romantic relationship; there are parallels here with the 'love-letters' written by Andrews to Tagore and by Madeleine Slade (Mirabehn, 1892-1982), daughter of an English admiral, (and probably also by Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, 1887-1964, daughter of a Christian Sikh prince, whose letters the Mahatma destroyed) to Gandhi, and, interestingly, with the 'familiar letters' exchanged between early modern male friends discussed by Alan Bray.⁵³ Biswas analyses in detail the extent to which love was expressed in the correspondence of Gandhi and his disciples, male and female, and finds both same sex and opposite sex attachments sublimated in the passionate exchanges of such letters as have survived.⁵⁴

The issue raised by Halldórsdóttir of the confidentiality assumed by the writer is of particular concern when letters contain disparaging remarks. Examples of these are the attacks on Thompson in the two letters written by Tagore, already discussed in the previous section. While, as Trivedi points out, it is highly unlikely that Thompson ever

⁵³ Mahatma Gandhi, *Letters to Rajkumari Amrit Kaur* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 1961); Alan Bray, *The Friend* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), pp. 48, 160–61.

⁵⁴ Biswas, 'Passages through India', pp. 48–55.

read these letters, Thompson's descendant, his son Palmer, was clearly distressed by them.⁵⁵ Similarly, Thompson attacked Andrews in a private letter, and Forster joked cruelly at Thompson's expense in his *Commonplace Book*.⁵⁶ Such criticisms need to be read as private snapshots of their writers' emotions at the time of writing, probably telling us more about the criticizer than about the criticized, and not as closures of friendships, which subsequent letters and histories show were maintained.

Letter-writing in the twentieth century has tended to have been taken as a given; only now when direct electronic communication has reduced letter-writing to a minority activity has it emerged as an independent subject for historical research. More has been written about letter-writing in earlier centuries and cultures, and many of the findings of these historians are helpful for understanding more recent activity. Thus Whyman, before intriguingly reviewing what might be termed 'subaltern' correspondence in England in her long eighteenth century (1660-1800), starts from Erasmus' 1522 humanist definition of a letter as 'a mutual conversation between absent friends, which should be neither unpolished, rough or artificial, nor confined to a single topic, nor tediously long'.⁵⁷ David Barton and Nigel Hall in their introduction to a collection of essays on social aspects of letter-writing look back even further in time to a twelfth century Italian monk who defined the structure of a letter as five sections: 'Salutation, Securing of good-will, Narrative, Petition, and Conclusion'.⁵⁸ Barton and Hall describe the specific coordinates of the letter, which they give as the writer, identified by the signature and use of the first person, and the recipient or recipients, identified by the

⁵⁵ Trivedi, 'Introduction', in Thompson, *Rabindranath Tagore Poet and Dramatist* (1991), p. a29; E. P. Thompson, *Alien Homage*, p. 91.

⁵⁶ Collins, *Empire, Nationalism and the Postcolonial World*, pp. 132–33, 141.

⁵⁷ Susan E. Whyman, *The Pen and the People: English Letter Writers 1660-1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 11.

⁵⁸ *Letter Writing as a Social Practice*, ed. by David Barton and Nigel Hall, *Studies in Written Language and Literacy*, v. 9 (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 2000), p. 6.

salutation and the use of the second person singular or plural. ‘The writer constructs an intended reader in the text’, already the letter is developing a structure and a unity of its own. Space and time are defined in two separate universes, those of the writer and those of the recipient, the latter being potentially both those of the time of writing and those of the time of receipt.

These time differences have significant impacts for the writer and especially for the recipients, who develop, as expressed in their own letters, ‘an overwhelming dependence on mail. When, people asked, would their letters arrive? Why had they been delayed? Had the writer forgotten the person who desperately waited for mail?’⁵⁹ Receiving or not receiving mail had an emotional impact independent of the content of the letter.⁶⁰ So, emotionally driven, the actions of sender and recipient form part of the fabric of living, ‘catching the post’, expecting the postman at a certain time (to read the mail with the early morning tea, or on returning home from work), or, for the traveller, collecting the mail at the *Poste Restante*, the bank, the hotel, or the travel agent. The timing of the mails was part of the rhythm of living. During the period of Whyman’s research, mail within England that had taken many days became almost overnight; during the period of this thesis the mail between England and India that had taken the weeks of the mail ship voyages became the four to five days’ timing of the aerogramme.⁶¹

In his introduction to *The Hill of Devi*, his 1953 recollections, based on his letters from India to England, of his first visit to Devas Senior over Christmas 1912 and of his time there in 1921 as secretary to the Maharajah, Forster notes how the content of a letter depends on the recipient’s relationship to the writer, explaining how this has

⁵⁹ Whyman, *Pen and the People*, p. 18.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

meant editing the letters for publication to omit comments (to his mother) like ‘Aren’t Indians quaint?’.⁶² Despite this editing he includes in his book detail that confirms this dependence on the recipient; he would have been unlikely to have included in a letter to his mother the account in a letter to a Cambridge friend of his regular morning visit while staying in Chhatarpur from the sphinx-like Krishna, with whom he had already visited the Khajrao temples.⁶³ In the letters reviewed in this thesis similar recipient-dependent differences will be seen; content in letters to mothers will differ from those to close friends, evident in Elwin’s and Thompson’s letters to their mothers compared to those to their acquaintances, and in Thompson’s case compared to those to his wife.

The writer needed to consider that others beside the recipient might read the letter. Whyman illustrates how one of the drivers, if not the main driver, behind the opening of the Royal Mail to public correspondence with its attempt to maintain a monopoly was to ensure the ability secretly to inspect that correspondence.⁶⁴ The correspondents studied by Whyman note this in their letters, and it becomes a theme too in the letters reviewed in this thesis, especially in the correspondence with those in prison. Extreme measures might be taken to avoid this, including, as described in Chapter IV of this thesis, sending mail directly to the Viceroy for forwarding, and thus turning the imperial totalitarian control of the mail on its head.

The imperial administration used the telegraph, which at least at the beginning of the period of the thesis was very expensive for the general user. The strategic importance of the telegraph lines will be evident in Chapter I of the thesis: the cutting of the line between Amritsar and Lahore meant that messengers had to take the report of the

⁶² E. M. Forster, *The Hill of Devi* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965), p. 9.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 129: ‘I did not post the letter locally, for it would certainly have been opened and might never have reached its destination.’

⁶⁴ Whyman, *Pen and the People*, pp. 48–49.

massacre personally to the Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab and was the pretext for the act of personal violence with which the chapter begins. But for instructions that must be seen only by the recipient there was no substitute for the sealed uncensored letter: Wavell learnt of his dismissal in a letter from Clement Attlee (1883-1967, Prime Minister, United Kingdom, 1945-1951) delivered by special messenger.⁶⁵

Barton and Hall discuss the ‘recontextualisation’ of letters when they are moved into other arenas and used for different purposes, such as historical research. ‘Collections of letters have been published as biography, as literature and as entertainment.’⁶⁶ This thesis has used published collections of letters when the originals were not available. Even when originals are available there may be an element of selection over which letters have been donated to the archive: Guha notes, correctly, that many of the letters that relate to the period of Elwin’s first marriage are missing from the British Library archive, presumably removed before donation, or destroyed, by his family. With published collections of letters, the potential for selection is even greater, even if the extensive footnotes to the massive publications of Gandhi and Nehru’s writings suggest that every effort has been made to provide a comprehensive picture.

These published collections raise the question as to whether the writer had in mind that his letter might be published at some time in the future and might modify its content accordingly. Particularly this is likely to have applied to Tagore, Gandhi, and Nehru. There is an interesting parallel here with the letters sent by the second Bishop of Calcutta, Reginald Heber, to his wife from his Indian travels; these were specifically

⁶⁵ Wavell, *Viceroy’s Journal*, p. 417.

⁶⁶ Barton and Hall, *Letter Writing*, p. 10.

intended for publication, which his wife achieved after the bishop's untimely death in South India.⁶⁷

Other derivatives from letter-writing include letters written to newspapers, newspaper and journal articles, and novels based in part or in whole on correspondence. These derivations can be seen in published primary sources to be reviewed in the present thesis. The protagonists all wrote letters to newspapers; in Thompson's case this was his first overtly political contribution. They also wrote articles for newspapers and journals. These articles might be republished as pamphlets (a series of pamphlets authored by Andrews had this basis) or collected to be published as books, such as Thompson's *A Letter from India*.⁶⁸

In its search for the networks of the three protagonists the thesis will be based primarily on their correspondence, published and unpublished, read in the contexts of some of their other writings, and those of other members of their networks, again published and unpublished. All three protagonists were prolific correspondents, and much of their correspondence is available. But, as already described, inevitably there is an element of selection in what has been kept for posterity, and even more so in what has been published.⁶⁹ There is the problem too that only half the correspondence may be available, that of one of the correspondents not being available (for example, as already mentioned, Gandhi claimed to have destroyed the letters he received from Amrit Kaur), or at best being in a different location (almost all of Gandhi's letters to Andrews have been published, but Andrews's letters to him remain for the moment unpublished in the archive of Sarbamati Ashram, Ahmedabad).

⁶⁷ Reginald Heber, *Narrative of a Journey through the Upper Provinces of India, from Calcutta to Bombay, 1824-1825, with Notes upon Ceylon, an Account of a Journey to Madras and the Southern Provinces, 1826, and Letters Written in India*, ed. by Amelia Heber, 2nd ed. (London: Murray, 1828).

⁶⁸ Edward John Thompson, *A Letter from India* (London: Faber & Faber, 1932).

⁶⁹ Guha, *Savaging the Civilized*, p. 128.

Thompson and Elwin translated verse, and all three protagonists wrote poems of their own. Thompson and Elwin also wrote novels and plays, and all three wrote non-fiction extensively, as magazine articles and contributions to newspapers, pamphlets, and full-length books, the latter ranging from anthropological reports through historical monographs to contributions to political debate. Careful selection from this literature is required if it is to be used to establish the contexts of the networks. This thesis is intended as a work of historical rather than literary scholarship, although when relevant it will draw attention to the conclusions of those who work or who have worked in this other field.

A chronological framework has been provided, not always accurately, by Andrews's and Elwin's autobiographies, supported by the biographies of all three protagonists. For Andrews the first biography by Chaturvedī and Sykes is careful to correct, if necessary, Andrews's autobiography which was based entirely on memory. All four biographies (two in the case of Andrews) provide important narratives and analysis. Other autobiographies and published diaries consulted include those of Gould, Jacob, Nehru, Scott, and Wavell.

My own first visit to India was in 1964, between leaving school and starting university. I stayed in London the night before my departure with my former boarding school housemaster, T. E. B. Howarth, himself born in India, who sent me on my way with the first volume of Philip Mason's *The Men who Ruled India* and a comment on the relationship between India and Britain as 'One of the great romantic stories of all time'.⁷⁰ My first night in India was spent at the Cambridge Brotherhood House where Andrews had lived sixty years before. I stayed for several months in an Anglican

⁷⁰ Philip Woodruff (Philip Mason), *The Men Who Ruled India* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1953).

Christian Ashram, where the daily routine owed much to Sevagram and the daily worship something to the Christa Seva Sangh, including on occasion Winslow's Liturgy for India. Here I was introduced to the idea of fulfilment Christianity, mainly through the lens of Raimon Panikkar's *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism*.⁷¹ On a trip to Ranikhet (to see the snows in the early morning) I first heard of Elwin, who had just died.

As an undergraduate at Oxford (1964-1967), I played truant from my medical studies to attend R. C. Zaehner's lectures on the Bhagavad Gita. Elwin's autobiography *The Tribal World of Verrier Elwin* appeared in the window of Blackwell's bookshop early in my first term and led me to the other works of Elwin, then still on open shelves in the Indian Institute library.

From 1997 onwards I have been privileged to make several visits to India. Relevant to this thesis have been visits to Goa, to Sarbamati and Rajkot, to Tranquebar, Tanjore, Trichinopoly, and Madras, to Darjeeling and Serampore, and most recently, just in time before the pandemic took hold in Europe, to Bastar and the Chitrakote Falls, Chhattisgarh, Amarkantak, Karanjia, and Sevagram.

Faith and India

It was the protagonists' Christian faith that first brought them to India. But even as their Indian experiences put pressure on their links with their churches and on their Christian belief, it can be argued that it was their faith and strong sense of mission that was the foundation for their commitments to Indian freedom and for their lasting friendships.

⁷¹ Raimon Panikkar, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1964).

Faith as a word and as a concept is a difficult subject for historical analysis. It can be used both to describe a religious grouping, as in ‘the Jewish faith’, ‘the Protestant faith’, ‘the Catholic faith’, and also to describe the belief or world view of an individual. Diarmaid MacCulloch’s *A History of Christianity* uses it little, and then mainly to describe the loss of faith (individual belief) resulting from nineteenth century biblical scholarship and twentieth century psychology.⁷² Adrian Gregory’s chapter ‘Beliefs and religion’ in *The Cambridge History of the Second World War* uses it in both the group and individual senses; he also uses the term ‘sea of faith’, quoting from Matthew Arnold’s poem ‘Dover Beach’, in which the poet hears in the sound of the waves drawing back over the pebbles the decline of that previously generally-held religious belief.⁷³ Following the same theme Brian Stanley in *Christianity in the Twentieth Century* paradoxically ascribes ‘confidence of faith’ to the secular voices who at the beginning of that century foresaw it as the century that would see the final end of religious belief.⁷⁴

In his 1968 inaugural lecture as Oxford’s Nolloth Professor of the Philosophy of the Christian Religion, *Neutrality and Commitment*, Basil Mitchell addressed some of the issues that arise when a believing philosopher studies religion.⁷⁵ As he acknowledged, the same or similar issues might arise for the historian. He saw these issues as a special case of the more generic situation ‘which confronts any academic who has to reconcile the demands of scholarly caution and detachment with the need to develop and maintain

⁷² Diarmaid MacCulloch, *A History of Christianity: The First Three Thousand Years* (London: Allen Lane, 2009), pp. 859–62.

⁷³ Adrian Gregory, ‘Beliefs and Religion’, in *The Cambridge History of the First World War* (Cambridge, England, 2014), III, 418, 426, 437; Matthew Arnold, *New Poems*, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1868), p. 112.

⁷⁴ Brian Stanley, *Christianity in the Twentieth Century: A World History*, Princeton History of Christianity (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), p. 2.

⁷⁵ Basil Mitchell, *Neutrality and Commitment: An Inaugural Lecture Delivered before the University of Oxford on 13 May 1968* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968).

a consistent “philosophy of life”’. This special case was particularly challenging when the philosopher (here could be read also the historian) was a religious believer:

committed not only to the acceptance of certain propositions, but to faith in God and loyalty to the Church as an institution. And this means that his commitment to certain beliefs, since it is bound up with something analogous to faith in a person, is of a different order from the commitment any man may have to a philosophy of life, which he is free at any time to abandon without incurring a charge of disloyalty.

Mitchell explains that the Christian philosopher, like any other academic, must be prepared to live according to a world view, a faith, which may not always be consistent with his academic postulates, but that this potential inconsistency is inevitable given that that this world view will never have been precisely or comprehensively articulated and that it will have been influenced ‘by innumerable currents of thought which affect the language he uses and reflect as yet unidentified assumptions and arguments’.

For the purposes of this thesis Mitchell’s identification of loyalty as a feature of Christian faith will be an important element in tracing the trajectories of faith of the protagonists and the implications of these trajectories for their networks. In this loyalty there is consistency between the use of the word faith in this religious sense and its use in the more general sense of ‘having faith in a person’. In this thesis the use of the concept of faith will be both narrow and wide, restricted to the agency driving beliefs and world views of the individual, rather than to those of religious groups, but not limited to any specific religions or world views, and for two of the protagonists continuing even after their rejection of organised religion.

When they set out for India, the primary commitment of the three protagonists of this thesis was to Christian mission. Two, Thompson and Elwin, had missionary fathers; Elwin additionally had uncles and cousins in the Indian Civil Service. Andrews and Elwin had been deeply involved in Christian religious activities in their student years. But not one of the three could be said to have been fully prepared for what they

would experience in India, both in their missionary work and in their wider encounters with Indians, or to have had much inkling of how these encounters and experiences would change their philosophies and their lives. What was the historical background to the Christian presence they found in India?

At the beginning of the Christian Era there were well-established Jewish diaspora communities on the Indian subcontinent, which through trading links would have maintained contact with the Jewish metropolis, Jerusalem.⁷⁶ Romila Thapar has reviewed various accounts of the arrival of Christianity and concludes that while the tradition that Thomas the Apostle came as a missionary in the first century is not implausible, given the extensive trade between India and the Middle East in this period, the existence of Christian churches and communities can certainly be dated back at least to the middle of the first millennium, with a migration of Persian Christians to Kerala and the establishment of the Syrian Christian Church there.⁷⁷ Ironically from the point of view of western mission to India in the modern period, this date sets the creation of a formal structure of Christian churches in India as contemporaneous with its creation in Anglo-Saxon England.⁷⁸

The Portuguese explorers were aware of these Indian Christians and met with two of their priests in Cochin in 1500.⁷⁹ The establishment by force of the Portuguese colony in Goa was associated over time with the creation of the archbishopric of Goa (the archbishop being the primate for all the Roman Catholic Churches of the Pacific), the

⁷⁶ Yohanan Ben David, *Indo-Judaic Studies: Some Papers* (New Delhi: Northern Book Centre, 2002).

⁷⁷ Romila Thapar, *The Penguin History of Early India: From the Origins to AD 1300* (London: Penguin, 2003), pp. 178–79.

⁷⁸ Richard A. Fletcher, *The Conversion of Europe: From Paganism to Christianity 371 - 1386 AD* (London: Fontana Press, 1998), p. 117.

⁷⁹ *The Voyage of Pedro Álvares Cabral to Brazil and India*, ed. by William Brooks Greenlee, Works Issued by the Hakluyt Society, Ser. 2, 81 (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), p. 176.

building of a large baroque cathedral, and the introduction of a local branch of the Holy Inquisition (which two centuries later was to be attacked by Voltaire).⁸⁰

The religious arrangements followed by the British East India Company were very different. The Company had its chaplains, but its treaty arrangements with the local powers specifically excluded missionary activity within the territories under its control. The Northamptonshire cobbler William Carey (1761-1834), whose revolutionary call to missionary activity went against the prevailing view that conversion of the heathen was not man's but God's business, to be achieved in God's good time, had therefore to base himself in 1800 in the Danish enclave of Serampore, on the right bank of the River Hooghly, upriver from Calcutta, the King of Denmark being an enthusiastic supporter of Christian mission.⁸¹ In so doing Carey was following the example of two German Lutheran missionaries in the south of India who in 1706, almost a century earlier, had arrived in the Danish coastal enclave of Tranquebar, south of the British Fort St George (Madras) and of the French territory of Pondicherry.⁸²

Carey's call to mission in India became a significant political issue in the United Kingdom where his cause was supported by the evangelical Clapham Sect. On 12 July 1813 the House of Commons, debating the renewal of the East India Company's charter, passed a resolution supporting missionary activity within the Company's territories. William Wilberforce (1759-1833), a member of the Sect, spoke for three

⁸⁰ MacCulloch, *History of Christianity*, pp. 703, 705, 859–62; Voltaire, *Œuvres Complètes de Voltaire, Avec Des Notes et Une Notice Historique Sur La Vie de Voltaire* (Paris: Furne, 1836), iv, 786.

⁸¹ William Carey, *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians, to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens* (Leicester: printed and sold by Ann Ireland, and the other booksellers in Leicester; J Johnson; T Knott; R Dilly, London; and Smith, at Sheffield, 1792); George Smith, *The Life of William Carey: Shoemaker and Missionary*, Everyman's Library (London: Dent, 1909).

⁸² Helle Jørgensen, *Tranquebar-Whose History? Transnational Cultural Heritage in a Former Danish Trading Colony in South India*, *New Perspectives in South Asian History*, 2 (New Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 2014), pp. 16, 26.

hours in its support. Later he told a friend ‘... I took a very active part in that greatest of all causes, for I really place it before the Abolition [of the Slave Trade] ... of laying a ground for the communication to our Indian fellow-subjects of Christian light and moral improvement.’⁸³

Following the Commons’ resolution, the resulting Act of Parliament included the clause:

And whereas it is the Duty of this Country to promote the Interest and Happiness of the Native Inhabitants of the *British Dominions in India*; and such Measures ought to be adopted as may tend to the Introduction among them of useful Knowledge, and of religious and moral Improvement; and in furtherance of the above Objects, sufficient Facilities ought to be afforded by Law to Persons desirous of going to and remaining in *India*, for the purpose of accomplishing those benevolent Designs, so as the Authority of the local Governments respecting the Intercourse of *Europeans* with the Interior of the Country be preserved, and the Principles of the *British Government*, on which the Natives of *India* have hitherto relied for the free Exercise of their Religion, be inviolably maintained: ...⁸⁴

This clause as finally adopted was a compromise. Missionaries were now allowed within British India, but only if they remained subject to the authority of the British Governors. An exception to this was provided in the case of the Church of England which was now to have its own bishop in Calcutta, responsible to the Archbishop of Canterbury, and taking responsibility for the activity of all Anglican clergy and missionaries in India. This bishopric was to be financed by the East India Company.

The new act was to form the basis for an explosion of missionary activity. Ten years later, in 1823, a newly arrived non-conformist missionary, James William Massie (1799-1869), reviewed the missions operating in Madras (a city in which the first census in 1831 found just under 40,000 inhabitants). These were the Tract society, two

⁸³ Robert Isaac Wilberforce and Samuel Wilberforce, *The Life of William Wilberforce*, 5 vols (London: John Murray, 1838), IV, 126.

⁸⁴ East India Company, *Papers Respecting the Negotiation with His Majesty’s Ministers for a Renewal of the East-India Company’s Exclusive Privileges, for a Further Term after the 1st March 1814* (London: Printed by E Cox and Son, 1813), p. 1134.

Mission printing offices, a Bible Society, a Samaritan society, the Church Missionary Society, the London Missionary Society (his own), the Christian Knowledge Society, the Wesleyan Missionary Society, a Christian Instruction Society, and the American Brethren. He described the various places of Christian worship, which included the Government-funded Mission Chapel for Europeans and Eurasians, the London Missionary Society's chapel, founded by a Mr Loveless, with boys' and girls' free schools for 150 children of mixed descent, funded by a Eurasian Catholic, Mr Delmonte, who had also funded the Roman Catholic chapel. At Vepery Massie visited the first Protestant mission church in British India, founded and served by missionaries from Tranquebar, and surrounded by a large population of Tamil Christians. Near Vepery he also found a Unitarian chapel with an Indian teacher. Further on he found the large and magnificent Scottish Presbyterian St Andrew's Church, modelled on St Martin's-in-the-Fields in London, though with a circular ground-plan; the building of the church had been funded by the East India Company at the same time as the creation of the Anglican hierarchy in recognition that Scotland also had its established church, of which many of the Company's officials were members. From the sea on arrival Massie had noted the Armenian church, but he made no mention of the Syrian Christian and Portuguese Roman Catholic churches also present close by.⁸⁵

The missionary arriving from Britain faced several challenges. The first was survival: Massie's wife and new-born son died respectively a week and a few months after his arrival, and Massie himself gave health problems as his reason for moving from Madras to the more salubrious Bangalore. Mortality was also high in the Anglican

⁸⁵ Massie, James William, *Continental India: Travelling Sketches and Historical Recollections, Illustrating the Antiquity, Religion, and Manners of the Hindoos, the Extent of British Conquests, and the Progress of Missionary Operations* (London: Thomas Ward, 1840), pp. 119-171.

hierarchy: three of the first four bishops died within three years of taking office. Next was language: only a minority achieved the remarkable fluency in Indian languages of William Carey or of the Company chaplain Henry Martyn (1781-1812), and Massie's failure to learn an Indian language led to his championing the employment of mother-tongue preachers and instruction in English in missions. Thirdly for those not forming part of the Company-financed establishment financial support had to be found, either from their missionary societies, who needed constant input from the missionaries in the field to attract their donors, or from individual appeals, or from fees from teaching activities. A fourth took the form of discrimination, based on class, caste, skin-colour, or race, affecting not only their congregations, but also the missionaries themselves. Finally, as Massie was soon to find, there was a constant risk of falling out with missionary colleagues, even within the same denomination.

A hundred years later these five challenges, health, language, finance, discrimination, and conflict with colleagues, were still faced by the protagonists of this thesis. Basil Westcott's death was the opening for Andrews to move to India; Elwin nearly died after his first year there. Andrews knew Urdu but was less skilled in Bengali; Elwin knew only Maratha and Thompson only Bengali. Elwin initially financed St Francis' Ashram with a preaching tour in England; Andrews famously had no resources, having donated the considerable royalties from his book *What I Owe to Christ* to Tagore's university. Andrews experienced colour discrimination against a companion in a church in South Africa; later he was proud to have been turned out of a church in the Punjab because of his allegiance to Gandhi. All three protagonists experienced antagonism from missionary colleagues, Andrews in Calcutta, Thompson in Bankura, and Elwin in Poona and Karanjia.

The controversy around the Company's providing support for English medium education seems to have paralleled the controversy around permission for missionary activity, covering approximately the same period and with more or less the same rival factions.⁸⁶ Despite Macaulay's notorious 1835 Education Minute, which demeaned the value of all Indian culture and learning, the eventual compromise, encouraging English medium teaching while continuing to provide some support for oriental studies, meant that missions played an increasingly important role in education, particularly at secondary and tertiary levels, driven by Indian desire to be able to access employment under the Raj.

Both Andrews and Thompson had initially come out to India to teach. Missionary schools and colleges had no difficulty in attracting pupils, anxious to secure qualifications that would open employment opportunities, but in terms of conversions to Christianity they had a very limited role. It was in a college such as this, firmly within the Wesleyan Methodist tradition, and with Wesleyan financial backing for its missionary staff, that Thompson found himself when he arrived in Bankura, Bengal. As a member of the staff Thompson had European type accommodation and appropriate servants; although he enjoyed the Indian countryside, his contacts with Indians were limited, and restricted by racial conventions, at least until such time as he met Tagore and his followers.⁸⁷

This lifestyle was the basis for the most cogent criticism of missionaries, that, like other Europeans in India, they lived a different life from the Indians, and in so doing failed to appreciate the depth of spirituality expected by Indians from religion. This had

⁸⁶ Stephen Evans, 'Macaulay's Minute Revisited: Colonial Language Policy in Nineteenth-Century India', *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 23.4 (2002), 260–81 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/01434630208666469>>.

⁸⁷ Lago, *India's Prisoner*, p. 50.

already been appreciated in the seventeenth century, before the arrival of the English missionaries, and the Italian Jesuit Roberto de Nobili (1577-1656) had adopted Brahmin dress and lifestyle to try to understand, and participate in, Indian religious life.⁸⁸ This was a model which developed a significant following in the twentieth century and formed part of the attraction of their first Indian postings for both Andrews and Elwin.⁸⁹ The Cambridge Brotherhood in Delhi, of which Andrews became a member, specifically looked to Indian style in its architecture as did St Stephen's College where he taught.⁹⁰ His friendship with the Rudra family and his close relationship as pupil and as a fellow man of religion with his Urdu teacher in Simla meant that he was almost immediately introduced to and made part of Indian worlds with close links with Hinduism and Islam.⁹¹ Living in Delhi he was able to spend time with Muslim friends who shared their religious experience with him, and about one of whom he was to write a memoir.⁹²

Similarly, the Poona Ashram which Elwin joined on arriving in India, the Christa Seva Sangh, was even more firmly committed to Indian spirituality, to Indian-style worship, and to an Indian lifestyle than the Delhi Cambridge Brotherhood.⁹³ Notably its founder and acharya, Jack Winslow, had published with others an Indian liturgy for the eucharist, based on the liturgy of the Syrian Christians of South India, which is included in the prayerbooks of several Indian churches to this day.⁹⁴

⁸⁸ MacCulloch, *History of Christianity*, p. 705, discusses the resulting controversy within the Church of Rome.

⁸⁹ Bob Robinson, *Christians Meeting Hindus: An Analysis and Theological Critique of the Hindu-Christian Encounter in India*, Regnum Studies in Mission (Oxford: Regnum Books International in association with Paternoster Press, 2004), pp. 1–40.

⁹⁰ Chaturvedī and Sykes, *Andrews*, p. 37.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 38–39.

⁹² C. F. (Charles Freer) Andrews, *Zaka Ullah of Delhi* (Cambridge, England: Heffer, 1929).

⁹³ Jack C. Winslow, *Christa Seva Sangha* (Westminster: Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, 1930), pp. 9–13.

⁹⁴ Jack C. Winslow, *The Eucharist in India: A Plea for a Distinctive Liturgy for the Indian Church: With a Suggested Form* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co, 1920).

Both the Cambridge Brotherhood and the Christa Seva Sangh ashram can be seen as examples of what has been described as ‘fulfilment Christianity’, seeing the Christian belief in Jesus’ divinity as the eventual, if hidden, focus of Indian spirituality.⁹⁵ This specifically Christian approach to Indian spirituality lies within a more general category of affirmative orientalism as described by Richard Fox in *Gandhian Utopia* in which India is conceived as an idealised spiritual heartland.⁹⁶ Fox’s term ‘affirmative orientalism’ describes the course taken by many who in the years immediately before the period of this thesis looked to India as a source of spirituality which they found missing in the life of the Occident. He considers that the Europeans such as Annie Besant (1847-1933), Margaret Noble (Sister Nivedita, 1866-1911), and Edward Carpenter (1844-1929), and the Indians such as Narendranath Datta (Swami Vivekananda, 1863-1902.), Aurobindo Ghose (1872-1950), and G. B. Tilak (1856-1920), who fostered this cultural resistance to the prevailing orientalism, anticipated, and in so doing laid the groundwork for, the Gandhian approach to Indian independence.⁹⁷ Besant cooperated with Madan Mohan Malaviya (1861-1946) in the proposals for the Benares Hindu University, of which Malaviya was Vice-Chancellor from 1919 to 1938; this has significance for Chapter III of this thesis in that Malaviya was a guest in Oxford at the time of Gandhi’s 1931 visits and in that his secretary undertook a journey to Europe in preparation for Gandhi’s. Boehmer also examines in detail the connections of and between Noble and Ghose, noting their times in England and their political and spiritual links to Ireland.⁹⁸ Many years later Thompson visited

⁹⁵ Robinson, ‘Christ and the Fulfilment of the Religions’, in *Christians Meeting Hindus: An Analysis and Theological Critique of the Hindu-Christian Encounter in India* (Oxford: Regnum Books International in association with Paternoster Press, 2004), pp. 216-32; Panikkar, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism*.

⁹⁶ Richard Gabriel Fox, *Gandhian Utopia: Experiments with Culture* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989).

⁹⁷ Fox, *Gandhian Utopia*, p. 121.

⁹⁸ Boehmer, *Empire, the National, and the Postcolonial*, pp. 79–124.

Ghose's ashram in Pondicherry and his comments in his correspondence with Nehru are included in Chapter IV.

Linking faith with one approach to freedom, Richard Drayton has described:

...that new ideology of British imperialism which emerged between roughly 1780 and 1850 on the basis of the new global reach of British power after the Seven Years War. It allied Evangelical Christianity, Antislavery, and Free Trade doctrines, and ultimately Whig enthusiasm about the export of parliamentary democracy. From the mid nineteenth century, the British Empire, at least for those who looked within the machine, was an instrument for the propagation of peace, order, religion, freedom, economic efficiency, and ultimately democracy to the world.

He acknowledges that 'Many who loved the late modern version of the Imperial idea did so because, however fraudulently, it promised a global cosmopolitan brotherhood of man.'⁹⁹ Similarly Manjapra uses the term 'aspirational cosmopolitanism' to describe 'the pursuit of conversations across lines of difference, between disparate socio-cultural, political and linguistic groups, that provisionally created shared public worlds'. Manjapra's comments 'Cosmopolitan visions were often phrased in terms of virtue, humanity, justice, civilization and the search for peace' and 'If nationalism was the main political project of resistance in the anticolonial era, cosmopolitanism was the main ethical project – and both of these operated together' are applicable to many of the discussions between the participants in the discussions described in this thesis.¹⁰⁰

Ashis Nandy has noted how Andrews's critique of British colonialism was based on Christian ethics: 'It is a comment on modern theories of dissent that the Westerner who perhaps came closest to the Indian cause in two hundred years of British colonial history operated on the basis of religious traditions, not on that of a secular ideology'.¹⁰¹ Even

⁹⁹ Richard Drayton, 'Imperial History and the Human Future', *History Workshop Journal*, 74 (2012), 156–72 (p. 163) <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/23278605>> [accessed 20 March 2018].

¹⁰⁰ Kris Manjapra, 'Introduction', in *Cosmopolitan Thought Zones: South Asia and the Global Circulation of Ideas*, ed. by Bose, Sugata, and Manjapra Kris, Palgrave Macmillan Transnational History Series (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 1–19 (pp. 1–2).

¹⁰¹ Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 47.

if Thompson and Elwin after their endorsements of the Indian cause were to move away from Christianity, similar ethical approaches drove their criticisms of the imperial project.

Freedom for Indians abroad and at home

The 1905 partition of Bengal was to have profound and unforeseen consequences for the future of the whole sub-continent. Kris Manjapra has shown how the *swadeshi* response, most obviously manifest in the boycott of British goods and institutions, was also the forerunner of a perception by artists and intellectuals of India's place in the world beyond the British context. 'As *swadeshi* activists were shutting down to British goods, they were commencing an unparalleled degree of intellectual commerce with the world outside the British world empire.'¹⁰² Manjapra considers that Sumit Sarkar's 1973 *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal* makes four significant contributions, shifting attention from elite politics to social productiveness, showing how the colonial counter-terrorism from 1908 marked the end of a five-year period of Bengali social cohesion, introducing the criterion of constructiveness in the evaluation of *swadeshi*, and seeing the mass politics that worked inclusively without regard to class, caste, or gender as a precursor of Gandhi's *swaraj* mass movement.¹⁰³ Manjapra shows how around the same time as the *swadeshi* movement Asutosh Mukherjee (1864-1924), Vice-Chancellor of Calcutta University 1906-1923, was successfully championing indigenous research performed to an international level, and to achieve this was looking beyond the imperial

¹⁰² Kris Manjapra, 'Knowledgeable Internationalism and the Swadeshi Movement, 1903-1921', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 47.42 (2012), 53-62 (p. 54) <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/41720272>> [accessed 11 October 2021].

¹⁰³ Sumit Sarkar, *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal, 1903-1908*. (New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1973).

educational pathways (which usually led to London, Edinburgh, Oxford, or Cambridge), especially to France, Germany and the United States.¹⁰⁴

Tagore was similarly to look out beyond the British Empire with his founding of his Visva-Bharati college in 1921, foreseen in his 1919 lecture *The Centre of Indian Culture*, and in his travels to Japan and America.¹⁰⁵ His 1913 Nobel Prize for Literature, likely to have been based on his Bengali as well as his translated work, was clear recognition of his, and India's, standing outside the Anglophone world, and for that very reason raised critical controversy within the imperial metropolis and in the former capital of India, Calcutta.¹⁰⁶ Both before and even more after the award there was worldwide interest in his work: for example, his play *The Post Office* was published in Italian translation in 1917.¹⁰⁷ Tagore's 1914 knighthood, which became a major issue during the early part of the period covered by this thesis, can even be seen as an effort by the British Empire to reclaim him from the wider world.

Indians travelling outside the subcontinent to study, to teach, to research, and to lecture created a networked diaspora that maintained contact with India as well as interacting with non-Indians both within and outside the imperial structure.¹⁰⁸ Among the students were those who formed the nucleus of the Ghadar secret society, of particular concern to the British government and their security services. As described by Shruti Kapila members of the Ghadar were sworn to be prepared to sacrifice

¹⁰⁴ Kris Manjappa, 'Knowledgeable Internationalism', p. 55; Jay Goopal Banerjee, 'Sir Asutosh Mookerjee: His Life and Work', and 'Contents' in *Sir Asutosh Memorial Volume*, by Yogīndra-Nātha Samāddār (Patna: J. N. Samaddar, 1926), pp. iii–xvi (pp. iv, xi, xv).

¹⁰⁵ Rabindranath Tagore, *The Centre of Indian Culture* (New Delhi: Rupa & Co, 2003).

¹⁰⁶ Collins, *Empire, Nationalism and the Postcolonial World*, pp. 54–58. Collins' research in the Nobel Library accessions register provides suggestive evidence that the Bengali texts were reviewed.

¹⁰⁷ Rabindranath Tagore, *L'Ufficio Postale*, trans. by M. Stesi-Strampfer (Lanciano: Carabba, 1917).

¹⁰⁸ Sumita Mukherjee, *Nationalism, Education, and Migrant Identities: The England-Returned* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010).

themselves in undertaking bombings and assassinations, justified by the teachings of Tilak, who held that such violence was required under carefully judged exceptional political circumstances.¹⁰⁹

There were other Indian diasporas.¹¹⁰ There were communities of Indian merchants based abroad, one of whom, a Muslim, was responsible for inviting the Hindu Gandhi to South Africa as his Gujarati-speaking legal supporter.¹¹¹ Once he was in South Africa Gandhi came into contact with a third diaspora, that of the indentured Indian labourers, who in an empire-wide system set up to meet plantation needs for cheap labour after the abolition of slavery suffered many of the same legal, economic, and social handicaps as the slaves they replaced.¹¹²

Andrews seems to have met Gopal Krishna Gokhale (1866-1915) for the first time at the 1906 Congress meeting in Calcutta.¹¹³ In 1909 and in 1911 Gandhi's collaborator in South Africa, Henry Polak (1882-1959) was in India pressing for the abolition of the indentured labour which had given rise to many of the South African issues; Andrews met him on both visits and with Gokhale supported his campaign.¹¹⁴ Gokhale himself went to South Africa in 1912, and tried to negotiate a compromise, offering to relinquish Indian demands for the right to free immigration as Empire citizens and for the vote in return for just treatment of Indian residents and the abolition of a £3 tax. The compromise failed and in September 1913 Gandhi returned to passive resistance. Gokhale with Andrews's strong support, which included rallying Indian Christian

¹⁰⁹ Shruti Kapila, *Violent Fraternity: Indian Political Thought in the Global Age* (Princeton: University Press, 2021), p. 48.

¹¹⁰ Claude Markovits, *India and the World: A History of Connections, c. 1750-2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021).

¹¹¹ Ramachandra Guha, *Gandhi before India* (London: Allen Lane, 2013), p. 63.

¹¹² Hugh Tinker, *A New System of Slavery: The Export of Indian Labour Overseas, 1830-1920*, 2nd ed (London: Hansib, 1993).

¹¹³ Chaturvedī and Sykes, *Andrews*, p. 50.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

opinion behind Gandhi, worked to raise funds and political backing in India. Andrews volunteered to go to South Africa in a telegram to Gokhale, who gratefully accepted his offer. During seven weeks in South Africa, he mediated between Jan Smuts (1870-1950) and Gandhi to achieve a settlement in which neither lost face. His method of mediation was one which he was to use repeatedly in the future, gaining access to the decision maker, in this case Smuts, by means of personal contacts, in this case the Governor-General's sister, Mrs Drew, and making clear how the obstacles to agreement appeared to the other side, setting them in the context of the political situation of the moment, in this case the demands of Gandhi's policy of passive resistance. Neither Andrews's autobiography nor either of his two biographies reveal the exact wording that enabled Smuts and Gandhi to reach agreement.

Their shared South African experience laid the foundations for life-long co-operation and close personal attachment between Andrews and Gandhi. Almost uniquely Andrews's letters to Gandhi are addressed to 'Dear Mohan' to which Gandhi replied with 'Dear Charlie'. From now onwards Gandhi unfailingly acknowledged his contribution.

Andrews had spent seven weeks in South Africa and now completed his originally planned journey to England, where he spent three weeks. He was welcomed off the boat train from Southampton at Waterloo Station by a group of Indians led by the poet Sarojini Naidu (1879-1949), who in the future was to be one of the many Indian women who played strong individual roles in the movement for Indian freedom.¹¹⁵ Returning to India, Andrews completed his move to Tagore's ashram in Shantiniketan, where he was living at the time of the outbreak of war in Europe in August 1914. War meant moves to Europe for both the Rudra sons, Sudhir to join the Young Men's Christian

¹¹⁵ Chaturvedī and Sykes, *Andrews*, p. 103.

Association first in Paris and then behind the Front, and Ajit, abandoning his college studies in Ceylon, to join the Indian army in France as the start of what was to be a distinguished military career.¹¹⁶

In 1915 Andrews began his campaign for the abolition of indentured labour. Three years earlier Gokhale had called for this abolition in a speech in the Legislative Assembly.¹¹⁷ Andrews had encountered indentured Indians in South Africa and in 1915 travelled to Fiji to gather first-hand evidence. On his return to India, he used his contacts in Simla, including his close relationship with the Viceroy, Lord Hardinge (1858-1944, Viceroy 1910-1916), to further the cause of abolition. Hardinge announced the abolition of indenture ‘within such reasonable time as will allow of alternative arrangements being introduced’ on 20 March 1916.¹¹⁸ This ‘reasonable time’ might however be stretched well into the future, and, with support from Gandhi and from Polak, Andrews continued his campaign. Sykes and Chaturvedī draw attention to the novelty of the approach he took, appealing to Indian women to campaign directly for immediate abolition. The new Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford (1868-1933, Viceroy 1916-1921), with whom Andrews had much less rapport, announced the cessation of recruitment for indenture for the duration of the war on 12 April 1917, and in May the Secretary of State for India Austen Chamberlain (1863-1947) announced in Westminster that the indenture system would not be revived at the war’s end, both meeting Gandhi’s deadline of 31 May.¹¹⁹

India’s support for the war effort was massive, in men, material, and money. In April 1918 the Viceroy called an all-party conference in Delhi to intensify that support and

¹¹⁶ Chaturvedī and Sykes, *Andrews*, p. 107; Tinker, *Ordeal of Love*, p. 112.

¹¹⁷ Chaturvedī and Sykes, *Andrews*, p. 112.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 116.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, ip. 121.

invited Gandhi to participate. Gandhi in turn invited Andrews as a potential mediator. In his autobiography Gandhi recalls discussing with the Viceroy and his Private Secretary John Maffey (1877-1969) concerns regarding secret treaties between the allies that had recently been made public by Russia following the 1917 revolution. Gandhi writes of a secret treaty between England and Italy, but it was more probably the Sykes-Picot agreement between the United Kingdom and France dividing up the Ottoman Empire that was more significant for India, given the subcontinent's large Muslim population. The timing was important for Gandhi, as he had recently been invited to speak at the meeting of the Muslim League, where the Allied Powers' lack of respect for the Khilafat, the Ottoman primacy in the Islamic World, was a cause for concern. According to Gandhi, Chelmsford said at their meeting that he, the Viceroy, could not be aware of all that was done by the British Cabinet and that he did not claim that the British Government was infallible, but that 'if you agree that the Empire has been, on the whole, a power for good, if you believe that India has, on the whole, benefited by the British connection, would you not admit that it is the duty of every Indian citizen to help the Empire in the hour of its need?' He too had read about the secret treaties in the press, but he knew nothing more about them than that. 'You may raise whatever moral issues you like and challenge us as much as you please after the conclusion of the war, not today.'¹²⁰

Tinker states that Andrews 'played his small part in promoting the war-conference'.¹²¹ The then Assistant Private Secretary to the Viceroy, Basil Gould (1883-1956), gives a fuller account of this in his memoirs: 'During the weekend [between the Viceroy's opening speech on the Saturday and Gandhi's contribution on the Monday]

¹²⁰ Gandhi, M. K., *An Autobiography, or, The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, trans. by Mahadev H Desai, 2nd edn, (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Press, 1940), p. 541.

¹²¹ Tinker, *Ordeal of Love*, p. 140.

C. F. Andrews—well known first as a Cambridge Don, then as a live wire in the Cambridge Mission to Delhi, and latterly as a friend of Mr. Gandhi,—kept popping in and out of Viceregal Lodge'.¹²² Andrews was no doubt employing his time-honoured skills as a mediator to secure agreement to Gandhi's single line, but crucial, contribution to the Monday meeting, first, unprecedentedly, in Hindustani and then in English, 'With a full sense of my responsibility I beg to support the resolution [India standing for a maximum contribution of manpower and munitions]', in return for the Viceroy accepting from him a public letter, outlining the Muslims' concerns, together with the people of India's minimal political demands.¹²³ Gandhi's secretary Mahadev Desai (1892-1942) described in his diary the preparation and revision of the letter, in which Andrews and Rudra participated, in Rudra's home. It acknowledged the need to give 'ungrudging and unequivocal support to the Empire, of which we aspire, in the near future, to be partners in the same sense as the Dominions overseas'.¹²⁴

During this period Andrews was the only one of the three protagonists of this thesis to be involved in the nationalist movement. His achievement so far was to have established and maintained close relations with many of the Indians involved in the movement, as well as with Tagore, who had reservations as regards nationalism, and to build on these relationships to mediate using his network of British acquaintances. His encounters with the indentured labourer, first in South Africa and then in Fiji, and subsequently as far afield as Guyana, brought attention to the need to include the Indian diaspora around the world within the developing concept of the Indian nation.

¹²² Basil John Gould, *The Jewel in the Lotus: Recollections of an Indian Political* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1957), p. 56.

¹²³ Gandhi, *Autobiography*, pp. 543-44.

¹²⁴ Mahadev H. Desai, *Day-to-Day with Gandhi; Secretary's Diary* (Varanasi: Sarva Seva Sangh Prakashan, 1968), I, 111-16.

Overall, peace at the end of 1918 was accompanied by guarded optimism as to India's progress towards dominion status within the British Empire. India's war contribution was recognised by individual participation in the Peace Conference, even if the Indian delegates were nominated by the Government of India. Plans for the decoration of the Government Court and the Assembly Chamber (now the Lok Sabha) in New Delhi indicated parity of India with the existing Dominions.¹²⁵

Theorising friendship

Lyndal Roper has written that 'It does not endanger the status of the historical to concede that there are aspects of human nature which are enduring, just as there are aspects of human physiology which are constitutional.'¹²⁶ Given that friendship has been a central concept throughout the historical and literary record, starting from *The Epic of Gilgamesh* and proceeding on through *The Iliad* and the Old and New Testaments, this thesis considers it to be one of these enduring aspects of human nature, but nonetheless open to theoretical analysis.

The philosopher Jacques Derrida (1930-2004) has explored such an analysis in one of his later projects, *The Politics of Friendship*.¹²⁷ Derrida takes his cue from a loose translation into French by Montaigne (1533-1592) of a saying ascribed to Aristotle,

¹²⁵ Robert Grant Irving, *Indian Summer: Lutyens, Baker, and Imperial Delhi* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), p. 294.

¹²⁶ Lyndal Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil: Witchcraft, Sexuality, and Religion in Early Modern Europe* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 12.

¹²⁷ <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yrajiRUQYQ>> contains a sound recording of a 1988 presentation in English by Derrida of 'The Politics of Friendship'. Sadly, the second half of the presentation has not been uploaded. *The Journal of Philosophy*, 85.11 (1988), 632-45, <<https://doi.org/10.5840/jphil198851110>> and *American Imago*, 50.3 (1993), p. 353-391, <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/26303875>> present his project translated into English as journal articles. Jacques Derrida, *Politics of Friendship* (London: Verso, 1997, 2005, 2020) is an English translation by George Collins of Derrida's *Politiques de l'amitié: Suivi de L'oreille de Heidegger* (Paris: Galilée, 1994). For readers of French the latter makes for easier reading, not least because the frequent notes are presented as footnotes rather than endnotes. A helpful 2018 discussion from King's College London with subsequent sessions also uploaded is at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TH_-wPsPTAE>.

translating this into English as ‘O my friends, there is no friend’.¹²⁸ His philosophical discussions include ideas, based on his reading of Aristotle and Cicero and of some more recent philosophers, that are helpful for analyses of specific friendships. He classifies primary friendship as being founded on virtue, in Cicero’s terms sometimes achieving immortality, as distinct from friendship founded on utility, such as political friendships, and friendship founded on pleasure, as typically seen in the young. He interpreted his cue text as meaning that an individual was likely to have few primary friends. He accepted that primary friendship might need time to develop. Importantly he followed Cicero in associating primary friendship with death: each friend would already be preparing a funeral eulogy of the other; this links closely with Bray’s findings on the roles of death, burial, and commemoration in the friendships he studied.¹²⁹

Taking direction from Nandy’s identification of ‘the numerically small but psychologically significant response of many who opted out of their colonising society for the cause of India’, Leela Gandhi sees ‘politics of friendship’ underlying a diverse assortment of cultural movements, ‘affective communities’ that defied the imperial binarity of rulers and ruled.¹³⁰ She includes among these, giving convincing examples, the movements for homosexual law reform, for animal rights, and for vegetarianism, and the followers of mysticism and of aestheticism.

Leela Gandhi gives two reasons to justify her use of the term ‘politics of friendship’. As her book deals with the late Victorian period, she needs to build her arguments on

¹²⁸ Giorgio Agamben, *L’amico* (Rome: nottetempo, 2007) provides an instant critique of this quotation; Philippe Stephanides, “‘O Friends, There Are No Friends’: On a Quote Attributed to Aristotle”, *Aphelis* <<https://aphelis.net/o-friends-there-are-no-friends-aristotle/>> [accessed 11 October 2020] is an exhaustive review of its sources.

¹²⁹ Bray, *The Friend*, p. 258.

¹³⁰ Nandy, *Intimate Enemy*, p. 36; Leela Gandhi, *Affective Communities: Anticolonial Thought, Fin-De-Siècle Radicalism, and the Politics of Friendship* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), p. 6.

‘the narrative and historical scaffolding of multiple, secret, unacknowledged friendships between anticolonial South Asians and marginalized anti-imperial “westerners” enmeshed within the various subcultures of late Victorian radicalism’ and she wishes to privilege ‘the trope of friendship as the most comprehensive philosophical signifier for all those invisible affective gestures that refuse alignment along the secure axes of filiation to seek expression outside, if not against, possessive communities of belonging’.¹³¹ Somewhat surprisingly, especially given her title *Affective Communities*, Leela Gandhi provides little evidence of the affective nature of these communities and she does not describe experiential phenomena such as physical touch, the exchange of correspondence, affectionate naming, or face-to-face meetings.

The friendships she describes can be classified as falling within Derrida’s friendships founded on utility. Hence the numbers of friends in each of her communities are not restricted, unlike those of Derrida’s primary friendships. This classification does not preclude the development of Derrida’s primary friendships within Leila Gandhi’s affective communities. Indeed the argument implied by the title of the present thesis is that the primary friendships described in it arose within the affective communities of faith and of the struggle for Indian freedom. Applying her reasoning to the present thesis, the friendships to be described were neither secret nor unacknowledged but were between anti-colonial South Asians and anti-imperial ‘westerners’ who indeed suffered marginalization as a result of their expressed views and open friendships. It will be shown that the protagonists did often ‘seek expression outside’ and this not infrequently ‘against ... possessive communities of belonging’ which included not only the British community in India but also the religious communities into which they had been born and those into which they had been ordained.

¹³¹ Leela Gandhi, *Affective Communities*, pp. 9–10.

Faisal Devji in his *The Impossible Indian* has argued that while Mohandas Gandhi saw brotherhood as an unrenounceable relationship based on family, he saw friendship, based on choice, as having the potential for ‘an anti-colonial politics’. Brotherhood, based on family or ethnic ties, can never be renounced; it in no way eliminates conflict between the brothers and sisters, which can extend even to fratricide. In contrast friendship is a free choice, and hence by its nature fragile.¹³² Devji takes as an example Gandhi’s support for the Khilafat movement, which campaigned for the survival of the Ottoman Caliphate and its custodianship of the Muslim Holy Places after Turkey’s defeat in the Great War. He considers that Gandhi rejected a liberal approach based on interests which might have resulted in a contract as a solution. In a passage with wider implications Gandhi wrote ‘I cannot regulate the Mahomedan feeling. I must accept his statement that the Khilafat is with him a religious question in the sense that it binds him to reach the goal even at the cost of his life’.¹³³ On this basis he urged the unconditional cooperation of the Hindus, not their cooperation in return for a consideration such as an abstention from the slaughter of cows by the Muslims, which would be conditional assistance: ‘The test of friendship is assistance in adversity, and that too unconditional assistance’.¹³⁴

Devji proceeds from this call to friendship between India’s Muslims and Hindus to consider Gandhi’s conviction that an individual’s voluntary choice of suffering for a cause was an invitation to friendship, distinct from the fraternity created by a shared experience of suffering. Devji draws attention to Gandhi’s own choice of suffering in the form of fasts: ‘Thus suffering in this sense made for a friendship that was neither

¹³² Faisal Devji, *The Impossible Indian: Gandhi and the Temptation of Violence* (London: Hurst & Co, 2012), pp. 70–71.

¹³³ M. K. Gandhi, ‘Khilafat: Further Questions Answered’, *Young India*, 2 June 1920, p. 2, quoted in Devji, *The Impossible Indian*, p. 82.

¹³⁴ M. K. Gandhi, ‘Mr. Gandhi’s letter’, *Young India*, 10 December 1921, p. 4, quoted in Devji, *The Impossible Indian*, p. 83.

affection nor agreement, but perhaps a relationship of desires that diverged and were even opposed, and that yet desired one another.’¹³⁵ This understanding of friendship will be further discussed in Chapter IV.

Friendship was central to Gandhi’s teaching; his letters typically carried the salutation ‘Dear Friend’. In a letter to Hitler (that was blocked by the censor) he wrote ‘That I address you as a friend is no formality. I own no foes’.¹³⁶ Devji sees this letter as evidence of Gandhi’s belief that the enemy needed to be converted to non-violence by love, an approach to be applied equally to German fascism and British imperialism.¹³⁷ This broad application of the concept of friendship contrasts both with Derrida’s interpretation of ‘O my friends, there is no friend’ as meaning there can only be a few friends and with Leila Gandhi’s larger but still limited affective communities.

Thus on this reading, while Gandhi recognized the claims, and risks, of family and brotherhood, friendship, with its contract-free choice-based fragility and its antithesis of enmity, was fundamental to his world vision.¹³⁸ While he sought to be the friend of all, not all reciprocated.

Gandhi’s call to unconditional friendship between the Muslim and Hindu ‘nations’ in the Indian subcontinent (at a time when the nation-state of India was yet to be defined), can be applied also to friendship between Indians and British, which might mean friendship between individuals or more generally friendship between the ‘nations’. E. M. Forster’s *A Passage to India*, with friendship as one of its central themes, ends famously with the request to the Indian Aziz from the English Fielding: ‘Why can’t we be friends now?’ to which the answer comes from their surroundings

¹³⁵ Devji, *The Impossible Indian*, p. 89.

¹³⁶ Gandhi to Hitler, 24 December 1940, *Gandhi*, LXXIX, 453-56, cited in Devji, *The Impossible Indian*, p. 131.

¹³⁷ Devji, *The Impossible Indian*, p. 129.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

‘No, not yet’, ‘No, not there’.¹³⁹ Much earlier in the book, in the second chapter, a group of Indian friends debate whether it is possible to be friends with an Englishman and decide that it is possible in England but not in India.¹⁴⁰ There is a contrast here, almost certainly intentional, with the novel’s dedication ‘To Syed Ross Masood¹⁴¹ and to the seventeen years of our friendship’, a friendship which began in England but which continued after Masood’s return to India.

Forster’s own explanation for this contrast may be revealed in a letter to his friend Malcolm Darling (1880-1969), in which he recalls their common experiences as undergraduates at King’s College, Cambridge, and as guests at the Maharajah of Dewas Senior:

King's stands for personal relationships, and these still seem to me the most real things on the surface of the earth, but I have acquired a feeling that people must go away from each other (spiritually) every now and then, and improve themselves if the relationship is to develop or even endure. A Passage to India describes such a going away - preparatory to the next advance, which I am not capable of describing. It seems to me that individuals progress alternately by loneliness and intimacy, and that the legend of the multiplied Krishna (which I got, like so much that is precious to me, by intercourse with Bapu Sahib [the Maharaja of Dewas Senior]) serves as a symbol of a state where the two might be combined. The ‘King’s’ view over-simplified people: that I think was its defect. We are more complicated, also richer, than it knew, and affection grows more difficult than it used to be, and also more glorious.¹⁴²

A possible interpretation of this letter might be that, in the novel, friendship fails because of the need for the two nations, as represented by the novel’s protagonists Aziz and Fielding, to separate and to look at themselves on their own before being able to rekindle the friendship once again. There may also be an element here of Lacan’s neologistic concept of *extimité* (extimacy) invoked by Shruti Kapila, ‘the establishment

¹³⁹ E. M. Forster, *A Passage to India* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1936), p. 317.

¹⁴⁰ Forster, *A Passage to India* (1936), pp. 12–13.

¹⁴¹ Syed Ross Masood (1889–1937), tutored by Forster before he studied at Oxford, Director of Public Instruction, Hyderabad, 1916–1928, Vice-Chancellor, Aligarh Muslim University from 1929, knighted 1933.

¹⁴² Forster to Malcolm Darling, 15 September 1924; quoted in P. N. Furbank, *E.M. Forster: A Life* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1977), II, 124.

of distance in a claustrophobic intimacy while throwing a bridge over a chasm of violence'.¹⁴³

Lionel Trilling in the chapter on *A Passage to India* in his *E. M. Forster* shows, giving many examples of divides, between Muslim and Hindu, between Adela Quested and Ronnie Moore, between the British husbands and wives, that the sense of separateness 'broods over the book, pervasive, symbolic', and that the separateness of Indians and English (*A Passage to India* uses that order) 'is merely the most dramatic of the chasms in this novel'.¹⁴⁴ He concludes that 'Great as the problem of India is, Forster's book is not about India alone; it is about all of human life'. This universalism of challenges to friendship supplies another element for discussion in this thesis.

Forster famously put friendship before patriotism: 'I hate the idea of causes, and if I had to choose between betraying my country and betraying my friend, I hope I should have the guts to betray my country'. His less quoted qualifying sentences were:

Probably one will not be asked to make such an agonising choice. Still, there lies at the back of every creed something terrible and hard for which the worshipper may one day be required to suffer, and there is even a terror and a hardness in this creed of personal relationships, urbane and mild though it sounds. Love and loyalty to an individual can run counter to the claims of the State. When they do-down with State, say I, which means the State would down me.¹⁴⁵

Several of the friendships to be described in this thesis laid the friends open to accusations of betrayal, of their countries or of their churches.

Changes in attitudes to friendship over time have been well-documented for same sex friendships by Alan Bray, based on his meticulous study and analysis, tragically published only posthumously, of gravestones and church brasses, literature, letters and

¹⁴³ Kapila, *Violent Fraternity*, p. 152.

¹⁴⁴ Lionel Trilling, *E.M. Forster: A Study* (London: Hogarth Press, 1944), p. 130.

¹⁴⁵ E. M. Forster, *Two Cheers for Democracy* (London: E. Arnold, 1951), p. 78. Forster dates this chapter, 'What I Believe', to 1939, at which time the 'Cambridge Five' spies were already operational.

a diary.¹⁴⁶ Although Bray demonstrates how the expressions of friendship he studied were conditioned by their historical and societal contexts, he finds a persistent link over the centuries between friendship and (in his examples, Christian) faith.

Friendships create networks, as Bray acknowledges. Alan Lester has argued for the application of the network model to interactions within empires.¹⁴⁷ Tony Ballantyne had already compared these interactions as webs, his preferred term.¹⁴⁸ Elleke Boehmer has compared the networks of the period of globalisation now drawing to its close with the networks of the imperial period, including in her title the memorable phrase ‘What Isn’t New about Empire’.¹⁴⁹ The transnational relationships and understandings to be described in this thesis, with the accompanying discussions on the future Indian nation, follow her model of ‘the cultural and political exchanges between the conventional colonial centre and periphery, as well as between subjects of the different peripheries’ impinging ‘in different ways on the cultures of the centre, to form a complicated and interconnected web’.¹⁵⁰ Relevant to the questions of this thesis, particularly to its attempt to locate a postcolonial politics of friendship, she writes

Within this reshaped framework, attention is focused not only on the emergence of alternative agencies and knowledges within colonialism, though this is crucial, but on how those different agencies may have impinged on one another, and how these contacts were then processed into emerging concepts of the new post-imperial nation.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁶ Bray, *The Friend*.

¹⁴⁷ Alan Lester, ‘Imperial Circuits and Networks: Geographies of the British Empire’, *History Compass*, 4.1 (2006), 124–41 <<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1478-0542.2005.00189.x>>.

¹⁴⁸ Tony Ballantyne, ‘Race and the Webs of Empire: Aryanism from India to the Pacific’, *Journal of Colonialism & Colonial History*, 2.3 (2001) <<https://doi.org/10.1353/cch.2001.0045>>.

¹⁴⁹ Elleke Boehmer, ‘Global and Textual Webs in an Age of Transnational Capitalism; or, What Isn’t New about Empire’, *Postcolonial Studies*, 7.1 (2004), 11–26 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/1368879042000210586>>.

¹⁵⁰ Boehmer, *Empire, the National, and the Postcolonial*, p. 171.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

From electronic network theory comes the rule that the value of the network to an individual node increases as the square of the number of nodes (Metcalfe's theory).¹⁵² This rule assumes that each node makes an equal contribution to achieve the full effect, which is not always the case with friendship networks. In this thesis two of the protagonists, Andrews and Elwin, will be seen to have made full use of their multi-node networks from an early date, while Thompson, himself one of Andrews's nodes, enlarged his own network and used it increasingly on his return to England from India. A limited number of these networks are illustrated diagrammatically in **Figure 1**, which will be further discussed in the conclusions of the thesis.

Specifically addressing networked relationships between Indian and British women in the period 1900-1952, Rosalind Parr has shown in her thesis *Citizens of Everywhere* how these were mutually supportive and 'based to a certain degree, on a sense of shared purpose that cut across national boundaries.'¹⁵³ Many cross-cultural networks are based, like Parr's, on political agenda, typically nationalist, anti-imperialist, or socialist, examples being the network of Ghadar conspirators as described in the previous section, and the friendships of the International Brigades of the Spanish Civil War.¹⁵⁴

In contrast the networks described in this thesis were based on friendships that left scope for differences of view. Friendships begin usually from common experiences or common interests, thus Andrews's friendship with Gandhi began from their experience together in South Africa, Thompson's with Tagore from a common interest in poetry, and Elwin's with Gandhi from life in religious communities. Mirabehn was drawn to Romain Rolland (1866-1944) by their common love for the music of Beethoven. Amrit

¹⁵² Carl Shapiro, *Information Rules: A Strategic Guide to the Network Economy* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1999), p. 184.

¹⁵³ Rosalind Parr, 'Citizens of Everywhere. Indian Nationalist Women and the Global Public Sphere, 1900-1952' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2018), p. 6.

¹⁵⁴ Helen Graham, *The War and Its Shadow: Spain's Civil War in Europe's Long Twentieth Century* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2012), p. 95.

Kaur first learnt of Gandhi and his work through her father's friendship with Gokhale. Another typical (if elite) friendship which emerges in the background to the thesis is that between Wavell and Gould, based on their time as exact contemporaries at boarding schools from age eight to age seventeen.¹⁵⁵ Friendships are sustained over time by contact and affection but may strengthen or weaken or break down with the passage of time. In the worst case friendship may turn into enmity.

As already discussed in terms of passionate letters, these friendships raise questions of gendered attraction and desire. The letters provide no answers to these questions, leaving it to the historian how to interpret these relationships. Bray wisely urges caution in reading evidence of actual carnal interaction from the jokes and insinuations in the letters of his early modern males: 'Jokes like this are not evidence of what men did between the sheets of a bed; they are rather evidence of what they said between the pages of a letter'.¹⁵⁶ Santanu Das equally argues against 'any hasty claim for conscious and explicit sexual dissidence' in the bodily contacts and relationships he finds described in the letters, memoirs, and literature of the special situation of the trenches of the First World War.¹⁵⁷

In this thesis the special situation is that of the religious community. In his thesis Biswas describes how the centrality and central attraction of the ashram's guru/acharya (and as will be seen this applied also to Sorella Maria, 1875-1961, born Valeria Pignetti, *La Minore* of the Umbrian *eremo* to be described in Chapter II of this thesis)) led to their disciples' desire to express their love (which was reciprocated) in correspondence and in physical vicinity and contact. Biswas considers that this desire was expressed in

¹⁵⁵ Wavell, *Viceroy's Journal*, p. 163; Gould, *Jewel in the Lotus*, p. 242.

¹⁵⁶ Bray, *The Friend*, p. 169.

¹⁵⁷ Santanu Das, *Touch and Intimacy in First World War Literature* (Cambridge: University Press, 2005), p. 117.

desexualised terms, but that this did not mean that sexual desire was lacking. However his opinion, with which the author of this thesis concurs, is that ‘the tendency to collapse all desire as ultimately sexual tends to make both desire and intimacy rather impoverished categories’.¹⁵⁸ The ashram created the environment for fictive relationships, thus Mirabehn became Gandhi’s ‘English daughter’ and Elwin his ‘English son’. But the rigidity of the guru’s discipline, especially in Gandhi’s case, might lead to a strongly patriarchal relationship, particularly oppressive for his female disciples. Fortunately, as will be seen, at least some of them were strong enough to respond with jokes at his expense.

The celibacy rules of the ashrams and of the Eremo impacted on friendship. Ashram membership might include married couples but in Gandhi’s ashrams conjugal sexual activity was forbidden. Within this celibate world strong attachments may form, both same sex and opposite sex, sometimes deeply spiritual and resembling John Henry Newman (1801-1890)’s understanding of his friendship with Ambrose St. John (1815-1875) as a foretaste of the heavenly relationship with God, as described by Bray.¹⁵⁹ But such friendships may be broken, as will be seen in this thesis in the case of Elwin, by the renunciation of celibacy by one of the friends.

This thesis will examine how many, though not all, of the friendships within the networks included not only common ethical approaches, but also those elements of the Christian concept of friendship, respect for commands, love for each other (even self-sacrificing), sharing of knowledge, which are recorded in St John’s Gospel as preached

¹⁵⁸ Biswas, *Passages through India*, pp. 24–25.

¹⁵⁹ Bray, *The Friend*, pp. 296–97.

and exemplified by Jesus.¹⁶⁰ Symptomatic of this, as Nandy notes, and as will be described in this thesis, was Gandhi's use of specifically Christian hymns and texts.¹⁶¹

An exploration of such a cross-cultural friendship deriving from a Christian context is found in A. M. Allchin's *Friendship in God*, describing the strong link formed and maintained on the basis of a single meeting between the Roman Catholic Sorella Maria and the Anglican Evelyn Underhill (1875-1941). This was a spiritual intimacy in which Underhill could write of her spiritual troubles to Sorella Maria and be sustained by 'short and telling replies'.¹⁶² It was also a friendship supported by prayer, prayers for each other as well as for common intentions, a pattern which as will be seen in this thesis is found also in Gandhi's cross-cultural friendships.¹⁶³

Specifically, within the South Asian context, the complex friendship between Tagore and Thompson has been examined in detail by Thompson's son, Palmer Thompson, and by Uma Das Gupta.¹⁶⁴ Both their books contain valuable primary source material with much helpful context. Tagore's friendships with both Andrews and Thompson have been discussed in depth by Collins.¹⁶⁵ Collins argues that Tagore's politics of friendship, at least in the pre-war years, aimed to bring together colonised and coloniser through common concerns, notably poetry, outside the discourse of nationalist politics. He acknowledges that his use of the term 'politics of friendship' differs, (as does also Leela Gandhi's) from that of Derrida.¹⁶⁶ He sees this approach failing on two accounts, first the discounting of Tagore's philosophy by European poets such as Yeats and

¹⁶⁰ John 15. 9-15.

¹⁶¹ Nandy, *Intimate Enemy*, p. 49.

¹⁶² A. M. Allchin, *Friendship in God: The Encounter of Evelyn Underhill and Sorella Maria of Campello*, Fairacres Publication, 143 (Oxford: SLG Press, 2003), p. 12.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

¹⁶⁴ E. P. Thompson, *Alien Homage*; Das Gupta *Difficult Friendship*.

¹⁶⁵ Collins, *Empire, Nationalism and the Postcolonial World*, pp. 122-43.

¹⁶⁶ Michael Collins, 'Rabindranath Tagore and the Politics of Friendship', *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, 35.1 (2012), 118-42 (p. 122, footnote 16)
<<https://doi.org/10.1080/00856401.2011.648908>>.

Pound, and secondly the problems of translation from Bengali, for which the competing assistance of Andrews and Thompson did not help. As Collins describes, both these friendships of Tagore's, with Andrews and with Thompson, changed over time, changes of a type to which neither Nandy nor Leela Gandhi devote attention, but which will be described and discussed in the present thesis.¹⁶⁷

A more contemporary philosophical approach to friendship is provided in the Ph. D. thesis of the moral philosopher Cathy Mason (who interestingly does not mention Derrida, although she does accept the classical division of friendship into primary friendship, friendship for utility, and friendship for pleasure). Mason interprets friendship in terms of the view of the philosopher and novelist Iris Murdoch (1919-1999) that 'the exercise of love', implied according to Mason in friendship, 'involves attending to reality and results in a deepening understanding of reality'. Mason rejects the view that friendship involves a limitation of the understanding of a friend (this understanding would be their image in Derrida's terms) to their positive qualities, instead requiring that friends must seek to have a full picture of both positive and negative qualities and that achieving such knowledge is integral to loving.¹⁶⁸

Although she does not link them to friendship, Mason also considers the virtues of hope and humility. As it happens, both are relevant to the argument of this thesis. She quotes from Rebecca Solnit's *Hope in the Dark*: 'Hope just means another world might be possible, not promised, not guaranteed. Hope calls for action; action is impossible without hope' to suggest that hope is fundamental to political activism.¹⁶⁹ For the protagonists and their networks 'another world', the postcolonial, held independent

¹⁶⁷ A thoughtful discussion of this theme is found in David Newsome, *The Parting of Friends: A Study of the Wilberforces and Henry Manning* (London: Murray, 1966).

¹⁶⁸ Cathy Mason, 'Neglected Virtues: Love, Hope and Humility' (PhD thesis, Cambridge, 2019) p. 13, 23, 49. <<https://doi.org/10.17863/CAM.46125>>.

¹⁶⁹ Rebecca Solnit, *Hope in the Dark: Untold Histories, Wild Possibilities* (Edinburgh London: Canongate, 2016), p. 4.

India. Mason's suggestion for humility, again following Murdoch, is that 'the humble person does not valorise being relatively superior'.¹⁷⁰ This has relevance to relations between the British and the Indians during the period under discussion (and by extension to all race relations) and is potentially a test for the relationships within the networks to be described in this thesis.

What is the 'postcolonial'? Might there be a postcolonial politics of friendship?

Chronologically 'postcolonial' has been taken to indicate the period following decolonization, the granting of independence to their colonies by the European imperial powers, during the second half of the twentieth century, usually starting with the independence of Pakistan and India in 1947. This Eurocentric definition, omitting the previous granting of independence to settler colonies, and neglecting the experiences of other former subject peoples over the course of world history, immediately gives a taste of the theoretical controversies surrounding the historical concept, which Leila Gandhi has reviewed in detail.¹⁷¹ She sees as a pivotal text Said's *Orientalism*, which with its study of interactions between Orient and Occident at religious as well as political and cultural levels contends that the very discourse of historical study constitutes occidental power, by imposing a specific pattern, a specific discourse, on the historical data described.¹⁷² This is exactly the risk run by the concept of the postcolonial.

¹⁷⁰ Mason, 'Neglected Virtues', pp. 123–24.

¹⁷¹ Leila Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction* (Edinburgh: University Press, 1998).

¹⁷² Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978).

Boehmer has challenged this Eurocentric metropolitan-periphery understanding of the postcolonial by describing exchanges between different nodes in the periphery, independent of (although often ultimately impinging on) the European colonial centre:

With few exceptions postcolonial theories of colonial power and anti-colonial resistance have privileged the relationship of European self and other; of colonizer and colonized. The aim of *Empire, the National, and the Postcolonial* is to swivel this conventional axis of interaction laterally by examining how, around the turn of the nineteenth into the twentieth century, certain early anti-imperial and nationalist movements, and nationalist and anti-colonial leaders and writers, found inspirational solidarity and instructive models in *one another's* work and experience.¹⁷³

This has relevance to the present thesis in that although all three protagonists came initially to India from England, two, Andrews and Elwin, firmly made their permanent homes and fields of action India-based. Boehmer's study is also relevant to the use of the term postcolonial within the chronology of the present thesis in that she uses this to discuss interactions during the period 1890-1920.

Leela Gandhi discusses in some detail the relationships between the postcolonial and both nationalism and racism. Although both are relevant to the postcolonial, these have much wider relevance, both historically and in the present, than just within the postcolonial alone. Leela Gandhi recognises that nationalism is a two-edged sword in the postcolonial; Boehmer agrees with Said that 'we must continue to acknowledge the success of nationalism in mobilizing peoples against oppression (within *and* across borders), while at the same time conceding its ideological and socio-political flaws, its mostly oppressive rather than liberatory postcolonial legacy'.¹⁷⁴ Certainly the pre-independence hope of many nationalists that the newly independent nations would unite

¹⁷³ Boehmer, *Empire, the National, and the Postcolonial*, pp. 1–2.

¹⁷⁴ Leela Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory*, pp. 102-121; Boehmer, *Empire, the National, and the Postcolonial*, p. 7.

in creating a postcolonial peaceful supranational world order of cooperation has never been realised.

Like nationalism, racism, often linked to religious adherence, has remained an unresolved burden of the postcolonial. The fear must be that until the biological fallacy of racial identity is universally accepted, racism will continue to be used by politicians to promote persecution, exclusion, and ethnic cleansing. Hybridity (meaning at its simplest acquiring elements of both periphery and metropolis, shown to varying degrees by the protagonists of this thesis) and diaspora (discussed earlier in this Introduction) are seen by Leela Gandhi as significant features of the postcolonial.¹⁷⁵

Dane Kennedy notes that the concept of the postcolonial has tended to be explored more fully in its literary than in its historical aspects. Kennedy, writing from the viewpoint of an historian, is concerned that postcolonial studies should not neglect the classic triad of ‘causation, context, and chronology’ (perhaps more logically considered in reverse order as chronology, context, and causation).¹⁷⁶ Kennedy is dismayed by

the tendency [in postcolonial cultural assessments] to essentialize the West, a discursive practice no less distorting than the West's tendency to essentialize the Orient. In Said's *Orientalism* and much of the scholarship it has inspired, the West is seen as an undifferentiated, omnipotent entity, imposing its totalizing designs on the rest of the world without check or interruption.¹⁷⁷

The present thesis will therefore examine how far the protagonists, coming from the West, managed to escape from ‘its totalizing designs’ and whether they appreciated ‘the uncertainties, inconsistencies, modifications, and contradictions that afflicted Western efforts to impose its will on other people’.¹⁷⁸ The viewpoint of the thesis is inevitably from the Occident, but its historical analysis will endeavour to break out from European

¹⁷⁵ Leela Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory*, pp. 122-140.

¹⁷⁶ Dane Kennedy, ‘Imperial History and Post-Colonial Theory’, *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 24.3 (1996), 345–63 (p. 351)
<<https://doi.org/10.1080/03086539608582983>>.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 353.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

constraints, by following the examples of the protagonists, in paying particular attention to the thoughts, opinions, and world views of their Indian interlocutors. The thesis will argue that the protagonists, each of whom had landed in India with most of the baggage of occidental arrival, including the ideology of British imperialism described by Drayton, by the end of their lives had moved beyond a latent Orientalist approach. Certainly, in their writings and actions they did not conform to Said's generalisation, speaking of the nineteenth century, that 'every European, in what he could say was consequently a racist, an imperialist, and almost totally ethnocentric'.¹⁷⁹

For postcolonial the thesis will therefore follow Young, Boehmer, Leela Gandhi, and Collins in conceptualizing a history of networks that look beyond the binaries of periphery-metropole and orient-occident.¹⁸⁰ It will follow Boehmer in considering as postcolonial those discussions which accept the imminence of British withdrawal from India, even if for the first four chapters such discussions anticipate Independence and therefore do not form part of postcolonial history.

The question remains, can these networks of friendship to be described in this thesis be considered postcolonial, based on their anticipation of the independence of India, creating a postcolonial politics of friendship?¹⁸¹ To judge this, the place of friendship in colonial India, the colonial politics of friendship, first needs to be described. Devji has written:

Now the colonial state in India, despite its paternalistic claims to represent the hierarchy of races or the progress of civilizations, did not employ the language of brotherhood to describe its subjects. Instead colonial rhetoric tended to stress friendship as the preferred relationship, both among Indians belonging to

¹⁷⁹ Said, *Orientalism*, (London: Penguin, 2003), p. 204.

¹⁸⁰ Young, *Postcolonialism*, p. 113, Boehmer, *Empire, the National, and the Postcolonial, 1890-1920*, pp. 1–12; Leela Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory*; Collins, *Empire, Nationalism and the Postcolonial World*, pp. 9–12.

¹⁸¹ Young, *Postcolonialism*, p. 57; Collins, *Empire, Nationalism and the Postcolonial World*, p. 143.

different religious and ethnic groups, and between them and India's foreign rulers.

He notes that it was a moral, not a political, imperative: 'The imperial order might therefore be described as a form of paternalism without brotherhood, being unable to countenance any fraternal connection either between India's various peoples or between them and the British.' Devji cites Kipling and Forster as novelists who explore this imperative in their writing.¹⁸² Historical examples of such friendships in imperial India are readily available, for example in the accounts of Jim Corbett and Philip Mason.¹⁸³

Clive Dewey describes such cross-cultural friendships in colonial South Asia in his chapters 'Malcolm Darling and the Cult of Friendship'.¹⁸⁴ The epigraph to this section of his book, from the 1908 farewell address of the Tukojirao Club to the 28-year-old Indian Civil Servant Malcolm Darling, at that time tutor and guardian to the Maharajah of Dewas Senior, provides insight into the context of these friendships:

We have not yet come across any European gentleman of your parts ... who unmindful of his high erudition and official position could condescend freely, in sweet social intercourse, with those not quite of his own rank and station in life — a thorough-going Indian among the Indians. Such men carry about them an atmosphere of peace and goodwill which always tells. By sheer force of their angelic nature, they help bridge the gap between East and West.¹⁸⁵

These were friendships across a hierarchy, the hierarchy of ruler and ruled, European and Indian, and as such were seen as exceptional. Darling discovered the rigidity of the racial hierarchy on his first voyage out to India; he made friends with another Indian Civil Service probationer Hamid Ali who while his equal in official terms was neglected

¹⁸² Devji, *The Impossible Indian*, p. 71.

¹⁸³ Jim Corbett, *My India* (Madras: Oxford University Press, 1954); Philip Mason, *A Matter of Honour: An Account of the Indian Army, Its Officers and Men* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1974).

¹⁸⁴ Clive Dewey, *Anglo-Indian Attitudes: The Mind of the Indian Civil Service* (London: Hambledon Press, 1993), pp. 103–98.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

by the other European passengers.¹⁸⁶ Forster had been a contemporary of Darling's at King's College, Cambridge; he spent Christmas 1913 with Darling and his wife in Dewas Senior, where all three became close friends of the Maharajah. Here the European/Indian hierarchy was reversed by their host's regal status, a reversal that became all the clearer when Forster returned as the Maharajah's secretary in 1921, and that is shown in Forster's willingness to take advice from the Maharajah in the most intimate of matters.¹⁸⁷

Dewey sets a limit to these cross-cultural friendships, based on differences of interpretation of the obligations of friendship between the two sides:

Friendship meant different things in different cultures. To Englishmen, even Englishmen like Darling, it was a circumscribed affair, a matter of common interests and personal rapport. To Indians it was a much stronger bond. True friends were total partisans: they backed one another against the world. Whether a friend was in the right or wrong, it made no difference; he was entitled to unconditional support, because he was a friend. Indians with English friends tended to ask them for favours which Englishmen were not prepared to give - generally government jobs. When their relationships foundered among mutual disappointment, an already awkward situation took a turn for the worse.¹⁸⁸

The cultural, indeed orientalist, generalisations in this paragraph jar, but later in his book Dewey emphasizes their validity. For Indians in India total support from friends was necessary for survival, while an Englishman in India had no such need.¹⁸⁹ Nonetheless Bray in his study of friendship in early modern England finds exactly this risk, that however warm the friendship there was an underlying assumption that it was a route to patronage and preferment. suggesting that, as must be many peoples' personal

¹⁸⁶ Dewey, *Anglo-Indian Attitudes*, p. 166; Unofficial racial segregation on board ship remained persistent; Darling's wife Josie experienced it on her first voyage home, Dewey, p. 168. Ian Scott had a similar experience in 1932: Ian Scott, *A British Tale of Indian and Foreign Service: The Memoirs of Sir Ian Scott* (London: Radcliffe Press, 1999), pp. 35–36. In 1964 when I booked a berth in the cheapest cabin for a voyage from Bombay to Basra I received a letter from the shipping company explaining that I would need to share the cabin with Asian gentlemen.

¹⁸⁷ Furbank, *Forster*, II, 83–84.

¹⁸⁸ Dewey, *Anglo-Indian Attitudes*, p. 166.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 196.

experience, this is an enduring feature of friendship.¹⁹⁰ Would the English in England have refused similar requests from their English friends, and if not, was their refusal of requests from Indian friends in India an indication of a deficit in their cross-cultural friendship (described by Dewey as ‘an already awkward situation’)?

Nick Owen, describing in his *The British Left and India* the difficulties both sides had in playing to a common script, acknowledges that in the few cases where ‘threads of friendship’ made this possible there was a need for the coloniser to take up ‘a location alongside and not above or ahead of the colonised, a sharing of risk, and willingness to undertake ... the “unlearning of one’s privilege” ’.¹⁹¹ Chapters III and IV of this thesis will follow Owen in considering whether political engagement with Gandhi, whether in Simla or Westminster, was rendered bewildering and even infuriating because he sought a dialogue of equals, in which both sides, while not enemies, would recognise the need for acknowledgement of errors in the past and for mutual independence in the future.

From these understandings of colonial friendships, and from the preceding discussion of the meaning of the postcolonial, broad criteria may be established in an attempt to define what might be required for a postcolonial politics of friendships. The friends would approach each other as equals, acknowledging their different starting points, and accepting the damage done to both parties by the imperial project. While accepting the urgency of bringing that project to a close, their affective friendships would accept disagreements and divergencies as to how that might happen; indeed at a

¹⁹⁰ Bray, *The Friend*, pp. 50–56.

¹⁹¹ Nicholas (Nicholas J.) Owen, *The British Left and India: Metropolitan Anti-Imperialism, 1885-1947* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 18, quoting ‘the unlearning of one’s privilege’ from Gayatri Spivak, *The Postcolonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1990), p. 42.

more general level these friendships would accept without difficulty political, ethnic, national, and religious differences between the friends.

To return to the second question posed in the title of this section, might there be a postcolonial politics of friendship? This thesis understands this postcolonial politics of friendship as transcending racial and national and religious borders and asks if it might have existed during colonial rule, before 1947, even at a time of political oppression and uneven power dynamics between Indians and Europeans.

Discussions of the protagonists in the existing literature

In her second chapter 'Anticolonial Thought and the Politics of Friendship' of *Affective Communities*, Leela Gandhi chooses Andrews as her first example, following, she claims, Susan Visvanathan in finding in his example "friendship" as the lost trope in anticolonial thought'. She sees the first meeting of Andrews with Gandhi as Andrews 'reversing the fundamental civilizational hierarchy of Empire' by touching Gandhi's feet while Gandhi's dress defies 'imperial polarities of class and station'. She recounts Andrews's meeting with the flogged Indian soldier, to be discussed in the first chapter of this thesis, from Andrews's account and comments 'Once again, the minor affective transactions of this closet drama import an incalculable excess into the impasse of colonial encounter, collapsing for a brief moment the mutually quarantined categories of colonizer and colonized'.¹⁹²

After these two examples Leela Gandhi records M. K. Gandhi's 1919 Lahore eulogy for Andrews ('As long as there is even one Andrews among the British people, we must, for the sake of such a one, bear no hatred to them'), reviews Andrews's *The True India* as a response to Katherine Mayo's *Mother India*, and notes that friendship is a

¹⁹² Leela Gandhi, *Affective Communities*, pp. 14-20; Susan Visvanathan, 'Rudra, Andrews and Gandhi', p. 3532-3541.

constant refrain in what is written about Andrews and what he writes, including what he writes about the teaching of Jesus. She finds that ‘closer examination of his writings reveals something extra: ... an “affective cosmopolitanism”, the ethico-political practice of a desiring self inexorably drawn towards difference’.

The difficulty with this diagnosis of Andrews’s condition, as with the episodes she describes, is that in themselves they do not seem to provide evidence of friendships that would be considered primary in Cicero’s, and therefore in Derrida’s, classification. This is in contrast to Visvanathan, who explicitly stresses the affective elements in the friendships she describes. Leela Gandhi’s use of the expression ‘politics of friendship’ regarding her ‘affective communities’ seems instead to reflect friendships of utility, even if no doubt primary friendships developed within the communities she describes. The present thesis will follow Visvanathan to show that Andrews, and the other two protagonists, did form strong primary friendships, often it is true progressing to these from friendships of utility, sometimes, as Leela Gandhi notes, basing these friendships on Jesus’ teaching, and that they valued such friendships independently of their political utility.

Benita Parry devotes a chapter to Thompson and his writings in *Delusions and Discoveries*, a chapter that is acknowledged by Thompson’s son Palmer (E. P. Thompson) as ‘a capable and compact study’. She takes as her starting point Thompson’s missionary orientation, seeing in this his seeking of atonement for the evils of empire, most particularly in the need for this in respect of the Amritsar massacre in his *The Other Side of the Medal*. This quest for atonement will be further discussed below in this section and in Chapter I of this thesis. Justifiably she finds many of Thompson’s arguments representative of his personal opinions rather than of empirical observation, acknowledging that this is in part due to his seeking always to present at

least two points of view. This ‘over-confidence in the “fairness” of his own judgement’ is considered by Palmer to be his father’s ‘besetting weakness’.¹⁹³ She finds a failure on Thompson’s part to understand the impact of imperial domination on the India that he describes. Particularly, she sees Thompson as being one of those who could never accept the complete independence of India. Palmer considers that she ‘leans over-heavily on this point, and she has been followed by others’.¹⁹⁴

In the preface to her 1998 revised edition of *Delusions and Discoveries* Parry responds to Palmer’s criticism. Her assessment remains that E. J. Thompson was:

... an independent thinker trapped in his own strong predilections, a participant in debates about independence who until his last years was unable to relinquish an affective attachment to the idea of the Raj, a maverick whose nonconformity was long moderated by reservations about Indian demands for self-determination, and a preacher whose recommendations for reconciliation were inadequate to the conditions of a colonial relationship.¹⁹⁵

She adds a new paragraph to the end of her chapter:

Situating himself as informant to the British, Thompson [in fact a character in his play *Atonement*] admitted to the paucity of his knowledge of India. Similar disjunctions are rehearsed when overwrought professions of love and empathy for India are drowned by irascible reproofs of Indian character and deportment, while his support for Indian political aspirations was until his last years moderated by a residual belief in an imperial mission and a liberal commitment to gradualism. If a tendency to Christian mysticism prompted him to florid articulation of regard for Indian spirituality, a muscular Christianity fueled a confidence in his role as teacher of the Indians. Both as an Anglo-Indian and as an Englishman Thompson was atypical, his criticism of the British in India measuring his distance from received opinion. At the same time his didacticism and his exonerations of British rule suggest the constraints to his disaffiliation, and confirm the limits of political reformism in situations of ascendancy and repression.¹⁹⁶

This paragraph, not always easily accessible because only in the second edition, is included in its entirety to demonstrate the harshness of her final judgment, which this

¹⁹³ Thompson, *Alien Homage*, p. 103.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 107; Benita Parry, *Delusions and Discoveries: Studies on India in the British Imagination, 1880-1930* (London: Allen Lane, 1972), pp. 164-202.

¹⁹⁵ Benita Parry, *Delusions and Discoveries: India in the British Imagination, 1880-1930* revd. ed. (London: Verso, 1998), p. 21.

¹⁹⁶ Benita Parry, *Delusions and Discoveries*, revd. ed., p. 182.

thesis will attempt to show is not always supported by the facts. She does not perhaps, apart from the repeated phrase ‘until his last years’, sufficiently appreciate the changes in Thompson’s thoughts and beliefs over time, which were accompanied by his developing friendship with Nehru and his reconciliation with Tagore. She ascribes his approaches to India to a Christian faith which after his move to Oxford became little more than residual. In the extract above from her preface to the revised edition, she converts his ‘affective attachment’ to India, which as this thesis will aim to show was firmly based on mutual respect and enduring cross-cultural friendships, to an ‘affective attachment to the Raj’.

As noted by Parry, also in her preface, Said’s *Culture and Imperialism*, published in the same year, 1993, as Palmer’s *Alien Homage*, identified *The Other Side of the Medal* as ‘an impassioned statement against British rule and for Indian independence’.¹⁹⁷ Said commends E. J. Thompson’s appreciation of the double misrepresentation of the 1857 uprising, the descendants of each side having each a different history: ‘His is one of the earliest and most persuasive metropolitan accounts to understand imperialism as a cultural affliction for colonizer as well as colonized’. But Thompson fails to appreciate that ‘the empire never gives anything away out of good will’.¹⁹⁸

Priyamvada Gopal also emphasizes Thompson’s originality in drawing attention to the two histories in her *Insurgent Empire*. She endeavours to escape the binary of colonizer and colonized, ‘taking a slightly different route from Owen’, by describing some westerners whose reaction to India led to a possible third way, anticipating the Gandhian desire for equality. One of her convincing examples is Nevinson, already encountered in this thesis as Andrews’s Hampstead host.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁷ Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1993), p. 177.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 249.

¹⁹⁹ Gopal, *Insurgent Empire*, pp. 82, 175, 188.

Priya Satia in her *Time's Monster* finds in Thompson and his sons a Byronic inspiration, comparing and linking them to the British arabists, especially to T. E. Lawrence (1888-1935, Lawrence of Arabia) whom Thompson and his wife had met through their Islip neighbour Robert Graves.²⁰⁰ Satia had previously developed this theme in detail in an essay 'Byron, Gandhi and the Thompsons'.²⁰¹ This is a helpful insight, but as she herself acknowledges, applies more to the Byronic myth than to the historic Byron. E. J. Thompson saw a role for great men and great deeds in the march of history, as shown by his private and public writings on his wartime experience and by his study of Charles Metcalfe, and as seen also in his regard and affection for Nehru. Anyone who has spent time in Greece as a teenager, as did Frank Thompson, is inevitably moved by Byron's poem 'The Isles of Greece'. But Satia discusses only in an endnote Frank's more probable motivation for his volunteering for Special Operations Executive, his membership of the Communist Party, into which he had been inducted at Oxford by Iris Murdoch.²⁰² For Palmer his devotion to his brother's memory and his commitment to Marxism were more probable drivers for his lifelong study of the English working class: it is difficult to imagine Lord Byron seeing this class as a 'nation' in need of liberation.

Where Satia is especially relevant to this thesis is in her discussion of how different histories can coexist and, in their differences, shape the present. As already noted, Thompson's achievement in *The Other Side of the Medal* was his realisation that there were two histories of the 1857 uprising, the Indian and the British (especially that of

²⁰⁰ Priya Satia, *Time's Monster: History, Conscience and Britain's Empire* (London: Allen Lane, 2020).

²⁰¹ Priya Satia, 'Byron, Gandhi and the Thompsons: The Making of British Social History and Unmaking of Indian History', *History Workshop Journal*, 81.1 (2016), 135–70 <<https://doi.org/10.1093/hwj/dbw012>>.

²⁰² Satia, 'Byron, Gandhi and the Thompsons', endnote 81. Conradi, *A Very English Hero*, pp. 258-9, considers in detail how Iris Murdoch may have influenced Frank's choices with their eventually fatal outcome.

the British in India), and that the differences in these histories determined the different responses of the two sides in the political debate about the Amritsar massacre. This realisation can be traced in his contribution to the missionaries' letter, which is not mentioned by Satia, but which will be discussed in Chapter I of this thesis.

Collins in his *Empire, Nationalism and the Postcolonial World* discusses in detail Tagore's relationships with Andrews and Thompson in a chapter entitled 'Acts of Atonement'.²⁰³ He sees both as seeking to provide reparation for the imperial project in India, Andrews by looking for a religious reconciliation and Thompson by presenting his knowledge and understanding of India, and particularly of Tagore and his works, to the metropolis. The term atonement, as Collins recognises, has multiple meanings and multiple uses.²⁰⁴ Collins sees Andrews's enthusiasm for Tagore's recognition in London in 1912 as a form of atonement looking to repair relations between Britain and India by Britain 'paying due respect to Indian culture and civilization'. In contrast Thompson in his books on Tagore looked to atone by offering a 'fair hearing' and 'sound criticism'.²⁰⁵ Collins sees Thompson's book *The Other Side of the Medal* as a further act of atonement, 'intended to becalm a troubled political relationship'; this will be discussed further in Chapter I of this thesis. 'Whilst Thompson longed for British-Indian relations to be healed, it was essentially with the intention of saving the empire.'²⁰⁶ Collins traces a 'politics of friendship' (which he distinguishes from Derrida's) among the intellectual elite that was possible in the early years of the century but foundered in ambivalence in the inter-war years.

²⁰³ Collins, *Empire, Nationalism and the Postcolonial World*, pp. 122-43

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 139-40

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 125, 132.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 138, 140.

Nilanjana Banerji's D. Phil. thesis 'The Other Side of the Raj' is an example of how the concept of the postcolonial has been explored in its literary aspects (as discussed by Kennedy, mentioned in the previous section), in this case in relation to Thompson's writings.²⁰⁷ Banerji considers that Thompson's 'strategy is one of stressing difference, and staging a debate in his historical enquiries and fictional re-creations in a way that leads to a discussion, interpretation, and acceptance of that difference, not merely an attempt at reconciliation, which is what liberalism attempts and which must end in failure'. With his impulse to mediate

... he is always working in that which is called the 'in-between space' by Homi Bhabha and other post-colonial critics ... that posits an alternative space for cultural negotiations which is unavailable within the polarities of self and other, orient and occident, coloniser and colonised.

Hence, he 'speaks for those in the in-between': English-educated Indians, women finding themselves between cultures, those of mixed parentage.²⁰⁸

A more recent D. Phil. thesis, again from a literary perspective, 'Imperial infrastructure and spatial resistance in colonial literature, 1880-1930' by Dominic Davies examines Thompson's novels in the context of infrastructure and urban assignments of space as expressions of imperial control and also of anticolonial resistance.²⁰⁹ From among the novelists he discusses he selects Thompson together with

²⁰⁷ Nilanjana Banerji, 'The Other Side of the Raj: Representations of Colonial India in the Writings of Edward John Thompson' (Thesis DPhil—University of Oxford, 2002). In terms of historical context, Banerji's contrast between Thompson as 'a married man with a sympathetic and supportive partner at his side' and the colonial bachelors Woolf, Orwell, and Forster, raises a very minor concern, as during Edward's time in India Theo was with him only for a matter of months.

²⁰⁸ Banerji, pp. 30, 257.

²⁰⁹ Dominic Davies, 'Imperial Infrastructure and Spatial Resistance in Colonial Literature, 1880-1930' (Thesis DPhil—University of Oxford, 2017) Just as with Banerji, a very minor concern arises in terms of context when Davies writes '... both Candler and Thompson invested much of their working lives in India and were involved in both governmental and educational capacities in the Raj's administration'. Thompson (unlike Elwin) was never involved in a governmental capacity in the Raj's administration; his only period of government service during his Indian days was as army chaplain to a British Army regiment.

Forster and with Edmund Candler (1874-1926, thought to be another possible model for Fielding in Forster's *A Passage to India*) as postcolonial in that they accepted the inevitability of the end of British rule in India. Davies' concept of infrastructure as subversive resonates with what is to follow in the present thesis: the railway journeys of Gandhi and Nehru met by crowds at every station, Elwin and Gandhi's journeys across Europe and the people they stopped to meet, Andrews's sea voyages to the ends of the earth to fight the evils of indenture, Thompson and Nehru's sea-plane flights between India and Europe to seek understanding. Davies considers that his 'own literary critical practice must be considered, in some sense, as itself a form of resistance':²¹⁰ he is concerned that the three novelists having accepted the coming end of formal empire are 'already attempting to imagine the rise of an informal one'.²¹¹ Does this mean just a return to Collins' politics of friendship? Is it alternatively, with hindsight, a reference to the cultural and economic imperialism which followed decolonisation? Or is it a realisation, as will be seen as expressed in the final letters between Thompson and Nehru, that there is a universe of friendship which is independent of politics? These too are questions that this thesis will attempt to address.

Perhaps surprisingly Elwin does not seem to have the same visibility in the mainstream of history writing. His Oxford and missionary days are reviewed from a Christian viewpoint in Emilsen's *Violence and Atonement*: the account ends abruptly when Elwin leaves the Church.²¹² Daniel O'Connor's *Din-Sevak* has a thoughtful preface and a carefully researched introduction to a well-chosen and useful selection of Elwin's writings. O'Connor stresses Elwin's consistency in his devotion to the poor,

²¹⁰ Davies, 'Imperial Infrastructure', p. 10.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 253.

²¹² William W. Emilsen, *Violence and Atonement: The Missionary Experiences of Mohandas Gandhi, Samuel Stokes and Verrier Elwin in India before 1935* (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1994).

despite the changes in his beliefs and his affiliations.²¹³ Ramachandra Guha's biography *Savaging the Civilized* discusses some of the gaps (sometimes acknowledged) in Elwin's autobiography, particularly concerning his broken engagements, his first marriage, and his uncertainties about his future after Independence.²¹⁴ There is one noticeable gap in Guha's biography, Elwin's close association with and visits to Sorella Maria of the Eremo Franciscano, which will be described and discussed in Chapter II of this thesis. Relevant to the argument of this thesis, Guha concludes, quoting others who recognized Elwin's complete identification with India, that Elwin's life had shown that 'the dialogue of cultures need not always be a dialogue of the deaf'.²¹⁵

Thesis plan and chapter structure

The thesis does not follow a strictly chronological course but selects for each chapter a specific theme from the networks' interactions. Each chapter explores its theme chronologically. The thesis does not attempt full biographical accounts for the protagonists, referring instead as appropriate to their published biographies.

Taking the networks of the three protagonists as the skeleton of the thesis risks bias in its assessments, given that these occidental males receive most attention. Particular attention is therefore paid to their oriental and their female friends of whom there are sufficient examples to gauge their contributions to the themes of the thesis.

The first chapter, 'Reacting to Violence, 1919-1926', considers the impact of the violence surrounding the Amritsar massacre on the protagonists and their networks. After examining a number of accounts of an episode of unjustified violence and of a

²¹³ Verrier Elwin, *Din-Sevak: Verrier Elwin's Life of Service in Tribal India*, ed. by Daniel O'Connor (Delhi: Published for the Christian Institute for the Study of Religion & Society, Bangalore, by ISPCK, 1993), p. 11.

²¹⁴ Guha, *Savaging the Civilized*, pp. 79–84, 127–28, 192–97.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.314.

subsequent meeting between Andrews and its victim, it discusses the missionaries' letter to *The Statesman* in response to the uncritical support for General Dyer from the British in India, Andrews's pamphlet *Indian Independence: The Immediate Need* (which was to influence Nehru), and Thompson's *The Other Side of the Medal*.²¹⁶

The second chapter, 'The Eremo Francescano and the Ashram of St Francis, 1926-1949', describes Elwin's cross-cultural linking together of Gandhi and Sorella Maria of the *Eremo Francescano* (Franciscan Hermitage) in Umbria, Italy. In his correspondence Elwin describes his founding of the Ashram of St Francis in India. He meets Sorella Maria in Switzerland and subsequently visits the Eremo. The chapter ends with Elwin's marriage and his disengagement from his friendship with the Eremo.

The third chapter, 'A Passage to Europe, August-December 1931' includes Gandhi's visit to England for the 1931 Roundtable Conference, together with the networking roles of Andrews and Thompson. The chapter concludes with Gandhi's journey back to India, including his meetings with Romain Rolland in Switzerland and with Sorella Maria in Rome.

The fourth chapter '“Stone Walls do not a Prison Make”, September 1931-September 1945' covers years in which both Gandhi and Nehru have periods of imprisonment. Gandhi's 'fast to the death' in 1932 is discussed in the light of his correspondence with his friends. In 1935 Nehru is released to visit Europe to see his sick wife Kamala and during his time in Europe he visits the Thompsons. The growth of the friendship between Nehru and Thompson is traced. In 1939 Thompson visits Nehru in India and subsequently publishes their discussion in the form of an interview.

²¹⁶ C. F. Andrews, *Indian Independence: The Immediate Need*. (Madras: Ganesh & Co., undated) <<https://archive.org/details/indianindependen00andruoft>> [accessed 26 April 2017]; Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography: With Musings on Recent Events in India* (New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1980), p. 66; Edward John Thompson, *The Other Side of the Medal* (London: Hogarth Press, 1925).

The account of Nehru's subsequent imprisonment is based on Nehru's prison diary and his correspondence with Thompson, including Thompson's sending books to the imprisoned Nehru by way of the Viceroy.

The fifth chapter, ' "They live on after they have died", April 1940-May 1964' includes the deaths of Andrews, Tagore, Thompson, Elwin, and Nehru, and of Frank Thompson, Edward and Theodosia Thompson's elder son. The memories and reactions of their surviving family and friends are discussed, particularly in the light of Derrida's and Bray's associations between friendship and the anticipation of death.

The Conclusions follow the thesis's title in considering faith, freedom, and friendship in relation to the experiences of each of the protagonists.

CHAPTER 1: REACTING TO VIOLENCE, 1919-1926

There is a fundamental difference between their civilization and ours. They believe in the doctrine of violence or brute force as the final arbiter. My reading of our civilization is that we are expected to believe in soul-force or moral force as the final arbiter and this is satyagraha.

Gandhi's *Message to Countrymen* on his arrest, 9 April 1919²¹⁷

Reconstructions of a long-remembered encounter

On 31 January 1929 Elwin wrote to Amy Turton (1857-1942).²¹⁸ In his letter he included an account of an episode which occurred during Andrews's visit to the Punjab in October 1919, when as a co-opted member of Congress' committee for the preparation of evidence for the Viceroy's Disorders Inquiry Committee (the Hunter Committee) Andrews was trying to help those who had experienced violence to come forward to give evidence.²¹⁹ Elwin had heard of the episode first hand from an Indian friend, Gurdial Mallik (1896-1970), who had been Andrews's companion on the trip.

He went with M^r Andrews, after the terrible massacre of Amritsar, to investigate the repressive methods put out by the Government. They found one peasant with his back covered with the festering weals from a lashing inflicted to force a confession, by certain officials. M^r Andrews, seeing it, prostrated himself on the ground, and touching the peasant's feet, said 'On behalf of my fellow-countrymen I do penance for the wrong that has been done you'.

Elwin was writing to Turton from Oxford; he must have met Mallik and heard this account of the episode during his first year in India, which was from October 1927 to September 1928. In his biography of Andrews, Tinker notes that there is no contemporary account of this episode; this memory of Mallik's, reported second hand

²¹⁷ 'Message to Countrymen', 9 April 1919, *Gandhi*, xvii, 407–9 (409).

²¹⁸ Elwin to Amy Turton, 31 January 1929, London, British Library, Mss Eur D950/7, fol. 4. The correspondence between Elwin and Turton is discussed in detail in Chapter II. Turton, a British resident of Siena, was co-founder of the *Eremo Francescano*.

²¹⁹ Chaturvedī and Sykes, *Andrews*, p. 134.

by Elwin nine years after the event, is probably the earliest account, differing in some significant details from later accounts.²²⁰

This chapter reviews these different accounts, together with related evidence presented to the Hunter Committee, and then sets this single episode of colonial violence in the wider context of reactions to the Amritsar massacre, particularly those of Andrews and Thompson. It will describe how, encouraged by Andrews, Thompson, with other missionaries, and in discussion with his wife Theo, made a public stand against British sympathy for Dyer. It will then discuss how Andrews came to write the articles which were subsequently republished in his influential pamphlet *Indian Independence: the Immediate Need*, and how after leaving India Thompson came to write *The Other Side of the Medal*, his revisionist account of the 1857 Revolt.

Gurdial Mallik, who witnessed the episode, was the son of a Sikh theosophy missionary.²²¹ In the 1940 volume of the *Visva-Bharati Quarterly* dedicated to Andrews's memory, he explains how he first met Andrews. As a student in Bombay in 1917 he was attending a class on Browning's poetry to which his tutor had invited Andrews, who had just returned from Fiji where he had been mediating on behalf of the indentured Indians. After the class each student was introduced individually to Andrews. Mallik remembered saying to him 'Sir, India is grateful to you for all that you are doing for her children'. Andrews smiled and replied 'My young boy, it is the other way round. It is I who am grateful to India for being what I am'. In the journal article Mallik comments on the effect this reply had on him:

I was at once struck with this observation, made in all sincerity and spontaneity, because being one of those thousands of students who had been for some time

²²⁰ Tinker, *Ordeal of Love*, pp. 174–75.

²²¹ Mohan Singh Diwana, 'Reflections and Notes on "Karam Khand"', *Journal of Sikh Studies*, 4.1 (1977), 135.

swept off their feet by the wave of Westernism, I had never realized till then that my own country could ever be held in such high esteem by a ‘foreigner’.²²²

As a result, Andrews’s off-the-cuff reply became a call to discipleship. Mallik met him again on a visit to Tagore’s ashram in Shantiniketan in 1919. Then having returned to his commercial apprenticeship in Karachi he received a telegram from Andrews, asking him to meet him in Lahore, ‘where he was proceeding for the purpose of making inquiries into the terrible happenings of the Post-Rowlatt Act period in the Punjab’. Mallik joined Andrews there from the beginning of October to the middle of November and seems to have remained in the Punjab after Andrews’s departure.²²³

That Mallik speaks of ‘the terrible happenings of the Post-Rowlatt Act period in the Punjab’ rather than of the Amritsar Massacre alone is a reminder that the massacre, the sustained shooting into an entrapped unarmed crowd by soldiers under the command of Colonel (temporary Brigadier General) Reginald Dyer (1864-1927), was just one event in a policy of violent repression, of which this flogging was an example, which was continued under the cover of martial law.

Three comments can be made on the particular period of violent imperial repression of Indian reactions to the Rowlatt Act. First, historically, the memory of the violence of the Revolt of 1857 and of its violent repression drove a philosophy that provided justification to General Dyer and subsequently to his supporters.²²⁴ The assault in Amritsar on the British missionary Miss Sherwood aroused fears and emotions among the British in India about violence against European women that led them to justify Dyer’s extreme violence as pre-empting a widespread rebellion that would have

²²² Gurdial Mallik, ‘Some Reminiscences of C. F. Andrews’, *The Visva-Bharati Quarterly*, VI.I (1940), 31–40 (p. 35).

²²³ Mallik, ‘Some Reminiscences’, p. 36; Tinker, *Ordeal of Love*, pp. 159, 161.

²²⁴ Mark Condos, *The Insecurity State: Punjab and the Making of Colonial Power in British India* (Cambridge: University Press, 2017), pp. 100, 220; Kim A. Wagner, *Amritsar 1919: An Empire of Fear and the Making of a Massacre* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2019), pp. 257–58.

resulted in even more deaths, British and Indian. It was alleged that such a rebellion had already been planned and organised, but the Hunter Committee could find no evidence of this.

Secondly, the violence of the repression can be seen, similarly to that of the Black and Tans in Ireland in the same period, as a continuation of the violence of the 1914-1918 war, as well-expressed in a letter of an Indian Christian K. T. Paul: 'The war has evidently prussianised some of those who engaged in it to put down the Prussians'.²²⁵ By this he was suggesting that the barbaric and unjustified discipline of martial law in the Punjab had been learnt by the British from their 'Prussian' enemy in the preceding European war, notably, according to this use of the adjective in British public discourse, during the initial German occupation of Belgium.

Judicial flogging, abolished as a punishment in the British Army in 1881, remained a punishment in the Indian Army until 1920. Sentencing to this punishment could be performed by a Special Court Martial held by a Commanding Officer, even if non-combatant, acting alone. Flogging appears to have been used frequently in the Indian forces during the 1914-1918 war, especially in the Labour and Porter Corps, in France, Egypt, Palestine, and Mesopotamia. It was seen as deeply degrading by the Indian, particularly as it might be inflicted in public on bared buttocks. Surendra Kumar Datta (1878-1948), who had qualified as a doctor, and had taught at Foreman Christian College, Lahore (and would in the future be its Principal), was at this time national secretary for India of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA). Serving with the YMCA behind the lines in France he noted two particular flogging sentences. The first, for 'staying away for a night with a French woman' was withdrawn after a

²²⁵ K. T. Paul to J. H. Oldham, 27 June 1919, quoted in Tinker, *Ordeal of Love*, p. 157.

threatened mutiny. The second was executed, and was followed by the death by suicide of the Gurkha victim.²²⁶

Thirdly, within British educational systems at this time there was a widespread and firm belief in the value of ritualised infliction of pain as a punishment and deterrent. This approach was endorsed by the clerical establishment. One of the few memories Elwin had of his father, a bishop, was of receiving a beating from him for disobedience.²²⁷ When Marx quoted with disapproval a British writer as saying that offenders ‘received such a flogging they will not easily forget’, the official was more probably echoing words from his school days rather than from his imperial experience.²²⁸ There is an implication of the same concept of praefectorial discipline, enforced by corporal punishment, in the English official’s justification of his ordering the flogging because of the Indian’s perceived insolence.²²⁹ A further action of this character described in the Hunter Committee evidence is the flogging of the six biggest boys of a school, without any evidence or suspicion of individual wrongdoing, purely as an example to the rest of the school. This approach inevitably created a superior/inferior, elite/subaltern divide between Englishman and Indian, reinforcing the imperial model of the colonised as a child in need of education and discipline from his guardian.

Similarly in his account of the British reaction to the massacre Derek Sayer is struck by ‘the recurrent vocabularies of the schoolroom’ in the justifications for imperial

²²⁶ Radhika Singha, ‘The “Rare Infliction”: The Abolition of Flogging in the Indian Army, circa 1835–1920’, *Law and History Review*, 34.3 (2016), 783–81
<<https://doi.org/10.1017/S073824801600016X>>.

²²⁷ Elwin, *Tribal World*, p. 2.

²²⁸ Marx, *The First Indian War of Independence*, p. 92.

²²⁹ The Disorders Inquiry Committee, *Evidence Taken before the Disorders Inquiry Committee: Gujranwala, Gujrat, Lyallpur and Punjab* (Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing, India, 1920), v, p. 72
<<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=umn.31951d00850875e&view=1up&seq=86>>
[accessed 30 December 2020].

violence as ‘teaching a lesson’. Indians, the British considered with condescending racism, ‘had a right to fatherly care — and this entailed, when necessary, fatherly chastisement’.²³⁰

A fuller eye-witness account by Mallik of the encounter between Andrews and the village headman, written 21 years after the event, can be found in his article in the *Visva-Bharati Quarterly* memorial issue:

Once in the course of our travels in the affected areas he visited a village, near Gujranwalla. He had heard that one of the retired Indian military officers there had suffered much during the Martial Law regime, because he had refused to be tutored into tendering evidence of a nature which was far from his own knowledge of the facts of the case. As a result, a series of stripes were inflicted on his aged body. After half an hour’s search we succeeded in locating this officer and Mr. Andrews begged of him to tell him what had been done to him. At first, he bluntly asked us to go away, saying he had nothing to impart, for he had enough of Englishmen. But this Englishman, he did not know, was a coin of a different mint. Immediately Mr. Andrews embraced the officer, who was surprised beyond his wits to see a member of the ruling race behaving in that informal and affectionate fashion. “Brother,” said Mr. Andrews, “do please tell me what they did to you.”

The officer, whose suspicions about the *bona fides* of Mr. Andrews had by this time been dispelled, then stripped himself bare and exposed a body ghastly with lash marks. At first Mr. Andrews was unnerved but he soon recovered and his countenance beamed with divine tenderness. With eyes filled with hot tears, he fell down at the feet of the officer and, with hands folded and a voice choked with feeling, said, “Brother, on behalf of the English nation I beg your forgiveness.”

The deep sounded unto the deep. The officer embraced Mr. Andrews and with a torrent of tears coursing down his cheeks, rejoined, “*Sahib*, as long as there is one Englishman like you in India, I can have the heart to forgive your whole nation.”²³¹

Mallik’s version of the encounter in this memorial article does not specifically mention Andrews’s touching the officer’s feet and refers instead to an embrace. It does go into detail as to Andrews’s emotional response: at first unnerved by the exposure of the physical evidence of unjust and unjustifiable violence (which had been not only physically severe, but also psychologically damaging by subjecting one accustomed to

²³⁰ Derek Sayer, ‘British Reaction to the Amritsar Massacre 1919-1920’, *Past & Present*, 131.1 (1991), 130–64 (p. 162) <<https://doi.org/10.1093/past/131.1.130>>.

²³¹ Mallik, ‘Some Reminiscences’, pp. 36–37. The first sentence of third last paragraph, ‘The deep sounded unto the deep’, is a quotation from the Bible, Psalm 42:9.

command as an officer, and to lead as the village headman, to public humiliation), he recovered when he realized he could seek forgiveness. In Mallik's account the response of the headman, after the intimacy of the full physical contact in the embrace between the two men had broken down barriers of racial difference, and after Andrews' emotional and extreme gesture of respect, granted this forgiveness.²³²

Further details are suggested in an account by Chaturvedī and Sykes in their biography of Andrews, prepared immediately after Andrews's death, at a time when the authors and Mallik were all based in Shantiniketan: Mallik's assistance in describing the period in the Punjab is acknowledged.²³³ Their account includes the officer's mental distress following the injustice and reference by Andrews to Sikh teaching on forgiveness, and follows Elwin in stating that Andrews touched the officer's feet.²³⁴ As discussed above in the Introduction, Andrews had shown respect both to Tagore after he had been awarded the Nobel Prize and to Gandhi at their first meeting by bending to touch their feet. While a widely accepted Indian gesture of respect between disciple and master, or between parent and child, it was a source of surprise and of emotional response that an Englishman should make it to an Indian. It was a characteristic of Andrews's spontaneous capacity for physical gestures which left no doubt in the minds of the recipients of his genuine sympathy and respect, and which inverted the relationship of coloniser/colonist parent/child.

Andrews himself described the encounter as an example of following the teaching of Christ in his devotional book *Christ in the Silence*, published in 1933 and therefore 13 years later. In his account Elwin's 'peasant' with Mallik's 'aged body' becomes 'A young Sikh village headman, with a fine record of service as a soldier, both on the

²³² Das, *Touch and Intimacy*, pp. 113, 171.

²³³ Chaturvedī and Sykes, *Andrews*, p. viii.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 136.

North-West Frontier of India and also in France’, who ‘had been flogged in the presence of his fellow-villagers on the suspicion of having cut the telegraph wires some two miles away from his village’.²³⁵ Andrews wrote of the man’s subsequently recognised innocence, but was even more concerned about his psychological reaction to:

...the *moral* wound which had cut deepest of all. ... Already he had shown clear signs of insanity, through brooding over his intolerable wrong till it had clouded all his mind. His friends had begun to be afraid even to go near him lest some mad act of violence might happen. All day and night he stayed in one room overlooking the gateway of the town, and refused to leave it. His friends had come to me asking my help in their distress.

The Indian’s first reaction to Andrews’s approach was to shun the Englishman. Then Andrews repeated the gesture of respect he had shown to Tagore and to Gandhi, touching the man’s feet, asking for ‘pardon for the great wrong my fellow-countrymen had committed’.

When he saw what I had done he drew his feet very quickly away, almost with a shock; then he burst into tears. For a long time we remained together, while he cried his heart out with convulsive sobs which seemed as though they would never cease. When at last, with deep emotion, I asked him if the past had all been forgotten and forgiven, he answered “Yes,” and his face was lighted up with a new joy and peace. His spirit had found its release and his heart had become again as the heart of a little child.

Andrews relates that ‘For a long time we remained together’, but does not bring himself to acknowledge in print the embrace that his disciple Mallik remembered in his memorial account. While ‘the heart of a little child’ might suggest paternalism, Andrews, ordained as a Christian priest, would have remembered Jesus’ teaching of the need to receive ‘the kingdom of God as a little child’.²³⁶

These different accounts are all examples of the significance of memories of violence. Gyanendra Pandey has reviewed oral histories of the violence associated with Partition in 1947. His analysis and conclusions are relevant to the memories of this

²³⁵ C. F. Andrews, *Christ in the Silence* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1933), pp. 94–95.

²³⁶ Luke 18.17.

incident and more generally to the memories which influenced reactions to 1919 violence in the Punjab. He looked at how violence is conceptualised and remembered by the victims, perpetrators, and onlookers, and concluded that violence is seen as something occurring only outside the community, and therefore establishes the limits of that community. Victims within the community are seen as martyrs; responses to attacks on the community are seen as ‘our revenge’ and are justified as preventing further and greater violence.²³⁷ This last was a recurrent theme in British justifications of Dyer’s shooting into the crowd in Amritsar and of the subsequent violent repression, based on memories, factual and fictional, of the 1857 revolt. On the Indian side ongoing resentment and, among some extremists, preparations for revenge, were directed against the British, not against the Gurkhas and the Indian sepoy of the Frontier Force (thought to have been predominantly Muslim, although some were likely to have been Sikhs) that had obeyed orders and fired into the crowd.²³⁸

For the headman, the psychological damage from the memory of the flogging was proving devastating, more troubling than the scars, which he was initially reluctant to show to Andrews, or the memory of the physical pain, although it was the physical contact with Andrews that provided release from the effects of the memory. For Mallik memories of Andrews’s reactions, his embrace, his shock at the evidence of violence, his request for forgiveness, served to reinforce his esteem for Andrews as an Englishman who was giving his all for India and Indians and thus breaking out from the bounds of his own community. Andrews’s long period of silence about the encounter suggests that for him this was a deeply emotional memory, about which he

²³⁷ Gyanendra Pandey, ‘Community and Violence: Recalling Partition’, *Economic and Political Weekly*, 32 (1997), 2037–39, 2041–45 (p. 2037)

<<https://www.jstor.org/stable/4405734>> [accessed 8 April 2019].

²³⁸ Wagner, *Amritsar 1919*, p. 154.

could bring himself to write only much later and only in the context of Christian forgiveness. Here he remained true to his Christian calling and faith, even if he had by now dissociated himself from the formal structures of the Anglican Church. But it is also likely that this meeting with one who had suffered violence by flogging brought back to his mind the lashed Indian indentured labourer who had touched Gandhi's feet, seeking protection, during his visit to Phoenix Farm in 1914, and of how on that occasion: 'When he saw I was a European, he suddenly started back with fear, as though I might strike him; and it was necessary to reassure him that I was not an enemy but a friend. That look of fear on his face as he saw me coming towards him haunted me for many days, and filled me with pity'.²³⁹

Already these accounts show the importance of friendships in creating communities of concern and mutual support. Andrews's friendship with Gandhi led him to join in the seeking of evidence in the Punjab. Mallik's friendship with Andrews meant that he could provide trusted support, no doubt as a translator, but also as a go-between, given that Mallik was by birth a Sikh, though not an adherent of the Sikh religion. Elwin's friendship with Mallik led to him hearing of the encounter and to him sharing Mallik's account in his letter to Turton, whom he had yet to meet, although he already considered her a friend. Interpreting these friendships according to Derrida's postulates, Andrews and Gandhi's was already a primary friendship while Andrews and Mallik's was at this time a relationship of guru and disciple, accepted by Derrida as a basis for the development of a primary friendship, which Mallik's writings show it subsequently became. References later in this thesis will trace the later stages of the relationships of Elwin with Turton and with Mallik, which this time were just at their beginning. The

²³⁹ Andrews, *What I Owe to Christ*, p. 126.

friendships were consistent with a postcolonial politics of friendship, rejecting differences of religion, nationality, and race.

News ‘trickled through the gagged silence’

Just as it was a long time before these accounts of this episode appeared in writing and in print, so the news of the Amritsar massacre and the associated violent repression emerged and spread only very slowly, restricted by cutting of the telegraph wires and then by draconian restriction of movement and censorship of news and mail. At the most basic level a cable from Miles Irving (1876-1962), the Deputy Commissioner at Amritsar, reporting the massacre to the Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab, Michael O’Dwyer (1864-1920), had proved undecipherable, and, as the telegraph wires had now been cut, Irving’s despatch, reporting 200 people killed, was taken by car from Amritsar to Lahore by S. M. Jacob (1879-1977), Director of Agriculture in the Indian Civil Service, accompanied by Gerard Wathen (1878-1958), the principal of Khalsa College, Amritsar, a friend of Darling’s and through him an acquaintance of Forster’s.²⁴⁰ At their request O’Dwyer was woken at 3 a.m. to read the despatch. According to Wathen’s wife’s diary, confirmed by the diary of the Chief Secretary of the Punjab, J. P. Thompson, Wathen then harangued the Lieutenant-Governor, urging that O’Dwyer should distance himself from and disown General Dyer’s action in continuing to fire on the Jallianwala Bagh meeting.²⁴¹ Jacob’s own autobiography, privately printed 50 years later, also describes this dispute between Wathen and O’Dwyer, and adds that he, Jacob, had limited his comments to O’Dwyer to querying why, since martial law had not been

²⁴⁰ Forster’s character Fielding in *A Passage to India* is in many respects a composite, combining Wathen’s role as College Principal and Darling’s ability to form friendships with Indians.

²⁴¹ Melicent Wathen, ‘Diary: India 1914-1920’, p. 184, and J. P. Thompson, ‘Diary’, British Library, Mss Eur F 137, 14 April 1919, both quoted in Wagner, *Amritsar 1919*, p. 175.

declared, Dyer had not been accompanied by, and had not been acting on the advice of, a civil officer (who would have been Irving) ‘to start and stop the shooting’.²⁴² The messengers’ comments were not appreciated by O’Dwyer, and both were sent back to Amritsar at 4 a.m. without any offer of a bed for what remained of the night.

Restriction of freedom of movement by the Government of the Punjab after the introduction of martial law and repression of the Indian press nationwide meant that details of the massacre and of subsequent violence were not publicly available. The Government of India restricted the information initially provided to the London Government to generalities, referring to ‘casualties’ on both sides and the restoration of order.²⁴³ In London *The Times* simply reported: ‘There seems to have been a renewal of the disturbances at Amritsar last Sunday, two days after the bank agents were murdered. The troops came into collision with the mob, and there were 200 casualties among the rioters.’²⁴⁴

Because of censorship and certainly also self-censorship in the English language press in India, news ‘trickled through the gagged silence’ quicker to the Indians than to the British.²⁴⁵ Accounts of floggings in the Punjab, though not it seems of the massacre, reached Rudra in Delhi from his students. He alerted Andrews who on 21 April wrote to the Viceroy Lord Chelmsford and to his Private Secretary John Maffey expressing his alarm. Andrews was in good standing with Chelmsford and Maffey thanks to his help in the negotiations with Gandhi the previous year (described in the Introduction), and within two days instructions were sent that public flogging ‘should be avoided as

²⁴² S. M. Jacob, *Favour for fools in a decadent empire: a skeletal autobiography*. (Woldingham: privately printed, 1970), p. 38.

²⁴³ Katherine E. Davies, ‘British Reactions to Amritsar and Croke Park: Connections and Comparisons’ (Master of History by Research, Sheffield Hallam, 2017), p. 25.

²⁴⁴ ‘“Open Rebellion” in India’, *The Times*, 19 April 1919, p. 11.

²⁴⁵ ‘Rabindranath Tagore: Why He Wishes to Resign His Title’, *Manchester Guardian*, 9 July 1919, p. 6 <<https://search.proquest.com/docview/476226715?accountid=13042>> [accessed 16 January 2019].

much as possible'.²⁴⁶ Nonetheless, as with the number of deaths in the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, for which estimates increased from the official 379 to considerably higher, initial official reports of small numbers of floggings, 12, were followed by later reports showing these were underestimates: the Government of India later admitted that 255 individuals had been flogged.²⁴⁷ It also later further emerged that the avoidance of flogging in public had been respected more in the breach than in the observance.

Andrews followed up his letters with a visit to Simla at the end of April when he met with Maffey and the Viceroy. It seems that at this time neither Andrews, nor Maffey, nor Chelmsford was aware of the scale of the massacre. There was no acceptance of Andrews's call for a review of the Rowlatt Acts, which had been the cause of the breakdown in relations with the British, coming within months of the end of the war that Indians had been led to expect would usher in new moves towards independence.²⁴⁸ Claiming that he had the Viceroy's approval, Andrews then proceeded to Amritsar, arriving on 12 May.²⁴⁹ But as the District was under martial law, which lasted from 15 April to 11 June, he was arrested and compelled to leave the Punjab; the Governor, O'Dwyer, informed Chelmsford of this on 13 May. Andrews wrote to Tagore. 'I have seen the police, at every corner, dominating the city. I have seen long lines of cavalry patrolling the streets. I have understood from the lips of many witnesses, the terror which these forces have inspired.'²⁵⁰ The episode of his meeting with the village headman described and discussed in the first section of this chapter occurred later when he returned to the Punjab at the end of September.²⁵¹

²⁴⁶ Tinker, *Ordeal of Love*, p. 153.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 174 fn. 7 .

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 154.

²⁴⁹ Chaturvedī and Sykes, *Andrews*, p. 131.

²⁵⁰ Wagner, *Amritsar 1919*, p. 207.

²⁵¹ Misinterpreting Tinker, Lago incorrectly states that Andrews returned to the Punjab on 12 June, when martial law ended: Lago, *"India's Prisoner"*, p. 148; Tinker, *Ordeal of Love*, p. 158.

Andrews's letters were no doubt among the sources of information that led Tagore to renounce his knighthood, an action for which there was no precedent. In his letter to the Viceroy of 31 May 1919 he wrote in general terms of 'accounts of the insults and suffering by our brothers in Punjab' and 'the dumb anguish of terror' but did not specifically mention the massacre.²⁵² Given the lack of precedent both the Simla and the London bureaucracies refused his request.

The British public in the United Kingdom were for many months kept as much in the dark as regards the massacre as the Secretary of State for India, Montagu, claimed to have been. A first inkling of something amiss was noted by two Punjabi students at Oxford who (at what must have been about a month from the date of the massacre) stopped receiving letters from their homes in Amritsar.²⁵³ Full accounts of the massacre appeared in the United Kingdom press only on 15 December 1919 as reports of the evidence presented to the Hunter Committee, to be discussed in the next section of this chapter.²⁵⁴

Photographs were smuggled out of India illustrating the imperial violence of martial law in the Punjab and were published in *The Sun and New York Herald* and in *Amritsar and Our Duty to India* by Benjamin Horniman (1873-1948).²⁵⁵ Horniman had been editor of the *Bombay Chronicle* until his arrest on 26 April 1919 and his deportation to England the following day: his newspaper had provided strong support to Gandhi and the nationalist cause.²⁵⁶ One of these photographs (**Figure 2**) shows the public flogging

²⁵² Lago, "India's Prisoner", p. 148.

²⁵³ S. K. Kirpalani, *Fifty Years with the British* (London: Sangam, 1993), p. 63.

²⁵⁴ 'Imperial Atrocities', *Daily Herald*, 15 December 1919, pp. 1-2.

²⁵⁵ 'Truth About India's Revolt Now Revealed', *The Sun and the New York Herald*, 1 February 1920, section 7, p. 1, <<https://www.loc.gov/resource/sn83030273/1920-02-01/ed-1/?sp=93>>, [accessed 9 June 2022]; B. G. Horniman, *Amritsar and Our Duty to India* (London: Fisher Unwin, 1920).

²⁵⁶ Ramachandra Guha, *Rebels against the Raj: Western Fighters for India's Freedom* (London: William Collins, 2022), chapter 3.

of an Indian by a British soldier similar to that described in the beginning of this chapter, differing only in the place and in the support to which the victim was tied.



TIED TO LADDER.

Another picture of an Indian tied to a ladder at Kasur railway-station being flogged.

To face page 120.

Figure 2. An Indian, stripped and tied to a ladder, being flogged by a British soldier. Photograph from Horniman's *Amritsar: Our Duty to India* (London: Fisher Unwin, 1920)²⁵⁷

Elwin, still at Oxford at the time of the massacre, has left a revealing memory, after introducing his friend

... that erratic, wayward, delightful genius Bernard Aluwihare, who was then an undergraduate at Jesus and has since been a Minister in the Government of Ceylon. I have a dim memory of lecturing a fellow graduate at Merton at the time of the Amritsar Massacre and declaring it was the only way to treat the natives and that anyone who had served in India would say the same. It was Bernard who first roused in my mind some sort of dissatisfaction with this conventional attitude and before I had left Oxford he had instilled into me not only a devotion to the non-violent idealism of Mahatma Gandhi and the internationalist culture of Tagore, but had filled me with a desire to see the wrongs of India righted.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁷ Horniman, *Amritsar*, p. 120.

²⁵⁸ Shamrao Hivale, *Scholar Gipsy* (Bombay: Tripathi, 1946), pp. 10–11.

This memory of Elwin's introduces for the first time the lasting cross-cultural friendship between the English Elwin and the South Asian Bernard Aluwihare (1902-1961), starting during their university days at Oxford, with its initiation of Elwin into the affective community of Indian nationalism.

The Hunter Committee

The Secretary for India, Montagu, claimed that he learnt of the full extent of the massacre only from press reports. Metropolitan awareness and concern had provided strong pressure for some kind of judicial investigation and had led Montagu to advise Chelmsford to set up the Hunter Committee. This had as its remit 'to investigate the recent disturbances in Bombay, Delhi and the Punjab, their causes, and the measures taken to cope with them'.

In the event, details of the flogging described in this chapter were not presented as evidence to the Hunter Committee. At Gandhi's insistence no evidence from the Punjab was presented.²⁵⁹ Mallik understandably found this very difficult to accept, as he describes in his chapter 'First Non-Cooperation' in a 1951 collection of reminiscences of Gandhi.²⁶⁰ Publicly Gandhi linked the non-submission of the evidence to the failure of the British authorities to release political offenders, including Dr Satyapal and Dr Kitchlew, whose arrests had precipitated the Amritsar disturbances (and whose sentencing by a martial-law commission to transportation for life, later commuted, was achieved only by O'Dwyer obtaining permission to backdate the start of martial law), so that they might give evidence as free men. But it might also have been an astute political move. As Mallik noted, the evidence was provided informally to the Indian

²⁵⁹ Gurdial Mallik, 'First Non-Cooperation', in *Reminiscences of Gandhiji*, by Chandrashanker Shukla (Bombay: Vora, 1951), pp. 169–72 (pp. 169–70).

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 170–71.

members of the Committee who used it to formulate their questions to the British witnesses.²⁶¹ As the British officials were covered by an indemnity, they had little reason to give other than truthful answers, and so the reports of the Committee proceedings are likely to be reliable sources. Meanwhile those Indians who had provided the evidence were spared the need to be cross-examined, which might have devalued their evidence, and might well have proved psychologically stressful.

The minority (Indian members) report of the Committee contains the following account of the flogging:

It appears that Mr. Jacob [the same S. M. Jacob who with Wathen had taken the despatch from Amritsar to Lahore], who accompanied Major Braid's mobile column [on 20 April], took six hostages from one village. As the *lambardar* [village headman] did not show inclination to help and was unable to give, when asked, any information as to how and by whom the wires were cut near the village, Mr. Jacob had him stripped naked, except for his loin-cloth, bound him to a tree and inflicted 15 stripes on him, and fined him Rs. 200, which he collected on the spot. Mr. Jacob admits that he eventually found out that this *lambardar* had no information and that the cutting of the wires had really taken place at some other place. Mr. Jacob says that he inflicted this punishment on this *lambardar*, acting as a summary court-martial. It is difficult to understand this as it appears that the notification nominating Mr. Jacob as one of the officers for the summary disposal of offences under martial law was issued only on the 23rd of April, nor does this case find a place in the return of cases supplied to us.²⁶²

In his written evidence and in his oral evidence under questioning Jacob answered that he had been instructed by the Punjab Government to accompany Major Brade with a motorised mobile column of soldiers (apparently British troops, either the West Sussex or West Kent regiment) to investigate and punish offenders for cutting the telegraph wires at mile 254 at Kamoke. On arrival at Kamoke he had called for the *lambardars*:

²⁶¹ Mallik, 'First Non-Cooperation', p. 170.

²⁶² *Report of the Committee Appointed by the Government of India to Investigate the Disturbances in the Punjab, Etc* (London: HMSO: House of Commons, 1920), p. 126, Parliamentary Papers.

One man Bhagwan Singh refused for a long time to come so I went to his house and got him myself ... He was standing there with folded arms and he was very indifferent to any instruction that I gave him ... He practically paid no attention to what I said and eventually I told him that if he did not do what I wanted he would have to be punished; but he still continued to be very indifferent to what I asked him to do, so I held a summary court martial on him and sentenced him to 15 strokes of whipping and a fine of Rs. 200.

After the flogging, inflicted by a British officer in the presence of some 30 villagers, Jacob eventually discovered that the cutting of the wires had taken place at Nangal Sadan at mile 364, not at mile 254. Not surprisingly Bhagwan Singh had had no information to give him as to who had cut the wires.²⁶³

Jacob's precise status accompanying Major Braid's mobile column was questioned by the Hunter Committee. Further questioning from the Committee revealed that the 'summary court-martial' did not include any charge concerning a breach of martial law, or of a proclamation, or of the Indian Penal Code. 'I merely punished him for refusing to help me.'²⁶⁴

In his autobiography Jacob states that his instructions came from J. P. Thompson, Chief Secretary of the Punjab, who, no doubt remembering Jacob's complaint about the military activity being independent of the civil authority in Amritsar, may have wanted to give Jacob an opportunity to handle the military.²⁶⁵ The objective of the mobile column, travelling in cars or lorries, was to punish those who were thought to have cut the telegraph wires and to take hostages to prevent a recurrence. Jacob succeeded only with difficulty in persuading the major commanding the column that the operation was under his (Jacob's) command and that any firing would require his specific orders. As regards the whipping this was the 'basic minimum to be effective and obtain the

²⁶³ *Evidence Taken before the Disorders Inquiry Committee: Gujranwala, Gujrat, Lyallpur and Punjab* v, 71–75, 205–6 <<http://hdl.handle.net/2027/umn.31951d00850875e>> [accessed 24 January 2019].

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, v, 73.

²⁶⁵ Jacob, *Favour for fools*, p. 39.

necessary co-operation of the villagers'. In a footnote he states that the whipping was performed by a subaltern 'with his swagger-pole, a puny affair compared to the formidable stick used in jails for judicial sentences'.

Jacob states in his autobiography that his questioning by the Hunter Committee was sprung upon him without due notice, preparation, or legal advice. The majority report absolved him of blame, but despite this the Government of India proceeded to censure his actions, in Jacob's opinion treating him as a scapegoat.

Parallels can be drawn between this hearing of the Committee and the trial in *A Passage to India*. In both cases there was an assumption by the colonial authority that its case would be vindicated. When that case was examined in court by expert, experienced, and well-briefed Indian lawyers, the case collapsed. Both at the time of the incident and at the time of the trial or hearing, British opinion divided: the local British civilians haunted by memories of past Indian violence, especially violence against women, in the 1857 revolt; the military convinced that violent repression was needed; the non-government civilian Wathen/Fielding identifying with the Indian; the Indians, irrespective of religion or caste, united in their support for the victim of injustice.

Neither Jacob nor Andrews fitted tidily into one of these groups. A constant theme in Jacob's autobiography is the cultural divide between the members of the Indian Civil Service educated at Oxford or Cambridge and at the famous Public Schools and others like himself who through family circumstances (in his case that his father had joined the closed Christian sect of the Plymouth Brethren, sending him to one of their schools) had no such advantages and were excluded from promotions to the Secretariat serving the Viceroy. Although he came from a family with long-standing links with India, his schooling and his university education in London set him apart from this magic circle,

his academic strength being in statistics where his publications show that he worked with one of the founders of this field of mathematics, Karl Pearson, not in the traditional field of Latin and Greek which he despised.²⁶⁶ In sport he excelled not in pigsticking but in tennis, his good eye and quick assessment of the ball's trajectory leading to his captaining the first Indian Ryder's Cup team in 1925, the other members of the team being Indians.²⁶⁷

Gould, whose education had placed him firmly within the magic circle, confirms in his autobiography the regular Sunday morning appointment for pigsticking for the Delhi-based British.²⁶⁸ In contrast Jacob's tennis is a good example of how sport might act as a cross-cultural bridge. In *A Passage to India* Aziz plays polo with a British subaltern met by chance: 'Concentrated on the ball, they somehow became fond of one another, and smiled when they drew rein to rest. ... "If only they were all like that," each thought.'²⁶⁹ The same subaltern was to bait Fielding in the club after the episode of the Marabar Hills.²⁷⁰ As will be seen in the last section of this chapter, Darling faced a similar verbal attack in the Amritsar club regarding his criticism of Dyer.

Jacob's dogmatic setting of himself against the military showed his rejection not of violence in itself, but of violence without civil authority behind it. His need to assert his authority over the mobile column may even have played its part in his decision to sentence Bhagwan Singh to a flogging, intending to demonstrate to the soldiers that he

²⁶⁶ S. M. Jacob, 'Inbreeding in a Stable Simple Mendelian Population with Special Reference to Cousin Marriage', *Proceedings of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences*, 84.568 (1911), 23–42 <<https://doi.org/10.1098/rspb.1911.0043>>, communicated by Prof. Karl Pearson, FRS; M. Eileen Magnello, 'Karl Pearson: Evolutionary Biology and the Emergence of a Modern Theory of Statistics' (DPhil Thesis, University of Oxford, 1993), p. 285.

²⁶⁷ Jacob, *Favour for fools*, 'Indian Team 1925', Photograph.

²⁶⁸ Gould, *The Jewel in the Lotus*, pp. 52-3.

²⁶⁹ Forster, *A Passage to India* (1936), p. 57.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 185–86.

was capable of decisive action, including violence, when unable to secure what he believed to be required assistance.

In contrast Andrews, an insider within the British magic circle, used his connections with the imperial elite to argue for non-violent solutions. But being a longstanding friend of Gandhi's and trusted by Congress, he was invited to come to the Punjab to gather evidence for the Committee. He returned to the Punjab for this purpose at the end of September 1919, and it was during this visit that the encounter described at the beginning of this chapter occurred. During this period, he visited Jallianwala Bagh, saw the bullet holes, and was profoundly disturbed.²⁷¹

Andrews's later understanding of what happened at Jallianwala Bagh is contained in a letter he wrote to Thompson that does not have a legible date but must have been written after 2 July 1920 as it refers to a letter written by O'Dwyer to *The Times* published on that date, to which O'Dwyer attached for publication his letter to Montagu of 30 December 1919, giving Dyer's first estimate of 200 deaths, and its later revision to 379 deaths. Andrews began by thanking Thompson for his cuttings, presumably of the letters Thompson had written to *The Statesman*, which will be discussed later in this chapter. After describing the conviction and sentencing to imprisonment in a martial law tribunal of a Lahore newspaper editor for giving a number (40) greater than the official count (13) of casualties in the Delhi rioting as 'the vilest thing' done by O'Dwyer, he wrote that at the same time O'Dwyer was:

hushing up the Amritsar Casualties and publishing officially that lie about 200. I see now in his full letter to the 'Times' that he states that General Dyer gave him that ridiculous figure. You know what war is: you know what 1650 rifle bullets at 100 yards range into 10,000 to 15,000 ~~thousand~~ [sic] massed people, directed where the crowd were thickest, will do ... General Dyer (as he himself

²⁷¹ Wagner, *Amritsar 1919*, p. 221.

said) meant to kill as many as he possibly could & would have killed more if he had had more ammunition.²⁷²

Andrews considered that the slowly increasing total of admitted deaths indicated collusion between Dyer and O'Dwyer and then wrote of a trusted Indian friend who witnessed the massacre and its results (bodies piled on top of each other, in the exits and in the garden itself). He berated Dyer for maintaining the curfew and failing to allow any care for the wounded. Concluding by reporting the experience of an Indian Christian (perhaps Datta) who was in the military camp outside Amritsar the night after the massacre, Andrews wrote: ‘“Serve the devils right” – was the word that went around. Miss Sherwood’s case had roused the passion of revenge to boiling point.’

Chaturvedī and Sykes note a significant change in Andrews’s views at this time. Previously he had argued for self-government for India maintaining the British connection. Now he supported full independence. Chaturvedī and Sykes date this to a letter of his of 19 September 1920 to the *Indian Daily News* which they quote: ‘Having witnessed with my own eyes the humiliation of Indians, I can see no possible recovery of self-respect except by claiming an independence from British dominion not less than that of Egypt. This requires absolute unity of moral purpose for its fulfilment, not compromise or concession.’ Chaturvedī and Sykes claim that these views, expressed more fully in an undated pamphlet of this period to be discussed in the next section, ‘made a tremendous impression in India, not least on such alert young minds as that of Jawaharlal Nehru’.²⁷³

²⁷² Andrews to Thompson, date illegible, Ms Eng c 5273, fols 68-9; M. F. O’Dwyer, ‘Letter to the Editor’, *The Times*, 2 July 1920, p. 8.

²⁷³ Chaturvedī and Sykes, *Andrews*, p. 155.

‘Indian Independence: The Immediate Need’

Andrews’s undated pamphlet *Indian Independence: The Immediate Need* takes as its starting point Seeley’s book *The Expansion of England*, published in 1882.²⁷⁴ It begins by noting that ‘more than half the book is about India’. For Seeley, ‘India is the passive, pliable material by means of which England was able to stretch out her Empire ...’. Andrews comments: ‘What a lasting indignity for three hundred million souls, to be made an appendage to the expansion of a small island called England seven thousand miles away in the North Sea.’

Andrews makes use of two of Seeley’s arguments. The first is that the Empire in India is only possible because there is ‘no Indian nationality, although there are some germs out of which we can conceive an Indian nationality developing itself’. Four-fifths of the British armies which won victories in India were native troops: ‘That we were able to hire these native troops in India, was due to the fact that the feeling of nationality had no existence there.’ From this Andrews deduces that ‘England did not conquer India, but only holds sway in India on account of India’s acquiescence’. An example supporting Seeley’s thesis was the loyalty of the Sikh forces which tilted the balance in the 1857 Uprising (to which Seeley himself alludes in a further quotation by Andrews).

Andrews continues to quote Seeley: ‘Now if the feeling of a common nationality began to exist there only feebly, if without inspiring any active desire to drive out the foreigner, it only created a notion that it was shameful to assist him in maintaining his dominion, from that day almost all our Empire would cease to exist.’ ‘... our own rule is perhaps doing more than ever was done by former governments to make this [feeling]

²⁷⁴ Andrews, *Indian Independence*; Seeley, *The Expansion of England*. Chaturvedi and Sykes, *Andrews*, p. 328, includes Andrews’ pamphlet in a list of compilations of Andrews’ speeches and articles ‘in most cases undated, ... but the nature of the subject matter dates them unmistakably to 1921-1923, when they met a popular demand’.

possible'. Andrews concludes from this that 'the attainment of Indian independence must be based, not on any appeal to arms, nor on any violence, but on a complete realisation by the people as a whole of Indian nationality'.²⁷⁵

Andrews then goes on to discuss Seeley's second argument, that 'Subjection for a long time to a foreign yoke is one of the most potent causes of national degeneration'. This argument is less convincing than the first: evidence is needed, and in India's case if there was no nation in the first place then what was there to degenerate? But for Andrews it is an argument for the urgent need for independence, and he links it with a further finding of Seeley's, that India is now so dependent on British rule, that were Britain to withdraw the situation would be like that after the departure of the Romans from Britain. This had been a dilemma for him, but now 'If India could be granted, before it is too late, some God-given genius, who could stir up, not in one province only, but throughout the whole country, the spirit of independence, then there might be hope'. This awakening of national consciousness was now made possible by 'a volcanic force', 'the personality of Mahatma Gandhi'. In conclusion Andrews makes it clear that while in the past he had 'the strongest leaning' to the conservative and gradual idea of development and progress, which was still attractive to many thoughtful and patriotic Indians, this was no longer his position.²⁷⁶

In his autobiography Nehru remembered how this pamphlet deeply influenced him, making 'not only an unanswerable case for independence' but also mirroring 'the inmost recesses of our hearts'. 'It was nationalism pure and simple, the feeling of the humiliation of India and a fierce desire to be rid of it and to put an end to our continuing degradation.' That it should be 'a foreigner and one belonging to the dominant race'

²⁷⁵ Andrews, *Indian Independence*, pp. 4–5, 7–8.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 9, 11, 13–16.

that called, 'in his simple and earnest language' for an end to the shameful assistance to 'the foreigner in maintaining his domination' was wonderful. What was needed was 'some vital upheaval from within'.²⁷⁷ Nehru's perceptive reaction to his friend's pamphlet shows their united hope for the postcolonial future

Two letters to *The Statesman*

Andrews proved to be another significant influence on his friends during this period.

In a letter to Thompson of 23 June 1920 from Shantiniketan he wrote:

Mr Dewick of S. Paul's Missionary College [Calcutta] with Kingsley Williams of Madras is circulating among missionaries an admirable letter for signature. I hope you will get in touch to press this all you can. I am writing to Dr Datta to get YMCA to join in. One of our [presumably Shantiniketan] Teachers was in with me this morning. He is very eager indeed about it. He says the whole missionary cause in India depends on it.²⁷⁸

Thompson, having first secured some amendments, became a signatory to the letter, which was published in *The Statesman* on 13 July 1920.²⁷⁹ This was his first entry into the political arena, and it proved a baptism of fire. Contrary to what is written in Lago's biography of Thompson, the letter did not protest against the fundraising by the London *Morning Post* on Dyer's behalf: it could hardly have done so as the fund was only launched in England on 8 July and the same 13 July issue of *The Statesman* contains that newspaper's first report of the fund.²⁸⁰ Instead, following Congress' lead, the signatories first deplored and condemned 'the excesses of the mob' and recognized 'the extreme gravity of the situation with which the authorities had to deal'. The next paragraph considered the justification for martial law, and without denying its necessity

²⁷⁷ Nehru, *Autobiography*, p. 66.

²⁷⁸ Andrews to Thompson, 23 June 1920, MS. Eng. c. 5273, fol. 71. Read in isolation, this letter does not show the patronizing tone assigned to it in Tinker, *Ordeal of Love*, p. 165.

²⁷⁹ Beatrice Budden and others, 'The Punjab Rising', *The Statesman*, 13 July 1920, p. 6. E. P. Thompson, *Alien Homage*, p. 76, gives 14 July as its publication date.

²⁸⁰ Lago, *India's Prisoner*, p. 150.

on this occasion, did not accept, as had been argued by some, that martial law was needed to keep India a place ‘fit for white men’. But the letter’s following paragraph condemned without hesitation the methods used, the indiscriminate and prolonged firing on the crowd, the crawling order, the flogging of schoolboys selected at random; ‘these things are beyond excuse, they have grievously stained the British name in India’. ‘Worst of all’ was the mentality of those who adopted such methods. Their evidence showed ‘how contemptuous is their attitude towards the people of India, and how arrogant is their assumption of racial superiority’. As Englishmen, the signatories regarded ‘“Prussianism,” wherever practised, as damned and futile; for no empire can be securely built on a foundation of terrorism and hate’. As Christians, they held that to condone such methods ‘would involve the repudiation of the teaching and example of Christ and the rejection of those principles of cooperation and friendship without which there can be no progress for the peoples of the world’.²⁸¹

Facing the page with this letter was the report from London of the Hunter Committee debate in the House of Commons. On that page there was also a brief report of an appeal by the Anglican Metropolitan Bishop of Calcutta, Foss Westcott (1863-1949), brother of Andrews’s deceased friend Basil, ‘to Englishmen to recognise how deeply the people of India had been hurt ... and how they looked for some expression of sympathy and endorsement of that acknowledgement of fault by those best capable of judging’. The timing and wording of this appeal suggest that the bishop might have seen a draft of the missionaries’ letter and that he had some sympathy with the views expressed in it.²⁸²

Thompson’s wife Theo was in Darjeeling awaiting the birth of their first child, while Thompson was in Bankura. Two days after the publication of the letter she wrote to her

²⁸¹ Budden and others, ‘The Punjab Rising’, *The Statesman*, 13 July 1920, p. 6..

²⁸² ‘Views of Bishop of Calcutta’, *The Statesman*, 13 July 1920, p. 7.

husband: 'It looks dignified enough in print --- not a thing that anyone need be ashamed to sign, but I'm ever so glad, dear, that your alterations were accepted before it was published. They make it a much stronger and fairer protest'.²⁸³ Her comments suggest that Thompson had revised the original draft to include recognition of the mob violence in Amritsar which had preceded the massacre.

Published replies to the missionaries' letter were less approving. On 20 July *The Statesman* contained an explanatory letter from Thompson.²⁸⁴ He had initially refused to add his signature to the missionaries' letter but then agreed because of the 'still-continuing flood of anonymous hatred' in the newspaper's correspondence page. He had stressed the atrociousness of the mob's behaviour and had considered martial law justified. 'But we simply cannot afford to make the Punjab question a racial one. Plenty of goodwill exists between Briton and Indian and it is all needed.' 'Brutality is brutality, always; both when a fiendish mob strikes down an English lady, and when a mass of wounded are left without thought or question.' Thompson then criticized *The Statesman's* reporting of the Home Press (the United Kingdom newspapers), which had created the impression that this opposed the Hunter Report, by quoting from only two papers, the *Morning Post* and the *Yorkshire Post*, both imperialist in their editorial policies. The Editor replied to this criticism by explaining that Reuter's Agency was responsible for 'the impression given of Home opinion as represented by the London newspapers', unwittingly revealing the weakness of his case; the pages of his newspaper for these days provided no independent assessments of metropolitan opinion, and the Reuter reports, principally of Government and Parliamentary activity, were printed without comment. Given that *The Statesman* was widely read in the British

²⁸³ Theodosia Thompson to Edward John Thompson, 15 July 1920, MS. Eng. d. 2696, fol. 15.

²⁸⁴ Edward J. Thompson, 'The Case of General Dyer', *The Statesman*, 20 July 1920, p. 6.

community in India, this indicated the isolation of this community from political opinion in the metropolis; this remained an issue even after the introduction of radio and regular commercial flights.

A long letter from Theo to Thompson of 20 July discusses in detail the discrepancies in opinions between the British in India and the British in the United Kingdom with all the insight that came from not being British herself. Following the action of the Army Council in retiring him, Dyer is seen by the British in India as a martyr. In her view the retirement of Dyer

... was due in large measure (even if one cant say, “wholly”) to public opinion at home — a public opinion altogether British in being so austere just that it may even have overshot the mark in seeing the point of view of the “native” and underdog. ... English sentiment at home was shocked — as Eng. Sentiment in India evidently was not — by Jallianwala Bagh — and that was surely more than half the reason for putting down the general.

But she regrets that this is being portrayed by the British in India as political trickery, particularly on the part of Montagu, the Secretary for India, rather than as an example of the British sense of justice. She concedes that the British in England have little understanding of the horrors of the atrocities committed by the mob: ‘Your sentiments were considerably modified by coming out here’.²⁸⁵

‘The Other Side of the Medal’

On his return to England to take up the post of Lecturer in Bengali in the Indian Institute in Oxford, Thompson began to write *The Other Side of the Medal* which when published was to be one of the first British revisionist histories of the 1857 Uprising, memories of which had contributed so much to the British reactions to the Indian violence in Amritsar and to the subsequent support for General Dyer from the British in India. The correspondence in *The Statesman* seems to have contributed to the origins

²⁸⁵ Theodosia Thompson to Edward John Thompson, 20 July 1920, MS. Eng. d. 2696, fol. 32.

of this work; in his book Thompson writes, in his characteristically hyperbolic style, ‘it is impossible to overestimate the harm done by the hysterical way in which the European community rushed to the defence of the Punjab repressions, and especially Jallianwalla’.²⁸⁶ Although the heart of the book is an account of the British atrocities following the 1857 Revolt, all derived from published sources, its third chapter ‘Shadows of the Mutiny’, nearly a third of the book, considers how the atrocities on both sides continued to shape opinions, Indian and European, in the sub-continent. In particular, Thompson has sympathy, based on his own experience, for those Europeans who ‘in the hill-stations and the large towns ... live a life cut off from the main life of the great country where they are sojourning ... ignorant as regards India, and disenfranchised as regards the Empire’.²⁸⁷ But the book is addressed less to these communities and more to the metropolitan British: ‘The book sets out matters that no Indian could, or perhaps should, set out, and [bold claim] I believe that it will change the attitude of every Englishman.’

Thompson claimed that he had written the book in ‘anger and indignation’ at the publication in 1924 of *The Lost Dominion* whose pseudonymous author Al Carhill was a former member of the Indian Civil Service.²⁸⁸ Carhill’s book is so fundamentally imperialist, reactionary, and racist in its explanations and conclusions that it has even been suggested that it might be an historiographical skit, a *1066 and All That* of the British Indian Empire.²⁸⁹ Like Seeley it refuses to consider India a nation. Its treatment of the 1857 Revolt is perfunctory:

It is unnecessary to go into the history of the Mutiny or to try to assess its causes. What is the cause why a horse shies and stumbles? Why is the rider shaken but not

²⁸⁶ Thompson, *Other Side of the Medal*, (1925), p. 110.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 112.

²⁸⁸ Thompson to Hogarth Press, 20 June 1925, quoted in Lago, *India's Prisoner*, p. 207; Al Carhill, *The Lost Dominion* (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1924).

²⁸⁹ Thompson, *Other Side of the Medal*, (1925), p. 30, fn. 1.

unseated? Does it matter very much, provided the horse does not break its knees, and the rider does not loose [sic] his nerve? All that is necessary is to remark that the Mutiny was in no way a national revolt, except in Oudh, which was hardly part of the British dominions; the Mutiny was a military rebellion.²⁹⁰

Beyond the racist metaphor of horse and rider is the dismissal of the revolt as a purely military rebellion, thereby by implication justifying the violence of the response. No wonder Thompson was infuriated. But publication of his own work was a delicate balancing act. As he explained in his letter accompanying its submission to the Hogarth Press, Leonard and Virginia Woolf's publishing house, his position as a Lecturer in the Indian Institute, Oxford, was at source funded by the Government of India, and yet for him it was important that the book should be read by 'my own people'. Leonard Woolf (with the benefit of his own colonial experience in Ceylon) was willing to publish, advising against adding conciliatory material which would 'simply blur the book'.²⁹¹

Woolf had already expressed his opinion on the Amritsar massacre in a December 1919 article in *The Daily Herald*.²⁹² He had linked it with violent events in Egypt, Ireland, Africa, Trinidad, and Ceylon as caused by 'the religion of imperialism', the faith, to question which was heresy, that 'the Empire ... is something good in itself', that 'it is a right and duty of Englishmen to rule, for their own good, Asiatics and Africans, who being of a lower order, are incapable of ruling themselves'. Any action by Asiatics or Africans in support of their demands for self-government was seen as sedition, punishable by bloodshed. 'The important point is not that General Dyer should be punished, but that people in this country [England] should realise why he did what he did'. Almost six years later this was also Thompson's aim.

²⁹⁰ Carthill, p. 47.

²⁹¹ Woolf to Thompson, 27 June 1925, quoted in Lago, *"India's Prisoner"*, p. 208.

²⁹² Leonard Woolf, 'Amritsar', *Daily Herald*, 23 December 1919, p. 4.

Forster, whose *A Passage to India* had been published the previous year, read Thompson's manuscript before acceptance for publication 'with the greatest interest'. 'I don't know whether your essay will do "harm" or "good" because I never look at books from that point of view. They appeal to me only as expressions of the truth, and in that way you make an irresistible appeal.'²⁹³ Forster had good reason to know the truth as regards both British and Indian atrocities in the Punjab from a letter written to him by Darling on 11 July 1919 that seems surprisingly to have escaped censorship.²⁹⁴ Recognising how pillage and murder from one side had led to panic and cruelty on the other, Darling described first the decision to fire on a crowd of 5-6,000 in a 'death trap' and then, a foretaste of Fielding's experience in *A Passage to India*, how his criticism was seen in the Club as worthy of court martial (he was later acquitted of accusations of cowardice, alleged because he had remained outside Amritsar at his District in the countryside instead of repairing to the city), and how the telegraph wires had been cut. He acknowledged the awfulness of the preceding murders and attempted murders of Europeans, men and women, including those of his and his wife's acquaintances. Was the uprising spontaneous or financed by the Bolsheviks? 'Martial law (kept on much too long) has cowed them [the big towns] ... but the old bitterness remains, embittered.'

In the event the publication of *The Other Side of the Medal* in October 1925 had no repercussions as regards Thompson's post at the Indian Institute and resulted in no negative reviews. It was well received by both traditionally imperialist and traditionally anti-imperialist newspapers and periodicals in both India and the United Kingdom. The moment was probably appropriate: it came during a period of reflection on the Great War, and by implication on the Empire, that was to see R. C. Sherriff's play *Journey's*

²⁹³ Forster to Thompson, 18 June 1925, MS. Eng. c. 5288, fols 152-3.

²⁹⁴ Darling to Forster, 11 July 1919, quoted in Dewey, *Anglo-Indian Attitudes*, p. 161-2.

End produced in London in 1927 and Siegfried Sassoon's *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer* published in 1930, and that was well before the divisive polarization into left and right in British political opinion that was to accompany the Spanish Civil War.²⁹⁵

The first impression of Thompson's book was of 1200 copies and surviving examples of this impression in good condition with their jackets are now collector's items. Second and third editions appeared in December 1925 and September 1930. An American edition followed with a carefully worded new preface, Thompson no doubt aware from Theo, and also from their correspondence with her father, of the risk of the book acting as an incitement to anti-British feeling in America.²⁹⁶

The next edition was nearly 60 years later, in 1989. This edition is remarkable for a 37-page 'Afterword' by the Calcutta historian Sumit Sarkar.²⁹⁷ Including a detailed reading of the Thompson papers, whose curator at that time was Palmer, this was the first detailed assessment of Thompson's life and work since the 1959 entry in the *Dictionary of National Biography* (which, as Sarkar points out, did not obtain Theo's full approval).²⁹⁸ In a perceptive provincialisation of the metropolitan world of letters and academia of which Thompson was then a part, Sarkar sets the publication of *The Other Side of the Medal* in the context of a crisis of English liberalism, of which the Bloomsbury Group (including Forster, and Leonard and Virginia Woolf) was an example, already shaken by the Great War and now faced with the Marxist revolution in Russia, trying not always successfully to make sense of the imperial present. Seen in this light *The Other Side of the Medal* challenged the historical given of the Indian

²⁹⁵ Robert Cedric Sherriff, *Journey's End* (London: Gollancz, 1929); Siegfried Sassoon, *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer* (London: Faber, 1930).

²⁹⁶ Lago, "India's Prisoner", p. 211.

²⁹⁷ Afterword by Sumit Sarkar, Edward John Thompson, *The Other Side of the Medal* (New Delhi: Sterling, 1989), pp. 83–123.

²⁹⁸ H. M. Margoliouth, 'Thompson, Edward John', in *Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959).

Empire, following *A Passage to India*'s challenge in fiction, albeit a fiction, as Forster's letters from India published in his *The Hill of Devi* show, which in many respects was based on lived experience.²⁹⁹ In Sarkar's view the crisis was that the metropolitan liberals found no obvious solution to their imperial predicament. He does however caution against including Thompson within this group, noting the contrast between the morally motivated Thompson's Nonconformist, non-Oxbridge background with the aesthetically and intellectually motivated Bloomsbury Group based on friendships first made in the University of Cambridge.³⁰⁰

In *The Other Side of the Medal* Thompson suggested a possible solution, that what was required by the Indians from the British was *prayaschitta*, a word of Sanskrit origin variously used to signify a gesture of reconciliation (here Andrews's embracing of the flogged headman comes to mind), a penance, or a ritual purification. It can also be used, for example, in current conversational Bengali in the sense of 'I shall have to do penance for that'. Thompson equates *prayaschitta* with the English word atonement, which like *prayaschitta* has several meanings and usages; Elwin in 1931 when he was still a theologian noted that 'The doctrine of the Atonement — the pivotal doctrine of the Christian religion — has never been standardised', being interpreted at different times as reconciliation, ransom, 'police-tax', redemption.³⁰¹ In using both words Thompson risked ambiguity from their multiple, not always equivalent meanings, particularly when he interprets *prayaschitta* as a gesture, leaving the reader to think that in Thompson's view only a gesture was required.

Andrews seem to have suggested this word to Thompson. In the letter of 23 June 1920 in which he asked Thompson to support and sign the missionary letter he wrote

²⁹⁹ Forster, *The Hill of Devi*.

³⁰⁰ 'Afterword', *The Other Side of the Medal* (1989), p. 173.

³⁰¹ Elwin, *Din-Sevak*, p. 161.

‘The Congress itself passed a special resolution condemning the acts done by the mob in quite unequivocal language and with no excuse. The whole Congress did open “pryaschitta”. If now there is no pryaschitta from the English side, you will understand how the best Indians will feel’.³⁰²

In a letter of 24 June 1924 to his son Frank’s missionary godfather, the Revd. E. W. Thompson (otherwise unrelated to the family), Thompson wrote ‘why does Andrews go hawing on about the necessity of our doing prayaschitta? ... I’d like as an individual Englishman, to do my bit of prayaschitta, if I cd.’³⁰³

Sarkar suggests that Thompson (and therefore Andrews)’s liberal conscience indicated that a British response was needed but that he could not define what that response should be, so falling back on the inadequate and, because of its multiple meanings in both languages, easily misinterpreted concept of *prayaschitta*/atonement. He considers Thompson’s call for this ‘suggests an acute discomfort, betraying the lack of complete grasp over a problem too difficult to be contained’ by this concept ‘and yet possible to tackle through such terms alone, and that ‘reaching in such passages the outer limits of liberal discourse ... his ambiguities are interesting and moving because of the honesty with which he exposes the crisis of liberal concern in the colonial situation’.³⁰⁴ Similarly Collins has interpreted this search for resolution of conflict as a way of overcoming difference to preserve the *status quo* and in this he has followed Benita Parry who assessed Thompson’s books as registering ‘the limits of a liberalism at odds with imperialism at home and disjunct from the supremacist convictions of Anglo-India’.³⁰⁵

³⁰² Andrews to Thompson, 23 June 1920, MS. Eng. c. 5273, fol. 71.

³⁰³ Thompson to Rev. E. W. Thompson, 26 June 1924, quoted in E. P. Thompson, *Alien Homage*, p. 89.

³⁰⁴ In a footnote Sarkar writes ‘I owe this point to Pratip Dutta’.

³⁰⁵ Collins, *Empire, Nationalism and the Postcolonial World*, p. 140; Parry, *Delusions and Discoveries* (1998), p. 155.

An alternative, perhaps Gandhian, interpretation would be for us to excuse Andrews and Thompson for their use of ambiguous concepts and instead to see them searching for an acknowledgment of truth from the British, to end the one-sided history poisoning their relationship with Indians. Thompson's last words in *The Other Side of the Medal* were that

We who are British can sweep our minds clear of all the poison and untruth that our books have placed there, and we can create an atmosphere in which a new beginning of thought is possible. ... Our own madness we can understand, and it is a matter for humiliation but not for perplexity; and there is seen to have been no inexplicable Indian madness, but only the passions of suffering men like ourselves. With such men an understanding is possible, and friendship and forgiveness. And this new attitude, I believe, is the *atonement* that Indians are seeking.³⁰⁶

Such a profound *prayaschitta* would seem to be rather more than a gesture, and its aim, in seeking friendship and forgiveness, would seem to go beyond the preservation of an empire. In seeking to bring Indian and British together as equals, each recognising that each needed friendship and forgiveness, it chimes with Gandhi's bewildering and infuriating call for a complete independence that would be redemptive for Britain as well as for India.³⁰⁷

In conclusion this first chapter has discussed, starting from the letter from Elwin to Turton and the letter from Andrews to Thompson, how coming from a background of faith Andrews, Thompson, and (in a small, much later acknowledged, way) Elwin, reacted to violence in the Punjab by moving to advocacy for freedom, for complete Indian independence in the case of Andrews, for reconciliation as equals in the case of Thompson, and for openness to Gandhi's teaching in the case of Elwin. Although the episode of the flogged village headman at the start of the chapter was only a very small part of the story of the Amritsar massacre and martial law repression, its analysis from

³⁰⁶ Thompson, *Other Side of the Medal* (1925), pp. 132–33.

³⁰⁷ Owen, *The British Left and India*, p. 196.

several sources gives insight into the different perspectives of the creators of these sources, and importantly how in this particular case reconciliation was thought to have been achieved. Similar reconciliations between the British and the Indians, restoring friendship, were the aims of the missionaries' letter to *The Statesman*, sponsored by Andrews and revised and signed by Thompson, and of Thompson's *The Other Side of the Medal*. This hope was for what might be considered a postcolonial politics of friendship at national level, between India and Britain, a hope that recurs in Thompson's subsequent writings.

In the conclusion to his 'Afterword' to this book Sarkar suggests that with time Thompson moved from the concept of *prayaschitta*/atonement to 'a search for human understanding across political, racial, and cultural divides'. Sarkar sees the need for this, something that activists tend to brush aside as a distraction, 'in a world teetering on the brink of nuclear holocaust'.³⁰⁸ Subsequent chapters in this thesis will examine similar searches for human understanding through friendships, many involving Thompson, Andrews, and Elwin. These searches might be considered to be seeking to create a postcolonial politics of friendship at an individual level.

In his discussion Sarkar describes a crisis of liberal concern in specifically a political sense. In concluding their letter to *The Statesman*, the missionaries considered not just their political positions as Englishmen, but also their religious positions as Christians, indicating the potential for a crisis of faith. The next chapter of this thesis will examine how Elwin experienced crises both of liberal concern and of faith, as described in his correspondence with the *Sorelle* of the *Eremo Franciscano* in Italy, from whom he found guidance and support.

³⁰⁸ 'Afterword', *The Other Side of the Medal* (1989), p. 117.

CHAPTER II: THE EREMO FRANCESCO AND THE ASHRAM OF ST FRANCIS, 1926-1949

As I read your description of your activities, I felt that I must have stolen our way at Sabarmati from you or you from me.

M. K. Gandhi to Sorella Maria, 10 August 1932³⁰⁹

A link to Gandhi

On Friday 24 August 1928 Sorella Maria of the Eremo FrancESCO, Campello sul Clitunno, Umbria, Italy, wrote to Gandhi at Sabarmati Ashram, Ahmedabad, India.

Dear brother Gandhi, Here I am before you, a little sister. I belong to Christ. I am Italian. I live together with other dear sisters in an old Hermitage on the mountain; an ancient place of prayer, where once the seekers of God and peace lived. We are poor. We work with our own hands, cultivating the land, spinning, weaving, embroidering. We welcome with joy and respect anyone who comes to us looking for a moment of peace in simplicity and solitude where silence speaks. Miss Turton, our friend and sister in Christ speaks often of you and of your Indian brothers. I love you and pray for all of you. From yourself and from all your [collaborators], and from your land comes a surge of life for me. I am a wild, free creature in Christ, and with Him, with you and with every seeker of God, I wish to walk the path of truth bringing my own witness to truth to the very end. With humble love I am sending you a little piece of cloth woven by us. In it I have written for you the Aramaic word Maranatha (o our Lord, Come), which the first Christians used as their greeting. Yes, the Lord Jesus is coming towards you, towards the East, toward beloved India. May he help you, pilgrim of the East to come to the West, here we await you with fraternal hearts. If you come, as I believe and hope, do not forget us, the little dwellers of the Hermitage, who await.³¹⁰

Sorella Maria was no longer a conventional Roman Catholic nun (in Italian a nun is known as *'suora'*, not as *'sorella'*, which is the literal Italian word for sister), nor was

³⁰⁹ *Gandhi e Sorella Maria: Un'amicizia grande come il mondo*, ed. by Francesco Dante (Brescia: ELS La scuola, 2017), pp. 82–83, with facsimile in Foto [Photograph] 5.

³¹⁰ Sorella Maria to Gandhi, 24 August 1926, English version as sent to Gandhi, *Gandhiji and Sister Maria: A Unique Friendship without Frontiers*, ed. by Joseph Patmury (Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 1998), p. 21; Sorella Maria's Italian original is in *Frammenti di un'amicizia senza confini. Gandhi e Sorella Maria* (Eremo di Campello sul Clitunno: Pro-manoscritto, 1991), Letter 1.

<<https://www.yumpu.com/it/document/read/7346042/frammenti-di-unamicizia-senza-confini-madonna-della-neve>> [accessed 15 February 2022]

her community a formal religious community.³¹¹ Having served for 18 years in a Franciscan missionary congregation, she had left this, though remaining firmly within the Roman Catholic church, with the blessing of Pope Benedict XV, in 1919.³¹² During the First World War she had nursed in an Anglo-American military hospital in Rome and had come to feel limited in her mission by the structures and rules of the order. In 1918 she had encountered an Italian officer, a patient in the hospital, who belonged to the Italian Waldensian (Protestant) Church and who kept with him an Italian translation of the New Testament by a Swiss Protestant, Giovanni Luzzi (1856-1948), pastor at that time of the Italian Protestant community in Florence. Interested in this translation, she met with Luzzi, who supported her both with gifts of his bible translations and also at a critical moment with financial aid.³¹³ In May 1921, introduced by Luzzi, whose wife was Scottish (they had met while he was studying in Edinburgh), Maria was visited by an English resident of Siena, Miss Amy Turton (1857-1942), almost twenty years her senior, a follower of Florence Nightingale (1820-1910), who had been working to introduce Nightingale's principles into Italian nursing.³¹⁴ From this first meeting, from an exchange of letters comparing their very similar visions of Franciscan lifestyle, and from careful openness in providing to each other the opinions of their spiritual advisers (spiritual referees, as it were), they became close friends and constant collaborators.³¹⁵

³¹¹ Sorella Maria was insistent on this distinction, not wanting to be part of any religious institution. Letter from Sorella Maria to Don Marco Gradassi, 14 July 1936, in Ferdinando Aronica, *Sorella Maria e il suo eremo tra opposizioni e ostilità: storia del rapporto tra l'eremo e l'autorità ecclesiastica dagli anni '20 agli anni '50* (Messina: Coop. S. Tom., 1993), pp. 87–88.

³¹² Amy Turton, *Storia Dell'Eremo 1921-28: Cronaca Degli Inizi* (Roma: Pro Manuscripto, 2002), p. 9.

³¹³ Letter from Sorella Maria to the daughter of Giovanni Luzzi, 30 January 1948, five days after Luzzi's death, quoted in Morozzo Della Rocca (ed.), *Maria di Campello: un'amicizia francescana*, (Brescia: Morcelliana, 2013), p. 123, footnotes 8 and 9.

³¹⁴ Roberto Morozzo Della Rocca, *Maria Dell'Eremo Di Campello: Un'Avventura Spirituale Nell'Italia Del Novecento* (Milano: Guerini, 1998), p. 62.

³¹⁵ Turton, *Storia Dell'Eremo*, pp. 11–14.

Working together, with Sorella Maria providing the leadership and inspiration, and Turton providing practical advice and financial support, they were to find and restore an abandoned Franciscan convent, which before had been a Benedictine hermitage, above Pissignano in Umbria, and to create there the open and welcoming community that Sorella Maria described in her letter to Gandhi. This was already a trans-national, cross-cultural, inter-denominational project, Sorella Maria was Italian and Catholic, Turton English and Anglican. Sorella Maria had written her letter to Gandhi in Italian; Turton had translated the letter into English and sent the English version to India.

Turton had ancestral connections with India: one of her maternal great-grandfathers was Dr William Roxburgh (1751-1815), the founder of the Calcutta Botanical Gardens. She had translated into Italian the life of Sadhu Sundar Singh, the Christian mystic of Sikh origin, who had been a major influence on both Elwin and Andrews, and whom she and Sorella Maria had met in Switzerland.³¹⁶ At the time of Sorella Maria's first letter to Gandhi she was not a member of Maria's community (she was to become one in March 1933, at the age of 75), but she was one of its principal financial supporters and fund-raisers, finding the funds which were used to restore the ruined fourteenth century hermitage on a hill, reached by a steep path from Campello, so that the community could live and worship and receive their guests there. As Sorella Maria was to explain to Gandhi in a letter of 11 July 1932, the Sorelle had come to be known as the larks, a nickname (*lodolette* in the local Umbrian dialect, *allodole* in formal Italian) given them by the local population, recognising that even though poor, they were

³¹⁶ Burnett Hillman Streeter, *The Sadhu: A Study in Mysticism and Practical Religion* (London: Macmillan, 1922); Sumita Mukherjee, 'The Reception Given to Sadhu Sundar Singh, the Itinerant Indian Christian "Mystic", in Interwar Britain', *Immigrants & Minorities*, 35.1 (2017), 21–39 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/02619288.2016.1246966>>.

always as happy as the singing birds. The nickname had great additional significance for Sorella Maria as the lark was St Francis' favourite bird.³¹⁷

Gandhi replied thanking Sorella Maria for her letter, stating that he was forwarding the correspondence to Andrews.³¹⁸ On a website devoted to some of Gandhi's correspondence there is an earlier letter from Turton to Gandhi, dated 1926, in which she begins 'Mr Andrews told you of this little group (7) of Italian Franciscan sisters (really poor) who pray for our brothers in India ...'.³¹⁹ In this letter Turton asks if Gandhi knows a young Indian girl who might join Sorella Maria. It is possible that Sorella Maria was thinking of adopting an Indian child, following the example of an American friend living in Italy, Anieka Leggett.³²⁰ The introduction of the Sorelle to Gandhi seems from this letter to have been made by Andrews, not, as both Allchin and Roncalli have suggested, by Elwin.³²¹

That it was not Elwin who made the introduction is confirmed in his first letter to Turton, introducing himself, which he sent on 27 November 1928 from his mother's home in Oxford where he was convalescing after the near fatal illness which had brought his first stay in India to an abrupt end.³²² He explains by way of introduction that he is a friend of Andrews, who has sent him her letter, together with Sorella Maria's letter to Gandhi, and who has asked him to get in touch. He explains about the Christa Seva Sangha Ashram in Poona, of which he was then a member, and asks about

³¹⁷ *Gandhi e Sorella Maria*, ed. by Francesco Dante, p. 75; Andrea Riccardi, 'Sorella Maria e Buonaiuti', in *Maria di Campello*, ed. by Morozzo Della Rocca, pp. 11-25 (p. 14).

³¹⁸ Gandhi to Sorella Maria, 21 September 1928; in *Gandhiji and Sister Maria*, ed. by Patmury, p. 22.

³¹⁹ Turton to Gandhi, 13 May 1926. <<http://www.gandhimedia.org/cgi-bin/gm/gm.cgi?action=view&link=Writings/Correspondence/1926&image=WRCO1926051301.jpg&img=90&tt=>> [accessed 17 February 2018].

³²⁰ *Gandhi e Sorella Maria*, ed. by Dante, p. 87, fn. 9.

³²¹ Allchin, *Friendship in God*, p. 8; Marco Roncalli, 'Sorella Maria and Gandhi' in *Maria di Campello*, ed. by Morozzo Della Rocca, pp. 97-117 (p. 103).

³²² Elwin to Turton, 27 November 1928, Mss Eur D950/7, fol. 1.

Turton's 'Confraternity of the Spiritual Entente', an ecumenical group of Christians joining together only in prayer.³²³ Then he writes, referring to Sorella Maria's letter to Gandhi:

I cannot tell what a joy it was to read the "Least Sister's" letter – It gave one the greatest comfort to know that her prayers were circling that great-hearted one in India and indeed all of us in that wonderful and beloved land. We too are closely linked with Gandhiji and many others, less well-known, but beautiful souls, seekers, lovers of the Eternal.

'Least Sister' is an English translation of 'La Minore', the title Sorella Maria often used to sign her letters as leader of the unregulated community, contrasting this with 'Il Priore', the title of the leader of a formal religious community.³²⁴

Elwin's letter is a significant cross-cultural transition, trans-national and trans-confessional. Through Turton's mediation, Elwin, the young English Anglican priest, is setting out to make common cause with Sorella Maria, the older, yet at this stage ecclesiastically more revolutionary, Italian Roman Catholic ex-nun. Furthermore, they both join together in their admiration for the teaching and life of a non-Christian, Gandhi, and in so doing join in one of Leela Gandhi's affective communities.

This letter is the start of a ten-year correspondence for which Elwin's letters are available in on microfilm in the British Library.³²⁵ On receipt Turton translated each letter into Italian and circulated the translation among the Sorelle. Examples of several

³²³ 'A brotherhood without vows, rule or special habit, with members of every nationality, class and form of Christian faith.' ... Its object was 'To hasten the coming of the Kingdom of God by promoting spiritual union between all believers in Christ.' Allchin, *Friendship in God*, p. 25.

³²⁴ For a theological interpretation see Enzo Bianchi's preface to Sorella Maria di Campello, Giovanni M. Vannucci, *Il canto dell'allodola: lettere scelte (1947-1961)*, ed. by Paolo Marangon (Magnano (BI): Edizioni Qiqajon, 2006), p. 6. 'The mystery of the kingdom ... is an open book only to those who have a large heart, to those who know themselves and acknowledge themselves to be 'the least' [*minore*], to those who know the richness of what is freely given.' [Author's translation]. The irony is that Bianchi writes as Prior of his community.

³²⁵ 'Papers of Verrier Elwin, Anthropologist (1924-1964)', London, British Library: India Office Records and Private Papers, Mss Eur D950/7-11.

of these translations are included in the British Library collection. Turton replied regularly, and Elwin continued the correspondence faithfully, if irregularly. On occasion Sorella Maria wrote in Italian to Elwin and her letter was translated into English by Turton before mailing.

Guha uses this correspondence extensively to trace the developments in Elwin's thoughts about Indian nationalism, the Anglican Church, and Christianity. At one point he refers to the Italian Sorelle as 'penfriends of Verrier's and fellow admirers of Mahatma Gandhi'.³²⁶ But what he does not do is to try to understand the importance, cultural, personal, spiritual, of the correspondence itself for the participants. For just as Elwin was to find his views and activities increasingly in conflict with those of his ecclesiastical authorities, Sorella Maria and her Sorelle were subject to criticism and restraint from their local bishop, particularly for their close contacts with non-Catholics, not just the Anglicans Turton, Andrews, and Elwin, but also Italian Protestants, and with those Italian Catholics condemned as Modernists by the Roman Catholic Church. One of these Modernists, Ernesto Buonaiuti (1881-1946), a professor of the history of Christianity, and a close friend of Sorella Maria's (who referred to him by his Franciscan Tertiary name Ginepro) had suffered, in 1926, exactly the same withdrawal of his priestly authority to celebrate the eucharist as Elwin was to experience in India in 1932.³²⁷ Thus, in their strivings to find a way forward from the restrictions of their respective churches, there was great empathy between the two sides of the correspondence. There was empathy too in their respect for the teaching of Saint Francis of Assisi, their seeking, like him, to live lives of poverty to serve the poorest in

³²⁶ Guha, *Savaging the Civilized*, p. 41; Guha, *Gandhi* does not discuss the correspondence between Gandhi and Sorella Maria.

³²⁷ Aronica, *Sorella Maria e il suo eremo*, pp. 13–15.

society, and in their enthusiasm for Gandhi and his teachings of the search for truth and of how to respond to violence in a world trying to recover from the First World War.

For the Sorelle Elwin was a young Christian pastor active in the world outside the Eremo, who shared their vision of openness, and whom they supported with correspondence, prayer, and indeed, in the case of Turton, with financial assistance. Elwin was a link with Gandhi and his world, for them of immense importance in their own search for religious truth and in their rejection of violence. As Elwin was progressively side-lined by his own church, Sorella Maria, Turton, and the Sorelle remained a reference point for him within the wider church for the Gandhi-influenced Christianity which at that time became his faith.

Sharing experiences

Elwin's second letter to Turton is in reply to her first reply to him.³²⁸ He is delighted to have been addressed as 'Fratello Verrier' but is uncertain how to address her in reply. Most of the letter is concerned with three different ecumenical religious groups, Turton's Confraternity of the Spiritual Entente, the Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius (another cross-cultural ecumenical group founded in 1927, at this stage primarily linking members of the Anglican Church with the Russian Orthodox diaspora), and the International Fellowship of Religions, the meeting of which he had attended in January 1928 in Sabarmati Ashram as the representative of the Christa Seva Sangh. This last was the occasion of his first meeting with Gandhi. The meeting, attended by members of different faiths, had been addressed by Andrews, and Elwin was now a member of the Fellowship's council. Elwin wrote that it was his policy with regards to Hindus and others never to adopt a negative attitude, but, in a spirit of

³²⁸ Elwin to Turton, 18 December 1928, Mss Eur D950/7, fols. 2-3.

reverence and homage, to try to point to the perfect Revelation, indicating that at this time he had not lost his missionary aim of bringing others to Christianity.

Elwin also mentioned that he has read Evelyn Underhill's account in *The Spectator* of her September 1925 visit to the Eremo.³²⁹ Her visit was in fact to the *Rifugio San Francesco* [the refuge of St Francis], a disused hunting lodge at Poretta, also in the hills above Campello, and in sight of the Eremo, which for nearly five years was the last temporary home of the Sorelle before they moved into the restored Eremo.³³⁰ This visit, together with the importance of Sorella Maria's continuing guidance to Evelyn Underhill, is discussed in detail by Allchin.³³¹ Elwin, who during his convalescent stay in Oxford had studied English mysticism, must have been aware of Evelyn Underhill's work in this field, but in this letter he wrote only of the beauty of her article and of how he wished he could get in touch with her; many years later he was to get to know her when his mother moved to a house in London a few streets away from her home.

In this second letter Elwin is writing as he might to any new contact who might wish to join one or more of the various religious networks of which he was a part. Only as the correspondence progresses does the fundamental role that the Eremo was to play in his own religious and indeed political development become evident.

Elwin's third letter to Turton, addressed to her as 'Sorella Amata',³³² is mainly concerned with three of his friends, one Indian and two European, and with St Catherine

³²⁹ Evelyn Underhill, 'A Franciscan Hermitage', *The Spectator* (London), 11 February 1928, pp. 183–4.

³³⁰ *Il canto dell'allodola*, ed. by Marangon, p. 20.

³³¹ Allchin, *Friendship in God*, pp. 27–29.

³³² Various names were used for Amy Turton, resulting in some confusion in the British Library catalogue of Elwin's papers, where she is included as three separate individuals: 'Miss Miriam Turton', 'Sorella Amata' and 'Nonna Speranza'. In her letters Sorella Maria refers to her most often as *Nonna Amata* (Beloved Grandmother), but also as *Nonna Speranza* (Grandmother Hope). Allchin, *Friendship in God*, p. 29, notes how Underhill always refers to her as Miss Turton, perhaps following a then current English convention of respect for her age, but also perhaps reflecting her 'undeniable authority'. For the text of this thesis Turton is used, with the different names retained as used in the originals in quotations.

of Siena.³³³ It also contains the important account of Andrews's meeting with the flogged village headman in the Punjab, already included at the beginning of Chapter I. This suggests that Andrews was at this juncture a role model for Elwin, who shared in his horror at the Amritsar massacre and its aftermath.

In March 1929 Elwin wrote to Turton again, this time not from his mother's home in North Oxford, but from the Indian Students' Union in Gower Street, London, where he had been working with Indians studying in London, thanking Turton for the support given by two further letters she had written to him.³³⁴ He reported that he was not yet sufficiently recovered to return to India, where he is 'longing to go, especially now that our beloved Mahatma has been arrested and will be tried on March 25th. I don't think they can do anything much to him now, but it is a token of darker times to come'. He asked Turton if she might be able to attend the April Conference of the Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius, which he was to chair.

Back in Oxford in June he wrote in a brief letter: 'I wish I could tell you about the Mahatma. But I send you a few papers which will help you, perhaps, to see him. I have sent on the beautiful little messages. I am sure that he and M^r. Andrews will treasure them greatly.'³³⁵ He was hoping to come to Siena on about October 3rd. 'I do pray I may see you then – and the Eremo.' He seems to have assumed that because Turton wrote from her home in Siena the Eremo was also there. In a postscript to a later June letter, he was hoping to leave London on 30 September, go to the Russians in Paris for one night, and then come to Siena.³³⁶ 'I should love to have a Celebration', presumably of Holy Communion, which would be appropriate for the Anglican Turton, but which

³³³ Elwin to Turton, 31 January 1929, Mss Eur D950/7, fol. 4.

³³⁴ Elwin to Turton, 12 March 1929, Mss Eur D950/7, fols. 7-8.

³³⁵ Elwin to Turton, 11 June 1929, Mss Eur D950/7, fol. 6.

³³⁶ Elwin to Turton, 27 June 1929, Mss Eur D950/7, fols. 10-11.

their ecclesiastical authorities would not consider acceptable for the Roman Catholic Sorelle. On 8 September he was expecting Turton at meetings in London on 27 September; he had had a card from Sabarmati thanking for the things she had sent to the Mahatma.³³⁷ ‘I do hope Sorella Maria & Jacopa & Immacolatella are better’. But on 6 October he was writing from the *SS Orford* which he had boarded in Naples on his way back to India: Turton had not come to London, and he had not been to Siena.³³⁸

This letter contains a significant statement of Elwin’s thinking at this time as regards Christianity and India:

I am sure that it is possible for a Christian and a priest to be a true disciple of India, just as ~~you~~ French or Russian religious passionately patriotic and truly wedded to their own culture. And to me Christ speaks through countless voices in the East, heralds of the Incarnation cry to us through India’s mystics and poets, the Eternal Word is uttered silently in her glorious art and sounds in her songs, the Creator is seen in the grand beauty of her woods, and rivers and mountains. India is a land alive with thoughts of God, and as though dazzled by the profusion of His witness, she has become the mother of religions. For her the path truly is from multiplicity to unity, from the diverse to the single, to the One Utterance and Truth of God in the Face of Jesus Christ. And yet that One is somehow not only the negation but the crown of all that multiplicity. You reach it not only by subtraction, but by addition. O our glorious East: and lovely, loving, loveable heart of India.³³⁹

Elwin is here following the thinking of ‘fulfilment’ Christianity, described in the ‘Faith and India’ section of the Introduction to this thesis, which sees the revelation of Christ as the fulfilment of Indian religion, spirituality, and mysticism.³⁴⁰ But unusually for him the syntax does not flow and is stilted, raising the question of whether he is paraphrasing someone else or whether he is repeating something written to someone else, who, as suggested by the deleted ‘you’ in the first sentence, might have been one

³³⁷ Elwin to Turton, 8 September 1929, Mss Eur D950/7, fol. 9.

³³⁸ Elwin to Turton, 6 October 1929, Mss Eur D950/7, fols. 12-14.

³³⁹ Guha quotes most of this passage, although with some textual changes: Guha, *Savaging the Civilized*, pp. 41–42. Immediately before he states that Elwin visited the *Eremo* on this journey, repeating the erroneous account in Elwin’s autobiography. After this quotation he includes another, which despite its reference is not found in this letter, concerning Elwin’s visit to the Holy Land which must have followed his departure from Naples.

³⁴⁰ Robinson, *Christians Meeting Hindus*, pp. 216–26.

of the Orthodox contacts with whom he had just been staying in Paris. At the end of the quotation the phrase ‘Lovely, loving, loveable heart of India’ is typical of Elwin: the theme of love was to recur in his writing to the end of his life. Here it echoes the ‘beloved India’ of Sorella Maria’s first letter to Gandhi.

Elwin’s next letter to Turton was dated 5 March 1930, almost six months later.³⁴¹ He referred to his recent ‘Circular Letter’ and to a letter he wrote to the 6 March 1930 issue of *Young India* in which he had referred to her. He hoped that she had met with his superior Jack Winslow (1882-1974), the founder of the Christa Seva Sangha ashram, then out of India; his next letter was to confirm that they had met. But apart from writing of being ‘overwhelmed with work’ he did not mention how in his superior’s absence he had been the acting leader of the Christa Seva Sangha, and how in that position, supported especially by Leonard Schiff (1908-2002), who had travelled out from England with him, and by Shamrao Hivale (1903-1984), an Indian member of the Ashram, he had brought the Ashram firmly behind Gandhi’s Independence Movement and Congress’ policy of non-cooperation. In his next letter, of 30 April 1930, this support is clearly described, albeit in religious terms: ‘Gandhiji and his followers seem to me to be expressing the spirit of our Lord in politics.’³⁴² He quoted from the Indian press: ‘The spirit of Christ has passed on to the little poor saint of India’, ‘Gandhiji is about to ascend his Cross like Jesus Christ’. Asking for prayer, he listed those imprisoned, Seth Jamnal Bajaj, Mahadev Desai, Vallabhai [sic] Patel, Jawrlal [sic] Nehru, Ramdas Gandhi. ‘How infinitely pathetic it is to see Christianity armed and dominant against Hinduism seeking the Cross with Christ!’

³⁴¹ Elwin to Turton, 5 March 1930, Mss Eur D950/7, fol. 15.

³⁴² Elwin to Turton, 30 April 1930, Mss Eur D950/7, fol. 16.

The Archdeacon of Bombay, whose salary was paid by the Government of India and who was responsible to the Government for the activities of Anglican clergymen in the diocese, wrote to Elwin to pass on the Government's displeasure that the Ashram had hosted an emissary of Gandhi's, the Quaker Reginald Reynolds (1905-1958), and to express concern about Schiff's wearing the outlawed Gandhi cap in public. Judging by subsequent entries in the Ashram's Minute Book, one of which congratulated Schiff for his action, the Archdeacon's intervention was counter-productive, strengthening the Ashram's alignment with Gandhi.³⁴³

In his next letter to Turton, of 19 February 1931, Elwin made clear the dilemma this conflict within the church posed for him:

The last months have been a time of great heart-searching for me. I don't see clearly yet whether I should follow M^r. Andrews, and be in a position to live and work freely with all my friends who love God, or whether I should remain in the Church of England which, in India at least, bears the appearance so largely of being allied to imperialistic Britain.³⁴⁴

Andrews had withdrawn from his priestly functions in 1914, unable to reconcile the restrictive beliefs of his Church with his broader belief in the Divinity as revealed in India.³⁴⁵

Elwin's letter is almost filial in his approach, ending 'dear Mother'; although he wrote regularly to his own mother, their theological differences meant he could not share with her the religious openness that he found in his contacts with the *Eremo*. The letter suggests that Elwin was at this time assigning a Christ-like role to Gandhi, implicitly in the body of the letter when he refers to 'all my friends who love God' and

³⁴³ Elwin, *Tribal World*, p. 48, *Din-Sevak*, p. 35; Guha, *Savaging the Civilized*, p. 45; Noreen, *Wheat Grain*, p. 147.

³⁴⁴ Elwin to Turton, 19 February 1931, Mss Eur D950/7, fols 17-18.

³⁴⁵ Tinker, *Ordeal of Love*, p. 96.

to following ‘the Truth’, and explicitly in a postscript in which he juxtaposes Yeravda Jail and Nazareth and describes Gandhi’s night-time arrest in the garden at Kevadi.

Elwin also wrote that the previous month he had been close to breakdown. However he did not mention two possible contributors to this, which are described by his biographer Guha. One was the resistance from the leader of his Ashram, Winslow, to the position he had taken in providing political support to Gandhi. The second was that, despite being a celibate in the Christa Seva Sangha, during his recent time away in Matheran, a hill station, he had enjoyed a romantic relationship with an Indian lady doctor, Ala Pocha, an associate of Gandhi.³⁴⁶

Breaking away

Elwin returned to his dilemma as regards his future in a letter of 14 May 1931, taken by hand from India to the Eremo by an unnamed visitor.³⁴⁷ ‘There is yet little light on the path of Truth. There is a great inner urge, away, to more complete poverty, more complete union with India, greater toil, fuller suffering. To follow that urge – for me – in India – will cost everything, friends, culture, the future and perhaps life itself.’ He had been travelling with A. V. Thakkar (1869-1951), who had dedicated his life to India’s tribal peoples and untouchables, for whom he asks for love and prayer; he was planning a week’s stay with Gandhi at the end of the month.

Two weeks later, writing from Swaraj Ashram at Bardoli, where he was staying with Gandhi, washing Gandhi’s clothes, cleaning his dishes, and helping to prepare his fruit,

³⁴⁶ Guha, *Savaging the Civilized*, pp. 62, 82; Guha’s account of the romance is confusing as regards the dates, first giving January 1932 (when Elwin was in Matheran only for five days) and then quoting Elwin in a 1933 letter to Gandhi stating that this happened in Matheran in January 1931. It is conceivable that a relationship was established in 1931 and broken off in 1932, which would explain Elwin’s reference to ‘a crushing pain which cannot be shared’ in a January 1932 letter to Turton: Elwin to Turton, 2 January 1932, Mss Eur D950/7, fol. 38.

³⁴⁷ Elwin to Turton, 14 May 1931, Mss Eur D950/7, fol. 19.

Elwin has made his decision and he is ‘supremely happy’. With Winslow’s agreement he will leave the Christa Seva Sangha in about November and begin a life of poverty. At this time, he was thinking of living in the ‘untouchables’ quarter of a village, examples of which he had visited with Thakkar. ‘It is a step of faith at midnight. I have no material or financial resources of any kind. I do not know whether I shall have anyone with me. I have no idea what the future holds.’ In a postscript he wrote ‘I gave Bapu (Gandhiji) your greetings and quoted from your letter. ~~to him~~. He was very pleased. I have had some such happy walks and talks with him – the Man of Peace ..’

In pencil there is written on the letter in another hand, most likely Turton’s, *privato* – *s’intende*, private – you understand.³⁴⁸ This may refer to Elwin’s response to what must have been a request from Turton about the First Century Fellowship, later to be known as the Oxford Group, and then as Moral Rearmament. Elwin had written:

I knew the First Christian Fellowship very well when I was in Oxford. I was not happy about it in those days. They were a little intolerant. [‘a little’ has been inserted together with heavy deletion of the rest of the sentence] But I rejoice to think that they have changed greatly. But I would rather wait a little before saying anything definite. I know so many young men to whom it has done very positive harm. You know how it pains me to write like this about any of our dear fellow-seekers, but I thought Truth demanded one word of warning. Pray God I may be mistaken as to their present position. I speak of two years ago and five years ago.

Elwin describes this Christian movement in his autobiography.³⁴⁹ It was a well-funded interdenominational evangelising mission, later known as the Oxford Group, and later still as Moral Rearmament, led by an American Lutheran pastor Frank Buchman (1878-1961), based on conversion experiences and confession of sins, which enjoyed considerable success, with support from the Anglican hierarchy, in the years between the world wars, and was still actively recruiting in Oxford in the early 1960s. Elwin’s

³⁴⁸ Elwin to Turton, 31 May 1931, Mss Eur D950/7, fols 20-22.

³⁴⁹ Elwin, *Tribal World*, pp. 30–31.

account is scornful about Buchman's directly accusing him of a hidden sin, and cynical about the public confessions at his meetings. Interestingly Andrews was an invited guest at one of the movement's house-parties in Switzerland in 1932.³⁵⁰ As will be described later in this chapter, Winslow went to work with the movement when he left India.

Back at the Sangha, the plan changed. Elwin's letter to Turton of 18 June 1931 reports that 'by the help of the Bp. of Dornakal [V. S. Azariah, 1874-1945, first, and still at the time of his death the only, Indian Anglican diocesan bishop], we have reached a working compromise which will enable me (I pray and hope) to follow God's leading & yet remain a member of the Sangha. I am very happy about it, and so is Fr. Jack'. But in July Elwin went to stay at Sabarmati Ashram and his letters to Turton report renewed perplexity as to whether he had taken the right decision, uncertain 'how to follow Truth without fear, without attachment', the ideal of Sorella Maria and Gandhi, 'how to serve our dear Lord; how to be true to Him in the midst of non-Christian society', the ideal which had brought him to the Christa Seva Sangha. This last was made more difficult by the apparent hostility of the Christians; he had not been invited to preach in church for more than a year. '... without Christian fellowship, without the inspiration of your churches, art, music, and memories of the saints' it went without saying that the regular letters from Turton and the prayers in the Eremo were a lifeline keeping him in his faith.³⁵¹

In his next letter to Turton of 18 August 1931 he described travelling down to Bombay with Gandhi by train in third class, with prayers on board at 3 a.m., and then a long discussion when Gandhi sent for him and discussed his health, his problems, his

³⁵⁰ Chaturvedī and Sykes, *Andrews*, pp. 258–59.

³⁵¹ Elwin to Turton, 29 July 1931, Mss Eur D950/7, fols 27, 28.

future. But the letter contains no resolution of the perplexity.³⁵² This was to come a month later, 18 September 1931, in his letter to Turton from the Poona ashram.³⁵³ He and Winslow had agreed that he was an embarrassment to the ashram's 'special work within the Church' while the ashram was an embarrassment to him in his work 'outside' (he had in fact announced his intention of resigning from the ashram to its General Chapter on 14 September).³⁵⁴ He would 'still belong to the spiritual family' of the ashram but he was to 'adventure further'. 'There is now no question about my priesthood'; he hoped 'to have a tiny group of Christian brothers, and perhaps ... some Hindu and Mussalman brothers also'. 'I don't want a lot of theology about it; but I want so much love, divine, supernatural, holy, Christ-like love, that the differences will be submerged.' Within the group he hoped to have 'dear, wonderful Shamrao'.

Elwin had met Shamrao Hivale when he was a teacher of Marathi to missionaries. Remembering their meeting almost thirty years later Shamrao told a journalist 'It was a strange meeting. We actually fell for each other'.³⁵⁵ Shamrao was the youngest child and second son of an Indian Christian family, losing both his parents from plague when he was six months old. He was brought up by his brother, Bhasker Panderang Hivale, to whom Shamrao dedicated his *The Pardhans of the Upper Narbada Valley*, describing his brother as 'tutor, guide and friend'.³⁵⁶ Leaving his work as a teacher of Marathi, Shamrao became a lay member of the Christa Seva Sangh, and was sent by the ashram to England to train for the Anglican ministry at the Anglo-Catholic Mirfield Community.

³⁵² Elwin to Turton, 18 August 1931, Mss Eur D950/7, fol. 29.

³⁵³ Elwin to Turton, 18 September 1931, Mss Eur D950/7, fols 31, 32.

³⁵⁴ Daniel O'Connor, 'Introduction', *Din-Sevak*, p. 36.

³⁵⁵ 'The Social Whirl', *The Times of India*, 29 April 1956, p. 4.

³⁵⁶ Shamrao Hivale, *The Pardhans of the Upper Narbada Valley* (London: Oxford University Press, 1946).

Shamrao was at Mirfield when he received Elwin's invitation to join him in his new project. It was not an easy decision. The two were clearly close friends, sharing perhaps, as their language above, 'dear, wonderful Shamrao' and 'We actually fell for each other', suggests, a same sex bond of friendship not uncommon in the celibate Anglo-Catholic environment of those times.³⁵⁷ This could be seen as an example of Derrida's primary friendship. But there was more to it than this: Elwin, as so many missionaries before him, would be dependent on a companion whose mother tongue would make communication fruitful and who could work more easily with those who would be their neighbours. That Elwin realised this is shown by a comment in his autobiography: Shamrao's cable saying he would come 'brought my plans within the realms of practical politics'.³⁵⁸ To reach a decision Shamrao had gone to London to discuss with Gandhi what he should do; rejecting the advice of the Principal of his theological college, he had accepted Gandhi's invitation to join his party for the journey back to India.

Elwin mentions Shamrao again in his next letter to Turton of 29 October 1931, his last from the Poona Ashram.³⁵⁹ 'Poor boy, he has had a hard time since he decided to join me; but I am sure he was right. God had been leading us together for so long.' Could Turton write to him and invite him to the Eremo, and cheer him up? Turton duly wrote and Shamrao replied, explaining that the possibility of their meeting would depend on Gandhi's movements.³⁶⁰

In Elwin's letter of 14 November 1931 he reports that he had now found a 'God-meant' spot for their portable Francis-Gandhi ashram (a bullock cart and a tent - he was delighted to hear that the Eremo adventure had started with just 100 lire) among the

³⁵⁷ Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Silence: A Christian History* (London: Penguin Books, 2014), pp. 184–90.

³⁵⁸ Elwin, *Tribal World*, p. 59.

³⁵⁹ Elwin to Turton, 29 October 1931, Mss Eur D950/7, fol. 33.

³⁶⁰ Shamrao from Kingsley Hall to Turton, undated, Mss Eur D950/7, fol. 34.

Gonds, an Adivasi tribal people of central India. This was a change of plan from his original idea of living with the untouchables, a change which was to have profound personal and political implications for him in the future.³⁶¹

But writing his last letter of the year on 2 December 1931 Elwin confessed that he too had had a hard time since September, one of the hardest things being Winslow's failure to understand (presumably his support for Gandhi and his decision to leave Winslow's ashram) and hardest of all his own failure to be great-hearted.³⁶² Now it was over. 'There is no breach, no quarrel; there is love, but not understanding.' Sorella Maria's prayer and understanding greatly helped, in the same way as Gandhi helped, 'in so clear and luminous a way — in the region beyond the emotions'. Shamrao was now returning to India with Gandhi, and they hoped to start their venture in the first week in January.

Cross-cultural friendships

On Sunday 13 December 1931 Gandhi was in Rome, his last stop on his last visit to Europe, which will be described in the next chapter. Around midday he was visited at the Villa Moris, where he was staying as a guest, by Sorella Maria, Sorella Immacolatella, and Turton, whom Gandhi had invited to come to Rome to meet him by telegram. They were met and escorted to the villa by Shamrao.³⁶³ This meeting was to be a point of reference for all the participants for many years, probably for the rest of their lives. As recorded immediately afterwards by Sorella Maria and confirmed in a subsequent letter to one of the proprietors of the Eremo, Gandhi was spinning at the

³⁶¹ Elwin to Turton, 14 November 1931, Mss Eur D950/7, fol. 35.

³⁶² Elwin to Turton, 2 December 1931, Mss Eur D950/7, fols 36, 37.

³⁶³ Undated notes by Sorella Jacopa of Sorella Maria's memories, in *Gandhi e Sorella Maria*, ed. by Dante, pp. 61–62; Letter to the Sorelle of the Eremo written by Sorella Maria in pencil on a page torn from a diary, dated Rome, 13 December 1931, in *Gandhi e Sorella Maria*, ed. by Dante, pp. 55–56.

time, sitting on the ground.³⁶⁴ Sorella Maria sat down on his left and Sorella Immacolatella on his right. Sorella Maria remembered him being like a child, intent on his task, which he interrupted to laugh, to examine the gifts they had brought him, to read aloud the writing on their embroidered napkin *sii pane per tutti* (May you be bread for all), his first lesson in Italian as they would subsequently remind each other.

When the time came to leave, the two Sorelle asked for his blessing. He crossed his arms and placed a hand on each of their heads. Turton said humbly ‘I am not yet worthy to be a lark’, to which Gandhi replied, ‘You must become worthy’.

There were two others present at this meeting, Mirabehn, English, devoted to the Indian Gandhi, and Shamrao, Indian, on his way back to India in answer to the call to join the English Elwin. Both were to be remembered by the Eremo in correspondence and prayer.

Two months later Sorella Jacopa (Clelia Allegri, 1883-1963, the closest and most trusted of Sorella Maria’s companions) wrote to some Italian friends reporting the meeting in Rome.³⁶⁵ Gandhi himself had expressed the wish to meet Sorella Maria; he knew of her through his favourite disciple Andrews and through Elwin. Elwin had wanted Shamrao to take the opportunity of the stay in Rome to seek Sorella Maria’s advice on their planned Ashram of St Francis, which would be a little centre of life in community in a remote area of India.

Sorella Jacopa ended her letter with a convincing insight. Perhaps the most interesting work of Gandhi would not be his politics, but his penetration among the untouchables, his drive to abolish unjust prejudices, to create brotherhood, to improve. As for

³⁶⁴ From a copy of a letter from Sorella Maria to Veva Lupo, 15 December 1931, *Gandhi e Sorella Maria*, ed. by Dante, pp. 56–57.

³⁶⁵ *Il canto dell’allodola*, ed. by Marangon, p. 21; Extract from a letter of Sorella Jacopa to some Italian friends, 15 February 1932, in *Gandhi e Sorella Maria*, ed by Dante, pp. 64-65.

describing his personality, Sorella Maria had given no precise indication, and it was difficult, even impossible, to have an exact notion. Sorella Jacopa's comments are of particular interest in that, although known by Sorella Maria as *l'unanime*, the unanimous, she was the most questioning of the Sorelle. Born partially sighted, she had studied philosophy before devoting herself to the cause of the blind, and she wrote using Braille with a special typewriter.³⁶⁶

In Sorella Maria's subsequent correspondence with Gandhi and Mirabeau, memories of the Rome meeting recurred regularly. Gandhi in his periodical *The Harijan* wrote that the half-hour spent with the Larks of San Francesco was one of his dearest memories.³⁶⁷

The following year, 1932, it was Elwin's turn to visit Europe, according to Guha at his mother's request, although there was probably also a need to seek funds for the Ashram of St Francis. He wrote to Gandhi seeking his approval and in the same letter, it appears from Gandhi's reply, suggested that Gandhi's friends might join from afar in his Friday evening prayer meeting by singing a hymn of his choice. Gandhi replied agreeing to both proposals and saying that the choice of hymn had been made for him that very evening by Mahadev Desai who with his beautiful voice had sung the Gujarati version of Newman's *Lead Kindly Light*.³⁶⁸ 'There is a special fitness about the choice of this hymn of Newman's. It was that hymn which, when I was in physical distress [after he had been assaulted] was sung to me by Olive Doke in Johannesburg ...'. In

³⁶⁶ Conversation with Sorella Daniela Maria, Eremo Francescano, 27 July 2018. This may explain why Jacopa, as she herself points out, refers to Elwin in this letter in an Italian version 'Elvin', there being no letter W in the standard Italian alphabet and therefore presumably no W key on her typewriter.

³⁶⁷ Sorella Maria to Pietro Ubaldi, 21 February 1938, in *Gandhi e Sorella Maria*, ed. by Dante, p. 127.

³⁶⁸ Mohandas Gandhi, 'Letter to Verrier Elwin', 27 May 1932, *Gandhi*, LV, 425-7.

his circular letter sent before leaving India Elwin passed on this suggestion, adopting it himself.³⁶⁹

Elwin recounts in his autobiography how on his way to England he visited both Siena and Florence with Turton.³⁷⁰ She introduced him to the Italian painter Giovanni Costetti (1874-1949) and his Norwegian wife Mai (1892-1975), living and working in Florence, both committed supporters of Gandhi. Elwin travelled on to stay with Madeleine Rolland (1872-1960), the sister of Gandhi's biographer Romain Rolland (Rolland was away from home at the time), at Villeneuve in Switzerland from 12 to 14 July 1932. From here he took the funicular railway to Val Mont to visit Sorella Maria, who was there for rest and medical treatment, accompanied and supported financially by the American Episcopalian Sorella Miriam Shaw (1889-1982).

The day before he came, 11 July 1932, Sorella Maria dictated a long letter to Gandhi announcing Elwin's visit and predicting that they would be speaking much of Gandhi and of dear India.³⁷¹ She reminded him of their Rome meeting the previous December and of how through Elwin above all, and through Shamrao, and also through Mirabehn, she had been able to follow him and, dare she say it, form part of his family. Meeting with Elwin was a fraternal joy. She appreciated him greatly, together with Shamrao. Like Elwin she had once belonged to a religious community; she then proceeds to give a complete account of her calling to found the Eremo; in spite of immense difficulties, and suffering, and ecclesiastical incomprehension, the Lord had given her grace and courage to follow this calling and to free her from every bond which was not of love. Then follow many pages describing the founding of the Eremo and the life of the Sorelle

³⁶⁹ Elwin, 'Circular Letter', 8 June 1932; in Dante, *Gandhi e Sorella Maria*, ed. by Dante, pp. 69–71.

³⁷⁰ Elwin, *Tribal World*, p. 80.

³⁷¹ *Gandhi e Sorella Maria*, ed. by Dante, pp. 74–78; *Gandhiji and Sister Maria*, ed. by Patmury, pp. 28-31.

within it. She promises that when she returns to the Eremo at the beginning of August they will sing *Lead Kindly Light* every Friday evening in an Italian translation *O Cara Luce*, which she and Miriam have prepared and learnt by heart.³⁷² She finishes by assuring Gandhi of their prayers for him, for his two companions in prison, for his wife Kasturbai [sic], for Mirabehn, for all those dear to him, and for India so much loved and so much tried, and by asking Gandhi to spare a thought for the Eremo and for the Sorelle who wished to follow the dear light of eternal truth. The letter was entrusted to Elwin for delivery.

Elwin's letter to Turton of 13 July 1932 enthusiastically records the rapport he established immediately with Sorella Maria at their first meeting the previous day.³⁷³ 'La Minore surpasses every expectation. Previously I had no clear idea of her. She is so strong! When I go into her room I feel at home. She was at once well-being, peace for me. That visit will always give me strength, encouragement, inspiration.' 'What consolation to have her sympathy, her support.' There is no mention of the languages in which they spoke; most probably Sorella Maria spoke in Italian, Elwin spoke in English, and Shaw acted as interpreter.

The next day, 14 July 1932, Elwin, now at Montreux on his way to Paris and London, wrote again to Turton, reporting his second meeting, 'another hour, of profound peace'.³⁷⁴ The meetings had been hours of 'nourishment', 'fortification', 'enlightenment', 'humbling'. He had received guidance for three vital questions: 'About the Bishop — the way of humility, about the English sisters — the way of caution; about holy poverty — the way of freedom.' He was 'grateful, grateful beyond

³⁷² To this day the hymn has continued to be sung or said in the Eremo every Friday. Conversation with Sorella Daniela Maria, Eremo Franciscano, 27 July 2018.

³⁷³ Elwin to Turton, 13 July 1932, Mss Eur D950/7, fol. 63.

³⁷⁴ Elwin to Turton, 14 July 1932, Mss Eur D950/7, fol. 66.

expression, to you, to her, to the Costettis, to Mme Rolland, to God good and true, for these sweet days of love and encouragement'. He noted Romain Rolland's sister Madeleine's 'deep respect ... for the Catholic faith (which she does not hold) and for the English people.' As Gandhi's hostess she will appear again in the next chapter.

To record their time together Sorella Maria sent a picture postcard with a view of the Lake of Geneva to Turton written in her own hand and signed by herself, Elwin, and Shaw (**Figure 3**). Until the invention of smartphones with cameras, sending such a card was a well-established Italian convention when friends met together away from home and remembered a mutual friend. Sorella Maria wrote:

Beloved little white peak that gives light to everything, be blessed for this meeting which we owe to you like many, many other good things. What a brother is Verrier! What hours all too short! But it is for ever. Oh how much how much I am with you at Dorotea's! what a worry!³⁷⁵

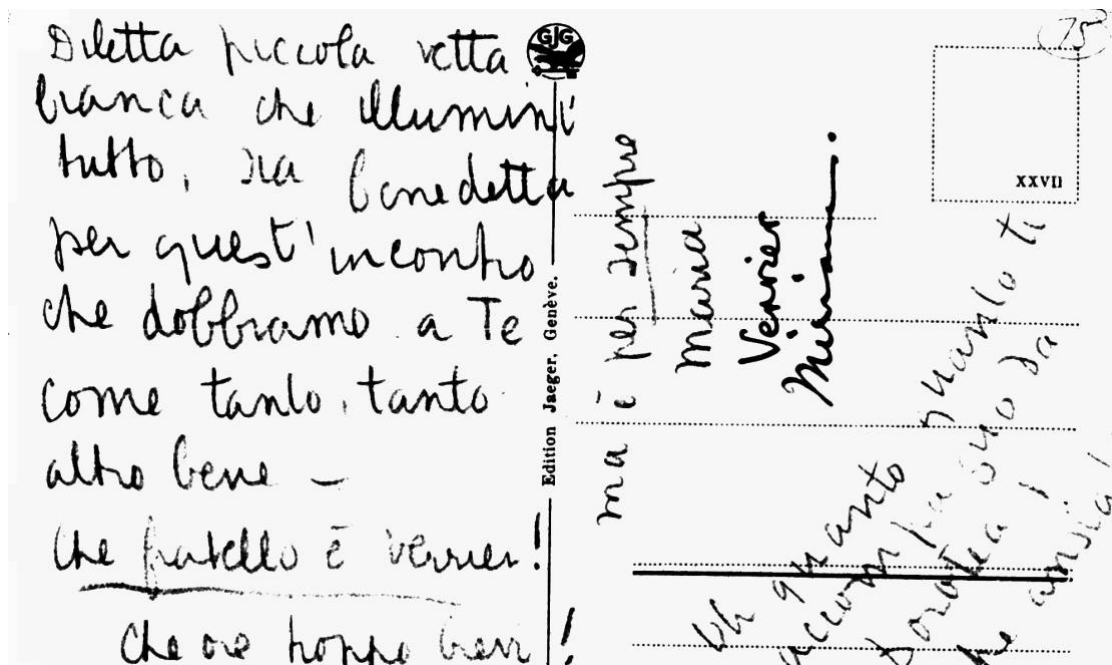


Figure 3. Picture postcard message to Turton from Sorella Maria, Verrier Elwin, and Miriam Shaw, 12 or 13 July 1932. British Library, Ms Eur D950/7, fol. 75.

³⁷⁵ Sorella Maria, Elwin, and Shaw to Turton, 12 or 13 July 1932, Mss Eur D950/7, fol. 75. Author's translation.

Sorella Maria's reactions to her meetings with Elwin are reported in more detail in her letter to Turton of Friday 22 July 1932.³⁷⁶ The letter, written in Italian, appears to have been dictated to Shaw, who intercalates in English three messages of her own.³⁷⁷ There was no news from Elwin; had he written to Turton since his arrival in London? By now Elwin was so dear to her that she thought of him, she was anxious for him, as for a brother. She was pleased that he had signed his letter to Turton *bambino fratellino* (little baby brother). Yes, Turton was spiritual mother for him, and he felt this very much. While for herself, Sorella Maria, Elwin was a companion on the way, with the same provisions for the journey. Before meeting him she had never found anyone so close to her on the way, sharing the same bread. Perhaps Turton would tell him this. That evening at about 7:30 they would sing *O Cara Luce* and would pray for India, for Gandhi, for the prisoners, for Elwin and his companions, and for the Ashram of St Francis. The letter is signed 'Maria' in her hand.

Sorella Maria's letter to Gandhi reached him in Yeravda Jail. He replied briefly, with his usual attention to detail, on 10 August 1932, addressing the letter to her at the Eremo Franceseano, Trevi, Umbria.³⁷⁸ He thanked her for her beautiful long descriptive letter and Miriam for her translation. He set a puzzle for her to answer: why was her address at Trevi, while letters received from the Sorelle in Italy were from Siena? This was the same issue which had confused Elwin when he failed to visit the Eremo in 1929: the Italian letters were written from near Trevi in Umbria, while their translations were made by Turton in Siena and sent to India from there.

Then Gandhi wrote:

³⁷⁶ Sorella Maria to Turton, 22 July 1932, Mss Eur D950/7, fols. 64-65. Author's translation.

³⁷⁷ '(but all of them come to me through feeling her!)', '(& how I echo!)', '(a loving kiss from thy Miriam)'.

³⁷⁸ Gandhi to Sorella Maria, 10 August 1932, *Gandhi e Sorella Maria*, ed. by Dante, pp. 82–83, with facsimile in *Foto* [Photograph] 5.

As I read your description of your activities, I felt that I must have stolen our way at Sabarmati from you or you from me. It is wonderful how differences in climate and physical surroundings make no difference in the things of permanent value.

Now that Verrier has brought us nearer and forged a living link by establishing a common prayer on Fridays among those of kindred spirit, you should write frequently and let me know all about your activities.

He concludes by including his fellow-prisoners Sardar Vallabhbhai and Mahadev in sending love to all.

On the same day Gandhi wrote a short letter to ‘*Sorelle Mai Sewell Costetti e altre*’, Viale V. Emmanuele 17, Siena, acknowledging receipt of their little letter and of a longer letter from Turton with three delicate flowers, one for each prisoner, and an article on illumination by Verrier.³⁷⁹ Sorella Maria received translations of both letters on 30 August. On 13 September 1932 she wrote very firmly to Turton.³⁸⁰ Writing to Gandhi it was important to recognize that his way of writing was simple, even simplistic. That he could not distinguish between the Eremo and Siena, or between us and our friends, must alert them to the need to write to him with greater simplicity and clarity. In the same way Turton must not refer just to ‘*la minore*’ but must describe in full ‘Sorella Maria’, lark of St Francis, who lives in the Eremo at Trevi, and who is called *la minore* among the other Sorelle. Turton should explain that she herself will be returning to the Eremo at the beginning of October, and that Elwin will also be coming.

Gandhi’s difficulty in locating the Eremo had already been foreseen in a dream of Sorella Maria’s in April 1932.³⁸¹ She seemed to be in Tuscany (the Eremo is in Umbria) when she met Gandhi, of whom she remembered his slightly tired face and above all his smile. They understood each other despite the language barrier. Gandhi asked where

³⁷⁹ Gandhi to Mai Costetti, 10 August 1932, in *Gandhi e Sorella Maria*, ed. by Dante, p. 84.

³⁸⁰ Sorella Maria to Turton, 13 September 1932, *ibid.*, pp. 90-91.

³⁸¹ Sorella Maria’s note dated April 1932, *ibid.*, p. 67.

the Eremo was, and she replied, beyond those mountains. He gazed far, far away, as if he saw, then said clearly: your life is good medicine.

From England Verrier wrote to Turton on 26 August.³⁸² He was having a holiday in the Lake District, recovering from an illness which he describes as a bad attack of malaria. After outlining his travel plans, he wrote a complicated paragraph alluding to, although not specifying, the India Office's veto on his returning to India, which created for him a dilemma: either to remain in England and support Gandhi's movement from there, as he had been doing in public meetings from his arrival, or to renounce political activity so as to be allowed to return to India and to his ashram. He enclosed letters from Mirabehn and Mai Costetti, the latter distressing him with its implication that he was betraying Gandhi by ending his public support for him and by privately criticizing his contributions to the Round Table Conference. In the letter Elwin recognized that resolution of his dilemma depended on the decision of the India Office, which he would take as a sign of God's will for him.

Elwin wrote again to Turton on 29 August 1932, his thirtieth birthday.³⁸³ He had received letters from her that morning, which had included a comment that Gandhi's 'failure in London was due to his speaking truth'.³⁸⁴ This was to misinterpret what he, Elwin, had written in his circular letter. He continues in his letter to Turton:

We are faced in India with the task of building a constitution, and with the transfer of power. It was here, as a politician and a strategist, that Bapu failed to convince. How could it be otherwise? it is outside his line. I don't think it is all big finance that is in the way. I believe in the sincerity of Macdonald, Sankey, Irwin, Baldwin, even Hoare. But they feel that Civil Disobedience now is simply doing harm all round.

What I am urging now is not a palliative or compromise: it is a change of policy. ... If peace could be made, and Bapu and the Congress could enter the reformed

³⁸² Elwin to Turton, 26 August 1932, Mss Eur D950/7, fol. 92.

³⁸³ Elwin to Turton, 29 August 1932, Mss Eur D950/7, fol. 88-89.

³⁸⁴ Gandhi's 1931 visit to Europe, which included his attendance at the second Roundtable Conference in London, is discussed in Chapter III of this thesis.

Councils, and then achieve a sort of coup d'état, they would get far more than by the present campaign. There is no question of "giving in": it is simple a question of fighting more efficiently. That is where the "Moderates" are so useful. They can talk to England in a way England can understand. I do not say all this in public, ~~but~~ because I am not a politician and I may be wrong.

These passages indicate a political parting of the ways from Gandhi that may have eased Elwin's forced disengagement from politics. There is no lack of respect or affection for Gandhi. Like Jacopa, he sees Gandhi as a leader of thought, not as a political actor. Interpreted in that sense, Gandhi's 1931 visit to Europe had been a success, spreading his teaching through his charisma to a wide western audience, even if the Round Table Conference, its primary rationale, failed. For the readers of the Italian translation of Elwin's letter in the Eremo these paragraphs would be of great interest but would not shake their affection for, or devotion to, Gandhi. In another context Sorella Maria, emphatically supported by Jacopa, was clear that theological or political disagreement did not imply breaking bonds of friendship and respect, nor did those bonds imply theological or political agreement.³⁸⁵ Her network of trans-national, trans-cultural and trans-confessional friendships differed from other more formal transnational networks of the same period that might require conformity and agreement on fundamental articles of aims and beliefs, with heavy consequences for dissenters.

Sorella Maria's letter to Elwin of 1 September 1932, addressed to 'Verrier', must have crossed with this letter of his.³⁸⁶ She reports Gandhi's reply to the letter which she had entrusted to Elwin and now sends a few lines of hers and some small drawings to send on to him. She also asks for Gandhi's address with a view to further correspondence. But the main thrust of the letter is her gratitude for Elwin's friendship

³⁸⁵ For example, Riccardi, 'Sorella Maria e Buonaiuti', in *Maria di Campello*, ed. by Morozzo Della Rocca, pp. 11-25 (p. 20). In this instance Maria is distancing herself from the modernist Catholic views of her close friend Ernesto Buonaiuti ('Ginepro').

³⁸⁶ Sorella Maria to Elwin, 1 September 1932, in *Gandhi e Sorella Maria*, ed. by Dante, p. 85.

and his sharing of burdens, both spiritual and physical, which she expresses as seeking together the inexpressible joy of sacrifice. With an *arrivederci* she looks forward to this continued sharing of burdens, made light by love, during his forthcoming visit to the Eremo. She concludes with good wishes to Elwin's mother and sister, and to Shamrao, the brothers of the ashram, and the sacred poor. May God increase Elwin's hunger and thirst! In signing the letter (as 'Maria') she asked for Elwin's blessing.

The letter she enclosed for Gandhi (which like her letter to Elwin had travelled via Siena for Turton's translation), replying to his of 10 August which she had received on the evening of 30 August, is longer than a few lines.³⁸⁷ Dated 2 September 1932 from the Eremo, addressed to Gandhi as *Caro Bapu*, Dear Bapu, it contains a full account of all the members of the Eremo and of their friends in Italy who are followers of Gandhi, together with some of their movements in the course of the year. With the letter Sorella Maria is providing the solution to Gandhi's puzzle and trying to avoid any future confusion in his mind as to her network. The letter is helpful for the historian in providing a snapshot of this network at this point in time.

Sorella Maria herself had been taken for a month to the Swiss Clinic by the American Sorella Miriam Shaw. Then on 26 July she had returned to the work and peace of the Eremo. On 16 August Shaw had returned to her house, St Christopher's, in the country in America, where she provided a welcome like that of the Eremo for those in need of support and peace. She was to return to the Sorelle of the Eremo at the beginning of December to stay until May 1933.

Amata ('miss Turton') similarly belonged to the community, but could not stay always with them, passing half the year in Siena with her sick sister and two other

³⁸⁷ Sorella Maria to Gandhi, 2 September 1932, in *Gandhi e Sorella Maria*, ed. by Dante, pp. 86-88.

ladies. Her house in Siena was called *Angelo Raffaele*, after the angel Raphael. The permanently resident members of the community in the Eremo were at this time Jacopa, Immacolatella, Angeluccia, Rosa, Agnese, Paola, Gigliola, Cenere and Cenerella; they lived in the Eremo all the year except for the winter months when, because there was too much snow and the wolves were prowling around, they moved a little lower down the mountain. The postal address however was always as in the heading of her letter. The friends of India in Italy, with whom Gandhi's and Verrier's messages were shared, were the Italians Cesare Ronchi and his wife, the Italian artist Giovanni Costetti and his Norwegian wife Mai, and the American Anieka Jan Leggett who lived near Florence. Elwin would be joining the Sorelle at the Eremo in October.

Sorella Maria concluded by requesting a brief acknowledgement of safe receipt, signing herself as *Sono la vostra piccola Maria minore Allodola di San Francesco*, I am your little Maria Minore, Lark of St Francis.

Gandhi duly replied from Yeravda Central Prison, Poona, on 4 October 1932, acknowledging her letter, starting 'Dear Lark Maria'.³⁸⁸ He thanked her also for the telegram sent during his fast: 'Tokens such as yours were food for me sent by God'. All the larks would forgive him if he took time learning all their original and assumed names. He signed off 'Love to you all from us all, ~~M. K. Gandhi~~ Bapu'.

Meanwhile Elwin had written a long letter to Sorella Maria on 6 September 1932, writing from England from the Somerset home of Laurence Housman (1865-1959), artist and dramatist, and activist for women's votes, homosexual law reform, and the independence of India, helpful critic and sponsor of Elwin's writing.³⁸⁹ Elwin begins the letter by remembering the peace and confidence that their meeting had brought him,

³⁸⁸ Gandhi to Sorella Maria, 4 October 1932, in *Gandhi e Sorella Maria*, ed. by Dante, p. 93, facsimile as Foto 6.

³⁸⁹ Elwin to Sorella Maria, 6 September 1932, Mss Eur D950/7, fols. 96-99.

which had strengthened and cheered him during days of sorrow and anxiety. Referring to Sorella Maria's difficulties with her ecclesiastical authorities he looks to 'go hand-in-hand (you helping your so little brother) through this darkness in the pure light of eternal and changeless Truth'. He expresses joy that Gandhi has received her letter, thus drinking from the well of life that is Christ's church. Then, in a philosophical section that cannot have been easy to translate, he writes of how the English 'have robbed India of life itself, fullness of life, fullness of peace'. He sees his way forward as changing in two respects, offering penitence for this rather than fighting in the battle for independence, and following Christ not by preaching, but by taking on the burden of suffering with 'all the afflicted, all the sorrow-stricken, all the poor,' ... 'those who are imprisoned, with those who are flogged and tortured, with the despairing'. 'Pray for ~~me~~ us, sister, that † we may carry that yoke with courage.' He signs off: 'Beloved little larks, your brother whom you have not seen greets you with his love – the only gift of his weakness and poverty. Verrier'.

This letter shows significant changes in Elwin's position. In the struggle for Indian independence, he will no longer be taking a primary role. In the world of religion, he will no longer be a preaching Christian missionary, but will follow Christ's teaching, in the spirit of St Francis, by identifying with the poor and suffering. In both changes he will remain close to the vision of Sorella Maria, who supported Gandhi and his followers with her friendship and prayers rather than by taking up any political stance, and who in the Eremo supported the poor and suffering, including her neighbours, those who came to stay at the Eremo, and those whom she supported from afar with her prayers and correspondence. Sorella Maria's avoidance of political allegiance is shown in a letter to Turton of 27 September 1932: Turton is welcome to join 'The Friends of India' (an association of supporters of the Indian independence movement based in the

United Kingdom) as an individual but must not mention Sorella Maria or the other Larks in any such context.³⁹⁰ Paradoxically these changes in Elwin's position took him away from Gandhi politically but brought him closer to Gandhi's religious views, particularly on conversion.

For September 1932 Elwin provided his mother with a programme which included sermons and meetings in Bristol, Street in Somerset, Bishop's Stortford, London (2), St Albans, London again, Margate, Coventry, Birmingham, St Ives, and London again (3), interspersed with three visits to Oxford staying with his mother.³⁹¹ In Birmingham his host was Professor Horace Alexander (1889-1989) of the Quaker Woodbrook College, Selly Oak, while at St Ives he was visiting the English branch of the Christa Sava Sangh, later to become one of the founding houses of the Anglican Franciscan religious order. These travels provided many opportunities, formal and informal, to spread information on the St Francis Ashram in Karanjia and on the Independence Movement in India; they were also a means to gather financial support for the Ashram's work, much needed now that neither Elwin nor Shamrao were supported by any missionary society.

An itinerary provided train times and contact addresses for Elwin's journey back to India.³⁹² Leaving Folkestone on the afternoon of 12 October 1932 he was to arrive in Paris that evening, to take the Paris-Milan train next morning, stopping off for twenty-four hours in Villeneuve to stay with Romain Rolland, and then arriving in Milan just before midnight. His plan was to take the 7.20 a.m. train from Milan to Foligno, taking the local train from there to arrive in Trevi just before 9 p.m. In a letter to Turton of 5

³⁹⁰ Sorella Maria to Turton, 27 September 1932, in *Gandhi e Sorella Maria*, ed. by Dante, pp. 91–92.

³⁹¹ Elwin, 'Programme for September', August 1932, Mss Eur D950/1, fol. 18.

³⁹² Elwin, 'Itinerary', August 1932, Mss Eur D950/1, fol. 19.

October 1932 he asks her to tell Sorella Maria that ‘a tired little bird hopes to reach the nest on the evening of the 15th. He will arrive in the dark ...’. He repeats his plan to arrive late on the evening of the 15th in a further letter to Turton of 9 October 1932. In a letter which reached Elwin in Folkestone on 10 October Turton must have managed to get the message back to him that this was not feasible: even today finding the track to the Eremo on an October evening after dark would be challenging, while on arrival the Eremo’s liturgically determined day would be long finished. Elwin replied to her by return on 10 October agreeing to spend the night of 15 October at Foligno, reaching the Eremo more rested on the morning of 16 October, and planning to stay until mid-day on 23 October, when he would travel on by train to embark on the *SS Victoria* leaving Naples for Bombay the next day.

The subsequent correspondence does not provide much detail about the week he spent staying with the Sorelle. One detail which is remembered in the Eremo is that during his stay he blessed at its inauguration a reception house (a restored goat shed) just outside its grounds for those guests needing overnight accommodation who might not be adapted to the Eremo’s daily routine of prayer and silence.³⁹³ Thus, even though known always according to the tradition of the Eremo as a (Protestant) pastor rather than a (Catholic) priest, his priestly function was recognised.

Elwin wrote to Sorella Maria, addressing her as *Sorella minore carissima*, Dearest least Sister, on 26 October 1932 from the *Victoria*, for posting at Port Said:³⁹⁴

The week I spent in your company will remain with me as a precious memory all my life. It meant for me purification, enlargement and liberation. You showed me a way of deeper simplicity and therefore of greater freedom. I learnt to love Italy as never before, and the spiritual scenery of Umbria spoke to my spirit. As I passed the dear hermitage in the train, I found myself saying what San Francesco said to Mount La Verna. “Farewell, Mount of God, Holy Mount,

³⁹³ Sorella Daniela Maria, Conversation with Sorella Daniela Maria, Eremo Francescano, 2018.

³⁹⁴ Elwin to Sorella Maria, 26 October 1932, Mss Eur D950/7, fol. 108.

... *Mons in quo beneplacitum est Deo habitare* [mountain in which it is well pleasing to God to dwell]." I carry all of you back to India with me, and our brothers will welcome all of you as sisters, as I tell them about you. It is a divine strength and comfort to have your love, sympathy and prayers.

After a paragraph describing his voyage so far, including his sea-sickness with the rough sea, he sends love and blessing to 'your nest of larks', remembering each by name (finding this easier than had Gandhi), Amata 'so strong in hope', Immacolatella 'specially dear for Shamrao's sake', Jacopa 'revered and strong', Rosa 'sweet and luminous', Agnese 'serious and true', Angeluccia 'joyously *operosa* [industrious]', Cenere 'so adept in the kitchen [*sic*]', and Cenerella 'whose smile ever welcomed me, and Agostino 'the strong and faithful'. He signs off 'With love. *Fratello minore* [Least brother]', reflecting perhaps his role as *acharya*, leader, of the Ashram of St Francis. At this stage in his life the members of the Eremo were for him far more than 'penfriends': this visit most probably was the peak of their relationship.

This close group of friends, brought together by Sorella Maria and Gandhi, is difficult to fit into the theorists' classifications of friendship. Certainly it was an affective community, although not exactly in Leela Gandhi's sense, in that it did not have a central political aim. Instead there was a profound devotion to Gandhi and his philosophy of life, including his colleagues and friends in India, which was reciprocated. Underlying this, in Gandhi's Ashram and in the Eremo, and also at this time in the Ashram of St Francis, was a faith in the divinity, to whom worship and prayers were daily offered. Individual friendship pairs approaching Derrida's model were asymmetric, Sorella Maria with Elwin as fellow-pilgrims, Elwin with Shamrao as bosom friends, Gandhi with Elwin and Mirabehn as fictive son and daughter. But neither in Italy nor in India did the surroundings cry out Forster's warnings 'not yet', 'not there'; the national, ethnic, cultural, religious, gendered divides were crossed in a joyful postcolonial politics of friendship.

On his return to India Elwin found that Shamrao was severely ill with malaria, upsetting all their plans, and leaving Elwin on arrival in Bombay ‘without clothes and bedding and money’.³⁹⁵ Winslow came to the rescue, with a blanket. Elwin wrote frequent, usually weekly, updates to Turton for translation and distribution to the Sorelle, describing the close contact with extreme poverty that he experienced when staying with Shamrao in the local hospital and his reactions to it. His letter of 20 November 1932 reported that Shamrao had been transferred to the Sassoon Hospital in Poona, where he was cared for by Dr Ala Pocha.³⁹⁶ While in Poona they had seen Winslow, Gandhi’s son Devadas (1900-1957) ‘looking very ill and thin’, and Gandhi’s secretary Pyarelal Nayyar (1899-1982), who had written a book *The Epic Fast*, describing Gandhi’s ‘fast to the death’ for the Untouchables which will be discussed in Chapter IV.³⁹⁷ Elwin had also met his and Andrews’ friend Gurdial Mallik, who was considering whether to join the Ashram of St Francis. Elwin concludes his letter ‘Truly we are a *bambino eremo* [baby hermitage] trying to follow its mother’.

That Elwin’s visit had been significant for the Eremo is shown by a letter to him from Sorella Maria of 24 November 1932: she wrote that he had enriched their life.³⁹⁸ Hearing that Shamrao was ill, she urged them to take care of themselves. Oh, that the Sorelle might serve and help them. She looked forward to the anniversary of the Rome meeting with Gandhi, which was always to be a special day in the calendar of the Eremo, and was preparing together with Elwin and his brothers in the Ashram of St Francis for Christmas and for eternal life. The Sorelle would be as united with the brothers as the new little buds of an old tree trunk. The venerable old trunk was the

³⁹⁵ Elwin to Turton, 4 November 1932, Mss Eur D950/7, fol. 112.

³⁹⁶ Elwin to Turton, 20 November 1932, Mss Eur D950/7, fol. 123.

³⁹⁷ Pyarelal, *The Epic Fast* (Ahmedabad: M. M. Bhatt, 1932).

³⁹⁸ Sorella Maria to Elwin, 24 November 1932, in Dante, *Gandhi e Sorella Maria*, pp. 97–98.

Franciscan order; it was Christianity; it was the religion of their Mother Earth. The Sorelle together with their dear brothers wished to flower as new creatures, drawing their lives from the lymph of the ancient and sacred tree.

Sorella Maria returned to this image in her letter to Gandhi of 13 December 1932, the first anniversary of their Rome meeting.³⁹⁹ Third on the list of the intentions of her prayers with which she had started the day, after dear India, and after those whom Gandhi loved (his wife Kasturbai, Mirabehn, his sons, his companions, his great friend Andrews) were the two little branches of the old Franciscan trunk, the Ashram of St Francis and the Eremo. She wanted these two buds, from the East and from the West, where they prayed and hoped in communion with Gandhi, to receive his blessing and be peace for him. The list of prayers continues, for all who visit and write to him, looking for light, for all searchers for truth in dear India, Great Britain, Natal, Italy, for all the ladies who had been sisters and mothers for him along the way and would still be faithful to him, for his beloved ashram where might there be peace. She wrote that she had been very anxious about his illness after his fast [the fast unto death, 20-26 September 1932]. ‘Right now I am also thinking of Shamrao so much because he is very ill. I recollect his beautiful face. I know he is a true companion to our beloved Verrier.’

In his letter to Turton of 1 December 1932 from Karanjia, Elwin reported that he hoped to build the extensive additions to the ashram in a fortnight.⁴⁰⁰ He was still missing Shamrao who had been moved to a mission hospital by Winslow. On Christmas Eve in a letter to all the Sorelle, each mentioned by name, he wrote that Shamrao had

³⁹⁹ Sorella Maria to Gandhi, 13 December 1932, in Dante, *Gandhi e Sorella Maria*, pp. 98–100.

⁴⁰⁰ Elwin to Turton, 1 December 1932, Mss Eur D950/7, fol. 124.

returned to the ashram but was still very weak.⁴⁰¹ He, Elwin, had had a month of anxiety, but Shamrao's return and the completion of the building work were causes for rejoicing: he lists the seven ashram buildings with their Sanskrit names. He remembers the Eremo: 'You can hardly imagine what joy and enrichment your eremo is to us here. In our loneliness and isolation the thought of you is constant refreshment and strength. The days passed with you will remain for eternity. I pray that they may bear fruit for beloved India also.' In a handwritten postscript he adds 'A most lovely Christmas night — the tiny mud chapel radiant with light.'

On 6 January 1933 Elwin sent out a long Circular Letter from Karanjia that parallels Sorella Maria's to Gandhi from Switzerland, in that it provided a detailed snapshot at that point in time of the Ashram of St Francis and its members.⁴⁰² He began with the beautiful hilltop setting of the ashram, within a village, overlooking the pilgrims' way to the source of the Nerbudda (Narmada) river, and then described its many buildings, starting with the Chapel, set in a garden with roses, and containing a drawing of the Crucifixion by Giovanni Costetti. There was a dispensary, run by Shamrao, that saw a thousand cases a month. The refectory was surrounded by a vegetable garden. The Hindi section of the library, which was rich in mystical texts, acted as a lending library for the literate. Shamrao and Elwin had their cells close to the Chapel, and there were also two guest houses. There was a school for little children and a little way away in the woods a Retreat House. There were also three village centres, each with a permanent worker chosen from the villagers.

⁴⁰¹ Elwin to the Sorelle, 24 December 1932, Mss Eur D950/7, fols. 125-6.

⁴⁰² Elwin, *Din-Sevak*, pp. 222–37.

That so much had been achieved is remarkable, given that Shamrao and Elwin had only arrived in Karanjia on 10 February 1932 and had both been away from the ashram for four months, with added time away because of Shamrao's illness.

In this Circular Letter Elwin provided a full description of the Eremo, acknowledging its great influence on the Franciscan Brotherhood of the Karanjia ashram, that he explains was formed of its Christian members. The life of the Sorelle was the closest he knew to the primitive Franciscan ideal, with its disciplined freedom and its free discipline, its absence of formalism, its union of work and prayer and joy, its love for the sacred poor. Elwin was seeing their way as a model for St Francis' Ashram; he quotes Sorella Maria's image of the little buds from the seraphic trunk [of Christianity] which would help each other with love, prayer, and offering, to bear the great burden of service for life and for the brothers.⁴⁰³

Also in this Circular Letter he introduces the three other brothers working and living with him. The eldest, Shamrao, now aged 31, was orphaned as a child by his Christian parents' death from plague (as Sorella Immacolatella had been, by her parents' death in Reggio Calabria in the Messina Straits earthquake of 1908; as Shamrao and Immacolatella had both been present at the Rome meeting with Gandhi there was a special link between them, to which references recur in the correspondence). 'Shamrao was originally intending to be ordained, but as he had an interest in the non-violent campaign of the Mahatma, he was considered unfit for ordination in the Church of England.' In the ashram he was responsible for the Dispensary.

Elwin had first met the third brother Srikant, now aged 21, at Gandhi's Sabarmati Ashram. His family were Kanarese-speaking Brahmins from Mysore. In 1932 he was

⁴⁰³ Sorella Maria repeats this image in letters to Elwin (24 November 1932) and Gandhi (13 December 1932), *Gandhi e Sorella Maria*, ed. by Dante, pp. 98, 99.

imprisoned for six months. He had spent time at training at a Montessori school and then six months at Tagore's ashram in Shantiniketan. In the Karanjia ashram he was responsible for the school.

The fourth brother Sundar, aged 16, came from a poor Christian family: his father had died before he was born. While continuing his studies he supported Srikant in the school and looked after the ashram's stores and kitchen.

'It does make a difference'

In the Circular Letter Elwin does not mention the fifth 'brother', as she was to be known for a few months, Mary Gillett.⁴⁰⁴ Her arrival in the Ashram of St Francis seems to have been considered a possibility at least since Elwin's visit to Sorella Maria in Switzerland, when he reported Sorella Maria advising caution regarding the English sisters (presumably English sisters in the Christa Seva Sangha Ashram, of which Gillett was a member): in a subsequent letter he had written that it had been decided that they would not be coming to the Ashram of St Francis. Gillett had known Elwin for four years, having met him first in England. On 14 January 1933 she wrote her first letter to Sorella Maria: 'This ashram of all places I have stayed in most nearly comes up to the Franciscan ideal to my mind'.⁴⁰⁵ She wrote of how she had been troubled when Elwin and Shamrao left the Christa Seva Sangha. She did not actually say that she too wishes to leave that ashram to join them, but it was implicit when she wrote asking for prayers as 'I try to discover whether what I ought to do is the same thing as what I want to do so much' and for an answer to her letter which 'which would act as a lift on the road which you and the Fratellino Minore have already travelled and which I am facing with some trepidation because it means making people whom I love, very ~~much~~ disappointed

⁴⁰⁴ Guha spells her surname as Gillet, but her autograph letters are signed Gillett.

⁴⁰⁵ Mary Gillett to Sorella Maria, 14 January 1933, Mss Eur D950/8, fols. 4-5.

and unhappy for a time'. She ended the letter with her greetings 'from the ashram of St Francis in the Jungle'.

At the beginning of her letter Gillett had written 'Father Verrier says you will know my name', but in addition Elwin provided a covering note, explaining that this was "Brother Mary" of whom he told Sorella Maria and whom they were all hoping would be their 'sorella minore' here.⁴⁰⁶

I remember you once warned me, saying that sisters might take from us "the heroic note". But Mary Gillett will not do that, because she is a brother, and will bring to us just what we want. She would live with us, as Mirabehn lives with Bapu and his brothers. This has filled us with great hope. She is devoted to Bapu and to St. Francis and to the sacred poor.

His note has a postscript: 'Advise on this matter, per favore'.

Less than three weeks later a letter addressed to their friends signed by both Gillett and Elwin announced their intention to be married in the ashram chapel during the week after Easter.⁴⁰⁷ A covering letter from Elwin addressed to Turton began 'Will the enclosed news be too great a disappointment to you all? I have felt, more than anything else, that the Larks will be hurt by this, and I can hardly bear that thought.'⁴⁰⁸ But he has found the perfect companion for his difficult task. Shamrao would remain the loved little brother. Mani and Srikant were very happy. Winslow who happened to be staying with them had given his warm blessing, likening the future ashram to the English seventeenth century mixed religious community of Little Gidding (a reference that might be clear to Turton and Miriam, but was unlikely to be so for the other Sorelle). As Elwin could hardly marry them himself, it is possible that the plan was for Winslow

⁴⁰⁶ Elwin to Sorella Maria, undated, but from the context (enclosed with Gillett's letter) 14 January 1933, Mss Eur D950/8, fol. 6.

⁴⁰⁷ Mary Gillett and Verrier Elwin, 'Letter to Friends', 2 February 1933, Mss Eur D950/8, fol. 10.

⁴⁰⁸ Elwin to Turton, 2 February 1933, Mss Eur D950/8, fols. 8-9.

to marry them. Elwin concludes his letter ‘Your fratellino minore (may I still call myself that?)’.

Guha discusses in detail Elwin’s exchanges with Gandhi concerning the marriage, which seem to have begun before this announcement, as Elwin quotes from Gandhi’s letter of reply in his letter to Turton. Gandhi first accepted the proposal even if disappointed at Elwin’s failure to live up to the ideal of *brahmacharya*, but then when informed by Pocha of her previous relationship with Elwin, expressed concern that any previous breach of promise would render the present engagement contrary to the ideal of Truth. For Guha this was the primary cause of the subsequent breaking off of the engagement and was also the beginning of the end of Gandhi’s role as Elwin’s paternal counsellor.⁴⁰⁹

The effects on the roles of Turton and Sorella Maria as Elwin’s spiritual directors also need to be considered. There are two drafts of Turton’s (the first crossed out), on two sides of a single sheet of paper torn from a notebook, for her response to the marriage announcement.⁴¹⁰ The first draft, which is crossed out, reads:

Verrier – nothing change our love. he must know that! I write only for myself – but am utterly sure la Minore could not love less! But I felt at once = “It does make a difference. V. is right in writing as he did He is true Bapu gives the essence of all - La nonna only accepts and waits to see clearly. “in silence + in peace” to re-adjust without any interruption ...

The second draft dated 8 March 1933 provides insights for understanding both past events and what was to follow in Elwin’s relationship with the Eremo:

Verrier: carissimo fratellino, The dear Candlemas letters have reached us – I am with you in thought and prayer – La Minore will write to you, as soon as possible. This I write for myself – (your nonna Speranza). First: my thankfulness that you have written to us all through – we have been with you in each development. Next: nothing can change love. “Love never fails” – La Minore could never love less – But, Verrier – it does make a difference. Bapu’s note gives the essence of all. I just wait in silence. God knows all. The future as

⁴⁰⁹ Guha, *Savaging the Civilized*, pp. 43, 92.

⁴¹⁰ Turton, ‘Drafts for Letter to Verrier Elwin’, 9 March 1933, Mss Eur D950/8, fol. 15.

the present – He will show us how to re-adjust – without any interruption – To each of you – Shamrao (future Sadhu Sundar Singh) – Sister Mary, Srikant – Mani and little Sundar our love flies

The date of this draft, 8 March 1933, is significant. On 1 March 1933 Elwin had written a typed letter to Turton to say that he and Mary had decided to break off their engagement, because of the impact on the ashram and because of their continuing devotion to St Francis.⁴¹¹ The letter is signed by Elwin alone. Although Elwin's letter is unlikely to have reached Turton by the date of the draft, in a handwritten postscript he states that he had sent a cable with the news that they were no longer planning to marry. Therefore, if Turton had received the cable, this may explain why she crossed out the first draft. It would then be to the news in the cable that Turton referred when she wrote in the second draft 'we have been with you in each development'.

In the postscript Elwin also wrote 'There is no secret tragedy here. It is an offering to God and we are very happy. We are not sorry it has happened. It will bring us nearer still to Bapu.' The assertion in the second sentence 'we are very happy' proved not to be true (similarly the assertion in the fourth sentence 'It will bring us nearer still to Bapu' was not borne out by subsequent events). For on 4 March 1933 Gillett wrote to Sorella Maria, thanking her for her reply supporting her calling to join the Ashram of St Francis.⁴¹² She referred to the 'proposed marriage, and what happened after'. Far from being very happy, she wrote that the 'pain on leaving Christa Sava Sangha has been nothing at all to this'.

The first insight from Turton's second draft is the confirmation that despite the distances and the postal limitations she and Sorella Maria had continually been close followers of Elwin's in their thoughts and prayers and were both devoted to him. The

⁴¹¹ Elwin to Turton, 1 March 1933, Mss Eur D950/8, fols. 11-12.

⁴¹² Mary Gillett to Sorella Maria, 4 March 1933, Mss Eur D950/8, fol. 13.

next is that this closeness depended on absolute trust and was based not only on shared aims but also on mutual love. From the Eremo this love would never cease, whatever changes there might be in Elwin's beliefs and lifestyle. But the future would not be the same; that Elwin had given his word in conflict with the celibacy required by the Rule of St Francis meant that his relationship with Turton and the Eremo would necessarily require readjustment, how was left by Turton in God's hands. The end of her draft provides two further insights: Shamrao is seen as the future Sadhu Sundar Singh because of a mystical experience he had recently had in pilgrimage to the source of the sacred river, Mary is referred to as Sister Mary, another indication, perhaps, that at the time of this second draft Turton already knew that the marriage plans had been abandoned.

The quotation from Gandhi's letter in Elwin's covering letter to Turton that accompanied his and Gillett's announcement of their plan to marry was as follows: 'If you have humbly to acknowledge defeat (in leading the ascetic life); you should do so. Your defeat will be victory for the God of Truth. There is no waste in God's laboratory. You must recognise your limitations.' It was to this quotation that Turton referred in both her drafts. Elwin included further edited extracts from a letter from Gandhi in a letter to Turton of 4 March 1933.⁴¹³ Gandhi had accepted Elwin's choice of him as father, with the tie, stronger than blood, of 'the burning love of Truth at any cost. Therefore whatever you may do will not disappoint me. But I was sad....'. Here Elwin disingenuously wrote that Gandhi specified certain circumstances under which 'we ought to give up the idea of marriage' without stating what these were. He continues the extract

Your love of Truth will transmute your desire for exclusive marriage into the universal marriage with Truth. In this divine marriage we men and women are

⁴¹³ Elwin to Turton, 4 March 1933, Mss Eur D950/8, fol. 14.

all women and Truth is the only Lord and Master and Husband.... Of this you have my assurance that whatever you do will have been done out of obedience to Truth as it might reveal itself to you. More than that no man can do....

Sorella Maria refers to these quotations in a letter to Gandhi of 17 April 1933 when she wrote that through Elwin, who wrote weekly, they had had corroborative lessons of her increasing communion with Gandhi from extracts from his letters to Elwin and to Gillett. Gandhi's wisdom was a lamp which gave light; by the grace of God Gandhi was truly a wise man.⁴¹⁴

As Sorella Maria reported to Gandhi in this letter, Turton herself had experienced a major life-event. No longer constrained by the need to care for her sister in Siena, she was now free to join the Eremo as a full member, and on 25 March 1933, aged 75, she made her profession as a novice, remaining an Anglican. Although the Eremo by design had no formal rules, this meant that she was no longer a free independent agent. With the developing political situation in Italy this also meant a commitment to, and a justification for, staying on in Italy even if Italy and the United Kingdom were to find themselves at war.

Winslow too was facing a major change in his life. He was not willing to accept Elwin's offer to be Visitor of the Ashram of St Francis, nor would he have been acceptable to several of its members. He was planning to return to England, to become involved in the Oxford Group movement, and Elwin correctly predicted that he would not return to permanent work in India.⁴¹⁵ An interesting comparison can be made between the lives of Winslow and Elwin. Both first class linguists, literary scholars, and writers, both Anglican priests and founders of Christian ashrams, one abandoned

⁴¹⁴ Sorella Maria to Gandhi, 17 April 1933, in *Gandhi e Sorella Maria*, ed. by Dante, p. 103.

⁴¹⁵ Elwin to Turton, 11 March 1933, Mss Eur D950/8, fol. 18.

his ashram, and India, but remained within his church, the other abandoned his church, and eventually his ashram, but remained in India for the rest of his life.

In practical terms the changed relationship between the Eremo and the ashram was evident in the nature of the weekly letters. Instead of an individual letter to Turton or Sorella Maria, Elwin now usually sent a copy of his weekly typewritten review of the ashram's news that he prepared for his mother, with typed or handwritten additions of variable length specifically addressed to the Eremo. Over the next few months these letters show continuing concerns about Gillett's future in the ashram and in the letter of 12 May 1933 Elwin writes that although recovered from illness she was not absolutely happy and that he was not sure whether she ought to stay.⁴¹⁶ On 2 June 1933 he wrote 'We are perplexed about Mary's future. Everyone tells us that she ought not to stay here. She is a splendid worker, but the position of a solitary girl is more complicated than I thought.'⁴¹⁷ On 15 June 1933 he reported that they had decided that it would be best for Gillett to return to Europe: 'it is too much of a strain for her to be here. ... She will be a great loss to our work, for she is hard at it all day long, in the schools or in the kitchen or in the chapel'.⁴¹⁸ Mary wanted to go to visit the Eremo: 'I know you will take her to your hearts, and re-create for her faith and hope'.⁴¹⁹

On 20 July 1933 Elwin was in Poona and recounted with enthusiasm how his travels had gone and whom he had met. Only the enforcement of untouchability by some of Gandhi's followers and the extravagant lifestyle of the Congress people distressed him. He would remain loyal to Gandhi to the end of his days, but some of his followers made loyalty very difficult. Then at the end of the typewritten letter he added a handwritten

⁴¹⁶ Elwin to Turton, 12 May 1933, Mss Eur D950/8, fol. 29.

⁴¹⁷ Elwin to Turton, 2 June 1933, Mss Eur D950/8, fol. 30.

⁴¹⁸ Elwin to Turton, 15 June 1933, Mss Eur D950/8, fol. 34.

⁴¹⁹ Elwin to Turton, 24 June 1933, Mss Eur D950/8, fol. 35-7.

postscript: 'I am passing through days of great interior trial and conflict. Pray for your poor little brother who loves you all.'⁴²⁰

On 24 July 1933 he expanded in detail on this inner conflict in a letter to Sorella Maria.⁴²¹ Since leaving the ashram at the beginning of the month he had been missing the company of Shamrao. He was upset by how he had been treated when he visited Gandhi, not just it seems by the caste-driven rules of Gandhi's hostess, but also by Gandhi's lack of encouragement for his work with the tribes. Other members beside Mary had left or would be leaving the Ashram; Srikant's health was so bad that Elwin was sending him to Tagore in Shantiniketan. Should the Ashram return to the days when the members were just Shamrao and himself? In practice an inter-religious ashram had proved very difficult: 'our Christian life and witness tends to be over-diluted if we do not have a home which is essentially Christian and Catholic'. The temptations to adopt the standards of the world were enormous. The great struggle was to be loyal to St Francis.

Gandhi had arranged for Elwin to be admitted to hospital for surgery for a hernia. After the operation he had an attack of malaria and was treated with a new medicine to which he reacted with jaundice, requiring a prolonged hospital stay. During the hospital stay his apparent depression worsened. Against this background a request arrived from Sorella Maria as to whether in his view it would be appropriate for Gillett, now visiting the Eremo, to join that community. With disclaimers regarding his present state of mind, and that he would never have volunteered this advice without being asked, his reply was categorical.⁴²² Gillett loved 'Poverty and the poor' but did not have a vocation to offer 'the soul in its entirety to God'. He hoped she would marry. He enclosed a letter

⁴²⁰ Elwin to Turton, 20 July 1933, Mss Eur D950/8, fol. 43-44.

⁴²¹ Elwin to Sorella Maria, 24 July 1933, Mss Eur D950/8, fol. 45-46.

⁴²² Elwin to Sorella Maria, 17 September 1933, Mss Eur D950/8, fol. 56.

to be given to Gillett. Given his reports of internal conflicts it is possible that he was already reconsidering his own vocation at this time.

A year and a half later Elwin and Shamrao found themselves making a similar proposal in a letter dated 10 April 1935.⁴²³ By now they were on their own as members of the Karanjia Ashram and thanks to Elwin's refusal to compromise with the Anglican hierarchy feeling 'cut off from the great stream of Catholic life'. They had 'no connections, no affiliations of any kind'. Could they have 'some little corner' in the family of the Eremo, as brothers or tertiaries or coolies of the community?

Judging by Elwin's letter to Sorella Maria of 30 November 1935 the response from the Eremo was positive but with firm conditions.⁴²⁴ One of these was the need for an extended stay at the Eremo, which Elwin felt would not be possible, because of the needs of the Karanjia Ashram, and because of his obligation to spend time with his mother when he came to Europe. Another was the need to learn Italian: Elwin could manage this, but not Shamrao. A third issue, the assignment of the names Gabriele and Raphaele, 'too angelic for us', might have been resolvable by substitution, as Elwin suggested, with names from the early Franciscan order. Elwin now thought 'the whole plan ought to wait a little' until he could come and see the Sorelle. He never made that visit. Elwin's reply suggests that he was finding excuses to go back on his request; it is likely that a critical condition for joining the Eremo was observance of the Rule of St Francis, including the rule of celibacy, and a passage in Guha's biography suggests that by the date of Elwin's letter neither Elwin nor Shamrao would have been in a position to comply.⁴²⁵

⁴²³ Elwin to Sorella Maria, 10 April 1935, Mss Eur D950/10, fol. 34-35.

⁴²⁴ Elwin to Sorella Maria, 30 November 1935, Mss Eur D950/10, fol. 27-28.

⁴²⁵ Guha, *Savaging the Civilized*, pp. 94-95.

Elwin's views had moved on since the April letter. As he explains in the November letter, he had written at the beginning of that month to the Anglican Metropolitan in Calcutta, the senior Anglican bishop in India, renouncing his Anglican holy orders and his communicant membership of the Anglican church. However as a final participation in Christian public life he had agreed to speak on 'Christmas in Karanjia' to the vast worldwide radio audience of the British Broadcasting Corporation's Christmas 1935 Empire Service programme, accompanying the King's Speech to the Empire.⁴²⁶ Although this agreement has seemed paradoxical, Elwin's message of 'Christmas love which teaches that a thing has only to be human to be precious, and where poverty is, there Christ would wish to be' is consistent both with his aims in founding the Ashram of St Francis and also with his subsequent devotion and service to the Adivasi peoples of India.

From 1936 onwards Elwin's letters to the Eremo become less frequent. He wrote to Sorella Maria in June 1936 to say that he would be coming to Europe in September but that the visit would be so short that he would not be coming to Italy.⁴²⁷ He wrote again on 17 August 1936, thanking Sorella Maria for her reply and concluding 'May the love of Christ bind us ever closer. May the true peace make our hearts quiet. I know about your trials, and my love comes to you in twofold measure because of them. With deepest love from Shamrao and me, Your fratellino, Verrier'.⁴²⁸ On 13 October 1936 he wrote from London.⁴²⁹ Shamrao, left behind in the ashram, was 'feeling very lonely' and was 'having a rather hard time'. Shamrao confirms this in his own letter of 31 October, and thanks the Sorelle for their letter which 'roused all my memories of

⁴²⁶ Elwin, *Din-Sevak*, pp. 220–21.

⁴²⁷ Elwin to Sorella Maria, June 1936, Mss Eur D950/10, fol. 14.

⁴²⁸ Elwin to Sorella Maria, 12 August 1936, Mss Eur D950/10, fol. 13.

⁴²⁹ Elwin to Sorella Maria, 13 October 1936, Mss Eur D950/10, fol. 12.

Rome'.⁴³⁰ He thanked them with all his heart for their prayers and thought for him. He was playing Mozart's Piano Concerto in A major, on the gramophone which Elwin had brought back after his previous visit to Europe only on their insistence, and he thanked them for this which had been a great blessing to him and even to Elwin. Elwin, ill again with malaria, wrote a brief letter to Sorella Maria on 14 March 1937.⁴³¹ He reports that a new ashram has been built at Sarwachappar, replacing the ashram at Karanjia, but does not explain that this ashram has no chapel.⁴³² In the next letter of 15 March 1938 he is planning to come to England with Shamrao for two months: 'I wonder if we can get to your little nest'.⁴³³ The visit to England eventually took place in 1939 and Verrier wrote again to Sorella Maria on 12 June from the *SS Mooltan* on their way home.⁴³⁴ Mahadev reported back to the Eremo their safe return to India, by no means a foregone conclusion given the political situation in Europe.⁴³⁵

The last document in this series of letters to the Eremo is an Italian translation of an extract from Elwin's Circular Letter of 1 May 1940, which begins with Elwin announcing that in April he has married Kosi Armu, daughter of an old Gond family that he has known for many years.⁴³⁶ This is followed by a long section justifying his abandonment of celibacy and a shorter section justifying his marriage to an aborigine. There are no further letters from Elwin to the Eremo in the British Library collection.

In his autobiography Elwin speaks enthusiastically of Turton and of the Sorelle of the Eremo. But he never specifically mentions Sorella Maria or his meetings with her. This is a significant lacuna; in the same way as he weakened his links with Gandhi, a

⁴³⁰ Shamrao to the Sorelle, 31 October 1936, Mss Eur 950/11, fol. 17.

⁴³¹ Elwin to Sorella Maria, 14 March 1936, Mss Eur D950/10, fol. 9.

⁴³² Guha, *Savaging the Civilized*, p. 100.

⁴³³ Elwin to Sorella Maria, 15 March 1938, Mss Eur D950/10, fol. 7.

⁴³⁴ Elwin to Sorella Maria, 12 June 1939, Mss Eur D950/10, fol. 1.

⁴³⁵ Mahadev Desai to Turton, 16 July 1939, in *Gandhi e Sorella Maria*, ed. by Dante, p. 132.

⁴³⁶ *Dalla circolare di Verrier*, 1 May 1940, Mss Eur D950/10, fol. 4.

parting of ways which he explains in detail,⁴³⁷ he seems in later life to have auto-excluded himself from her love and concern, without, in her case, providing any explanation in his autobiography.⁴³⁸ This exclusion may explain why the connection between the Eremo and Elwin has received less attention from Italian writers on the Eremo. Similarly, Elwin's own treatment of the connection in his autobiography has led his English biographers to treat this connection as a source of information rather than as a formative influence on Elwin in its own right.

From her side Sorella Maria wrote to Gandhi on 2 October 1947 that the Sorelle continued to love Elwin, but that marrying a Gond girl he had abandoned his friends in Europe; the need was to understand and never to forget him.⁴³⁹ For Sorella Maria friendship was of prime importance, overriding differences of culture, politics, or religion, making this abandonment all the more tragic. The Sorelle of her time were aware of her distress and passed on their memories of it to their successors.⁴⁴⁰ Sorella Maria wrote that the Sorelle had not forgotten Shamrao and Mirabehn, both of whom had been present at the meeting in Rome, or the now departed Andrews. She gave Gandhi the news that Turton had died in 1942 and was buried in the burial ground of the Eremo. She still remembered Elwin when writing on 17 March 1949 to Giovanni Vannucci, a young Catholic priest of the Servite Order, who in some respects had taken Elwin's place in her affections.⁴⁴¹ Vannucci had sent her a pamphlet of Elwin's: what did Vannucci think of the calibre of Elwin's spirit?

So ended what had been a strong cross-cultural network. Ties of affection and memory might remain, but the loss of the common interests in the way of Saint Francis

⁴³⁷ Elwin, *Tribal World*, p. 85.

⁴³⁸ Conversation with Sorella Daniella Maria, Eremo Franceseano, 27 July 2018

⁴³⁹ Sorella Maria to Gandhi, 2 October 1947, in *Gandhi e Sorella Maria*, ed. by Dante, p. 139.

⁴⁴⁰ Conversation with Sorella Daniela Maria, 15 February 2022

⁴⁴¹ Sorella Maria to Giovanni Vannucci, 17 March 1949, in *Il canto dell'allodola*, ed. by Marangon, p. 138.

and in the teaching of Gandhi meant there was no longer a basis for the mutual support that characterised the strongest moments of the link between the Eremo and the Ashram. The work of the Ashram of St Francis now divided in two different directions, Elwin's studies and writings on the tribal peoples and Shamrao's practical medical and social support to the local population. In the future Nehru's call to Elwin to go to Assam would mean the effective end of the Ashram, even if Shamrao continued his work as long as he was fit to do so. In contrast, the Eremo continued in its vocation of prayer and hospitality, and its devotion to Gandhi, influencing many in Italy and further afield who looked for a broader, less exclusive, approach to the Christian religion, an influence that came to its fruition with the papacy of John XXIII and the Vatican Council that he called. The Eremo's membership, never many, gently renewed itself, and to the present day it continues to follow the vision of its founder.

Sorella Maria's clear vision, strong personality, capacity for love, and seeking of fellow travellers in the search for truth provided the bedrock for the Eremo. Elwin's companion on his second passage to India, Leonard Schiff, has provided an assessment for Elwin:

His greatest and most dangerous gift was his enchanting character. This was quite uncultivated and he was equally attractive to men and women. There was a light about him. He had humour, gentleness, depth and a great impressive intellect. If only he had a first-class spiritual director, which he never did, things might have been very different.⁴⁴²

There is ample evidence of Elwin's ability to enchant in the sources reviewed here. However, it is the contention of this thesis that Elwin did have a first-class spiritual director, Amy Turton, but that, having undoubtedly benefited from that direction, he chose to break away, for reasons that from the context are now understandable even if not always fully understood or tactfully acknowledged at the time or later.

⁴⁴² Guha, *Savaging the Civilized*, p. 58.

In conclusion this chapter, based on the correspondence of its protagonists, has shown how, starting from the premise of Christian faith, friendships were built between Elwin, Turton, Sorella Maria, and Shamrao, breaking across national and ecclesiastical boundaries. The starting point for these friendships was a shared friendship with Gandhi with adherence to Gandhi's insistence on truth, the basis of his search for freedom. Painfully, especially for Sorella Maria and also for Shamrao, these links of friendship did not survive Elwin's abandonment of celibacy and his distancing of himself from Gandhi. But the links of friendship between the Eremo and Gandhi proved stronger, all the more through their shared memories of the Rome meeting. As will be shown in Chapter V, these links were still strong at the time of Gandhi's death; they continue to this day in the Eremo in the weekly singing of Newman's hymn.

CHAPTER III: A PASSAGE TO EUROPE, AUGUST-DECEMBER 1931

It is nothing more than what I expected, but it is all the same wonderful, the manner in which you are conquering hearts in that country.

C. Rajagopalachari to M. K. Gandhi, 21 October 1931⁴⁴³

Forse il più interessante dell'opera di Gandhi non sarà la sua politica ma la sua penetrazione fra gl'intoccabili, il suo sforzo di abolire pregiudizi iniqui, di affratellare, di migliorare.

Sorella Jacopa to some friends, 15 February 1932⁴⁴⁴

Marseille and Folkestone

After much prevarication Gandhi sailed from Bombay on 29 August 1931 to attend the Second Round Table conference in London. He was accompanied by his disciple Madeleine Slade (Mirabehn), and his secretaries Mahadev Desai and Pyarelal Nayyar (1899-1982). Also aboard the *RMS Rajputana* was Sarojini Naidu, who in a letter to her daughters of 6 September provides snapshots of some of her fellow-passengers: 'men of eminence and intellect like Sir Prabhashankar Pattanit', 'beautiful Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, the embodied symbol of Hindu culture, tradition and ideals', 'Pannikar, brilliant, versatile, of extraordinary charm, wit and perhaps unreliability', 'Neogi, adviser of the Orissa States, a man of deep knowledge and sound intellectual qualities', 'K. T. Shah, cantankerous of manner but brilliant and O of what incredible range of memory and mental resource', 'G. D. Birla with his marigold-coloured turban, his agile and incisive intelligence, his far-famed prescience in financial matters, the

⁴⁴³ C. Rajagopalachari to M. K. Gandhi, 21 October 1931, in *My Dear Bapu*, ed. by Gopalkrishna Gandhi, p. 146.

⁴⁴⁴ *Gandhi e Sorella Maria*, ed. by Dante, p. 65. 'Perhaps the most interesting of Gandhi's works won't be his politics, but will be his penetration among the untouchables, his effort to abolish unjust prejudices, to create brotherhood, to improve.' Author's translation.

glamour of his youth, wealth and success', Shuaib, son-in-law of Maulana Mohammed Ali, later to be High Commissioner of Pakistan in India, 'sombre and semi-tragic, semi-romantic personality'.⁴⁴⁵ Some of these were already, or would be, members of significant cross-cultural networks. Meanwhile Gandhi held his own court from his chosen berth on deck, making friends with the children and the ship's crew and welcoming all to his evening prayers.

Because of its political importance, historical discussions of Gandhi's visit to Europe have tended to concentrate on his participation in the Second Round Table Conference and associated meetings. However, this visit to Europe had already been under consideration before the First (1930) Round Table Conference was convened. On 18 February 1928 Gandhi had written to Chakravarti Rajagopalachari (1878-1972), his South Indian lead supporter, editor, and conscience-keeper, and the father of his future daughter-in-law, that he had received two invitations to visit Europe, and would he consider the propriety or otherwise of accepting these invitations? 'The idea is cooking in my brain.'⁴⁴⁶ What was cooking was made clear in a second letter dated 28 March 1928; the attraction was the possibility of an interview with his French biographer Romain Rolland. 'All the reputation I enjoy in the West is borrowed from him and I feel that if I meet him face to face, there may be disillusionment on many points. It may be that we should come closer than we ever were. I do attach considerable importance to knowing each other much better than we do'.⁴⁴⁷ The primary objective of the journey was therefore a meeting of minds, with a concern about his reputation in Europe. Participation in political negotiations was not then seen as a priority, and Gandhi's

⁴⁴⁵ Sarojini Naidu, *Sarojini Naidu, Selected Letters, 1890s to 1940s*, ed. by Makarand R. Paranjape (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1996), p. 246.

⁴⁴⁶ Gandhi to Rajagopalachari, 18 February 1928, in *My Dear Bapu*, ed. by Gopalkrishna Gandhi, p. 109.

⁴⁴⁷ Gandhi to Rajagopalachari, 28 March 1928, in *ibid.*, p. 110-111.

eventual 1931 'Passage to Europe' needs to be seen in this light, that the Round Table Conference invitation provided the pretext but was not the unique objective.

A further indication of the importance Gandhi attached to how his teaching might be perceived in Europe, particularly in continental Europe, was his June 1931 sending of Vellalore Annaswamy Sundaram (1896-1967), who had been his follower since hearing him speak in Madras in 1915 and was now secretary to Madan Mohan Malaviya, Vice-Chancellor of Benares Hindu University, on a seven-month tour of the continent as his forerunner. In a letter of 19 June, written from the Christa Seva Sangha under the letterhead of *The Servant of India* and received by Amy Turton on 15 July, Elwin wrote introducing him to the Eremo Franciscano as 'my dear friend V.A. Sundaram, disciple of Gandhiji and Pandit Malaviya, and a great lover of our saint Francis. I am sure you will find in him one of your true "sons" or "younger brothers". He will give you the latest news.'⁴⁴⁸ The last page of a letter from Turton to Sundaram, datable to this period from its reference to Elwin's most recent description of his plans, contains as a postscript a clear statement of the Eremo's commitment to Gandhi: 'We are always more deeply concerned about India – It seems the central matter in many ways in the hope for a renewal of the world hanging on the success of Mahatma Gandhiji's message to England ... God bless & help his mission!'⁴⁴⁹ A letter from Rome of 23 July from Sundaram to Turton thanks her for the peace and harmony he had for three days in Siena, presumably as her guest. It also reports his 45-minute meeting with the Italian *Duce* Benito Mussolini, in which Mussolini was in a contemplative mood and they had talked of St Francis with Mussolini's face 'full of love'. Sundaram had also met, he reports, Cesare Ronchi, and was looking forward to meeting him again.⁴⁵⁰

⁴⁴⁸ Elwin to Turton, 19 June 1931, Mss Eur D950/7, fol. 24.

⁴⁴⁹ Turton to V. A. Sundaram, July 1931, Mss Eur D950/11, fol. 4.

⁴⁵⁰ V. A. Sundaram to Turton, 28 July 1931, Mss Eur D950/11, fol. 2-3.

Sundaram continued on his journey, preparing for possible meetings with Gandhi in Italy, Switzerland, Germany (where he met Albert Einstein), Czechoslovakia (where he met Jan Masaryk), and France, before crossing to England to join Malaviya.

Gandhi's arrival in Marseille on Friday 11 September was filmed by British Pathé News for the weekly newsreel that would be shown as part of the week's programme in local cinemas across the United Kingdom.⁴⁵¹ The title was *Gandhi is — Here! The Indian Nationalist leader — whose personality is intriguing the whole World, arrives*.

The commentator reported:

Here he is at last, the mystery man of India. Our first glimpse as the *Rajputana* came alongside at Marseille. And there's a woman of whom you have probably all read but never seen in a picture, Miss Madeleine Slade, the English daughter of an admiral, who now prefers to be known as Mirabehn. She is one of Mr Gandhi's most devoted disciples. She is leading the way ashore now, and just behind her comes Mr Gandhi, dressed as he said he would be, just his loincloth, even in the chilly climes of Europe. He's carrying with him his pots and pans, which he declared at the customs. He was trotted around Marseille for several receptions and made one or two speeches which rather frightened the French authorities. When asked to speak into the sound film microphone, he said I think not. And so we go on our way to England.

Andrews had travelled from England to Marseille to meet the party. and a group photograph shows Gandhi in Marseille, with Andrews, Pyarelal, Mahadev, and Mirabehn (**Figure 4**). The lady between Gandhi and Mirabehn was most probably Madeleine Rolland, Romain Rolland's sister, who on behalf of her brother, held back by ill-health, was the first person to greet Gandhi on his arrival in Europe.⁴⁵² In the back row the lady whose head appears between Andrews and Gandhi was probably Yvonne

⁴⁵¹ *Mahatma Gandhi Arrives in the U.K.* (British Pathé, 1931)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P6njRwz_dMw> [accessed 27 September 2018]. The more or less standard format for an evening at the cinema was 'The News', a short film that might be a documentary, the feature film, and then at the end the National Anthem for which all stood to attention.

⁴⁵² Mahatma Gandhi and Mahadev H. Desai, *The Nation's Voice: Being a Collection of Gandhiji's Speeches in England and Sjt. Mahadev Desai's Account of the Sojourn (September to December 1931)*, ed. by C. Rajagopalachari and Joseph Cornelius Kumarappa (Ahmedabad: Bhatta, 1932), p. 112.

Privat, in which case it would have been her husband Edmond Privat (1889-1962) hidden behind Andrews; the Privats, Swiss pacifists and workers for international understanding, particularly through the use of the language *Esperanto*, had also come from Switzerland to welcome Gandhi and his party.⁴⁵³ Both Madeleine Rolland and Edmond Privat knew English well (Madeleine had translated, and with her brother had visited, Thomas Hardy, and Edmond had studied at Cambridge) and so had critically important roles as translators.⁴⁵⁴



**Figure 4. On arrival at Marseille, 11 September 1931:
from left to right, Edmond Privat hidden behind Andrews, Andrews, Yvonne Privat,
Gandhi, Pyarelal, Madeleine Rolland, Mahadev, Mirabehn.
Photograph at Gandhi Smriti, Rajkot, Gujarat, India**

⁴⁵³ Frédéric Inderwildi, 'Edmond Privat', *Dictionnaire Historique de La Suisse* <<https://hls-dhs-dss.ch/fr/articles/023056/2009-10-12/>> [accessed 24 November 2019].

⁴⁵⁴ Berta Lawrence, 'Fifteen letters from Madeleine Rolland to Thomas Hardy', *Thomas Hardy Journal*, 5.1 (1989), 72–77.

Madeleine Rolland brought with her a letter of welcome from her brother, which included wishes for a good outcome for the conference, and also the following injunction, that Gandhi should always maintain:

his close contact in thought with the peoples, the peoples of India, - the oppressed people of the world, - so that they always feel that you are their just and steady champion, who speaks for them, that yields none of their rights. Their faith in you, their moral union with you, is the salvation of humanity, in this troubled hour where everywhere violence is ready to burst the last dykes which retain it.⁴⁵⁵

In Marseille Gandhi addressed ‘members of the General Association of the present and past students of Marseilles’ who welcomed him as ‘bringing light to the exploitation-blinded West and healing balm to war-weary Europe’. Gandhi’s speech concluded with an approach that seemed to echo Seeley ‘This struggle through non-violence can be otherwise described as a process of purification, the underlying idea being that a nation loses its liberty owing to some of its own weaknesses and we find that immediately we shed our weaknesses, we regain our liberty’.⁴⁵⁶

Gandhi’s group continued by the shipping company’s night-train across France to cross the Channel the following day. The Pathé News commentator continued:

Well, here we are in Folkestone, and the *Biarritz* coming alongside, and as Gandhi said it’s proper English weather, pouring rain and bitterly cold. Miss Slade is the first ashore, to tend to the luggage, that is the goat’s milk etc. She was followed by Gandhi’s son and then came the little man, still scantily clad, and with an extremely wet blanket around his tiny frame. I’m sure he must have been frozen, we were, in thick overcoats. He picked his way through the puddles along the quay side, he was wearing sandals, by the way. A waiting motor car. He decided he would rather go up to London by road. He insisted on sitting up in the front seat with the driver, he said that he could see better that way. So he tucked himself in. So off to London and his followers went by the boat-train.

In town quite a lot of people had waited in the pouring rain, outside the Friends Meeting House in the Euston Road, to see what he really looked like. But at first they were quite disappointed, ’cause he went in the back way. Shortly

⁴⁵⁵ Romain Rolland, *Gandhi et Romain Rolland*, Cahiers Romain Rolland, 19 (Paris: Albin Michel, 1969), p. 61. Author's translation.

⁴⁵⁶ Gandhi and Desai, *Nation's Voice*, p. 113.

afterwards he left by the front way. And then they really did see quite a lot of him, even his knees. No, he won't speak into the microphone.

And so to his Poplar home, where we leave this bizarre little man, whose coming has caused so much comment, complete with loincloth, spinning wheel and goat's milk, feeling sure that he cannot complain of his reception or the publicity he has received, from which by the way we always understood that he shrank.

These newsreel commentaries have been included in its entirety, to show that there was no mention of why Gandhi was coming to London, or of the significance of the scanty clothing, the spinning wheel, and the goat's milk. At the end of the report there is a suggestion of duplicity, implying that Gandhi sought publicity, even though he claimed to try to avoid this. For the purposes of the film Gandhi was just a 'bizarre little man', exactly as Andrews had feared, writing in a letter to Thompson of 4 September:

Can you help in any direction in getting the Press to take Gandhiji more seriously when he arrives and their courting the hopelessly vulgar propaganda which is making him into a sensational freak? I have just completed the third volume of what I have edited about him called 'Mahatma Gandhi at Work'. It contains the really noble story of his struggle in South Africa — the Transvaal Struggle — and the spirit of good humour and generosity with which he writes is magnificent. ... you are likely to get a review copy ... I have written about it, because it is one way in which what Gandhi really stands for can be put over to English readers & I want it reviewed by those who know him not by those who are put off by the goats milk & loin cloth etc.⁴⁵⁷

With Gandhi's arrival in England, it became Andrews's mission to create an understanding of 'what Gandhi really stands for'. Evenings and weekends over the course of Gandhi's twelve-week stay were to be dedicated to meetings, private and public, to put over this point of view. The fullest account of these meetings is provided by Mahadev.⁴⁵⁸ The chronology of the meetings is important in establishing how networks were created, but unfortunately, while presumably following a more or less chronological order, Mahadev does not provide dates, which can however often be deduced by triangulation from other sources.

⁴⁵⁷ Andrews to Thompson, 4 September 1930, MS. Eng. c. 5273, fol. 93.

⁴⁵⁸ Gandhi and Desai, *Nation's Voice*.

London and Lancashire

As implied, but not explained, in the Pathé News commentary, the first welcome meeting for Gandhi was held in Friends House, the London headquarters of the Society of Friends, opposite Euston Station in Euston Road. The chairman of the meeting was Laurence Housman, who had developed contacts with the Society of Friends in the 1920s, eventually joining the society in 1952. According to Mahadev, his welcome ‘gave assurance ... of growing goodwill towards India, goodwill, unchangeable irrespective of the results of the Conference’, describing Gandhi as ‘the instrument of something which is not generally understood—unification of politics and religion. In churches we are all sinners, but in politics every one else is a sinner...’ Gandhi had ‘come to call upon us to search our hearts and to declare what our religion is’.⁴⁵⁹ That Housman should have used these words and that Mahadev should have quoted them suggest that both had a vision of this visit of Gandhi to England which went well beyond the political.

From Friends House Gandhi proceeded to his lodgings in Poplar at Kingsley Hall.⁴⁶⁰ In her account of her hosting of Gandhi Muriel Lester (1883-1968) described this community, started by herself and her sister in the East End of London in memory of, and using funds left by, their brother Kingsley, who had died of illness in 1914 at the age of 26, as:

a centre of fellowship in the midst of a large industrial district of East London ... run for the most part by the people of its neighbourhood who work out their own salvation, educationally, socially and spiritually. Ten volunteers give whole-time service and receive food, seven shillings a week and a cell on the flat roof as their portion; ignoring barriers of creed, class and nation, they serve in unity, cooking or organising, cleaning or teaching, scrubbing or praying. The

⁴⁵⁹ Gandhi and Desai, *Nation's Voice*, p. 116.

⁴⁶⁰ Guha, *Gandhi*, chap. 19. Contrary to Guha's description, Lester, though working closely with the Society of Friends, was not a Quaker, nor was Kingsley Hall a Quaker settlement: Marjorie Sykes, *An Indian Tapestry: Quaker Threads in the History of India, Pakistan & Bangladesh: From the Seventeenth Century to Independence* (York: Sessions Book Trust, 1997), p. 234.

strength of Kingsley Hall lies in the practice of the presence of God, as taught by Jesus Christ, and is an effort towards the Kingdom of God on earth. Our ideals and our aspirations at Kingsley Hall have much in common with those of Mr. Gandhi's Ashram.⁴⁶¹

Kingsley Hall differed from most other settlements in east and south London at this time in having no specific church or institutional connection, even though its founders' family were Baptists. In this respect it differed also from the Eremo Franciscano, which, despite its differences with the church authorities, remained firmly within the Roman Catholic Church, and from the Anglican Christa Seva Sangh and St Francis' Ashrams, but was similar to Gandhi's ashram at Sarbamati. It did have a place of worship, at which Lester might officiate, and its work was driven by the two sisters' Christian faith, which included a strong commitment to pacifism, not a cause that was popular either with the government or with the majority of the population during either of the world wars, but which found an ally in Gandhi's commitment to non-violence.

Like Gandhi there was an insistence on being open to all, but especially to the poor and underprivileged. In response to an interviewer for the Theosophy Journal *Aryan Path* Lester explained:

I think Christ understood nature. It depends upon never scorning anybody else, always being humble-minded ... Our social workers, our political leaders, are in daily peril of losing their own souls. They count themselves very superior to the rest of us. No one is really a superior to any one else. If we separate ourselves from others, we lose our humility. Others teach us as much as we teach them.⁴⁶²

There is similarity here with Sorella Maria's insistence on being 'La Minore'. It was an argument Lester put to good use in getting a promise from Gandhi to visit her 'ashram' in London. She had visited Sabarmati in 1926 and, on her departure, she invited Gandhi to England. 'What is the use?' was his reply 'I have not had such success here with my own people that I have anything to teach you and your good people in

⁴⁶¹ Muriel Lester, *Entertaining Gandhi* (London: Nicholson & Watson, 1932), p. 2.

⁴⁶² Anonymous, 'The Religion of Works. An Interview with Muriel Lester', *The Aryan Path*, 1 (1930), 22–25 (23).

England'. 'I don't want you to come to teach us, I want you to come to learn from us.' Gandhi laughed and promised to come, subject to certain conditions.⁴⁶³

Lester made sure of his acceptance for his planned visit to London. Kingsley Hall was seven miles from the locations for the Round Table Conference at St James' Palace and for its associated receptions and meetings. Initially both Andrews and Polak, who were organising Gandhi's time in England, were opposed. But it was that very distance and the opportunity to follow an 'ashramic' lifestyle, based on prayer and a daily routine of common life, that enabled Gandhi to be not just another conference delegate but also a learner and a teacher for England and for Europe. The problem of the distance was solved by the generosity of a local Indian doctor, who lent his car (and presumably also his driver) for Gandhi's commutes, which were accompanied by a police escort.

This was Gandhi's fifth visit to London. He had always enjoyed the city and its openness to alternative points of view, the vegetarians who took him into their group during his first visit as a law student being an obvious example. However, he had not previously been exposed, or at least not for any significant period of time, to the East End of London. Poplar, the borough of Kingsley Hall, was no fringe area like Shoreditch, Spitalfields, or Whitechapel, but was an industrial area in the centre of what had become after the clearance of the Holborn slums the poorest part of London. Close to the hall was a gin distillery and warehouse, an affront to Gandhi's call for prohibition. Seventeen years before the establishment of the National Health Service and the Welfare State, voluntary aid (of which, it should be said, and to which many still existing buildings testify, was not in short supply) was the only resource available in case of illness, injury, unemployment, family breakdown, or other financial disaster. Gandhi was to learn, if he had not already realised, the universality of poverty as a

⁴⁶³ Lester, *Entertaining Gandhi*, p. 1.

driver of his vision, and that even in the imperial metropolis bold experiments were needed to confront its challenge.

Part of the routine when Gandhi was in Sabarmati was his daily walk in the early evening during which he would keep his companions in conversation. In Bow he undertook a similar hour's walk but starting at 5.30 in the morning to fit in with the Conference timetable. Lester describes the route: St. Leonard's Street (at that time the main road to the Blackwall Tunnel), Three Mills Lane, crossing two branches of the River Lea (from the bridge looking north to Bow Bridge and south to the Underground line to Barking and beyond this to gasometers) and passing the eighteenth century tidal mill (then in use for grinding grain for the adjacent gin distillery), and then along the Channelsea River path to reach the views from the elevated pathway above the main London sewer.⁴⁶⁴ As in Sabarmati fellow walkers with a variety of motives brought up a great variety of subjects. Shamrao remembered discussing his future with Gandhi during the morning walk.⁴⁶⁵

Once Gandhi was asked on the walk which section of the British public was 'most sympathetic towards India's desire for independence'. Lester records that he paused and then replied: 'It is hard to say, but I should think the Christian section; though they don't understand all that independence implies nor do they see how it would work out.'⁴⁶⁶ Gandhi may have been thinking here of his welcome from the Quakers at Friends House (and later in Birmingham), and of his meetings with the Anglican clergy in London, Canterbury and Chichester. When he comments on a lack of understanding he is probably referring to the failure even of the Christians to accept the need for

⁴⁶⁴ Geographers' A-Z Map Company, 'A to Z Atlas and Guide to London and Suburbs 1938/9', 2008, pp. 53–54.

⁴⁶⁵ *The Times of India*, 29 April 1956, p. 4.

⁴⁶⁶ Lester, *Entertaining Gandhi*, p. 58.

equality in any new relationship between India and Britain implied by independence. How exactly independence would work out probably not even he could correctly predict.

The conversation continued and included, again as reported by Lester, a significant statement by Gandhi of his views of religion:

There is a oneness running through all the faiths. It is clearly perceivable. They are like so many fingers on one hand. There is a difference in ritual, in garb, in words and customs; but if I tear down these inessential things I find that at rock bottom there is one faith. And that is simple. One day we shall forget all these differences, or, if they remain, they will be delightful things like different colours which give a pleasant variety to life. We shall become mutually tolerant and sensibly respectful to each other's faiths and nations. We are even perceiving the necessity of tolerating folly. You hear a lot about Hindu-Moslem strife and jealousy, but you do not realise that these quarrels are mostly engineered. It is easy for leaders to set their people against each other, but actually among the people themselves there is a real harmony when left to themselves, they live at peace. Hindus are invited to Moslem festivals and go as honoured guests; they are glad to do good turns to each other. There is a deep-rooted inherent goodness in humanity, otherwise it would have perished long ago.⁴⁶⁷

In this statement there are three ever-relevant assertions: the unity behind all faith, the differences between faiths as a pleasant variety, the ease of engineering inter-religious strife.

On the walk there were at least three places where Gandhi would regularly exchange greetings with those at work.⁴⁶⁸ He devoted one morning to visiting the homes of families living in the most deprived street in the area, Eagling Road, and according to Lester 'all were ready to display every corner of their little domain for him to inspect, to ask about and to admire'.⁴⁶⁹ Children and housewives in the same street as Kingsley Hall kept a watch on its roof and whenever they saw Gandhi coming out of his roof top cell the children cheered. Someone would shout 'Ere'e is' and everyone would run

⁴⁶⁷ Lester, *Entertaining Gandhi*, p. 59.

⁴⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

⁴⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

out. 'And such a nice gentleman as 'e was too, not a bit like wot the papers said. You could tell 'e was good all through and understood poor people. 'E was just like one of us.' Doris Lester (1886-1965), Muriel's sister, devoted an entire chapter to how Gandhi was perceived and welcomed by the local children, particularly those of the Nursery School, with as its high points the children's visit to Gandhi in Kingsley Hall and his visit to the Nursery School and the nearby London County Council playground.⁴⁷⁰ The children called him 'Uncle Gandhi', as Gandhi was to remind them in a letter from Yeravda Jail of 20 January 1932, in which he apologized that he had not yet been able to deliver to the children of his ashram the presents they had given him on his birthday and which he had personally carried back to India.⁴⁷¹ Gandhi would never have established the same rapport with his temporary neighbours if he had been living at his reception committee's West End base in Knightsbridge, and he used the argument that he must be 'among the poor' to resist all efforts, including those of Andrews who was ensconced in the top floor in Knightsbridge, to move him from Kingsley Hall.⁴⁷² 'I feel happy in Miss Lester's abode because I get here a taste of the life I am pledged to live.'⁴⁷³

It was in the same spirit of solidarity with the working class that Gandhi travelled with Mahadev, Mirabehn, and Andrews to meet the Lancashire cotton-workers. As in India there was a crowd to meet his train when it arrived at Manchester Victoria station.⁴⁷⁴ Despite the fact that he made little or nothing in the way of concessions regarding the Indian boycott of foreign cotton fabrics, 'the warmth of reception could only be equalled by what Gandhiji has been familiar with in the towns and villages of

⁴⁷⁰ Lester, *Entertaining Gandhi*, pp. 90–97.

⁴⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 96–97; Francis Watson, *Talking of Gandhiji: Four Programmes for Radio, First Broadcast by the British Broadcasting Corporation* (London: Longmans, Green, 1957), p. 92.

⁴⁷² Lester, *Entertaining Gandhi*, p. 73.

⁴⁷³ Gandhi and Desai, *Nation's Voice*, p. 126.

⁴⁷⁴ Guha, *Gandhi*, p. 349.

India'.⁴⁷⁵ Gandhi and his party stayed at the Spring Vale Garden Village home of Charles Haworth, a Quaker former cotton industry worker, now a welfare officer, when they arrived on Friday night, and then on Saturday night at the Heys Farm Guest House, a Quaker hostel near Clitheroe.⁴⁷⁶ Much to Haworth's relief Gandhi was cheered when he arrived at Spring Vale at midnight.⁴⁷⁷

'Bishops and Archbishops'

On 23 October 1931 Mahadev wrote to Jawaharlal Nehru an often-humorous letter bringing him up to date on what was happening. Gandhi was 'giving a lot of time to the Bishops and Archbishops. I wonder what you would think of it. But I am quite sure it means to them a real good education and they would not like to miss it.'⁴⁷⁸ The first of these ecclesiastical visits was to Canterbury, where he was the guest of the Dean, Hewlett Johnson (1874-1966), an uncritical supporter of the Soviet Union. Mahadev and Gandhi attended the service of Evensong in the Cathedral, which included prayers for India and for China, and then while Gandhi continued his weekly silence Mahadev had a detailed conversation with the Dean. There had been severe floods in China and the Dean was planning to visit the country in company with Andrews, and with Albert Schweitzer and Wilfred Grenfell, medical missionaries respectively to Africa and Newfoundland, a plan that in the end did not materialise. They discussed the Russian Revolution; the Dean felt that the Bolsheviks' 'fight for the poor and oppressed' to provide 'the amenities of life from the bottom up' was more important than their

⁴⁷⁵ Gandhi and Desai, *The Nation's Voice*, p. 126.

⁴⁷⁶ Sykes, *Indian Tapestry*, p. 246; 'When Gandhi Met Darwen's Mill Workers' (BBC News, 2011) <<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-lancashire-15020097>> [accessed 28 November 2019]; James D. Hunt, *Gandhi in London* (New Delhi: Promilla, 1978), p. 193.

⁴⁷⁷ Watson, *Talking of Gandhiji*, p. 88.

⁴⁷⁸ Letter from Mahadev Desai to Jawaharlal Nehru, 23 October 1931, in Nehru, *Bunch of Old Letters*, p. 105.

denunciation of Christianity. His thoughts for the oppressed extended to Gandhi who he considered ‘must have always felt strong in the strength of God’ as he walked, in the words of Psalm 23, ‘through the valley of the shadow of death’. Many had asked him if he ‘was going to convert Mr. Gandhi to Christianity’ to which his indignant reply was ‘To convert him! His is one of the most Christ-like lives that I have yet to come across.’⁴⁷⁹

The second cathedral city visit, which followed a midweek meeting with missionaries in London at which Gandhi praised both Andrews and Elwin, was to Chichester.⁴⁸⁰ This time Lester was in the party and she describes the welcoming procession led by a band, the beauty and peacefulness of the bishop’s palace and its garden, and the Sunday morning walks in the garden and on the city walls.⁴⁸¹ Again Mahadev had his own conversation with their host, Bishop George Bell (1883-1958), formerly an Oxford academic, who unlike the Dean of Canterbury remained well-connected and influential in the realm of British politics, while developing ecumenical relationships with churches on the continent of Europe, particularly the German Protestant churches. Mahadev observed perceptively that Bell was unlike other clergymen that they had met in that, lacking any predominantly religious ‘air’, although with ‘a deep undercurrent of spirituality’, he was able to talk with an often-puzzling detachment about anything. His views seemed already made up, but he was able to avoid showing disagreement. Mahadev suggested that even if the Conference ended in failure, the visit would have led to ‘a deeper understanding between India and England’ and would be helpful to the mission of pacifists. The bishop agreed about the deeper understanding but was sceptical as to whether pacifists in England would know what to

⁴⁷⁹ Gandhi and Desai, *Nation’s Voice*, p. 216.

⁴⁸⁰ Tinker, *Ordeal of Love*, p. 251.

⁴⁸¹ Lester, *Entertaining Gandhi*, pp. 99–100.

do in the absence of a settlement. Asked who were the outstanding pacifists he gave the names of Albert Schweitzer and Romain Rolland, and also Maude Royden and Arthur Ponsonby, while he considered that the pacifism of H. G. Wells and Bertrand Russell lacked ‘the moral forces we are thinking of’.⁴⁸²

At Chichester Gandhi also met Canon Campbell who had been deeply influenced by the writings of Tagore. The canon asked Gandhi for the origin of the concept of *swaraj* and when Gandhi replied that its source was self-purification and self-sacrifice, he saw this as ‘the essence of all great religions’ and a challenge to the secularity of the current world. From Chichester Gandhi, Andrews, and Mahadev travelled to Bognor to visit the 85-year-old C. P. Scott (1846-1932), who had edited *The Manchester Guardian* from 1872 to 1929, and was now living in retirement with his 97-year-old sister. Scott challenged Gandhi, wasn’t the unity of India a result of British rule, to which Gandhi replied that this superimposed unity was responsible for the many disruptive forces at the Conference, which might have been avoided if the Indian representatives had been elected, rather than nominated by the British Prime Minister. Scott’s sister ‘regarded Gandhiji’s visit as an important event in her life’ and gave her blessing to his mission.⁴⁸³

A third visit to a bishop was in Birmingham. Here however Mahadev gave greater attention to the visit to Woodbrooke Hall, the education centre of the Society of Friends, founded by the Cadbury family. The previous year a member of the centre, Professor Horace Alexander, had been sent to India on a fact-finding meeting at a time when because of censorship and imprisonment reliable news from India was difficult to

⁴⁸² Gandhi and Desai, *Nation’s Voice*, p. 177.

⁴⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 178.

access in England.⁴⁸⁴ In his speech, as recorded by Mahadev, Gandhi stated that he had often remarked that his ‘true work in England’ lay ‘outside the Conference’:

I cannot be too insistent that responsible leaders of public opinion in the British Isles should inform themselves of the true nature of the struggle that Indians are carrying on against heavy odds. For, unless you understand the true nature and the inner meaning of this struggle, you will not be able to bring effective pressure to bear on those who are conducting the affairs of the State here.⁴⁸⁵

Gandhi had thus two aims in his meetings with Christian leaders and their followers. On the one hand he established a common understanding in matters spiritual, particularly as regards the calls to poverty and non-violence. On the other he looked to them to provide continuing understanding of, and support for, his movement’s aims as regards India’s freedom.

Oxford

It seems to have been Datta who suggested to A. D. Lindsay (1879-1952), Master of Balliol College, Oxford, that he should invite Gandhi and his party to stay with him.⁴⁸⁶ Datta had worked with Lindsay in India in the International Missionary Council’s Commission on Christian Higher Education and, according to Mahadev, Lindsay’s first invitation to Gandhi was made during this time in India.⁴⁸⁷ Datta was also now in England as one of the two Indian Christian representatives at the Round Table Conference and he and his Scottish wife were responsible for Gandhi’s West End headquarters in Knightsbridge.

⁴⁸⁴ Susan Smith, ‘Goody-Goody Fellows? Quakers and the End of Empire in India’, 2013, p. 12 <<https://britishempireatwardotorg.files.wordpress.com/2012/09/quakers-and-the-end-of-empire-in-india1.pdf>> [accessed 26 April 2022].

⁴⁸⁵ Gandhi and Desai, *Nation’s Voice*, p. 230.

⁴⁸⁶ Drusilla Scott, *A.D. Lindsay: A Biography* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1971), p. 212.

⁴⁸⁷ Scott, *Lindsay*, p. 211; Gandhi and Desai, *Nation’s Voice*, p. 184.

On the way to Oxford, on 23 October 1931, Gandhi visited Eton College as the guest of the Headmaster.⁴⁸⁸ He spoke at a meeting of fifty senior boys and asked at once for questions. Mahadev noted that there were only two, ‘Mr. Shaukat Ali gave us the Muslim case. Will you give us the Hindu case?’ and ‘What would happen to India with the rapacious princes when the Englishmen retire from India?’. Mahadev contrasted these questions to Gandhi, based on metropolitan preconceptions that the communal issue and the status of the princes were the major issues for any discussion of Indian independence, with the questions of the boys in the East End ‘about his home, his dress, his sandals, and his language’, concerned about the lack of a desire for an understanding of India among these Eton boys who were destined to be among the future elite of the Empire. Gandhi took their likely future as his starting point in his replies, noting that among the existing high officials he found ‘ignorance, meaning not absence of knowledge but knowledge based on false data’. In the context of the need for Indian freedom the communal question was of no importance. Instead, it was England that needed India’s freedom: ‘It can be no pride to you that your nation is ruling over ours. No one chained a slave without chaining himself. And no nation kept another in subjection without herself turning into a subject nation. It is a most sinful connection, a most unnatural connection ...’ As for the princes, ‘they were easier to deal with than Englishmen’, India would convert them from ‘exploiters into friends’.⁴⁸⁹

Drusilla Scott (1911-2003), Lindsay’s daughter and at that time an undergraduate at Somerville College, described the domestic arrangements for Gandhi’s stay at the Master’s Lodgings at Balliol.⁴⁹⁰ She remembered the party, which included Gandhi, Mahadev, Gandhi’s son Devadas, Mirabehn, and Andrews, arriving on Saturday

⁴⁸⁸ Mahadev Desai to Nehru, 23 October 1931, in Nehru, *Bunch of Old Letters*, p. 105.

⁴⁸⁹ Gandhi and Desai, *Nation’s Voice*, p. 181.

⁴⁹⁰ Drusilla Scott, ‘Gandhi in Oxford’, *Balliol College Annual Record*, 1994, 58–62.

morning.⁴⁹¹ Andrews had already undertaken a reconnoitre. Gandhi was installed in a large room on the ground floor, now the college office, with his secretary (presumably Mahadev) in his dressing room. The programme of rising well before dawn for baths, prayers, and morning walks was maintained, and Gandhi had his meals of Fortnum and Mason nuts and fruit, together with goat's milk procured by his police detectives, in his room. Mirabehn 'glided about the house in silent dignity looking after Gandhi's needs' while 'Andrews wandered around in a lost sort of way commenting on what went on'.

The visit to Oxford was suggested as a peaceful respite from the Round Table Conference, but given the packed timetable of meetings the only peace must have been in the early mornings. On Saturday there was a meeting in Balliol for the Master's friends and a meeting with the Indian Majlis society. It was therefore not surprising that when on Sunday morning Gandhi was taken out to Scar Top, the house the Thompsons had built on Boars Hill, Theo Thompson was to find him asleep over his spinning wheel in front of the fire.⁴⁹² 'I—wished to work. But these [his fingers] went to sleep.'⁴⁹³ Thompson had invited his Boars Hill neighbour Gilbert Murray (1866-1957, Regius Professor of Greek, and chair of the League of Nations Committee on Intellectual Co-operation), Michael Sadler (1861-1943, Master of University College, earlier president of the Calcutta University Commission), Reginald Coupland (1884-1952, Beit

⁴⁹¹ The Saturday must have been 24 October 1931, not 26 October as stated by Scott. Lester remembers Gandhi 'motoring' from Eton to Oxford, and Mahadev records that on the way Gandhi had stopped near Reading to call on Colonel Maddock, the surgeon who had operated on him for appendicitis in Poona, so his arrival in Oxford by train, which Scott also describes, must have been for his second visit.

⁴⁹² Lago, *India's Prisoner*, p. 245. Lago dates this meeting to 13 September, the day after Gandhi's arrival in England. In fact it was on Sunday 25 October 1931. According to Lago, p. 199, the Thompsons had felt sufficiently confident to build Scar Top, presumably with Theo's family's money, after Oriel College's Bursar Percy Lyon had arranged for Edward to become a Research Fellow of the college. Thompson and Lyon had been friends in Bengal; this was a not unusual example of a friend supporting preferment. According to Dewey, similar support expected of an English friend by an Indian might not be accorded, disappointing the Indian friend. Dewey, *Anglo-Indian Attitudes*, p. 166.

⁴⁹³ Thompson, *A Letter from India*, p. 39.

Professor of Colonial History), Percy Comyn Lyon (1862-1952, Bursar of Oriel College, formerly in the Indian Civil Service, Education, in Bengal) and Lindsay, as well as Datta, Mirabehn, and Lester.⁴⁹⁴ According to Mahadev, Gilbert Slater, (1864-1938), previously Principal of Ruskin College, and then Professor of Economics at the University of Madras) was also present.

Mahadev recorded that Murray, whose greatest political concern was peace through co-operation between nations, seemed greatly perturbed by ‘most dangerous manifestations of non-violent revolution and nationalism’. Gandhi replied that ‘co-operation presupposes free nations worthy of co-operation’. As long as India was a subject nation, both she and England were dangers to peace in the eyes of other nations. It was his dream that India should win freedom through non-violence. Lester recorded that during this Oxford visit Gandhi demanded that this freedom included the liberty to make mistakes, rejecting the gradualist approach that India was not ready for independence. He insisted that the Empire must end for India to be an equal partner (with constitutional correctness he said ‘The British Empire is an Empire only because of India’) but that he did not want India to be cut off from the British nation: ‘We want you as friends. If only you would come down from Simla!’⁴⁹⁵

The meetings on the Sunday continued with a meeting for ‘the foremost of the Oxford dons and fellows’. This was followed a meeting of the Raleigh Club, which took place in Rhodes House and which included many Rhodes Scholars and other overseas students from the English-speaking world. Among them was Ian Scott (1909-2002), educated in a mixed-race school in Trinidad, later to be Drusilla Lindsay’s husband and Deputy Private Secretary first to Wavell and then to Louis Mountbatten (1900-1979,

⁴⁹⁴ Lester, *Entertaining Gandhi*, pp. 103–4; Thompson, *A Letter from India*, p. 38; Robert Cecil, *A Great Experiment: An Autobiography* (London: Cape, 1941), p. 262.

⁴⁹⁵ Lester, *Entertaining Gandhi*, p. 104.

Viceroy 1947, Governor General of India 1947-1948). He was impressed by the way Gandhi won over a hostile and rather condescending audience.⁴⁹⁶ It was at this meeting that Coupland's complacent assessment that 'all was required for India's constitutional progress was patience and cooperation' provoked Gandhi's comment that, although he was no professor, this was not the way he had learnt that America and Ireland achieved independence.⁴⁹⁷

Lindsay invited Gandhi back to Balliol for a second weekend, 7-8 November 1931, which was more concerned with political negotiation. A meeting in Balliol was attended by Malcolm Macdonald (1901-1981, Under-Secretary of State for the Dominions, the Prime Minister's son), Lord Lothian (1882-1940, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster/Under-Secretary of State for India, and Secretary of the Rhodes Trust), and Coupland, that sought, and obtained, Gandhi's approval for a two-stage approach to India's self-government, first provincial and later, with a firm promise, central. This approach was rejected by other Indian delegates to the Round Table Conference, although subsequently the principle was incorporated in the 1935 Government of India Act.

This second weekend was also remembered by Lindsay because the evening before Gandhi's arrival he had met Malaviya (who was staying as Sadler's guest at University College) who had proposed a gathering of the most distinguished philosophers and scientists to ask whether God existed and what was his will. Gandhi's response when Lindsay told him of this proposal was that even if such a gathering reached agreement, which he doubted it would, he would not regard it as being of any importance because nothing could be the will of God which could not be understood by simple unlettered

⁴⁹⁶ Drusilla Scott, 'Gandhi in Oxford', p. 60.

⁴⁹⁷ Richard Symonds, *Oxford and Empire: The Last Lost Cause?* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991), p. 54.

people. In a similar vein Lindsay's son had asked Gandhi a question which came from the group of miners he was teaching: how far was Gandhi a Christian? Gandhi's response was Socratic and at the same time in the spirit of the founder of that religion: could his father (Lindsay) tell him how far he was a Christian? In Gandhi's view neither could answer the question.⁴⁹⁸

By the end of Gandhi's second weekend stay at Balliol the Lindsays felt they had made a lasting friendship with Gandhi, Mahadev, Mirabehn, and Pyarelal.⁴⁹⁹ This was a friendship that was continued by correspondence, particularly with Mrs Lindsay. Again this Gandhi-centred friendship cannot easily be classified: while having the qualities of Derrida's primary fellowship, and postcolonial in crossing the divides of nationality and religion, this friendship seems more in the nature of an extended family group, with some similarities in this respect to Andrews' close friendship with the Rudra family.

At some point during the visits to Oxford, most probably during the first visit, Gandhi and Mahadev, together with Sundaram, managed to find time to visit Elwin's mother at her home at 1 Warnborough Road. In a letter to Elwin his mother described how Gandhi sat on her floor and drank his goat's milk.⁵⁰⁰ The visit had been a great success and for the rest of her life Mrs Elwin was devoted to Gandhi, in time becoming a more loyal supporter of Gandhi than her son, who in his 1964 autobiography regrets that during the 1940s his differences with Gandhi, on khadi, on Prohibition, on sex-relations, and on diet kept them apart.⁵⁰¹

⁴⁹⁸ Scott, *Lindsay*, p. 215.

⁴⁹⁹ Scott, 'Gandhi in Oxford', p. 61.

⁵⁰⁰ Elwin to Turton, 14 November 1931, Mss Eur D950/7, fol. 35.

⁵⁰¹ Elwin, *Tribal World*, p. 85.

A few weeks later, talking with Madeleine Rolland, who knew and loved the city, Gandhi reflected on his visit: ‘fine young men’, conservative but generous, who would be useful in his struggle. But the beauty of the university’s buildings and of its works of art were tainted for him by the thought of the exploitation of the world which had allowed such riches to flourish, a view that has attained wider currency in recent years, with criticism from within and outside the university of its endowments derived from slave plantations and white supremacist land expropriation.⁵⁰²

Paris, Villeneuve, Lausanne, Geneva

Gandhi left England for the last time from Folkestone on 5 December 1931. Andrews had already left for Africa. Lester, who travelled with the party as far as Rome, gives an account of Gandhi’s experiences in Paris, where his British bodyguard Sergeant Evans successfully shielded him from the pressing crowds of journalists and well-wishers first at the *Gare du Nord* railway station and then at the small flat of Mme Louise Guieysse, sister-in-law of Rolland’s ex-wife, where Gandhi was to stay the night. The evening in Paris was full, with a 4.30 p.m. welcoming tea-party with the Indians of Paris and a 6 p.m. reception of invited intellectuals at the flat, followed by supper at the flat before an 8-10.30 p.m. public meeting at the ‘Magic City’ cinema.

Next morning the party left Paris by train for Switzerland, to travel to Villeneuve on Lake Geneva, to visit and stay with Rolland, who had found himself, and had remained, in Switzerland on the outbreak of the Great War. Rolland was a Beethoven scholar, and it was this interest that had brought Madeleine Slade into contact with him in 1923, and then through his interest in Gandhi to travel to India to become ‘Gandhi’s English

⁵⁰² Romain Rolland, *Gandhi et Romain Rolland: correspondance, extraits du Journal et textes divers*, Cahiers Romain Rolland, 19 (Paris: Albin Michel, 1969), p. 113; ‘Uncomfortable Oxford Walking Tours’, <<https://www.uncomfortableoxford.co.uk>> [accessed 26 April 2022].

daughter, Mirabehn', in 1925. Just as Turton was the intermediary as translator and facilitator of the correspondence between Sorella Maria and Elwin, Mirabehn, assisted by Rolland's sister Madeleine, was to act as translator and facilitator of correspondence between Rolland and Gandhi.⁵⁰³

Lester reports in detail one early morning walk from Villeneuve, when she accompanied Mirabehn, Gandhi, Privat, and Pierre Cérésole (1879-1945), the Swiss founder of International Voluntary Service, which had worked in France, Austria, and Wales in reconstruction after war or after natural or economic disaster. Cérésole was campaigning to have this work recognised as an alternative service to the Swiss military conscription. After listening to Cérésole's description of his work, Gandhi launched out on a long account of the evolution of his own approach to the State. In South Africa, first in the Zulu War and then in the Great War, he had supported the government, in the first unarmed as a stretcher-bearer, and then in India in its recruitment campaign, because of the need to fight against tyranny and because this seemed the best way to advance the Indian cause. Cérésole pointed out the difference between resistance to an alien power and resistance to the government of one's own country, particularly when as in his case this had evolved as a democracy over centuries. Gandhi replied that to resist the machinery of the modern state group non-violent action was required; suffering of 'simple, humble people' meant purification, and inevitably eventual victory. Cérésole countered that in Europe the people were not ready for this; Gandhi replied socratically 'Are you sure it is the people who are not ready, M. Cérésole?'. Cérésole acknowledged that it was the leaders that were lacking; what qualities would

⁵⁰³ R. A. Francis, 'Romain Rolland and Gandhi: A Study in Communication', *Journal of European Studies*, 5 (1975), 291–307 (294).

such a leader need? ‘Realisation of God every minute of the twenty-four hours.’ What did Gandhi mean by God?

Truth is God, and the way to find him is Non-Violence. A leader must have complete mastery over himself. Anger must be banished, and fear and falsehood. You must lose yourself. You must not pleasure yourself either with food or sex pleasures. Thus purified, you get power. It’s not your own, it’s God’s.⁵⁰⁴

R. A. Francis, translator of the published letters and journal extracts of the correspondence and meeting between Gandhi and Rolland, has urged the reading of the whole of Rolland’s account of the meeting, as ‘one of the most lively and moving human documents in all of Rolland’s personal papers’, showing ‘a gift for shrewd and witty observation’.⁵⁰⁵ The five conversations between Gandhi and Rolland with Madeleine Rolland as translator in attendance were fully documented by Mahadev or Pyarelal and by Princess Marie Koudacheff (1895-1985, Macha), Rolland’s secretary, who in 1934 would become his second wife. Unlike Mahadev or Lester, Rolland in his journal shows great precision as regards dates, times, modes of transport, and names of railway stations.⁵⁰⁶ From this it appears that the walk and first meeting with Cérésolle is likely to have been on the Tuesday morning, Gandhi having been on his weekly silence on Monday, and before Gandhi started to reply later on Tuesday morning to the questions put to him by Rolland in Monday’s one-sided meeting.

The three main subjects of the conversations between Gandhi and Rolland were Gandhi’s proposed visit to Rome, his attitude to the Soviet Union, and his personal

⁵⁰⁴ Lester, *Entertaining Gandhi*, pp. 156–63.

⁵⁰⁵ Francis, ‘Romain Rolland and Gandhi’, p. 297; Francis’ translations are in Romain Rolland and Mahatma Gandhi, *Romain Rolland and Gandhi Correspondence: Letters, Diary Extracts, Articles, Etc.*, trans. by R. A. Francis (New Delhi: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1976).

⁵⁰⁶ According to Rolland, when they arrived Gandhi and his party left the train at Territet, one stop short of Villeneuve, and they did the same at Pully when going to Lausanne, presumably to avoid any waiting crowds and particularly any waiting journalists. Rolland, *Gandhi et Romain Rolland*, pp. 70, 87.

beliefs. As regards the invitation Gandhi had received from Scarpa, the Italian consul in India, to visit Rome, Rolland was deeply concerned that any compromise by Gandhi with the fascist government would rebound on his cause in misrepresentations in the press, just as had happened to Tagore, and even more worryingly would be seen as betrayal by those Italians who opposed the regime. In this context Rolland more than once mentioned Giacomo Matteotti (1885-1924) and Giovanni Amendola (1882-1926), the first murdered at the regime's behest, the second dying following a fascist assault. The question was urgent, as arrangements for accommodation and travel could not be delayed. Gandhi and his party had been scheduled to sail from Venice, but if he diverted to Rome, they would need to sail from Brindisi. Gandhi had an invitation to meet Mussolini in Rome: Sarojini anticipated this in a letter to her daughters with 'what a meeting between the two Dictators!'⁵⁰⁷ Rolland put Gandhi's desire to meet Mussolini down to the 'devil of curiosity'; there was no recorded mention in their discussion of Sundaram's favourable impression at his meeting with Mussolini earlier in the year. Gandhi decided that he should proceed with the Italian programme, but Rolland insisted that he should not accept official hospitality, sending a telegram to his friend General Maurizio Moris (1860-1944), founder of the Italian Air Force and sufficiently senior and respected still to be untouched by fascism, if he would host Gandhi and two others. To Rolland's surprise the reply came not by return, but only after thirty hours: despite his seniority the General had to seek approval from higher authority.⁵⁰⁸

When Rolland had first published his biography of Gandhi in 1923, still greatly disturbed by the, in his view, unnecessary violence of the Great War, he visualized him as the leader of a new approach to political action, based on his message of non-

⁵⁰⁷ Sarojini Naidu, *Selected Letters*, p. 246.

⁵⁰⁸ *Romain Rolland and Gandhi Correspondence*, trans. by Francis, p. 197.

violence. In the intervening years before their Villeneuve meeting Gandhi had been invited to two meetings in Europe at which it was hoped he would expound this message, but he accepted neither of these invitations. In the meantime, Rolland had moved on from his position of pacifism (even if he was still a point of reference for Swiss pacifists such as Cérésole and Privat) because of his horror of fascism and his acceptance of the need for the young Soviet republic to defend itself by force. In a sense he was ahead of his time: later in the decade the Nazi seizure of power in Germany and the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War would force even those living in insular Britain to choose sides. But Gandhi could not be persuaded to join in his support for Soviet Russia. Francis notes how Gandhi first justified his different approach by their methodological differences; he had drawn his conclusions from his personal experience, and, unlike Rolland, not from history, thus excluding acceptance of Marxist theory.⁵⁰⁹ While he believed that non-violence was of universal application, India might need to prove that it worked before it could be of any use in Europe.

That Tuesday evening Gandhi travelled third class by train to Lausanne for three meetings organized by Privat and Cérésole at 4 p.m., 6 p.m., and 7 or 8 p.m. The first was a private meeting restricted to Gandhi and his party and to invited members of Cérésole's Service Civil International and of the Conscientious Objectors de Suisse. As reported by Madeleine Rolland, Gandhi asserted that any support of any kind for a state which required military service must be withdrawn to end such service. Cérésole, as one who had put all his energy into reconciling his duties as a good citizen with those of a conscientious objector, argued that not everything of the state was bad. Gandhi replied that even the worst states, even those ruled by a Nero or a Mussolini, might have

⁵⁰⁹ Francis, 'Romain Rolland and Gandhi', pp. 299, 307; Rolland, *Gandhi et Romain Rolland*, p. 83.

something that was good, but in the case of India the British regime had suppressed the nation's energy and growth (Seeley's argument again) and that to counter this all privileges created by the state must be refused. He conceded that the policy to be followed might vary from country to country but felt that the essential points were sacrifice and abnegation. Cérésolle claimed that there was a profound difference between an independent nation and a subject nation. Gandhi agreed, but pointed out that the aims were different, in India liberation from the foreign yoke, in Switzerland from the military mentality. His call to non-cooperation was highly disturbing for the invited audience: Rolland noted in his journal that had this not been a private meeting Gandhi might have been threatened with expulsion from Switzerland forthwith.⁵¹⁰ At a later public meeting in the Victoria Hall in Geneva on the day before his departure, where the large audience was divided between the boxes occupied by the hostile bourgeoisie, the *Journal de Genève*, and the League of Nations, and the amphitheatre packed with enthusiasts and socialists, Gandhi openly attacked Swiss militarism and capitalism. The audience heard him politely, but the following day furious articles were published in the newspapers, denouncing him as a tool of the Marxists who had come to disarm and destroy Switzerland, leaving her people unarmed against communist aggression. It was no wonder that he had been staying with 'the Bolshevik Romain Rolland'.⁵¹¹

The second meeting in Lausanne was public and was broadcast live. Rolland, house-bound by illness, listened to it on the radio with his secretary, and commented in his journal that Gandhi's voice was astonishingly clear, calm, firm, and well-articulated, with almost a baritone register, and that he could hear Privat's translation into French

⁵¹⁰ Rolland, *Gandhi et Romain Rolland*, p. 93.

⁵¹¹ Francis, *Romain Rolland and Gandhi*, p. 173.

and the applause and occasional laughter of the audience (in response to certain scathing replies of Gandhi's) very well. In this meeting Gandhi criticized two Swiss French language newspapers, one from Geneva and one from Lausanne, which he claimed had misrepresented his speech in Paris and his intentions, making him out to be a nationalist who clandestinely planned for violence should non-violence fail. He called for retractions; the audience clapped, and the journalists left the hall, slamming the doors.

The third meeting was in a church, and included Cérésolle's international service volunteers and conscientious objectors, who, standing and hand in hand, sang the Swiss song of comradeship. They asked Gandhi why he considered God to be Truth and he explained the development of his belief, from a God of thousands of names and forms to the God of Love, to God as Truth and then most recently to Truth as God, which even atheists might accept. But any human belief was limited, and this would be a Being or an Entity which was beyond our power of understanding. Just as with attaining scientific knowledge, a specific discipline was needed; to approach this understanding for him the discipline consisted of the three vows of chastity, non-violence, and poverty. To swim in the ocean of truth, you had to reduce yourself to zero.⁵¹²

Truth was the subject of a further conversation between Rolland and Gandhi, which Rolland began with a full account of how his insistence on truth had moulded his own academic and subsequent career. He felt that Gandhi's idea of truth was missing something, joy; art and the love of beauty must also be included. Gandhi saw things somewhat differently: truth should bring joy, and if not, you were missing truth.⁵¹³ There was more agreement here than in the discussions about Italy and Russia, but although there was sympathy and understanding as regards each other's position, and

⁵¹² Rolland, *Gandhi et Romain Rolland*, pp. 92–93.

⁵¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 106–8.

each recognised the other as being driven by the search for truth, there could not be full agreement. Nor was either prepared to take on the role, which Rolland had originally hoped might be assumed by Gandhi, of leading the young people of the West who, particularly in the decade immediately after the Great War, were looking for an alternative to militarist nationalism. Rolland in a September 1926 letter to Mirabehn, to be shared with Gandhi, had already declined this role for himself: ‘I am not a Christian, I am not a Gandhian, I am not a believer in a revealed religion. I am a man of the West who seeks truth, in the fullness of love and sincerity’.⁵¹⁴

More important, certainly for the purposes of this thesis, but also for the intellectual well-being of both the principals, were the successful personal contacts during the six days of the visit. In his journal Rolland, bringing all the literary skills of a Nobel Laureate into action, created a comprehensive and sympathetic story of what Harris has appropriately called a visit with a ‘near circus atmosphere’.⁵¹⁵ Leaving aside the two goats and two cows that Gandhi met when joyfully calling unannounced on an old peasant lady at work on her weaving on one of his very few trips out by car,⁵¹⁶ there were no performing animals, but the human performers were widely spread in terms of age, gender, educational background, and faith, providing every ‘opportunity to explore spirituality, gender and subjectivity in global history’.⁵¹⁷ Harris concentrates on the remarkable example of Mirabehn and how she was ‘given’ by her musical to her spiritual master, and the tensions her relationships with the two men caused her. On the whole these tensions do not emerge from the letters and activities of this European

⁵¹⁴ Romain Rolland to Madeleine Slade, 26 September 1926, in Rolland, *Gandhi et Romain Rolland*, pp. 22–23.

⁵¹⁵ Ruth Harris, ‘Rolland, Gandhi and Madeleine Slade: Spiritual Politics, France and the Wider World’, *French History*, 27 (2013), 579–99 (p. 594) <<https://doi.org/10.1093/fh/crt048>>.

⁵¹⁶ As in London, cars were kindly provided by the local doctors. Rolland, *Gandhi et Romain Rolland*, p. 87.

⁵¹⁷ Harris, ‘Rolland, Gandhi and Madeleine Slade’ p. 579.

journey, in which exercising her facilitating and linguistic skills must have given her great satisfaction, and in which finally achieving the meeting in flesh and blood of her two masters must have been a personal triumph. But Rolland perceptively noticed her smiles, and Mahadev's, when Gandhi, asserting that there was joy in hard truths, agreed that he could be as soft as a lamb and also as hard as a tiger.⁵¹⁸ Clearly it was the tiger that had insisted on the greater part of the luggage being sent back from Aden on the outward voyage.

In the journal Rolland also included three personal interviews. On the Tuesday evening he had a short meeting with Mahadev, who, Rolland knew, had abandoned, without any subsequent regrets, his career as a lawyer to devote himself entirely to Gandhi. Rolland also knew from Mirabehn that his own (Rolland's) writings and thoughts had become a major influence in his life, and that Mahadev, until forbidden by Gandhi, had wanted to be taught French by Mirabehn, so that he could read Rolland's work in the original. Mahadev assured Rolland that he knew enough French to realise how often the English translations betrayed his text in French (this from the translator of Gandhi's autobiography from Gujarati into English), and he asked for the gift of the French version of Rolland's ten-volume novel *Jean-Christophe* as he was hoping to be sentenced to jail soon after his return to India to give him time to read it. He and Pyarelal had been looking forward to this meeting with Rolland for years: twice disappointed, it now seemed a dream.⁵¹⁹

Mirabehn did not attend the Thursday meeting in Geneva, but instead stayed with Rolland at Villeneuve. They talked about life at Sarbamati Ashram and how hard Gandhi could be on those closest to him, but how only Gandhi's firm and calm control

⁵¹⁸ Rolland, *Gandhi et Romain Rolland*, pp. 109–10.

⁵¹⁹ Rolland, *Gandhi et Romain Rolland*, p. 99.

kept the peace amid the inevitably conflicting currents that occurred in that very open community. Mirabehn described with admiration Gandhi's wife and the sacrifices she made and showed understanding of her passive resistance towards her on her arrival, abating to allow friendship when she realised Mirabehn's sincerity. Another feature of the ashram was its animal life, insects, reptiles, birds, none of which could be killed; here at least the circus had its menagerie. Mirabehn was happy to be returning home to India; her recent time in England had confirmed that there she was now a foreigner. When their conversation came to an end Mirabehn bent down and kissed Roland's hand; he took this gesture as addressed not to him but to the miracle of which he had been the instrument, of her finding her way and her master.⁵²⁰

Rolland's conversation with Pyarelal took place on the last, Thursday, evening of the visit. His sister had managed to get the confidence of this intense young man, who opened up to her only with difficulty when they travelled together on the train to Geneva; it was she who translated for this conversation. Now he opened his heart to Rolland, explaining the pain he had caused the uncle who had brought him up when he abandoned everything to dedicate body and soul to Gandhi. Rolland's books had meant much for him, firstly his life of Tolstoy in which he had found certain passages decisively illuminating, and then *Jean-Christophe* and *Beethoven*. Rolland gave him his *Goethe and Beethoven* in English translation.

Although he acknowledged her intelligence and energy, and her work in London, Rolland seems to have been less taken with Lester. She had presumably arrived after the rest of the party, as she had missed the train in Paris, and she forced her way into Rolland's room uninvited just as Rolland's first meeting with Gandhi was finishing. Rolland might have forgiven that, had she not brought with her Sergeant Evans, whom

⁵²⁰ Rolland, *Gandhi et Romain Rolland*, pp. 102–3.

he considered a potential spy, not realising that the relationship between Gandhi and his English bobbies was such that they were only accompanying him on this trip at his request, and that on his return to India they would be presented with English-manufactured watches as rewards for their services. Unjustifiably Rolland ascribes to Evans a leak to the press that he had been discussing Russia with Gandhi.⁵²¹ Later when Gandhi compares the ‘riches’ of Lester’s neighbours with those of the poor in India Rolland suspects, wrongly, that Lester’s British *amour-propre* had shielded Gandhi from the worst misery in London.⁵²²

Harris considers the climax of the visit to have been when on the last evening, at Gandhi’s request, Rolland, an accomplished musician, played the piano for Mirabehn and his sister and Gandhi upstairs while the rest of the company listened downstairs.⁵²³ He played an arrangement for piano of the Andante of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony, followed by a similar arrangement of the initial orchestral movement and the flute air of the *Champs Elysées* scene of Gluck’s *Orphée*.⁵²⁴ It was certainly the climax for Mirabehn, who had not been able to indulge her passion for Beethoven in India, and is likely to have been so too for Mahadev and Pyarelal: Rolland wrote that he was struck by how Gandhi’s young disciples loved art, despite their lack of opportunity to enjoy it. Another of the young travellers, never mentioned in Rolland’s journal, was Shamrao who wrote in a circular letter to friends, of which the Italian translation survives, that he had listened to the Beethoven sitting on the stairs and was unable to keep the tears

⁵²¹ Rolland, *Gandhi et Romain Rolland*, pp. 77–78.

⁵²² *Ibid.*, p. 114.

⁵²³ Harris, ‘Rolland, Gandhi and Madeleine Slade’, p. 579. It is clear from Rolland’s journal that he played the music on his piano, not on a gramophone.

⁵²⁴ Most probably Franz Liszt’s transcription for piano of Beethoven, Symphony No. 5 in C Minor, Op. 67: II. Andante con moto, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JcCivWipunQ>> and Alexander Siloti’s transcription for piano of Gluck, ‘Dance of the Blessed Spirits’, from *Orphée et Eurydice*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=63j3ssQu_X8>.

from his eyes.⁵²⁵ But, as Harris notes, the music had less effect on Gandhi who after Rolland had tried to explain it to him and had asked for his impression replied with a mischievous laugh that it must be beautiful since Rolland had told him it was.⁵²⁶

From Rolland's journal he himself seems to have been most moved by his physical contacts with Gandhi, when they met and when they said goodbye, the laughing Gandhi raising his hands in Indian greeting and then embracing him, so that he felt Gandhi's moist scalp on his cheek, and when on the Wednesday Rolland, less well, was finding the discussion difficult, he took Gandhi's hands in his and they smiled, looking in each other's eyes, while Gandhi laughed his jerky laugh, his mouth open, like a good dog panting.⁵²⁷ As so often the memory of this physical contact confirmed that, although they had agreed to differ on faith and on freedom, their friendship was stronger than ever. This was an example of Derrida's primary friendship. In all the journal extracts there is no hint of racial barriers, either in their relationship or in Rolland's contacts with Gandhi's Indian fellow-travellers. In contrast to the Oxford meetings there is no sense of exoticism, and the absence of the pervading imperial elitism experienced in England seems to make for a more equal and thus postcolonial cultural exchange, reinforced by the Indian participants' deep awareness of European culture. Gandhi's 1928 expectations for the face-to-face meeting proved correct: even if there was a measure of disillusionment, he and Rolland had come closer than they had ever been.⁵²⁸

⁵²⁵ 'Letter from Brother Shamrao (discepolo di Verrier)', January 1932, Mss Eur D950/11, fols. 19-21.

⁵²⁶ Rolland, *Gandhi et Romain Rolland*, p. 111.

⁵²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

⁵²⁸ Gandhi to Rajagopalachari, 28 March 1928, in *My Dear Bapu*, ed. by Gopalkrishna Gandhi, p. 110-111.

Rome

On the Friday the weather improved, the view of the mountains cleared, and for the first time Rolland felt well enough to leave his villa so as to go to say goodbye to his guests at Villeneuve railway station. Gandhi walked there, and the doctors' cars brought down some of the luggage. The party travelled in a Swiss railways' third-class carriage to Milan's recently inaugurated Central Station, where a special first-class train was waiting to take them to Rome overnight, running ahead of the regular service. The special arrived in Rome twenty minutes ahead and Gandhi refused to leave it until General Moris came to collect him, well aware from Rolland's warnings that if he accepted one of the alternatives being pressed on him this would be a further capitulation to the fascist regime. Moris eventually arrived (he had not been told about the special train, probably intentionally) and Gandhi left the train, to the relief of the railway staff, allowing them at last to move it from the platform which was needed for the regular service held up behind.⁵²⁹

Moris' villa was on the outskirts of Rome and Gandhi, Mirabehn, and Mahadev were his guests there, while the others went to the Hotel Ginevra near the station.⁵³⁰ Later that day Gandhi, accompanied by Mirabehn and Mahadev and Moris, had a twenty-minute audience of Mussolini, who offered chairs to Gandhi and Mirabehn but kept Moris and Mahadev standing. Unlike Sundaram, Gandhi was not invited to meet the Pope, but was granted a private visit to the Vatican Museum and the Sistine Chapel. He does not seem to have been particularly interested in either the classical sculptures in

⁵²⁹ Romain Rolland and Mahatma Gandhi, *Romain Rolland and Gandhi Correspondence: Letters, Diary Extracts, Articles, Etc.*, trans. by R. A. Francis (New Delhi: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1976), p. 253.

⁵³⁰ Gianni Rivolta, 'Quel 13 Dicembre Del 1931 in Un Cinegiornale d'attualità Il "Mahatma" Gandhi Venne Alla Garbatella', *Cara Garbatella*, 2004 <<https://caragarbatella.it/quel-13-dicembre-del-1931-in-un-cinegiornale-d-attualita-il-mahatma-gandhi-venne-alla-garbatella/>> [accessed 3 April 2018].

the museum or the renaissance frescos in the Chapel but was greatly moved by a crucifix in the Chapel, in front of which he stood in contemplation before examining it from all possible angles.⁵³¹

Writing in his journal of those whom Gandhi hoped to meet in Rome, Rolland had mentioned ‘a disciple of St Francis, living near Siena, with whom Gandhi has been in correspondence for years, who has adopted the rules of the ashram’.⁵³² Around midday on Sunday 13 December Gandhi and Mirabehn were visited at the Villa Moris by Sorella Maria, Sorella Immacolatella, and Amy Turton, invited by a telegram from Gandhi and escorted to the villa by Shamrao.⁵³³ This is the meeting described in Chapter II.

Sadly, given that in their beliefs, and in the religious communities they had founded, and indeed in their personalities, they had so much in common, and given their common acquaintance with Evelyn Underhill, it seems that Lester never met Sorella Maria, even though they seem to have been in the Villa Moris at exactly the same time.

After the meeting Shamrao visited Rome with the Sorelle and Turton, learning from them something of the life of the Eremo that might be put into practice in the ashram he and Elwin were to create in India. The Sorelle took him to visit Sorella Maria’s friend the Modernist Professor Buonaiuti (‘Ginepro’). Then in the evening Shamrao rejoined Gandhi and his party for the overnight train journey to Brindisi. Meanwhile the Privats, convinced by Gandhi during the train journey through the Alps that they could afford the trip to India if they travelled with him in steerage and were prepared to accept Indian

⁵³¹ Madeleine Slade, *The Spirit’s Pilgrimage* (London: Longmans, 1960), pp. 150–51.

⁵³² Rolland, *Gandhi et Romain Rolland*, p. 83.

⁵³³ Undated notes by Sorella Jacopa of Sorella Maria’s memories, in Dante, *Gandhi e Sorella Maria*, pp. 61–62. Letter to the Sorelle of the Eremo written by Sorella Maria in pencil on a page torn from a diary, dated Rome, 13 December 1931, in Dante, *Gandhi e Sorella Maria*, pp. 55–56.

hospitality in India, had rapidly obtained passports and an *ad hoc* collection of luggage so that they too could join the party. Lester returned from Rome to London, while the English bobbies relinquished their charge only at the quayside at Brindisi, waving goodbye with their handkerchiefs.⁵³⁴

Homeward voyage

Both Privat and Shamrao describe the voyage in the elderly ship *Pilsna*: this was to be one of her last voyages as an ocean liner.⁵³⁵ The members of the party were now Gandhi, Mirabehn, Mahadev, Pyarelal, Edmond and Yvonne Privat, Bernard Aluwihare, and Shamrao. Shamrao noted the for him strange experience of all sleeping together on the floor of the hold, English, Indian, Swiss, men and women, in a space shared with a large motor car, cages of pigeons, and a sick dog.⁵³⁶ The only concession allowed by Gandhi to the Captain's offers of more comfortable accommodation was the use of the bathrooms in the upper decks.⁵³⁷ Twice daily prayers continued, and all were welcome to join; passengers from the other decks would come frequently to spend time with Gandhi. Shamrao's comment is of interest: 'Bapu bases himself not so much on the New Testament as on the Bhagavad-Gita. ... But his sweetness and his humility come from Christ – his behaviour towards women, his love for children, his generosity, his kindness, his piety and his marvellous smile.'⁵³⁸ Shamrao was at this time still planning to be ordained as a priest in the Church of England. He particularly appreciated

⁵³⁴ Edmond Privat, *Aux Indes avec Gandhi*, Orient, 11 (Paris: Attinger, 1934), p. 13.

⁵³⁵ Privat, *Aux Indes avec Gandhi*, p. 15; the *Pilsna* became first an emigrant transport and then a troopship, the *SS Galilea*, which was sunk by a British submarine with the loss of nearly a thousand lives. 'Wrecksite – Galilea ocean liner 1918-1942'

<<https://www.wrecksite.eu/wreck.aspx?142187>> [accessed 26 April 2022]

⁵³⁶ 'Letter from Brother Shamrao (discepolo di Verrier)', undated, probably January 1932, Mss Eur D950/11, fols. 19-21.

⁵³⁷ Antonello Brandi, 'Il Lloyd Triestino e i traffici con l'India: merci, passeggeri, scambi tra Trieste e l'oriente indiano' (Tesi di Laurea, Università degli Studi di Trieste, 1995), p. 179.

⁵³⁸ 'Letter from Brother Shamrao', Mss Eur D950/11, fols. 19-21.

Gandhi's conversations with Privat, of which Privat recorded the following political gist. The Privats and Gandhi admired the sense of fair play, the courage, and the impartial justice of the English. But in India England lost her better self, was blinded by repression, became deluded. Gandhi's dream was for a voluntary association between equals after the end of the Empire.⁵³⁹

The massive welcome home in Bombay on 28 December 1931 is described by Privat.⁵⁴⁰ The welcoming delegation for Gandhi was led by his wife Kasturba and by Nehru's daughter Indira, Jawaharlal having been imprisoned while Gandhi was still at sea. Elwin was there to meet Shamrao, and also met up joyfully with his friend Aluwihare, who had been his mentor in Indian matters during his Oxford days. 'I was hailed with a great shout from Bernard Aluwari who dashed through the crowd knocking over several world figures & capitalists & nearly knocked the breath out of me by his hugs'.⁵⁴¹

Elwin and Shamrao left for a few days in Matheran but were soon called back urgently by a telegram from Mahadev to Gandhi's lodgings in Bombay. Like the Privats and Aluwihare who were also sleeping there, they were woken by the arrival of the police to arrest Gandhi. Before he was taken away Gandhi (who was in silence) wrote a note for Elwin:

My dear Elwyn, I am so glad you have come. I would like you yourself to tell your countrymen that I love them even as I love my own countrymen. I have never done anything towards them in hatred or malice and God willing I shall never do anything in that manner in future. I am acting no differently towards them now from what I have done under similar circumstances towards my kith and kin. With love, yours
M. K. Gandhi.⁵⁴²

⁵³⁹ Privat, *Aux Indes avec Gandhi*, p. 21.

⁵⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 32–33.

⁵⁴¹ 'Extracts from Verrier's letter, January 1932', Mss Eur D950/1, fols. 28–29.

⁵⁴² Elwin, *Tribal World*, p. 67; Photograph of the note in Hivale, *Scholar Gipsy*, after p. 31.

In conclusion religious faith played its part in the events described in this chapter, as shown by the Friends House meeting, Lester's hospitality in Kingsley Hall, Gandhi's meetings with the clergy, and above all by Gandhi's Rome meeting with Sorella Maria, Turton, and Sorella Immacolatella. Gandhi contributed little to the Conference attempts to find a constitutional solution for India, but had many opportunities to try to convince his listeners that freedom for India required a partnership of equals with Britain. He disappointed Rolland by declining to act as leader for a fresh approach to European politics, but, as he had expected when his visit to Europe was first planned, he reinforced the affection in which he was held by Rolland and his sister. The spaces of the journey, Kingsley Hall, Oxford, the villas at Villeneuve, Villa Moris, the *Pilsna*, were conducive for him to form new friendships, with the Lindsay family, Mrs. Elwin, Shamrao, and the Privats as examples of new friends.

The 'Passage to Europe' had brought no positive political results but it had clarified Gandhi's political position and strengthened a web of friendships between South Asia and Europe that was to endure. The progress of these friendships will be discussed in the last two chapters of this thesis.

CHAPTER IV: ‘STONE WALLS DO NOT A PRISON MAKE’, SEPTEMBER 1931-SEPTEMBER 1945

*Stone walls do not a prison make,
Nor iron bars a cage:
Minds innocent and quiet take
That for an hermitage.
If I have freedom in my love,
And in my soul am free,
Angels alone, that soar above,
Enjoy such liberty.*

Richard Lovelace, 1642

Today India is one vast prison-house. We are prisoners. You Englishmen and Englishwomen are our jailors. You have to realize your responsibility, that just as we have to render an account of ourselves, you as jailors will also have to render an account of yourselves.

Gandhi, 1931⁵⁴³

‘HM’s guest in one of the numerous free hotels’

Before hosting Gandhi at his home, Scar Top, Boars Hill, on 25 October 1931, Thompson seems to have asked if they might meet in London. A meeting at 88 Knightsbridge originally arranged for Friday 25 September was postponed to 8 p.m. on Monday 5 October by a telegram because of Gandhi’s need to travel to Lancashire.⁵⁴⁴ To Gandhi’s amusement Thompson, knowing that Monday was Gandhi’s Day of Silence, queried this. Gandhi replied in a typed letter on 1 October:

Dear Friend, You have come nearer to me because I see that your imagination has run riot with itself far more than Indians. How? Because I gave you a Monday, you have drawn all kinds of deductions but the simplest, which was that I gave you a time on Monday when I could easily finish my silence. ... After all, I take only 24 hours’ silence between Sunday and Monday, therefore ordinarily it finishes on Monday evenings. How delightful that you thought that my Indian mind found a round-about way of administering rebuke. Well, I again send you next Monday night at 8 o’clock, (p.m.). Could you come to 88, Knightsbridge at that hour, and you will find that I shall have broken my silence at that time? If by some unexpected call on Sunday night I cannot take my

⁵⁴³ Speech to The Commonwealth of India League, London, 30 October 1931, *Gandhi*, LIV, 108–12 (111).

⁵⁴⁴ Gandhi to Thompson, Telegram, 24 September 1931, MS. Eng. c. 5289, fol. 15.

silence in time, you will do penance on Monday for drawing Indian deductions on English soil and wait until the silence is broken.⁵⁴⁵

The letter is an example of Gandhi's use of teasing humour to create a bond with the recipient. 'Dear Friend' was his usual salutation to new correspondents, but in this letter he specifically begins by noting that Thompson's preoccupation with the day of silence has led him to the false assumption that his request for a meeting has been declined and that this over-interpretation of the invitation had made them closer. He hypothesizes that Thompson's English mind has made assumptions about the workings of his own Indian mind and uses this interpretation to establish a common bond, based on a common understanding of possible differences. But as often with Gandhi there is a sting in the tail. It cannot be excluded that Gandhi's silence might over-run and so Thompson must be prepared to do penance (echoes of the *prayaschitta* of *The Other Side of the Medal*) for his taking the liberty of assuming that Gandhi when in England might use an Indian subtlety to renounce their meeting.⁵⁴⁶

Gandhi used the same teasing humour in his question and subsequent comment which Thompson quotes on the dedication page of his book *Letter from India*: 'They tell me, Mr Thompson, that you have published a book entitled A Farewell to India?' 'That is so, Mahatmaji.' 'Well, it seems to me that you have been wasting your time again. How do you think you are ever going to say farewell to India? You are India's prisoner.'⁵⁴⁷

Gandhi used the formal English 'Mr Thompson' (in this period Englishmen who knew each other usually used the surname alone, without the Mr or other title) and Thompson responded with the respectful, Indian, 'Mahatmaji'. Gandhi scolded gently

⁵⁴⁵ Gandhi to Thompson, 1 October 1931, MS. Eng. c. 5289, fol. 16.

⁵⁴⁶ Thompson, *Other Side of the Medal*, p. 131.

⁵⁴⁷ Thompson, *Letter from India*, p. 7.

and with no doubt a smile, for if Thompson had really said a final farewell to India, why on earth would they be meeting now?

Lago uses Gandhi's words in the title of her biography of Thompson.⁵⁴⁸ Neither she nor Thompson has specified when the exchange took place. Conradi, who in his biography of Thompson's son Frank followed Lago in incorrectly dating Gandhi's visit to the Thompson home to the day after his arrival in England, has implied that it was during that meeting.⁵⁴⁹ Given that *A Farewell to India* was published in 1931 and *A Letter from India* in 1932, and that this visit and the previous meeting in Knightsbridge are the only recorded meetings between the two men during this period, on balance the first meeting in Knightsbridge seems the more likely of the two for this exchange.

In her introduction Lago notes the appropriateness of Gandhi's phrase 'India's prisoner'.⁵⁵⁰ She contrasts Thompson's repeated wish to be free of India with his ever-deeper entanglement. But importantly, and this is significant in understanding Thompson, being India's prisoner did not necessarily imply being India's friend.

While Gandhi was still in England Thompson demonstrated his continued 'imprisonment' by obtaining funding from the Rhodes Trust for a fact-finding visit to India, on behalf of the Trustees and also on behalf of the *Manchester Guardian*. Replying to a letter from Thompson, Gandhi, shortly before his departure, wrote in his own hand from Kingsley Hall on 1 December.⁵⁵¹ For ease of reference, and also as a beautiful example of a letter written in English by Gandhi in his own hand, a scan of this letter is included as **Figure 5**. The letter does not appear to have been published in Gandhi's *Collected Works*.

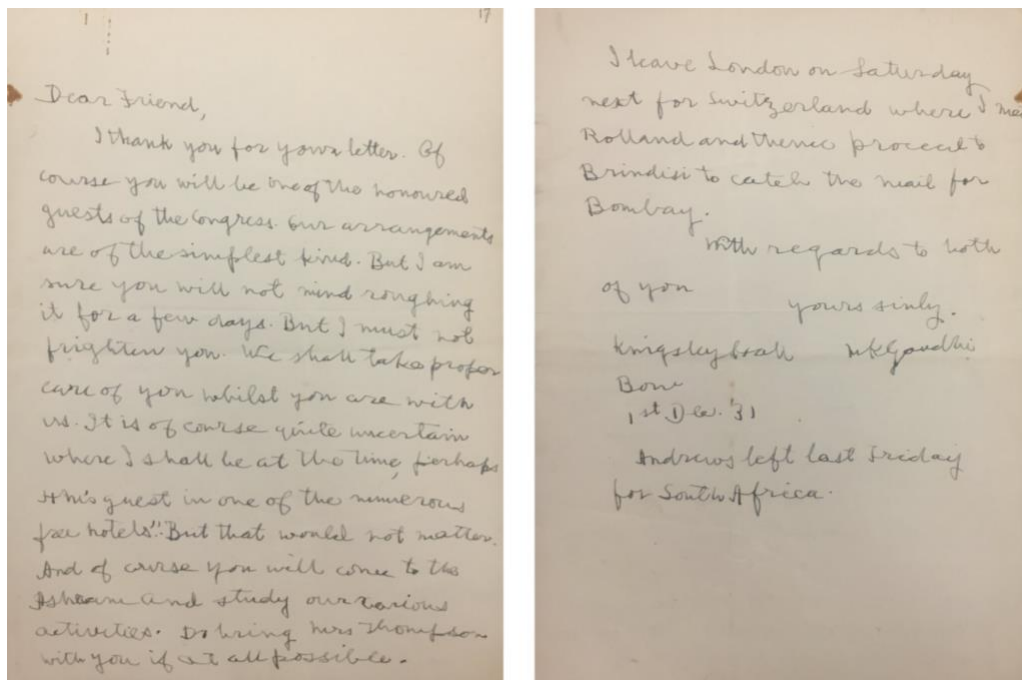
⁵⁴⁸ Lago, *India's Prisoner*, p. iii (Title page).

⁵⁴⁹ Conradi, *A Very English Hero*, pp. 96–97; Lago, *India's Prisoner*, p. 245.

⁵⁵⁰ Lago, *India's Prisoner*, p. 1.

⁵⁵¹ Gandhi to Thompson, 1 December 1931, MS. Eng. c. 5289, fol. 17.

In the letter Gandhi assured Thompson that he, and also his wife if she would be coming, would be welcome guests at his Ashram. 'It is of course quite uncertain where I shall be at the time, perhaps HM's guest in one of the numerous free hotels!!' He would be leaving London on Saturday 5 December to meet Romain Rolland in Switzerland and then would be proceeding to Brindisi; he did not mention that this very recent change in his intended port of departure was caused by his plans for meetings in Rome with Mussolini and with Sorella Maria. As a postscript he added that Andrews had already left England on Friday 27 November for South Africa (where he had been invited to act as a mediator for an India-South Africa Round Table Conference). Gandhi's prediction was correct: when 'India's prisoner' landed in Bombay on 13 January 1932 the Mahatma had already been confined to jail, nine days earlier on 4 January.



**Figure 5. Letter from Gandhi to Thompson, 1 December 1931.
Bodleian Library, MS. Eng. c. 5289, fol. 17.**

Prison, both as the metaphor and as the reality, was a trope in the anti-imperial discourse, and indeed has remained so in the democratic discourse confronting

oppressive postcolonial regimes. David Arnold in his discussion of life histories in India, with particular reference to autobiographies written in prison, notes how prison in the colonial context was seen as an embodiment of the imperial power.⁵⁵² For all, prison was a continual background source of dread; for the educated Indian, a challenge to status; for the forest Indian an unbearable challenge to lifestyle. Prison recurs in the literature of this period. In *A Passage to India* the Indian doctor Aziz twice becomes ‘the prisoner’ before his eventual release.⁵⁵³ In *Burmese Days* the prison doctor is the protagonist’s only Indian confidant; the protagonist’s attempts at courtship through the gift of a hunting trophy falter when it emerges that the only good taxidermist has escaped from the prison.⁵⁵⁴ In *The Village in the Jungle* the lover’s journey seeking the prisoner from the village ends in the inevitable discovery: excluded from the freedom of the forest, like his predecessors he has died in jail.⁵⁵⁵

Yet prison was also a political weapon to be used against the contested government. Once the insurgent was inside the prison his continued imprisonment was a constant source of complaint for his followers and if the insurgent was well-known this might be an embarrassment in the imperial metropolis. Gandhi’s use of the fasting weapon took this to a further extreme. Congress specifically planned for a constant stream of candidates for imprisonment, in order to maintain pressure on the Government of India, and to develop a protesting following that might contribute to the building of the nation. Those imprisoned became heroes of the independence movement, and hence were envied by those associated with the movement (including Elwin) who had not had this experience.

⁵⁵² David Arnold and Stuart Blackburn, *Telling Lives in India: Biography, Autobiography, and Life History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004).

⁵⁵³ Forster, *A Passage to India*.

⁵⁵⁴ George Orwell, *Burmese Days* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1934).

⁵⁵⁵ Leonard Sidney Woolf, *The Village in the Jungle* (London: Arnold, 1913).

Conditions in prison covered a spectrum, including solitary confinement, hard labour, and exposure to violence applied to the prisoners themselves or to other prisoners, but also individual permissions to read and write, permissions to associate with other prisoners, permission to create gardens, and permission to visit unwell relatives. Prisoners were divided into Categories A, B, and C: Category A prisoners kept their own clothes, while other prisoners wore prison clothes. Mirabehn (Madeleine Slade, herself a Category A prisoner) described the arrival of Sarojini Naidu, ‘overflowing with vivacity and wit’ at Bombay’s Arthur Road jail, preceded by ‘a bed, a dressing table with brush and comb, a washstand, a bathtub, etc, and even curtains’.⁵⁵⁶ When Gandhi’s companions were imprisoned with him their daily routine, with timings adjusted to the prison routine, was not all that different from the ashram routine, with prayers daily and Gandhi’s day of silence weekly. In the Friday evening prayers, the singing of Newman’s hymn ‘Lead, Kindly Light’, as suggested by Elwin, linked the prisoners to those remembering them and praying for them around the world. The biggest issue was physical access to the outside world, with restrictions on access to news, on sending and receiving mail (which was always censored), and on visits from family members and well-wishers. When in prison Mirabehn was given the choice of receiving visitors or of sending and receiving mail; she chose the latter so that she could remain in constant contact with Gandhi.

Gandhi had already been imprisoned three times in South Africa and, as described in Elwin’s correspondence with the Eremo in Chapter II, twice previously in India. His second Indian imprisonment had ended only with his pact with Lord Irwin (1881-1959, Viceroy 1926-1931), enabling him to attend the second Round Table Conference. When he was arrested on 4 January 1932, in response to his letter to Lord Willingdon (1866-

⁵⁵⁶ Slade, *Spirit’s Pilgrimage*, p. 161.

1941, Viceroy 1931-1936) informing him that Congress had resolved to resume civil disobedience, he was taken to Yeravda Jail. Thompson was not allowed to visit him but was able to report, on the basis of first-hand information, that he was keeping fit.

Thompson did meet with Mirabehn, who had not yet been arrested, and who in her view felt that he, Thompson, should be leading a procession of protest so as to be arrested and join the prisoners.⁵⁵⁷ Should he have followed her wishes, judging by Horniman's experience, he would more likely have been deported forthwith, with, judging by Elwin's experience, a question mark as to whether he might ever be allowed to return to India in the future. Mirabehn arranged for Thompson to meet some of Gandhi's supporters, including Gandhi's son Devadas, and Elwin ('a missionary dressed in Khuddu & bare feet'), who was staying with her at the time.⁵⁵⁸ Thompson found them reluctant to answer questions, which was perhaps understandable given that, in his efforts always to appear even-handed, his own support for Gandhi and for Congress seemed equivocal, and also that, as he reported, in three days' time all of them, apart from Mirabehn (who would soon follow) and Elwin, would be in prison.⁵⁵⁹ Elwin's letter to Turton of 21 January 1932, written while he was still staying with Mirabehn, confirms the situation 'Mahadev and Bernard are in jail, Devidas [*sic*] is to be arrested today. Shamrao is with me. ...quite possible that before you get this, we shall be in jail.' Elwin's letter included a copy of their report of their visit in disguise to Peshawar, to investigate at Gandhi's request the situation in the North-West Frontier Province, for which there was then a total news blackout.⁵⁶⁰

⁵⁵⁷ Thompson, *Letter from India*, p. 23.

⁵⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 24-28; Thompson to Theo, 18-22 January 1932, Ms. Eng. 6360, fols.18, 19.

⁵⁵⁹ Elwin had a busy month: meeting Shamrao (and Aluwihare) in Bombay (28 December 1931), breaking off his understanding with Ali Pocha in Matheran (29 December 1931-3 January 1932), presence at Gandhi's arrest (3-4 January 1932), spying in the North-West Frontier Province (6-16 January 1932), and staying with Mirabehn (around 21 January 1932) before setting off to start St Francis' Ashram at Karanjia (29 January 1932).

⁵⁶⁰ Elwin to Turton, 21 January 1932, Mss Eur D950/7, fol. 41.

Thompson reported his experiences during his visit to India in *A Letter from India*. This book, published by Faber and Faber in 1932, might perhaps have been better entitled *Letters from India* since it is based on newspaper reports he wrote for the three very different readerships of *The Manchester Guardian*, *The Spectator*, and *The Times*. In the *Manchester Guardian* section of the book he writes cynically about the Congress prisoners, well aware of the status and prestige imprisonment bestowed on the leaders:

The Indian Government ...has invented a form of martyrdom which is mostly garlands for its more distinguished practitioners. Rigorous imprisonment can be meted out to the little people; nothing serious can be done to people taken up merely because in another week they are likely to be mischievous.⁵⁶¹

But he argues that further negotiation will be needed before implementing a new constitution for India, and he points out that to wait until the constitution was in place and only then to release from prison those who would be needed to make it work was unrealistic.⁵⁶² British experience in 1945, notably at the June-July Simla conference, would tend to confirm that he was right.

Thompson referred early in the book to the ‘abounding kindness’ which he met during this visit, and he remarked that an Englishman ‘can walk in anywhere and find a welcome’. More Englishmen were needed who took ‘friendliness for granted’ and ‘accepted it without reservation of [?] or] racial nervousness’. Later he wrote of ‘the thousands of friends I have in every part of India, and with humility I remember their patience and their fairness and their kindness and their abounding belief in my people’. But the book contained little concerning personal friendships, even in its references to Gandhi, Tagore, Andrews, Mirabeau, or Elwin. From Thompson’s letters to his wife it is clear that the lawyer M. R. Jayakar (1873-1959) proved a magnificent host in Bombay, but that in a Bengal rendered hostile by his books about Tagore Thompson’s

⁵⁶¹ Thompson, *Letter from India*, p. 62.

⁵⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 16.

only remaining friends, apart from his former pupils, appear to have been Prasanta Mahalanobis and his wife Rani.⁵⁶³

His chapter, 'What Happened at Jallanwalabagh', originally written for *The Spectator*, whose readership was more conservative than that of *The Manchester Guardian*, was based on his discussions with Irving. It seems almost a recantation of his account in *The Other Side of the Medal*, attempting to absolve Dyer at least in part because he 'never knew there was no way out'.⁵⁶⁴ Once again, as when he met with Gandhi's followers, his determined efforts to appear even handed, even almost trying to be all things to all men, which he saw as necessary to presenting an unbiased view and account, both to those he met in India, and to his readers back in England and further afield, meant that at this time there was little chance that he might make a bridge between the two. Das Gupta has noted how this chapter brought disapproval from both sides, quoting a letter by Humayun Kabir to Thompson pointing out that the 'endeavour to be scrupulously fair to both parties in the struggle' would not increase his 'popularity with either Englishmen or Indians'.⁵⁶⁵

In contrast Thompson's article for *The Times*, 'Mainly about Lions' is light-hearted and literary, only controversial in its concern that big game hunting could lead to species extinctions, a risk that only began to be taken seriously more than thirty years later.⁵⁶⁶

Fasting unto death

This spell of imprisonment for Gandhi began after his return from Europe and his support for the recommencement of non-cooperation and ended with his fast to the

⁵⁶³ E. P. Thompson, *Alien Homage*, p. 92.

⁵⁶⁴ Thompson, *Letter from India*, p. 102.

⁵⁶⁵ Das Gupta, *Difficult Friendship*, p. 7.

⁵⁶⁶ Thompson, *Letter from India*, pp. 153-59.

death against a communal electorate for the Untouchables. At the time many had difficulty in understanding the need for such an extreme step; at this distance in time understanding has not become very much easier. The issue had its origin in the Round Table Conferences, at both of which Bhimrao Ambedkar (1891-1956) as leader of the Untouchables had insisted that the only way for his caste to achieve democratic representation was for it to have a separate electorate with reserved seats, as had already been accepted for the Muslims and the Sikhs. Gandhi's visions of a united Hinduism and of Congress as sole representative of a united India would not allow this. He spoke repeatedly against this approach, which he felt would make the situation of the Untouchables worse, leading to increased division and entrenched conflict between the castes at village level. He told the Conference 'If I was the only person to resist this thing, I would resist it with my life'.⁵⁶⁷ At this point the damage was done; his insistence on being a man of his word, an essential plank of his teaching on Truth, meant that he was prepared to lay down his life to try to prevent the Untouchables being granted a communal electorate.⁵⁶⁸

Consequently, having already in March 1932 reminded Samuel Hoare (1880-1959, Secretary of State for India, 1931-1935) of his intention, Gandhi wrote on 18 August to inform Ramsay MacDonald (1866-1937, Prime Minister, United Kingdom, 1929-1935) that following the British Government's announcement that a separate electorate would be created for the Depressed Classes he would start a fast unto death on 20 September unless the British revised their decision.⁵⁶⁹ He received MacDonald's reply on 9 September and wrote back to him the same day confirming his intention to fast: '... I

⁵⁶⁷ 'Speech at Minorities Committee Meeting', 13 November 1931, *Gandhi*, LIV, 154–159 (159).

⁵⁶⁸ The comparison with his insistence that Elwin must not go back on any understanding with Pocha, and that there must be no untruth about such an understanding (Chapter II) is illuminating here.

⁵⁶⁹ Gandhi to MacDonald, 18 August 1932, *Gandhi*, LVI, 347-8.

affirm that for me this matter is one of pure religion'. 'In establishment of a separate electorate at all for "Depressed" classes I sense the injection of a poison that is calculated to destroy Hinduism and do no good whatsoever to "Depressed" classes.'⁵⁷⁰

There is a connection here with Gandhi's fascination with the crucifix in the Sistine Chapel in Rome. As he had written in terms of Muslim support for the Caliphate, and as he was presumably thinking in terms of Jesus' death, this was a religious question in the sense that it bound 'him to reach the goal even at the cost of his life'.⁵⁷¹ Thus for Gandhi the fast unto death was a religious, not a political, obligation. While his decision to give his life for the Untouchables might seem to be modelled on the example of Jesus, it was taken for the future of Hinduism and to try to protect that religion from becoming through political division the tool of politicians.

Devji addresses this class of decision by Gandhi in terms of a free choice of suffering in the context of friendship (in this particular case, presumably with the Depressed Classes, and, more generally, with the Hindus):

... Gandhi's conversion of suffering into a choice freely made by the individual ended up setting aside its historical memory as a form of collective experience that made brotherly obligation possible. In making friendship available on the uncommon ground of solitary experience, then, suffering operated prejudicially, indeed even by brinkmanship, as when the spectacle of Gandhi's own suffering in the form of fasts voluntarily undertaken so often forced rivals to parley.⁵⁷²

There were other friends besides the Depressed Classes who would be touched by this fast. As part of his preparations, demonstrating his determination to take the fast to its final conclusion if necessary, Gandhi wrote letters to a number of his close friends and associates. The spirit in which he wrote these letters is shown by two of them in particular. He was writing to Mirabehn regularly, but she particularly records in her

⁵⁷⁰ Gandhi to MacDonald, 9 September 1932, *Gandhi*, LVII, 8-9.

⁵⁷¹ M. K. Gandhi, 'Khilafat: Further Questions Answered', *Young India*, 2 June 1920, p.2, quoted in Devji, *Impossible Indian*, p. 82.

⁵⁷² Devji, *Impossible Indian*, p. 89.

autobiography the letter that he wrote, and she received, on the day he started his fast, 20 September:

As I wrote that first letter conveying my vow [his first letter to MacDonald] I thought of you and Ba [his wife, Kasturba]. And for a time I became giddy. How would you two bear the thing! But the voice within said, 'If you will enter in, you must give up all thought of attachment' And the letter went. No anguish will be too terrible to wash out the sin of Untouchability. You must therefore rejoice in this suffering, and bear it bravely. I know how difficult all this is to do. Yet that is exactly what you have to try to do. Just think and realise that there is no meaning in having the last look. The spirit which you love is always with you. The body through which you learned to love the spirit is no longer necessary for sustaining that love.⁵⁷³

His hesitation before sending the letter to MacDonald showed his insight into the feelings of his wife (now in practice more correctly described as his close friend and supporter and mother of his children, since they had renounced conjugal relationships) and his English disciple, who both loved him; his instructions in the letter to rejoice in his suffering and to remain attached to his spirit, not to his body, left no doubt that he was prepared to die. As Devji has shown, Gandhi was not prepared to accept the preservation of life as an absolute, seeing this paradoxically as being at the root of the politically inspired mass-killing of the European wars.⁵⁷⁴ Thus truth for Gandhi took moral precedence over preservation of life, even if that life was a life-spring for others.

Gandhi's letter to Elwin was shorter:

My dear Verrier, you had, I hope, no difficulty in understanding the step I am about to take. This is therefore just to tell you that all my English friends were before my mind's eye when I penned my letter to the Prime Minister. May God bring good out of this. My love to you all in which Sardar and Mahadev join me. We sing the hymn [Lead, Kindly Light] this evening (Friday). Bapu.⁵⁷⁵

Reading between the lines ('you had, I hope, no difficulty ...') Gandhi may in fact have had some doubt as to whether Elwin had understood why the fast to the death was needed. Writing thirty years later in his autobiography, Elwin gives a factual account

⁵⁷³ Gandhi to Mirabehn, 20 September 1933, in Slade, *Spirit's Pilgrimage*, p. 167.

⁵⁷⁴ Devji, *Impossible Indian*, pp. 185–87.

⁵⁷⁵ Gandhi to Elwin, 16 September 1933, in Elwin, *Tribal World*, p. 83.

of the fast without any comment of agreement or disagreement. But for Gandhi the important point was to repeat the message he had given Elwin before leaving for jail: this step was not personally directed against the English, and he wanted his English friends to understand at least that. Friends around the world were uniting in the singing of Newman's hymn; friends around the world were to receive letters to reassure them that they had been taken into account in Gandhi's decision.

The letters were personal, with the salutation and the signature to which each recipient was accustomed. Thus Herman Kallenbach (1871-1945) was addressed as 'Lower House' with sign off 'Upper House',⁵⁷⁶ Edmond and Yvonne Privat were addressed as 'Anand' and 'Bhakti',⁵⁷⁷ and the letter to Padmaja Naidu (1900-1975), Sarojini's daughter, had as sign off 'Love from your intimate friend, comrade and playmate. The Slave Driver'.⁵⁷⁸ Often, but not always, the letters were in response to a letter or telegram from the recipient. As well as the Privats, friends from the previous year's European tour receiving his cables and letters included Andrews,⁵⁷⁹ Agatha Harrison,⁵⁸⁰ Muriel Lester,⁵⁸¹ and Romain Rolland.⁵⁸² There were many to friends and well-wishers in India, including interestingly one to Jack Winslow and the Christa Seva Sangh, who no longer seemed to be embarrassed to be giving their support: 'Without your gift of flowers I knew that I had your hearts and prayers with me. All the same I treasure this physical token'.⁵⁸³ One more letter which showed Gandhi's joyfulness and looking to the future in his fast was that written to the children of the Sarbamati Ashram (to whom he had still not been able to deliver the toys from the East End children)

⁵⁷⁶ Gandhi to H. Kallenbach, 18 September 1932, *Gandhi*, LVII, 55.

⁵⁷⁷ Gandhi to Edmond and Yvonne Privat, 16 September 1932, *Gandhi*, LVII, 44.

⁵⁷⁸ Gandhi to Padmaja Naidu, *Gandhi*, LVII, 55.

⁵⁷⁹ Gandhi to Andrews, 13 September 1932, *Gandhi*, LVII, 28.

⁵⁸⁰ Gandhi to Agatha Harrison, 16 September 1932, *Gandhi*, LVII, 43.

⁵⁸¹ Gandhi to Muriel Lester, 16 September 1932, *Gandhi*, LVII, 45.

⁵⁸² Gandhi to Romain Rolland, 16 September 1932, *Gandhi*, LVII, 44.

⁵⁸³ Gandhi to Members of Christ Seva Sangh, 19 September 1932, *Gandhi*, LVII, 99.

‘...if I pass away into the final sleep, dance with joy and take a pledge that you will complete my work. What great fun and joy that work will be! All of you should acquire the strength for that ordeal.’⁵⁸⁴

Most of the letters were short; to Indian friends the recurrent themes were joy at the opportunity to give his life for the cause of the Untouchables, that they should rejoice and not mourn if he were to die, and that they were not to emulate his action. But the poetess Sarojini received a more demanding letter. Sarojini had sent ‘a loving sermon’, ‘appealing to my pride to retrace my steps so as to make me cling to life’ and Gandhi replied with a mixture of high theology (‘The decision was taken after much prayer, in the name of God and at His call’) and homely proverb (‘the proof of the pudding is in the eating’). He was not persuaded: Sarojini must realise that ‘She who sees life in death and death in life is the real Poetess and Seeress’.⁵⁸⁵ Sarojini was a friend of very long standing, and one of the few to have the moral authority to try to dissuade Gandhi from the fast, but even she made no headway against Gandhi’s firmly taken decision.

The urgency of the situation was appreciated in Poona, Simla, and London. Hard, detailed, and tiring negotiations between Ambedkar and the fasting Gandhi finally achieved an agreement: not separate electorates, but reserved seats for the untouchables. Consent was needed from the British Prime Minister, which Andrews, with Agatha Harrison’s assistance, obtained by taking the agreement to the Prime Minister’s country residence Chequers on Sunday morning, 25 September 1932.⁵⁸⁶ Gandhi broke his fast at 5 p.m. the next day, after Tagore, who had travelled from Bengal to be with him, had sung a verse of his poem *Gitanjali*. Once he had recovered Gandhi started once again

⁵⁸⁴ Gandhi to Ashram Boys and Girls, 19 September 1932, *Gandhi*, LVII, 65.

⁵⁸⁵ Gandhi to Sarojini Naidu, 17 September 1932, *Gandhi*, LVII, 47-49.

⁵⁸⁶ Chaturvedī and Sykes, *Andrews*, p. 262.

to write to his Indian and European friends, thanking them for their support during his fast.

Because of the restrictions on receiving mail from other prisoners one friend, Nehru, prisoner since 26 December 1931 in Dehra Dun jail, had not received any correspondence from Gandhi prior to the fast. On 24 September 1932 Gandhi had permission to send him a telegram: ‘During all these days of agony you have been before mind’s eye. I am most anxious to know your opinion. You know how I value your opinion. ... Doing very well. Love. Bapu.’⁵⁸⁷ As Mahadev had explained, jokingly, to Nehru in a letter written on the voyage to Europe, Gandhi’s affection for Nehru had a strong paternal element, and in this was similar to Gandhi’s relationships with Mirabehn and with Elwin.⁵⁸⁸

Nehru replied with a telegram which was a masterpiece of drafting, managing to include his thoughts on all the significant themes, emotion, politics, religion, future tactics, and respect, within its economic constraints:

Your telegram and brief news that some settlement reached filled me relief joy. First news your decision fast caused mental agony confusion but ultimately optimism triumphed regained peace mind. No sacrifice too great for suppressed downtrodden classes. Freedom must be judged by freedom of lowest but feel danger other issues obscuring only goal. Am unable judge from religious viewpoint. Danger your methods being exploited by others but how can I presume advise magician. Love. Jawahar.⁵⁸⁹

This telegraphic summary illustrates how that, despite their obvious friendship, mutual esteem, and fictive father-son relationship, Gandhi and Nehru were agreed on two important aims, freedom for India, and emancipation for the suppressed classes, but were not agreed on Gandhi’s religious motivation or indeed on the use of fasting as

⁵⁸⁷ Gandhi to Nehru, Telegram, 24 September 1932, *Gandhi*, LVII, 112-13.

⁵⁸⁸ Mahadev to Nehru, 31 August 1931, cited in Judith M. Brown, *Nehru: A Political Life* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), p. 112.

⁵⁸⁹ Nehru to Gandhi, Telegram, 25 September 1933, *Nehru*, v, 409-10.

a means to achieve these aims. Nehru's inability to 'judge from religious view-point' reflects his agnostic approach to all religion, informed by his understanding of Socialism, and his impatience when religion became a political issue. For the purposes of this thesis this is an important example of a friendship which remained strong despite political and religious difference.

Gandhi acknowledged this difference in a letter of 2 May 1933, written before the start of his second (this time time-limited and orange juice supported) fast for the Depressed Classes. He wrote first of his attachment to Hinduism as the driving force in his Harijan campaign. There was 'nothing so bad in all the world' as untouchability. 'And yet I cannot leave religion and therefore Hinduism. My life would be a burden to me, if Hinduism failed me. I love Christianity, Islam and many other faiths through Hinduism.' Then he moved to the issue of risking his life and his life's work with the fast: '... surely death is not an end to all effort. Rightly faced it may be the beginning of a nobler effort.' He accepted that he will not convince Nehru by argument; if Nehru 'did not see the truth intuitively', 'even if I do not carry your approval with me, I shall retain your precious love during all these days of trial'.⁵⁹⁰

Building a friendship

During this time Nehru's wife Kamala's pulmonary tuberculosis was worsening. Her condition deteriorated and Nehru, who had been released at the end of August 1933 but re-imprisoned on 12 February 1934, was released on 12 August 1934 for an 11-day period to see her. He took the opportunity of his temporary freedom to write a very long letter to Gandhi, dated 13 August 1934, with his pent-up and critical opinions concerning the directions being taken by Congress, some of which had been directly

⁵⁹⁰ Gandhi to Nehru, 2 May 1933, *Gandhi*, LXI, 59-60.

instigated by Gandhi, about some of the individuals involved, and about the financial arrangements for Swaraj Bhavan, his old family home in Allahabad which his father had left to Congress. He made little concession to personal friendship, although he did conclude 'Perhaps some parts of this letter might pain you. But you would not have me hide my heart from you. Yours affectionately, Jawahar'.⁵⁹¹

Gandhi replied with a shorter letter, dated 17 August 1934, which overflowed with understanding but also appealed to political realism, beginning 'Your passionate and touching letter deserves a much longer reply than my strength will permit.' '... your presence has done for Kamala and incidentally for Mama [Nehru's recently widowed mother] what no drugs or doctors could have done.' 'I understand your deep sorrow. You are quite right in giving full and free expression to your feelings.' 'Let me assure you that you have not lost a comrade in me.' 'After the explosion I want construction. Therefore now lest we do not meet, tell me exactly what you will have me to do and who you think will best represent your views.' 'As regards Swaraj Bhavan, ... I would ask you not to take this matter so personally as you have done. It more becomes your generous nature to give the same credit to your co-trustees for regard to Father's memory that you would take for yourself. Let the nation be the custodian of Father's memory and you only as one of the nation.' Gandhi's careful choice of words and sympathy covering gentle rebuke used the letter medium to achieve a fatherly rapprochement which Nehru might find difficult to resist.⁵⁹²

Kamala's health continued to deteriorate and in April 1935 their daughter Indira left her studies at Tagore's Shantiniketan to accompany her mother to a sanatorium in the Black Forest in Germany. Nehru, who was in Almora Jail, was allowed out for one day

⁵⁹¹ Nehru to Gandhi, 13 August 1934, in Nehru, *Bunch of Old Letters*, pp. 115–20.

⁵⁹² Gandhi to Nehru, 17 August 1934, in *ibid.*, pp. 120–121.

to visit his wife in Bhawali Sanatorium to say goodbye. Then on 2 September he received a telegram saying that Kamal's condition had become critical. He was released from jail unconditionally and five days later, having flown to Europe, he was with his wife and daughter.

When there were improvements in Kamala's condition Nehru made two brief trips to England. During the first he visited Oxford and while there called on Thompson. Thompson wrote to him subsequently on 26 November 1935, offering to be of assistance in the publication and review of his autobiography.⁵⁹³ Thompson's salutation, using the unadorned surname used between equals of those times, was 'Dear Nehru (we do not need to stand on ceremony)'. He appreciated Nehru's situation: 'You have a sick wife ... You looked to me a very tired man. I am one myself, and in poor health too, so I can sympathise'. In a sentence he set out his political stance, in the hope that Nehru shared this: 'I want friendship between Britain and India; but even more I want the bringing in of a just social system, both here and in India'. Thompson warned that he would be leaving for India in a month's time but would be returning in April; this was for research for his book *The Life of Charles, Lord Metcalfe*.⁵⁹⁴ Thompson's letter appears to have been left unanswered.

In the end Thompson's departure for India was postponed until September 1936. He travelled widely all over the sub-continent, including Hyderabad in the south and Bikaner in the north (both princely states), Bombay in the west and Calcutta in the east, and had interviews with numerous individuals, both those in government and those in the nationalist movement, including in Delhi the Viceroy Willingdon, whom he found charming and frank, and in Wardha Gandhi, who was rather busy nursing Mirabehn.

⁵⁹³ Thompson to Nehru, 26 November 1935, in Nehru, *Bunch of Old Letters*, pp. 155.

⁵⁹⁴ Edward Thompson, *The Life of Charles, Lord Metcalfe* (London: Faber and Faber, 1937).

His letter from Delhi of 26 October asking if he could meet Nehru in Allahabad was addressed in jocular fashion also to the censor as he had noticed that his letters were ‘taking four or five days to do one day journeys’, comparing unfavourably with the service he had experienced between Bakura and Darjeeling in 1920 for his daily correspondence with his wife.⁵⁹⁵ The meeting took place, most probably on 30 October, and Thompson found Nehru ‘frank and affectionate’. Before leaving for Calcutta, on 30 October, Thompson wrote again to Nehru, a letter presumably delivered by hand to avoid the censor, with a draft for an article for the *News Chronicle*, asking for Nehru’s responses to a list of questions so that the article could take the format of an interview. The article was eventually published on 2 January 1937. The letter briefly lists three of Thompson’s political opinions, indicating how he distanced himself from Gandhi and Nehru. But in a postscript he wrote ‘Please be sure that I am essentially a friend of India’s independence, and, once my brain is convinced, can be relied on to stand firm. I cannot do this when I disagree and will not pretend to do it’.⁵⁹⁶

On arrival in Calcutta Thompson found some books sent by Nehru, but was disappointed, as he remarked in a further letter of 1 November, that they did not have his name in an inscribed dedication.⁵⁹⁷ This letter’s main comment was on the hardening of the government’s response, part and parcel of the hardening against all freedom everywhere: ‘These people do not intend to let themselves be smashed’. Then on 24 November 1936 he wrote a letter to Nehru from Pondicherry, a long and bitter (second) farewell to India – he was due to sail from Bombay on 5 December:

I am sorry for you. If I may say so, I liked you as I have not liked someone on so little acquaintance, for years. I still think that if we had seen more of each other and had pooled our very different experiences at some leisure, we could have helped each other intellectually. But we have to go our different ways ... I to settle down to

⁵⁹⁵ Thompson to Nehru, 26 October 1936, in Nehru, *Bunch of Old Letters*, p. 208.

⁵⁹⁶ Thompson to Nehru, 30 October 1936, in *ibid.*, p. 209.

⁵⁹⁷ Thompson to Nehru, 1 November 1936, in *ibid.*, p. 210.

my rightful vocation of English poet and novelist ... and you to break your heart on the folly of your own people. ... Nothing can prevent you being increasingly surrounded by a circus, such as besets Mahatmaji!⁵⁹⁸

There are some more personal matters. Thompson hopes that Indira 'will regard my wife and myself as friends, we shall feel honoured; and she will find we are friends'. He asks to be remembered to Nehru's sister 'whose charming hospitality I shall long remember. I wish she knew my wife. I hope she will, when you revisit Oxford'.

Nehru replied in time to catch Thompson before he left 'this distressful and distressing country' in a letter of 3 December 1936.⁵⁹⁹ He sympathized with Thompson's revulsion at British, European, and American idolaters of India and Indians and at the excesses of Aurobindo Ghose's Pondicherry ashram. But neither for him were of any importance. He disagreed completely with Thompson's analysis of the Indian situation in his *News Chronicle* article that had been published before the two had met. 'But I do not wish to discuss your article. I just wanted to send you my good wishes on the eve of your departure from India. Do not go away with all this bitterness for this unhappy country.' He would pass on the invitation to Indira ready for her planned start at Oxford in October 1937.

Thompson took the opportunity of the homeward voyage to write a long reply, dated 6 December 1936.⁶⁰⁰ This excused his previous letter as stemming from his disillusionment in Pondicherry and expressed concern that as with the Labour party in England the nationalist cause in India would accept no criticism. But in his view Gandhi no longer knew how to use or direct the passions that he roused, while Nehru's socialism was bad tactics, as strengthening 'the forces against you', even if given the 'monstrous' economic, social, and religious structure in India, it would prove the right

⁵⁹⁸ Thompson to Nehru, 24 November 1936, in Nehru, *Bunch of Old Letters*, p. 212.

⁵⁹⁹ Nehru to Thompson, 3 December 1936, *Nehru*, VII, 673-674.

⁶⁰⁰ Thompson to Nehru, 6 December 1936, in Nehru, *Bunch of Old Letters*, p. 213-7.

course long term. He argued that given the resistance of the Princes and the Muslims and their alliance with the British Conservative party, Congress must ‘take office wherever you can: do all the good you can, administratively and legislatively: claim every right, and every inch of ground, you can: and at the first possible moment say you are going to occupy ground still more advanced’. In this way the Muslims would come to realise that their future was with India, not with the Tories; in this way the National Movement would change from being ‘an almost solely Hindu Movement’ into ‘an Indian movement’. Thompson ended his letter ‘Do not answer this. Only, for the time being, hold in abeyance your conviction that I am bitter against India. Yours sincerely, E. Thompson’.

Nehru waited until after the provincial elections to reply. Then on 22 April 1937 he sent a five-page rebuttal of Thompson’s position as expressed in his letter and his *News Chronicle* article.⁶⁰¹ He explained that he had waited to reply not just because he had been travelling the length and breadth of India campaigning for Congress and as a result had been recuperating for nearly a month, but also, since they differed so fundamentally in their interpretations of India, so that the course of events might show which of them was right. He claimed that Thompson’s analysis of Congress was contradicted by his own experience of addressing vast crowds all over the country, and of mixing with them and sensing ‘some of the ferment that moved them’ (**Figure 6**). The Faizpur Congress, at which Nehru had been president, had passed without the predicted split and divisions, and Congress’ success in the elections meant that Muslims were increasingly likely to be lending their support to the party. He was surprised how Thompson emphasized small groups, such as the Liberals, which were unimportant on the national scale, and the Princes. ‘The Princes are there of course and they are a nuisance. ... They will have

⁶⁰¹ Nehru to Thompson, 22 April 1937, MS. Eng. c. 530, fols 10-15.

to go.’ Thompson seemed to have neglected ‘the fact that Indian politics are more and more shaped by the mass urges and by the conscious opinions of hundreds of thousands of persons’. Comfortingly Nehru wrote: ‘I don’t think I object to criticism even from an Englishman! I really don’t mind what you say or write to me’.

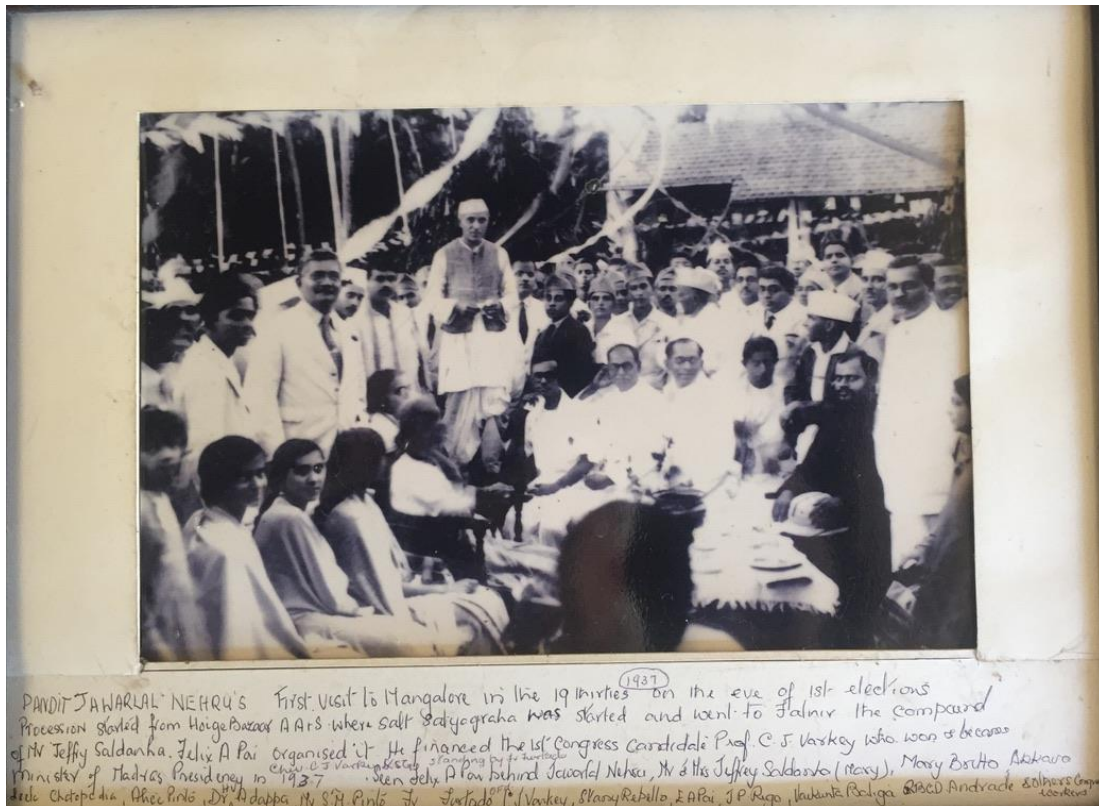


Figure 6. Nehru electioneering in Mangalore in 1937.

The organiser of the meeting, Felix Albuquerque Pai, half hidden behind Nehru, was a Christian, a descendant of a Brahmin converted by the Portuguese. Photograph reproduced by kind permission of its owners, the Albuquerque Pai family

Thompson replied, contritely, on 3 May 1937.⁶⁰² Congress was ‘the most modern and important movement in India’ and was ‘striving for the things that I also want in my own country, so that your battle is my battle’. He went on to consider the increasing violence of the state against the individual, contrasting this with the pre-Great War liberal confidence that injustice could be resolved by peaceful means. Then he reported his concern for the situation in Spain, where his friend and co-author Geoffrey Garratt

⁶⁰² Thompson to Nehru, 3 May 1937, in Nehru, *Bunch of Old Letters*, pp. 233-41.

(1888-1942), whom he had met during their voyage to India in 1931-2) was working in support of the Republicans. He assured Nehru that he had read the letter with 'close attention' and that he found it 'for the most part deeply convincing'.

This exchange of letters demonstrates a high level of respect between the two correspondents, each timing their replies according to the needs of the other, providing extensive justifications for their point of view, yet accepting the different position of the other. The correspondence, each recognised, had important implications for the futures of India and the United Kingdom, with Nehru being a political leader, while Thompson was a significant metropolitan source of information on the situation in India. In the background is the sense of a growing personal relationship between the two men.

In June of the following year, 1938, Nehru travelled by sea to Genoa, and then to Marseilles, and from there overland to Barcelona, where he experienced at first hand bombing by Franco's forces. He visited the front and later wrote of those he met of the International Brigades that they were 'the jolliest crowd' who 'had come as volunteers from distant places, drawn by that strange attraction for serving a cause which has moved men and women throughout the ages'.⁶⁰³ Helen Graham writes of these volunteers in terms of a Europe-wide struggle between those who clung to a 'fixed social hierarchy' and those who looked forward to 'a more fluid form of society', a hope which paralleled Nehru's socialist vision for independent India.⁶⁰⁴ Nehru wrote that he left them reluctantly 'for something within me wanted to stay on this inhospitable hillside which sheltered so much courage, so much of what was worthwhile in life'.

⁶⁰³ 'Spain—A Year Ago' *Nehru*, IX, 275-276.

⁶⁰⁴ Graham, *The War and Its Shadow*, p. 80.

Nehru travelled on to London, and in July he went with Indira and Eslande Goode Robeson, the wife of the Afro-American singer Paul Robeson, to visit Thompson and his wife at their home on Boars Hill. He took a book as a present and Thompson was greatly moved by the inscription. He wrote (20 July):

Dear Jawaharlal, I am—in certain moods—a proud man (not, I hope, a conceited one: that is far different), with good reasons for pride. But nothing could give me more pride than this book inscribed by you ‘to my friend Edward Thompson’. I know you are a man who carries reticence to an almost inhuman degree: and that what you say means everything that can be put into the words.⁶⁰⁵

Nehru’s simple inscription in the book, perhaps stimulated by Thompson’s joking protest at the lack of inscription of the books he received in Calcutta, confirmed what the depth of their political exchanges had already suggested; this had become a friendship which each would increasingly value. Henceforth their letters started ‘Dear Jawaharlal’ and ‘Dear Edward’.

As Thompson implied in his letter, Nehru’s concept of friendship seems to have differed significantly from Gandhi’s more universal and spiritual offer ‘Dear Friend’. His choice of friends was more selective and, in tune with his agnostic and socialist views, he looked for them among those who, like Andrews or Eslande Robeson, in Helen Graham’s terms looked forward to, worked for, and sometimes fought for, a changed society.⁶⁰⁶ Unlike Gandhi, the number of his acknowledged friends was more restricted, closer to the few primary friends of Derrida’s interpretation of Montaigne’s ‘O my friends, there is no friend’.

This friendship between Thompson and Nehru, slowly developing as seen in these encounters and letters from not altogether propitious beginnings, was to prove profoundly important for both men in the years to come, years of imprisonment for

⁶⁰⁵ Thompson to Nehru, 20 July 1938, in Nehru, *Bunch of Old Letters*, p. 290.

⁶⁰⁶ Eslande Goode Robeson to Nehru, July 1938, in *ibid.*, p. 291.

Nehru, years of bereavement and illness for Thompson. Looked at from the point of view of Devji's dichotomy of brotherhood versus friendship, the only basis in which the two might conceivably be considered to have been 'brothers' was that both were 'India's prisoners', a prison from which neither could escape. But as a freely chosen (and therefore renounceable) relationship their friendship was based not just on affection, but also on a willingness to try to understand and, if necessary, to tolerate, the other's different approaches and opinions. Their friendship might also be described as postcolonial before its time, differing thanks to their mutual foreseeing of the end of Empire and to their acceptance of parity in argument from the colonial friendships of *A Passage to India* and *Burmese Days* with their insurmountable barriers between ruled and ruler.⁶⁰⁷

Passage to India in time of war

This friendship reached its climax at their last meeting. Amazingly Thompson obtained funding, again from the Rhodes Trust, and permission, for a fact-finding visit to India in the first months of the Second World War. He flew out on 3 October 1939 and back on or around 10 November, stopping on the way at airports which before long would be in the theatre of war. When he arrived in India, everyone wanted to see him, as news from England was at a premium. He arrived in Allahabad on 13 October and after staying a night with the anti-socialist Sapru moved to stay with Nehru, who unusually seems to have had all the time in the world to put it to rights with him over the course of several evenings. Nehru mentioned Thompson in several letters: to Krishna Menon, then in London, 'To my surprise Edward Thompson turned up this evening. He says that both he and you had written to me about his coming. I received

⁶⁰⁷ Leela Gandhi, *Affective Communities*, pp. 9–10.

no such intimation. I have had some talk with him today of a rather general nature.’ and later, after Thompson’s return to England ‘Edward Thompson is very keen and all that but it was obviously not easy for him to grasp the situation here and his impressions are likely to be superficial’, to Rajendra Prasad ‘some news from England and have also had long talks with Edward Thompson who has just come to India by air’, and to Indira

Edward Thompson has suddenly arrived in Allahabad. He shifted over to Anand Bhavan and spent two days with me and I had long talks with him. He is rather erratic in his conversation—the quality of a poet I suppose—but it was a pleasant change to have him and talk to him. He helped me to get a better picture of England today and Europe, and I helped him a little perhaps to understand the amazing complexity of India.⁶⁰⁸

Nehru’s happiness to have Thompson reflected their continuing friendship and also perhaps the possibility of discussion with an Englishman who was not by the nature of his post bound in time of war to give support to King, Viceroy, and Empire. This was at a time when the relationship between India and Britain was deteriorating, in India following the Viceroy’s Declaration of War without consultation and in Britain because of India’s failure to provide whole-hearted support for the war effort, and when this deterioration was feeding into personal relationships.

On 22 October Thompson was invited by Nehru to Wardha to meet the Congress Working Committee who had been meeting with Gandhi. Thompson met Gandhi and also Mirabehn, who as an Admiral’s daughter was anxious to know whether the British forces were strong enough to win the war. On 24 October Thompson travelled with Nehru to Bombay, where two days later the Congress provincial government resigned, and they met with Ambedkar and other members of the provincial legislature. Nehru had never before met Ambedkar, and Thompson described Nehru sitting on a table swinging his legs like a schoolboy while Ambedkar made an emotional speech. It was

⁶⁰⁸ Nehru to Krishna Menon, 13 October 1935, 2 December 1935, to Rajendra Prasad, 16 October 1935, to Indira Nehru, 17/18 October 1935, *Nehru*, x, 452, 263, 188-89, 633.

then according to Thompson's account that Thompson remarked 'I think religion is the greatest pest in the world' (this from a former Methodist missionary) to which Nehru replied, 'I agree with you'. Nehru's agnosticism left him blind to Gandhi's thesis that the evil of untouchability was a religious issue, threatening the Hinduism into which both had been born. But this introduction to Ambedkar was followed by a meeting the following day at which they formed a good working relationship.⁶⁰⁹

A later meeting towards the end of his visit which meant much to Thompson was with Prasanta and Rani Mahalanobis, who had driven miles specially to renew their friendship. At a previous meeting in 1936, when they had stayed together in a forest bungalow, their conversations under the stars had moved to wider issues than politics and passed beyond the limits of ideology and race.⁶¹⁰

Viceregal Mail

Thompson returned home to his writing and lobbying, entrusted by Nehru with two pieces of Chinese silk for Indira, and Nehru continued with the difficult balancing act between his antifascism and his first priority of full Indian independence, including Indian responsibility for the country's defence. He was imprisoned at the end of October, for most of the time in Dehra Dun where the altitude allowed him to create an English cottage garden inside the prison, no doubt finding the gardening an excellent complement to his writing. Alongside Hitler's *Mein Kampf* he read Thompson's *The Life of Charles, Lord Metcalfe*:

I finished reading Edward Thompson's *Life of Metcalfe* today. Very good book. I wish I had read it carefully earlier. Edward sent it to me three years ago and I just glanced through it then. It is helpful in many ways- Throws light on present conditions-princes, land problems &c. But what is most interesting is the whole

⁶⁰⁹ Edward John Thompson, *Enlist India for Freedom!* (London: Gollancz, 1940), p. 13.

⁶¹⁰ E. P. Thompson, *Alien Homage*, p. 96.

background & also Canadian problems then, so like, in some ways, Indian problems now.⁶¹¹

A letter to be sent to Thompson enclosed in one to Indira of 10 January 1941 was suppressed by the prison authorities.⁶¹²

Nehru was released in December 1941. He and Gandhi then gave their approval to the marriage of the Hindu Indira Nehru to the Parsee Feroze Gandhi in an ecumenical ceremony followed by a simple dinner on 26 March 1942. The bride wore a sari made from her father's prison spinning.

Congress' adoption of the 'Quit India' resolution of 14 July 1942 led to the carefully planned and carefully executed secret detention in Bombay of Gandhi and his co-workers together with the entire Congress Working Committee. Mirabeau describes the special train with assigned compartments and dining car waiter-service of full breakfast that took the detainees first to Poona for Gandhi's group to be interned in the Aga Khan's palace and then on for the Congress group to be held in Ahmednagar Fort.⁶¹³

On Christmas Day 1942 Nehru recorded in his prison diary that nearly a month ago he had received a book of poems [*New Recessional and Other Poems*] from Thompson:

This was a gift for Christmas. This gift gladdened me and the sense of aloofness from England was lessened. How much we are governed by personal friendship in our reaction to nations and countries. Edward, sensitive person that he is, must suffer much for all that is happening. And what of his son at the front [Frank], and his other son [Palmer]?⁶¹⁴

Almost a year later, on 11 December 1943, he was writing to Indira when three more of Thompson's books arrived, a second copy of *New Recessional and Other Poems*, a second copy of *The Life of Charles Lord Metcalfe*, replacing a lost copy which had been inscribed by Thompson and Indira on an occasion when Indira visited Boar's Hill, and

⁶¹¹Thompson, *The Life of Charles, Lord Metcalfe*; Nehru, Prison Diary, 27 November 1940, *Nehru*, XI, 505-506 (506).

⁶¹² Prison Diary, 11 January 1941, *Nehru*, XI, 530.

⁶¹³ Slade, *Spirit's Pilgrimage*, p. 240.

⁶¹⁴ Prison Diary, Christmas Day 1942, *Nehru*, XIII, 38-41 (41).

The Making of the Indian Princes, to which Nehru had been looking forward eagerly.⁶¹⁵

He asked Indira to write to Thompson to tell him that the books had been received:

No gift that I have had here could have been more welcome, nor could I have wished for a better inscription than what he has written in the book on the Indian Princes. I often think of him and of the bond of friendship that ties us. Such bonds have helped me greatly to keep sane and sober, and not to allow 'black thinking', as they call it very appropriately in the language of prison, to find a home in my mind.⁶¹⁶

Thompson had inscribed the book with a translated quotation from Plato:

"And what are you thinking of, Agathon?" asked Socrates
"That this man called me friend," answered Agathon.⁶¹⁷

Judith Brown notes that in the absence of family visits this regular correspondence with Indira, and with friends when permitted, kept Nehru sane, and that he had the insight to realise that his imprisonment 'had given him a greater appreciation of life and things those outside would take for granted'.⁶¹⁸ Among those things was friendship, judging by the frequency with which the words 'friend' and 'friendship' appear in these letters and in Nehru's prison diary. In a passage from the diary Nehru wrote:

There are friends, of course, many of them, in England & America and I often think gratefully of them. They may be ineffective in the larger sphere of policy and action. Yet they make a vast difference for they prevent that awful hardening of the heart and will which comes between nations. It is bad enough as it is; how much worse it would have been if there had been no such friends abroad!⁶¹⁹

Nehru here seems to be acknowledging the affection of friends, in contrast to the convention of political friendship. For Thompson, less sure in his political judgments and affiliations, to be called a friend and to return that friendship was an acknowledgement of a strong personal bond, affective not political, shown in his

⁶¹⁵ Edward John Thompson, *The Making of the Indian Princes* (London: Oxford University Press, 1943).

⁶¹⁶ Nehru to Indira Gandhi, 11 December 1943, *Nehru*, XIII, 307-310 (310).

⁶¹⁷ Prison Diary, 17 December 1943, *Nehru*, XIII, 310-314 (312).

⁶¹⁸ Brown, *Nehru*, p. 153.

⁶¹⁹ Prison Diary, 17 December 1943, *Nehru*, XIII, 310-314 (312).

reaction to Nehru's book inscription, and in turn in his inscription in the book he sent to Nehru.

On 10 November 1944 the Prison Superintendent brought Nehru a sealed parcel, unopened by the censor, which he had instructions to deliver without opening. The parcel contained two books by Thompson, *100 Poems* and *Burmese Silver*, and Wavell's anthology of the poems he had at one time or another known by heart, *Other Men's Flowers*.⁶²⁰ Thompson had had an interview with Wavell before the Viceroy Designate left London for India, at which Thompson had made a reasonably good impression, based more on his World War I record rather than his understanding of the difficulties facing government, and so was now in a position to turn the imperial system on its head by using the King's representative as his postman.⁶²¹ Also in the parcel was a letter from Wavell himself, the sender of which Nehru managed to keep secret from the Superintendent. Wavell included in his letter a message from Thompson saying that he had been very unwell after an unsuccessful stomach operation for removal of a growth, and despite some improvement with subsequent treatments remained an invalid, and also that his elder son Frank had 'disappeared into the blue on some secret mission and is unable to write'. Wavell wrote that he was sending his anthology as he knew from Thompson that Nehru was interested in poetry; he asked, with a trace of Wiccamic humour, that his letter remain private 'in view of our respective positions'. Nehru noted in his prison diary 'Letters are often self-revealing. They give us some insight into the writer. Wavell's letter was a good one and indicated the decency of the man'.⁶²² What Nehru did not know was that Wavell had already on 11 September

⁶²⁰Edward John Thompson, *100 Poems by Edward Thompson* (London: Oxford University Press, 1944); Edward John Thompson, *Burmese Silver* (London: Faber and Faber, 1937); Archibald Percival Wavell, *Other Men's Flowers* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1944).

⁶²¹ Wavell, *Viceroy's Journal*, p. 11.

⁶²² Prison Diary, 11 November 1944, *Nehru*, XIII, 510-11 (511).

submitted a proposal to Leo Amery (1873-1955, Secretary of State for India and Burma, 1940-1945), the gist of which he had included on 25 October in a letter to Winston Churchill (1874-1965, Prime Minister, United Kingdom, 1940-1945, 1951-1955), which implied the need to release the imprisoned members of the Congress Working Committee. It would take until 31 May 1945 for Churchill and his Cabinet to approve Wavell's proposal.⁶²³

14 November 1944 was Nehru's 55th birthday and, he noted, his fifth consecutive birthday in prison. Thompson had sent a birthday message to him to be published in the newspaper (which he was allowed to receive): 'It is very hard to know what to say about my dear friend Jawaharlal. As my message, I send you, Jawaharlal, the assurance given to a Hebrew prophet. "O man greatly beloved, peace be unto thee, be strong, yes, be strong. Go thou the way till the end be, for thou shalt rest in thy lot at the end of the day"'. Nehru was greatly moved and commented in his prison diary 'What an affection he has developed for me! Why, I have always wondered. What has he discovered in me to attract him so much? Do I deserve all this love and faith that so many pour on me?'.⁶²⁴

But three days later the newspapers brought the news that Thompson's elder son Frank had been shot in June after capture when on a secret mission with the Bulgarian partisans. Nehru knew how proud Thompson was of Frank, and felt very depressed, knowing what a blow this would be for him.⁶²⁴ Three months' later a brief letter from Wavell enclosed a letter from Thompson giving an account of Frank's death; this was the Bulgarian partisan version, describing Frank conducting his own defence in Bulgarian, which many years later on the basis of an eye-witness account has been

⁶²³ Wavell, *Viceroy's Journal*, pp. 90, 98, 136.

⁶²⁴ Prison Diary, 17 November 1944, *Nehru*, XIII, 514-16 (515).

shown to have been in many respects a propaganda creation.⁶²⁵ Nehru sent a thoughtful letter of condolence back via Wavell, but it did not reach its destination.⁶²⁶

With the end of the war in Europe in May 1945 and the liberation of Burma there was no continuing justification for the imprisonment of members of the Congress Working Committee. Indeed they were urgently needed to start negotiations on a future settlement for India. Ten days after his release on 15 June Nehru was summoned by Wavell to the Simla Conference. Only in August could he escape to his Shangri-La, the Kashmir of his ancestors, and begin to come to terms with life outside the prison walls. He wrote to Thompson from Gulmarg on 12 August, stating that a typed copy of his letter about Frank's death would be sent to him.⁶²⁷ Having finally received it, Thompson replied on 11 September, writing of memory, friendship, and sympathy.⁶²⁸ The contents of these letters, together with those concerning Frank's death, will be discussed in detail in the next and final chapter, which examines the significance for friendship of the children of friends and of the deaths of friends.

Neither Thompson nor Nehru had the religious faith that inspired Gandhi, Andrews, and Sorella Maria. Both were strong believers in freedom, even if we might classify Thompson as a liberal, with the risks of compromise and of vacillation, and Nehru as a socialist, with the risks of ruthlessness and overreliance on the state. In these meetings and letters their choice of friendship despite their differences was life-enhancing, strong enough to resist 'that awful hardening of the heart and will which comes between nations' or the emptiness left by the loss of a deeply loved, and even hero-worshipped, firstborn son.

⁶²⁵ Conradi, *Very English Hero*, p. 4.

⁶²⁶ Prison Diary, 9 March 1945, *Nehru*, XIII, 571-572 (571).

⁶²⁷ Nehru to Thompson, 12 August 1945, MS. Eng. c. 5305, fol. 60.

⁶²⁸ Thompson to Nehru, 11 September 1945, *Nehru*, XIII, 573, fn. 620.

In conclusion this chapter provides a contrast between Gandhi's faith-based friendships, evident in the letters written before his fast to the death, and the secular friendship of Nehru and Thompson, united in their agreement that religion was the greatest pest in the world. Gandhi's offer of friendship to all created an open family; Nehru and Thompson's friendship was a more specific bond between them, fully acknowledged and accepted by their family members. Remembering his experience in Spain, Nehru's socialist ideals may have included the tradition of radical comradeship (Thompson's friend and co-author Garratt would have had a similar experience), but Thompson's reluctance to commit to a single political view makes it unlikely that he would have followed this tradition. The interactions with Wavell show how this notoriously uncommunicative Field Marshal and Viceroy could push status and politics aside to assist and even abet efforts to provide sustenance to an imprisoned kindred spirit, like himself a lover of poetry.

CHAPTER V: ‘THEY LIVE ON AFTER THEY HAVE DIED’, APRIL 1940-MAY 1964

For the man who keeps his eye on a true friend, keeps it, so to speak, on a model of himself. For this reason, friends are together when they are separated, they are rich when they are poor, strong when they are weak, and – a thing even harder to explain – they live on after they have died, so great is the honour that follows them, so vivid the memory, so poignant the sorrow. That is why friends who have died are accounted happy, and those who survive them are deemed worthy of praise.

Cicero⁶²⁹

Fear of death and sorrow should be abandoned altogether. Why should there be pain and fear for a thing which is inevitable for every human being? It is ignorance to regard death as a punishment from God. Death is a gift to man from God.

Gandhi, 1932⁶³⁰

‘His rare gift of spontaneous universal friendship’

On 7 April 1940 Nehru wrote at the end of a long letter to his daughter Indira:

Have you heard that Charlie Andrews—Uncle Charlie—died two days ago in a Calcutta nursing home? He had been ill for a long time and had been operated on several times. His death has distressed me greatly. I do not know that I have ever come across a more lovable or generous-hearted man. In these days of hatred and passion and conflict, it is good to remember this man who was so childlike, so foolish sometimes, and yet so utterly devoid of hatred or ill will against anyone, and so full of love and goodwill. If there is such a thing as godliness, he had it. It is very sad to think that he is no more. I fear Gurudeva [Tagore] cannot last very long. He grows weaker and weaker and his eightieth birthday approaches. Charlie's death must have been a terrible blow to him. India changes. The old guards fade away. The old lamps go out and it is not clear what the new ones are like.⁶³¹

Two days earlier in a press statement Nehru had written of Andrews's rushing about across oceans, never saying no to an appeal for help from Indians whether in India or overseas.⁶³²

⁶²⁹ Cicero quoted in Jacques Derrida, *Politics of Friendship* (London: Verso, 2005), p. 5.

⁶³⁰ Gandhi to his future daughter-in-law, Lakshmi Rajagopalachari, 7 July 1932, in *My Dear Bapu*, ed. by Gopalkrishna Gandhi, pp. 148–49, fn. 99.

⁶³¹ Jawaharlal Nehru to Indira Nehru, 7 April 1940, *Nehru*, XI, 452–56.

⁶³² Press statement, 5 April 1940, *Nehru*, XI, 381.

As was Nehru's way, his response to Andrews's death concisely combined several different themes. First of all, Andrews had been a family friend, 'Uncle' being the conventional prefix by which British children knew and addressed British expatriate men in India, used also more generally by younger South Asians to address older men.⁶³³ Nehru's own personal distress at learning of Andrews's death had been alleviated by thinking of his lack of hatred and ill-will and his capacity for love, so different from the prevailing hostility of 1940. He remembered Andrews's longstanding friendship with Tagore, also nearing the end of his life. Poetically he wrote of old guards fading away, old lamps going out, and the uncertainties for India in the future.

Nehru's response meets the criteria of Derrida's *post mortem* discourse, elaborated in his *Politics of Friendship*; '... in this virtue of the funeral eulogy, everything seems then to have a part to play: epitaph or oration, citation of the dead person, the renown of the name after the death of what it names'.⁶³⁴ Derrida argues that this requirement of friendship, memory after death, is a feature also of friendship among the living, who in their estimation of the friend are already preparing their 'funeral eulogy'. Nehru gave an example of this when writing of Andrews in a 1937 letter to Krishna Menon: 'His politics are not mine, indeed I do not consider him political at all, but in his own way he has done extraordinary good work'.⁶³⁵ There is another example of this 'anticipated citation' in a 1927 letter from Gandhi to Herman Kallenbach: 'I am glad you are having short spells of Andrews's company. I have not come across a humbler or more godfearing man throughout my varied experience'.⁶³⁶ Importantly Nehru's remarks, on

⁶³³ A well-worn joke, current still in the 1960s, told of young British children from India, viewing England for the first time from the deck of the liner, commenting to their parents 'Here the uncles do all the work!'.
⁶³⁴ Derrida, *Politics of Friendship*, p. 5.
⁶³⁵ Nehru to Krishna Menon, 5 April 1937, *Nehru*, VIII, 848.
⁶³⁶ Gandhi to Hermann Kallenbach, 13 May 1927, in *My Dear Bapu*, ed. by Gopalkrishna Gandhi, pp. 97–99.

Andrews being ‘childlike’, ‘so foolish sometimes’, ‘His politics are not mine’, showed that political agreement was not necessary for their friendship. These remarks can be interpreted as an inversion of the colonial infantilisation of Indians, a postcolonial judgment on a man who often risked his personal standing to serve the South Asians.

Andrews had died in a Calcutta nursing home in the early hours of 5 April 1940. His funeral was held in the Anglican Cathedral, conducted by his long-term family friend the Anglican Metropolitan Bishop of Calcutta, Foss Westcott, whose tribute was ‘It is not enough to give men things. You must give them yourself’, consonant with the giving of friendship in Derrida’s *Politics of Friendship*.⁶³⁷ He was buried in the nearby Christian cemetery in Lower Circular Road. Around the same time as the burial was taking place Tagore was addressing the mourners in Shantiniketan, presumably either in Bengali or in Hindi; his address was translated into English by the Quaker Marjorie Sykes (1905-1995) for publication in *The Visva-Bharati Quarterly*.⁶³⁸

Tagore spoke of the intolerable grief of never again being able to experience ‘that dear human comradeship’. ‘But the relationship of love, infinite, mysterious, is not subject to the limitations of such material intercourse, not cabined and confined in the life of the body.’ Tagore regarded his friendship with Andrews as ‘a gift from God beyond all price’, rising ‘like a river from the dear spring of this Christian Sadhu’s devotion to God’ which held ‘no taint of selfishness, no stain of ambition, only a single-minded offering of the spirit to its Lord’. He spoke of Andrews’s love and support for Shantiniketan and his love of India and Indians: ‘The poor, the despised, those whose lives were spent in dust and ugliness—it was these whose familiar life he shared, time

⁶³⁷ Chaturvedī and Sykes, *Andrews*, p. xiii; Derrida, ‘Politics of Friendship’, *American Imago*, 50.3 (1993), p. 368.

⁶³⁸ Rabindranath Tagore, ‘Charlie Andrews’, *The Visva-Bharati Quarterly (New Series)*, VI.I (1940), 1–6.

and again, naturally and without effort.’ Such sharing made him unpopular with many of the British, and sometimes also with Indians, but Andrews accepted this as part of his commitment to the Christian faith. At a time when in India relations with the British were increasingly strained and when in the wider world ‘in uncontrolled arrogance a torrent of blood sweeps away the landmarks of civilised human society’, Andrews’s ‘rare gift of spontaneous universal friendship’ left ‘a life which is transcendent over death itself, and dwells with us imperishably’.

Tagore’s funeral eulogy, like Nehru’s letter, matches Derrida’s description of the surviving friend’s *post mortem* discourse.⁶³⁹ Unlike Nehru’s, it is cast in a theological framework, all the more remarkable given that Tagore (unlike Nehru) was a committed Hindu and Andrews a committed Christian. While Nehru looks ahead to a world without Andrews, Tagore invokes Andrews’ gift for universal friendship as securing Andrews immortality, which in Derrida’s analysis is the immortality characteristic of a friend ‘who goes ahead’. Nehru was right to suggest that Andrews’ death would be a terrible blow to Tagore, and the strength of their friendship, Tagore pardoning as had Nehru some of Andrews’s lapses, is clear throughout the eulogy. As an older man than Nehru, not far from death himself, the loss is tempered by a different perspective and a look to the future where he himself will not for long be present.

In the same issue of *The Visva-Bharati Quarterly* is the obituary article for Andrews, cited already in Chapter I, contributed by his younger friend Gurdial Mallik.⁶⁴⁰ Mallik had been resident in Shantiniketan since 1920, contributing particularly as a teacher and also as a translator, knowing Urdu, Pushto, Sindhi, Gujarati, Marathi, Hindi, English,

⁶³⁹ Derrida, *Politiques de l’amitié*, p. 21.

⁶⁴⁰ Mallik, ‘Some Reminiscences’.

and a little Persian.⁶⁴¹ His first reminiscences of Andrews concern their first meeting when Mallik was still a student, and then next their investigation together of the 1919 martial law violence in the Punjab, both discussed in the first chapter of this thesis. He continues with a series of briefer, sometimes comic, sometimes saint-like, anecdotes, Andrews without cash for a newspaper, Andrews appearing for lunch in just a dhoti after a visiting English official had complained about his uncivilized native dress of dhoti and shirt, Andrews giving up his higher-class rail seat to an elderly infirm Indian lady, and Andrews giving away his new travelling suit to a blind coatless Santhal. Finally, he remembered, once again from their period together in the Punjab, Andrews's joy at being, like Jesus, turned out of his Christian place of worship as a rebel.

Mallik's friendship with Andrews met Derrida's category, derived from Aristotle, of friendship between those of different status, student and teacher, disciple and *guru*. Its consequences can be seen in Mallik's subsequent life-history: while remaining a Hindu he developed close links with the Quakers, as described in their journals and in Marjorie Sykes' brief biography.⁶⁴² His acknowledgement of his debt to Andrews, not just spiritual but also literary, is shown in his dedication to Andrews of his translations of the short stories of Premchand (1880-1936) into English from Hindi and Urdu:

DEDICATED
WITH DEEP LOVE
TO
DEENABANDHU C. F. ANDREWS
AND
TO THE UNDERSIGNED'S DEAR NIECES AND NEPHEWS
WHO HAVE ALWAYS WISHED
THEIR UNCLE TO TELL
THEM SOME STORIES

G. M.⁶⁴³

⁶⁴¹ 'Gurdial Malik (1896-1970)' <<http://www.visvabharati.ac.in/GurdialMalik.html>> [accessed 20 October 2020].

⁶⁴² Marjorie Sykes, *A Man of Holy Simplicity: Some Tributes to the Witness of Gurudayal (Gurdial) Mallik* (Bangalore: W. Q. Judge Press, 1970).

⁶⁴³ Premchand, *Short Stories of Premchand*, trans. by Gurdial Mallik (Bombay: Nalanda Publications, 1946), p. 5.

In his 'Translator's Note' Mallik wrote that soon after Premchand's death Andrews had suggested that some of Premchand's stories might be translated into English, encouraging Mallik to undertake these translations, some of which Andrews had read. Neither of them can have imagined that the tenth story, 'The Chess-Players', would be made into an acclaimed film by Satyajit Ray (1921-1992).⁶⁴⁴

Another memorial book dedication soon after Andrews's death was in Thompson's *Enlist India for Freedom*, his unsuccessful attempt to obtain recognition of India's right to decide for herself her role in the war:

To
the Memory of
C. F. ANDREWS
and of our quarter-century of
unbroken friendship⁶⁴⁵

To accept this assertion of unbroken friendship it is necessary to accept that friends can also be rivals. Andrews' first meeting with Tagore in Hampstead on 7 July 1912 provoked a mystical response: Andrews wrote of accompanying his host Nevinson home and then staying out alone in ecstasy on Hampstead Heath in the summer night.⁶⁴⁶ Henceforth he was a devotee of Tagore, and his Indian base was to be in Shantiniketan, even if his travels meant that much of the time he was away. Thompson's first meeting with Tagore was in Calcutta in October 1913, but it was during his subsequent first visit to Shantiniketan that that he underwent what his son Palmer called an epiphany. Like Andrews he saw Tagore's recognition in Europe, on that visit confirmed by the news of the award of his Nobel prize, as a bridge between east and west. But unlike Andrews he saw his role as that of a collaborator and critic, a role about which Tagore was at best ambivalent (Thompson's son Palmer speculated that Tagore might not have liked

⁶⁴⁴ Satyajit Ray, *The Chess Players*, 1977.

⁶⁴⁵ Thompson, *Enlist India for Freedom!*, p. 4.

⁶⁴⁶ In his eulogy Tagore mentioned walking with Andrews on the Heath; either this was before Andrews and Nevinson set off home, or it was a trick of Tagore's memory.

his father's 'assumption of equality in the republic of poets') and later, after publication of Thompson's *Rabindranath Tagore: Poet and Dramatist*, outrightly hostile.⁶⁴⁷

The upshot of this difference between Andrews and Thompson, which impinged on their separate efforts to translate Tagore's work into English and to publish the results, was an apparent rivalry for Tagore's approval. A much-quoted comment of Thompson's in an undated private letter to Prasanta Mahalanobis 'I am surer than ever that yr. friend C. F. Andrews is beneath contempt as regards judgement (& intellect generally). I can't understand how R. ever got humbugged into his ecstatic veneration of him. ...' was thought by Palmer to have been written in January 1921 in the context of Andrews' association with Gandhi's non-cooperation movement, which was threatening to close Thompson's college in Bankura.⁶⁴⁸ The addition in brackets of '& intellect generally' was unfortunate as, leaving aside its rather doubtful assumption of Thompson's equality in the republic of intellectuals with the polymath Mahalanobis, it neglected Andrews' impressive academic achievements. But if Thompson is to be given the benefit of the doubt maybe he was simply expressing the view that Andrews was being foolish in his political activities. Certainly, contrary to Tinker's view that Thompson and Andrews 'maintained a distant relationship of mutual irritation during the 1920s', there is no lack of friendliness in the letters Andrews and Thompson exchanged concerning the missionaries' letter to *The Statesman*, and in a letter to Tagore of 7 January 1923, announcing his departure from India for Oxford, Thompson sent New Year wishes to 'Andrews and my other friends at Santiniketan'.⁶⁴⁹ Tinker

⁶⁴⁷ E. P. Thompson, *Alien Homage*, p. 15; E. J. Thompson, *Rabindranath Tagore: Poet & Dramatist*.

⁶⁴⁸ Thompson to P. C. Mahalanobis, undated, quoted in E. P. Thompson, *Alien Homage*, p. 33, with Palmer's comment on page 38, note 19; Collins, *Empire, Nationalism and the Postcolonial World*, pp. 132–33.

⁶⁴⁹ Tinker, *Ordeal of Love*, p. 241, note 21; Das Gupta, *Difficult Friendship*, p. 148.

himself notes that by 1935 Andrews and Thompson's letters to each other used 'Dear Edward' and 'Dear Charlie' rather than the surnames they had used previously.⁶⁵⁰

The preface of Andrews's first biography, published in 1949, its writing having been delayed by the war, includes a description of the care taken by the authors, Benarsidas Chaturvedī and Marjorie Sykes, to verify their account from reliable sources.⁶⁵¹ As they remarked, Andrews's autobiography, *What I owe to Christ*, was based simply on his memory, rather than on any reference to sources. At the beginning of their biography the authors included a facsimile reproduction of the foreword hand-written by Gandhi less than two months before his assassination:

Charlie Andrews was simple like a child, up-right as a die, and shy to a degree. For the biographers the work has been a labour of love. A life such as Andrews' needs no introduction. It is its own introduction. M. K. Gandhi New Delhi 8-12-'47⁶⁵²

Again Andrews is remembered with a postcolonial inversion as a child, this time by the Mahatma. Thus, two of Andrews' longest standing Indian friends, Tagore and Gandhi, provided him with 'funeral eulogies'.

'You are often in my thoughts and strangely enough I have thought more of you than ever'

On 10 April 1946 Nehru wrote to Thompson from New Delhi, where he was busy with meetings concerning negotiations with the visiting United Kingdom Cabinet Mission. He started by hoping that the birthday cable he and his daughter and sisters had sent had arrived in time for what had been Thompson's sixtieth birthday on 9 April. He wrote that he had been reminded of the birthday a few days before; this reminder was in a letter he had received from Palmer that gave the news that his father, known to have been suffering from an inoperable tumour for many months, was now dying.

⁶⁵⁰ Tinker, *Ordeal of Love*, p. 277.

⁶⁵¹ Chaturvedī and Sykes, *Andrews*, pp. x–xiii.

⁶⁵² *Ibid.*, p. vi.

In his first paragraph Nehru gave news of what was happening in Delhi: ‘the old drama of England and India’ now had a few new actors but mainly old ones who found it difficult ‘to play new roles’. He did not know what the outcome would be: whatever happened in India no one would ‘have an easy time’ and he had trained himself ‘neither to expect too much of life nor to despair of it’.

But I am not writing to you to discuss world events or happenings in India. Why should I worry you with them or indeed worry myself? What I wanted to tell you was that you are often in my thoughts and strangely enough I have thought more of you than ever. Why this has been so I do not know. I have thought of our friendship and what a good influence it has been on me at particular moments of my existence. And then I have thought of how you have influenced considerable numbers of people in India and England not obviously so much as in a large deeper way. I believe you have been one of the very few persons who have made India understood by a number of English people and England understood by many Indians. In these difficult days that is a big thing to achieve, and what is more that achievement is a lasting one. ... I should love to meet you again and talk about so many things. I wonder if there will be any time for the likes of us when we can be rid of the political questions that afflict us.⁶⁵³

In a letter to Palmer typed on the same day Nehru wrote:

It is quite absurd for your father to feel depressed and have a sense of failure. I do believe that he has achieved a great deal and what he has achieved will live for a long time. Only it is always difficult to measure this type of achievement. He has been a link between England and India. He has influenced many people in India, and I suppose many people in England, so he has been a real peace-maker between nations and peoples. I do not know if I shall see him again. I hope I shall; but whether I do or not, I think of him very often and think of him with great affection and respect for what he has done.⁶⁵⁴

In these moving letters Nehru illustrates two of Derrida’s postulates. First that the friend has always the image of his friend before him and that this image persists even after the friend’s death. Secondly that the friendship carries with it the *post mortem* discourse even before the death of the friend. ‘A memory is engaged in advance, from the moment of what is called life, in this strange temporality opened by the anticipated citation of some funeral oration.’⁶⁵⁵ Both the friends, Nehru and Thompson, knew that

⁶⁵³ Nehru to Thompson, 10 April 1946, MS. Eng. c. 5305, fol. 63.

⁶⁵⁴ Nehru to Edward Palmer Thompson, 10 April 1946, MS. Eng. c. 5305, fol. 67.

⁶⁵⁵ Derrida, *Politics of Friendship*, p. 5.

Thompson was dying; in his letters Nehru provided Thompson with his funeral eulogy a few days before his death, which occurred on 28 April 1946.

Derrida does not seem to have discussed the affective link between a friend and the other friend's children. This can be close, and in some cultures is formalized by godparent/godchild relationships. Such relationships, whether or not formalized, carry with them elements of Derrida's *post mortem* discourse, for the child's parent may look to the chosen friend as someone who will take at least some responsibility for the child in the event of the parent being the first to die.

Although in this case there was no formal relationship, Nehru, whose only son died aged two days, had taken more than a polite interest in the Thompsons' sons. Frank's biographer reports that they first met at the Thompsons' house on Boars Hill, where Nehru gave Palmer some cricket practice.⁶⁵⁶ Palmer wrote a letter to Nehru for his father to take to India in 1939; Thompson left it behind, but Nehru nonetheless wrote to Palmer, taking the precaution of mailing it to Thompson in England rather than entrusting it to him on his travels. In the letter Nehru described Thompson's Indian trip, expressed the hope that by the time Palmer left school the world would be better and saner, and concluded 'I do not know when I shall go to England again. But if and when I go there, I hope to meet you and make friends with you, if you do not think me too old and out of date for the purpose.'⁶⁵⁷ Thompson eventually enclosed Palmer's original letter to Nehru with a letter of 28 April 1940 that also contained the news that his elder son Frank was now an officer in the army and was expected to be posted abroad soon.⁶⁵⁸

⁶⁵⁶ Conradi, *A Very English Hero*, p. 99.

⁶⁵⁷ Nehru to Palmer, 11 November 1939, *Nehru*, x, pp. 592–93.

⁶⁵⁸ Nehru to Thompson, 28 April 1940, in Nehru, *Bunch of Old Letters*, pp. 441–42.

Replying to a recent letter from Thompson, Nehru asked after Frank and Palmer in his letter of 10 January 1941.⁶⁵⁹ This the prison authorities returned unsent, as Nehru reported in his Prison Diary and in the one letter he was allowed to send, to Indira.⁶⁶⁰ He wondered again about what might be happening to them, knowing that Frank was at the front, in an entry in his Prison Diary of 25 December 1942.⁶⁶¹ Almost two years later he learnt from Wavell that he had heard in a letter from Thompson of 19 September 1944 that Frank had ‘apparently disappeared into the blue on some secret mission and is unable to write’ while Palmer was ‘serving in the army in Italy’. Six days later he read in the newspapers why Frank was unable to write (this was Nehru’s comment in his Prison Diary): he had been ‘working with the Bulgarian partisans, a dangerous job for which he had volunteered’ and had been ‘shot by the Germans ... in June’.

Nehru wrote in his Prison Diary:

How proud Edward was of this son of his — I remember him telling me of his brilliance, his linguistic attainments and his lovable qualities. He was a boy who had just gone to Oxford with a scholarship. Edward added then — all for cannon fodder! He proved right. ... What a terrible blow it must be for Edward. My heart goes out to him and I feel very depressed.⁶⁶²

This was in the middle of the war and young men of Frank’s age in the forces were being killed in their thousands. But Nehru’s friendship with Thompson, and through this friendship his sharing of Thompson’s love and admiration for his son, meant that this particular death was a special additional burden for him. He wrote to Indira that ‘The news has distressed me greatly though such things must happen in war.’ He remembered that in 1938 Thompson ‘was obsessed with the thought of the coming war and used to say that all their bright young men were destined to die in them [*sic*] --- just

⁶⁵⁹ Nehru to Thompson, 10 January 1941, *Nehru*, XI, 527–28.

⁶⁶⁰ Prison Diary, 11 January 1941, *Nehru*, XI, 530-531 (530); Jawaharlal Nehru to Indira Nehru, 31 January 1941, *Nehru*, XI, 538-541 (540).

⁶⁶¹ Prison Diary, Christmas Day 1942, *Nehru*, XIII, 38-41 (41).

⁶⁶² Prison Diary, 17 November 1944, *Nehru*, XIII, p. 514-16 (515).

cannon fodder they were'. Nehru remembered the letter Palmer had written to him from school.⁶⁶³

On 8 March 1944 Nehru was writing his diary entry for the day when he received a covering letter from Wavell, dated 1 March, enclosing a letter, dated 22 February, received from Thompson describing what was known about Frank's death. The detailed contents of this letter were relayed by Nehru to a letter to Indira, who Nehru reckoned 'must have met Frank' in Oxford.⁶⁶⁴ Until Frank's arrival in Bulgaria the account corresponded with known facts, but much of the story of Frank's last days was part of the 'legend of the Thirteen Partisans of Litikovo', which Frank's biographer Peter Conradi, based on his 1999 interview with a surviving eyewitness, considers was largely invented for propaganda purposes.⁶⁶⁵

On reading the letter Nehru wrote in his diary:

How proud he is of Frank's abilities and heroism — and very rightly. I feel rather upset and terribly sad—I shall never meet Edward again—he is slowly dying.

I have read Edward's letter again—with tears in my eyes—The story of Frank's death and his courage will haunt me for a long time.⁶⁶⁶

That night Nehru woke in terror from a nightmare, in which, as far as he could remember, he had been shouting in English 'get away! go away!'⁶⁶⁷

Next day he wrote a letter of condolence to Thompson and accepting Wavell's offer sent it to him with a covering letter so that it could be sent to Thompson. Wisely he kept a copy, as he subsequently heard from Wavell that the original letter had gone astray. He sent the copy to Thompson on 12 August 1945.⁶⁶⁸ Addressing Thompson as 'My dear Edward' he wrote:

⁶⁶³ Nehru to Indira Gandhi, 18 November 1944, *Nehru*, XIII, 516–17.

⁶⁶⁴ Jawaharlal Nehru to Indira Gandhi, 10 March 1945, *Nehru*, XIII, 576–78.

⁶⁶⁵ Conradi, *A Very English Hero*, p. 4.

⁶⁶⁶ Prison Diary, 8 March 1945, *Nehru*, XIII, 567–71 (571).

⁶⁶⁷ Prison Diary, 9 March 1945, *Nehru*, XIII, 571–572 (571).

⁶⁶⁸ *Nehru*, XIII, 572, fn. 619.

You write with a father's pride and a father's sorrow, and you have reason for both, but many others will share that pride and sorrow. I have thought that if I had a son I would like him to die in some such way before life had stained him and added burdens which are sometimes heavier than death itself. It would be a grievous blow, but somehow a splendid death gives a deeper meaning to life and I am a little weary of the dull and meaningless round of life's normal activities. The story of Frank's heroic death will, as you say, haunt those who hear of it. There is so much to haunt us, so many memories, some vital and brief, others daunting and long-enduring, that we have become a haunted race. To seek some relief from these ghosts of our former selves we try to cultivate a measure of detachment. Sometimes I feel that I grow more detached, perhaps because of my Hindu inheritance, or perhaps it is the temper of the age which values life so cheaply. Death has become so common that it is no unexpected visitor. And yet the pull of life is strong and we continue to plan and build our dream castles for the future.

He remembered Frank as he was when they last met and how he had often thought of the two brothers and how they might be changed by 'their play with life and death'. He went on to describe his own views of death and of friendship, a profound paragraph, that will be discussed in the final section of this chapter. He concluded:

You are ill and I am here and perhaps we shall not meet again. And yet I do not know, for I have grown used to the unexpected happening. Whether we meet or not, I shall often think of you with affection and treasure the memory of our friendship. And, so whatever happens, may it be well with you. Ever yours
Jawaharlal⁶⁶⁹

This time Thompson received the letter, and in his reply of 11 September wrote:

'... there is not much of value in these earth-days. But more and more I am sure that memory, and especially friendship, are of worth. I feel that you and I are in close sympathy about all things.'⁶⁷⁰

Thus, using Frank's death as a proxy, Nehru and Thompson entered Derrida's *post mortem* discourse of the politics of friendship, sharing the loss, and sealing their friendship with memory and affection. Nehru, seeming most likely to be the surviving friend, assured Thompson that the memory of their friendship would be treasured, and Thompson, foreseeing his own demise, confirmed their joint valuation of the worth of

⁶⁶⁹ Nehru to Thompson, 12 August 1945, copy of letter written 9 March 1945), MS. Eng. c. 5305, fol. 59, also *Nehru*, XIII, 572–73.

⁶⁷⁰ Thompson to Nehru, 11 September 1945, *Nehru*, XIII, p. 573, fn. 620.

memory, even if containing ‘haunting memories’, and friendship as a lasting bond between them.

Frank has continued to be remembered through the decades with the recitation of the last stanza of his poem *Polliciti Meliora* (‘Promise better things’) which with its English subtitle ‘An epitaph for my friends’, became with his own death the epitome of Derrida’s linking of friendship and death, the dying friend leaving the survivors the lasting memory that they had already formed. All three stanzas are needed to set the last stanza and these memories, of vistas of beauty, sunlight, books, and flowers, in context:

As one, who gazing at a vista
Of beauty, sees the clouds close in,
And turns his back in sorrow, hearing
The thunder-claps begin

So we, whose life was all before us,
Our hearts with sunlight filled,
Left in the hills our books and flowers,
Descended and were killed.

Write in the stone no words of sadness
- Only the gladness due,
That we, who asked the most of living,
Knew how to give it too.

A friendship of politics

Nehru’s friendship with Elwin's was of a different order from his friendship with Thompson. It seems probable that they met while Elwin was working with Gandhi, as Elwin refers to this connection in a 1952 letter to Nehru.⁶⁷¹ If so, Nehru would have met a young man, thirteen years his junior, whom Mahadev Desai described in 1928 as ‘just out of his teens, fresh from Oxford’.⁶⁷² In his 1936 autobiography Nehru described

⁶⁷¹ Elwin to Nehru, 21 September 1952, quoted in Guha, *Savaging the Civilized*, p. 224.

⁶⁷² Mahadev Desai, *Young India*, 19 January 1928, quoted in Guha, *Savaging the Civilized*, p. 37.

Elwin as 'a brave and generous Englishman' and quoted Elwin's description of 1930's Satyagraha: 'It was a wonderful experience to watch a whole nation throwing off its mental bonds of servitude and rising to its true dignity of fearless determination'.⁶⁷³ They met for lunch in Bombay in 1937 and Elwin in a letter to his mother unwittingly revealed Nehru's gift for establishing rapport with the British elite, when not imprisoned by them: 'On Fri. I had lunch with Pandit Jawarhalal [*sic*] Nehru. What a prince he is! Such a gentleman. And so utterly civilised'.⁶⁷⁴ In the same letter he writes 'Read Edward Thompson's "Burmese Silver" if you can get it', an example of the mutual awareness of the protagonists of this thesis, and finishes, probably just to tease his mother, by saying that he and Shamrao are thinking of moving to Burma.⁶⁷⁵

Much later, on 21 September 1952, Elwin wrote the letter already referenced at the beginning of this section in which he requested Nehru's moral support for a new field of research, the Adivasi under the responsibility of the Assam government. As Ramachandra Guha relates, Nehru saw this as an opportunity for Elwin to advise on the possible future for these tribes, and he forwarded Elwin's report of his research in Assam to all chief ministers of states with tribal populations.⁶⁷⁶ This was the beginning of a remarkable double act, Nehru guided by Elwin in his policy for the tribes, and Elwin using Nehru's authority to attempt its implementation. This became a personal link following Elwin and his wife's December 1953 breakfast with Nehru at Teen Murti, the prime minister's residence:

What a charmer he is, and what state he keeps! We saw the Giant Panda which he keeps in his garden and after breakfast he took me for a long walk and discussed everything about the Frontier. He wants me to advise the Government not only on the frontier but on the whole tribal problem in India.⁶⁷⁷

⁶⁷³ Nehru, *Autobiography*, p. 392.

⁶⁷⁴ Elwin to his mother, 11 September 1937, Mss Eur D950/1, fols 79-81.

⁶⁷⁵ Thompson, *Burmese Silver*.

⁶⁷⁶ Guha, *Savaging the Civilized*, p. 231.

⁶⁷⁷ Elwin to his mother, 12 December 1953, Mss Eur D950/4, fol. 24.

Two days before Elwin had been offered the job of Adviser to the Government of India for the North-East Frontier Tribes, based in Shillong. After a period in which, according to Guha, Elwin had been ambivalent about life in independent India, he now had a mission, entrusted to him at the highest political level, which would occupy him for the rest of his life.

In the same letter Elwin reported to his mother on the company they had been keeping in Delhi. He had seen Devadas Gandhi and Pyarelal Nayyar, both of whom had asked after her and after Elwin's sister Eldyth. He and his wife had had tea with the Finance Minister, Sir Chintaman Dwarkanath Deshmukh (1896-1982), whom Elwin had known when Deshmukh was working in Chhattisgarh, and they had been invited to lunch the next day by the health minister, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, who previously had taken Mahadev's place to work with Pyarelal as Gandhi's secretary.

The one ominous note amid Elwin's enthusiasm for his new position was that it would 'mean a separation between me and Shamrao for the first time for many years', as Shamrao would need to stay behind to continue the work at Patangarh. Elwin wrote in his autobiography that as soon as he received the offer of the job, he sent a telegram to Shamrao asking him to come at once to Delhi, and that with Lila they had had a long discussion as to whether the offer should be accepted. But if, as stated in his letter to his mother, he was offered the job on arrival in Delhi and his appointment was confirmed by 6 p.m. following day, it seems that, allowing time for Shamrao's travel, if he did make it to Delhi, he would have been presented with a *fait accompli*. A more likely hypothesis is that the possibility of the job offer was already known to Elwin (but that for dramatic effect he did not mention this in his autobiography) and that the 'agitated discussions with Lila and Shamrao' before Lila and Elwin's departure for New Delhi took this possibility into account, making any journey of Shamrao's to New

Delhi, to which there is no allusion in any of Elwin or Shamrao's surviving letters, unnecessary.⁶⁷⁸ However, if his readers were to be left thinking that the need for a decision about accepting the job arose only once the Elwins were in New Delhi, Shamrao's (possibly invented) summons to join them was needed to make it possible for him to appear to have been a party to the discussions.

In the autobiography Elwin wrote that 'Shamrao has always been a person of singular unselfishness and he felt that that this would be a good thing for me to do'. Clearly Elwin felt Shamrao could always be counted on to 'do the decent thing', to accept what was best for Elwin, irrespective of any downside for himself.⁶⁷⁹

The sequel to breakfast at Teen Murti came on 28 August 1955, when Nehru came to visit the Elwin family home in Shillong which contained a museum of Elwin's tribal research. Elwin described the visit in often amusing detail in a letter to his sister Eldyth written two days later.⁶⁸⁰ Nehru had obviously enjoyed the visit which he prolonged after a full tour of the exhibits in order to have more time for conversation, although Elwin was not at his most relaxed as the Prime Minister was accompanied by the Governor of Assam, with whom he was not in sympathy. He reported to his sister that because of his agitation he had offered Nehru the choice of a cup of coffee or a cup of sherry, and that Nehru, perhaps because of the presence of the Governor, had preferred coffee: in his autobiography this exchange became 'Sir, will you have a cup of sherry?' 'No, I think I will make do with a glass of coffee.'⁶⁸¹

Consequently from 1954 until his death in 1964 Elwin drove a policy, not just for the tribes that were his responsibility, but also, as guidance to others, for all India's

⁶⁷⁸ Elwin, *Tribal World*, p. 229.

⁶⁷⁹ Elwin, *Tribal World*, p. 230.

⁶⁸⁰ Elwin to his sister Eldyth, 30 August 1955, British Library, Mss Eur D950/5, fols 87, 88.

⁶⁸¹ Elwin, *Tribal World*, p. 315.

twenty million Adivasi, that was summed up in his *A Philosophy for NEFA*. NEFA was the acronym for the North-East Frontier Agency, described on the book's dust jacket as 'a wild and mountainous tract of over thirty thousand square miles bounded by Bhutan, Tibet and Burma, and inhabited by a large number of tribes speaking some fifty different dialects'.

Nehru wrote the Foreword, dated 16 February 1957, for the 1957 first edition, which was intended for a local readership, and added a second Foreword, dated 9 October 1958, for the 1959 revised second edition, intended for a wider audience. In the first he wrote:

Verrier Elwin has done me the honour of saying that he is a missionary of my views on tribal affairs. As a matter of fact, I have learnt much from him, for he is both an expert on the subject with great experience and a friend of the tribal folk. I have little experience of tribal life and my own views, vague as they were, have developed under the impact of certain circumstances and of Verrier Elwin's own writings. It would therefore be more correct to say that I have learnt from him rather than that I have influenced him in any way.⁶⁸²

In the second, Nehru enunciated (Guha argues at Elwin's suggestion), 'five fundamental principles': encouragement of 'their own traditional arts and culture', respect for 'tribal rights in land and forests', training 'a team of their own people' for administration and development, working through 'their own social and cultural institutions', and judging results 'by the quality of human character that is evolved'.⁶⁸³

Nehru clearly enjoyed Elwin's company, and was no doubt amused by the changes in Elwin's priorities over the years. Elwin was fulsome in his praise of Nehru, and himself a charmer was charmed by him. But this friendship was based on reciprocal political needs, Nehru to find a way to incorporate the aboriginal tribes into India without destroying them, and Elwin to have political support at the highest level for the

⁶⁸² Verrier Elwin, *A Philosophy for NEFA* (Shillong: Sachin Roy on behalf of the North-East Frontier Agency, 1957), p. xi.

⁶⁸³ Elwin, *A Philosophy for NEFA*, 2nd rev. ed (1959), p. xiii.

implementation of his proposals, not just in the NEFA, but also nationwide. In Aristotle's and Derrida's classification, this was more a political than a primary friendship.⁶⁸⁴

In the summer of 1961 Elwin had his first heart attack and by 1963 his health was deteriorating, with shortness of breath, chest heaviness, and high blood pressure, requiring several hospital admissions, and preventing his touring activities. Nehru, visiting Assam but not Shillong, wrote expressing his concern, and so did William Archer (1907-1979), Elwin's longstanding friend who as a Deputy Commissioner in the Naga Hills had first introduced him to the tribes of North-East India. Archer was now Keeper of the Indian Section of the Victoria and Albert Museum, having had to leave government service in India at Independence. Archer reminded him of their time together in Middle India: 'I still think that the Baiga is your finest book and after that, Folk Songs of the Maikal Hills. How proud I am that you dedicated it to me.' Referring to his unfinished book on the Santhal, he urged Elwin to 'muster all your breath and rally that stupid old heart so that I can dedicate it to you ... Dear Verrier, you should have died so many times in the past. Don't die now.'⁶⁸⁵

On 19 February 1964, against medical advice, Elwin flew to Delhi for a Frontier Services Board selection committee. On 21 February he had a meeting with Nehru, who had himself had had a stroke in January, after which he had been bedbound for almost a month.⁶⁸⁶ On the evening of 22 February Elwin had further chest pain, and was admitted to hospital, dying soon afterwards.⁶⁸⁷

⁶⁸⁴ Derrida, 'Politics of Friendship', pp. 359–60.

⁶⁸⁵ Guha, *Savaging the Civilized*, pp. 297–98.

⁶⁸⁶ Brown, *Nehru*, p. 334.

⁶⁸⁷ Guha, *Savaging the Civilized*, p. 301.

At his death Elwin had achieved renown and was admired by many, especially in India, who were proud to have been his acquaintance. He was assured of the love of his wife and sons. But it is difficult to identify any for whom he was one of Derrida's 'primary friends'. Archer and his wife certainly felt bound to him, but the distance in time, 1948-1964, and space, England to India, limited the continuation of their friendship. Perhaps Elwin's sister Eldyth comes closest to meeting this charge, with her visits to him in India, her regular correspondence, and her guardianship of his English and Italian archives, enabling many through the years to study his affective networks.

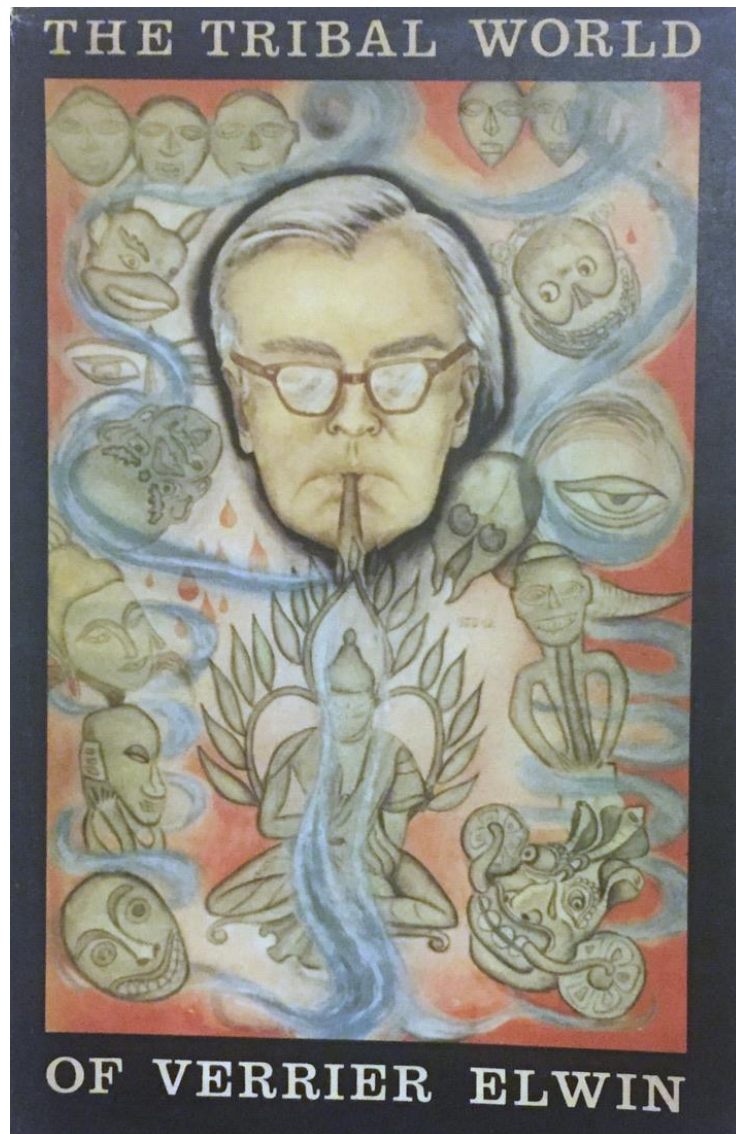
Elwin wrote his own funeral eulogy, his autobiography *The Tribal World of Verrier Elwin*, with his preface dated July 1963, to be published by the Oxford University Press, India, his publisher Roy Hawkins (1907-1989) hoping in a letter to Eldyth that Verrier would live to read the reviews. As Elwin had predicted it might be, the book was in the end published posthumously, in England on 15 October 1964 where it was given a prominent position in the shop window of Blackwell's Bookshop, Broad Street, Oxford.⁶⁸⁸ It had a striking, somewhat mystifying, picture on the front of its dust jacket, a copy of a painting by Otto Kadlecovics, who had visited the Elwins in Shillong (**Figure 7**). Elwin described the painting as '(for me) thought-provoking'.⁶⁸⁹ As Guha has pointed out, Elwin as depicted on the dust jacket appears 'altogether more complex than the self-portrait in the book itself'.⁶⁹⁰ The eye is first drawn to a don-like bespectacled Elwin, tidy hair, thoughtful, smoking a cheroot. But then in almost Tolkienesque fashion the smoke from the cheroot entwines the shoulders of an enthroned Indian deity, while different strands reach out to the tribal masks and symbols, representing according to the artist, 'the temptations of the soul', violence,

⁶⁸⁸ Personal observation.

⁶⁸⁹ Elwin, *Tribal World*, p. 319.

⁶⁹⁰ Guha, *Savaging the Civilized*, p. 307.

envy, hatred, pride. On either side of Elwin there is an eye, one of ‘desire, lusting for the world and its pleasures, one sardonic critical’. At the top there are five heads; whether these are additional masks or have another significance is not explained. Verrier ‘looks on the world in three different ways—with spiritual idealistic eyes, ... with eyes that love beauty, and a last eye that was cynical and slightly sinister’.⁶⁹¹



**Figure 7. Dust jacket of Elwin's autobiography:
portrait by Otto Kadlecovics.
(Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1964)**

⁶⁹¹ Guha, *Savaging the Civilized*, pp. 307–8.

The autobiography met with immediate success, and among the many enthusiastic reviews was one from Archer in the *Daily Telegraph*.⁶⁹² However, Archer's notes written in preparation for this review, extensively quoted by Guha, showed a more critical view of the book and a somewhat envious and vindictive attack on some of Elwin's claimed achievements.⁶⁹³ Primary friends may be critical of each other, and may be rivals, as Elwin and Archer were in their tribal studies, but envy and vindictiveness would seem to disqualify from this role.

One who for many years was a primary friend of Elwin's and who at the end had some excuse for envy and vindictiveness which he never seems to have shown, was Shamrao. At the start of the ashram venture Shamrao was an irreplaceable pillar, who had abandoned his vocation as an Anglican priest, and was later to abandon both his close relationship with Gandhi and his friendships with Sorella Maria and Sorella Immacolata in order to remain in sympathy with Elwin, to whom he was devoted. A highpoint of this relationship may have been at the time of the writing of Shamrao's book about Elwin, no doubt partly ghost-written by its subject, *Scholar Gipsy*. In this there is a happy photograph of Elwin's and Shamrao's sons (to whom the book is dedicated) together, an example of the part played by a friend's child in a friendship.⁶⁹⁴

To illustrate how Elwin's second marriage, to the Pardhan Lila, was presented to his mother and sister, Guha quotes from a letter from Shamrao to Eldyth in which Shamrao excused Elwin on the grounds that he was one of the 'often quite mad' geniuses, poets, prophets and reformers, examples being Ruskin and Wordsworth, who became more likeable once their human failings became known. 'So my dear Eldyth, if this marriage has upset you or mother Elwin ... I think we ought not let it make any difference in our

⁶⁹² Archer, W. G. 'Converted by India.' *Daily Telegraph*, 22 October 1964, p. 20.

⁶⁹³ British Library, Mss Eur. F236/266, quoted in Guha, *Savaging the Civilized*, pp. 310–12.

⁶⁹⁴ Hivale, *Scholar Gipsy*, between pp. 96 and 97.

regard or love for him.’⁶⁹⁵ The letter was in reply to a letter of Eldyth of 1 May 1953 and Shamrao started writing it on 5 September while convalescing in Hawkins’ home in Bombay after two unspecified operations, enjoying Brahms and Bach and regretting that Hawkins did not have any Beethoven or Mozart. He gave the date planned for the wedding of Elwin with Lila as 21 September; in fact, according to Guha it happened on the previous day. Both Jehangir Patel, their principal financial sponsor, and Hawkins approved of the marriage; he, Shamrao, had been against it,

but on the whole I think it is the best thing for him. There is no doubt at all that both are extremely fond of each other & there is no fear of it turning out the way the first marriage did. [Lila] is a charming girl and understands Verrier and his ways almost as well as I do. I wish he had married her 14 years ago! I tried my best but he felt then – that she was in love with someone else.

The letter stopped there and was resumed on 22 October 1953 from Patangarh. Elwin with his new wife and their three-year-old son Wasant had now set off on a ten-week research trip. ‘Verrier is definitely very happy with Lila – and isn’t that the most important thing? It’s no good arguing with Verrier. He has chosen his life, he believes absolutely in his mission & he is determined to die in Patangarh.’⁶⁹⁶ Within two months, shortly after returning from the trip, Elwin had accepted his new government post and he and Lila were planning to leave Patangarh for Shillong. A year later Shamrao wrote again to Eldyth, having felt ‘terribly lonely’ after returning from a visit to Elwin in Shillong; he could not be happy unless he was with Elwin. ‘I wish I could fly back to Shillong now. So I can realise how you all feel.’⁶⁹⁷ Even if Shamrao had his own wife and children, there is a feeling here of betrayal of what had been a very close relationship.

⁶⁹⁵ Guha, *Savaging the Civilized*, p. 312.

⁶⁹⁶ Shamrao to Eldyth Elwin, 22 October 1953, Mss Eur D950/4, fols. 58-9.

⁶⁹⁷ Shamrao to Eldyth Elwin, 20 September 1954, Mss Eur D950/5, fol. 39.

The move to Shillong left Shamrao not only bereft of Elwin, but also bereft of funds. There was apparently no divorce settlement for this breakup. Previously the division of labour had been that Shamrao was responsible for the health and welfare services while Elwin funded this with his writing and his finding of sponsors. On Elwin's departure their sponsors withdrew much of their support. There was a suggestion from Elwin that Shamrao's work might transfer to Assam; he wrote to his mother 'if I get on well, I shall move TWARU over to Assam, and Sham will try to sell his house and get another in Shillong', but this never materialised.⁶⁹⁸ Shamrao did visit the Elwins in Shillong on more than one occasion, once with his complete family. In his autobiography Elwin described Shamrao as 'my lifelong friend and ally'.⁶⁹⁹ 'It was not easy in those days for an Englishman ... to find his way about outside the narrow circle of the sahibs and I could have done little had I not had Shamrao with me.'⁷⁰⁰ 'Without Shamrao I could have done nothing. If I provided thinking and ideas, he translated them into action.'⁷⁰¹ But fine words butter no parsnips. 'In the last eight years, he and his wife Kisum have carried on, with very little money and every circumstance of discouragement, by themselves but have continued to bring comfort and succour to hundreds of the poorest people.'⁷⁰² Elwin was honest about how he had abandoned what had been their project together, but seems to have shown no remorse for the fact that he was no longer providing the financial backing the work needed, or for the distress he was causing Shamrao by his departure.

As his American son-in-law recorded in an obituary, Shamrao was never able to maintain his previous work, and the project became increasingly difficult to continue:

⁶⁹⁸ Elwin to his mother, 19 December 1953, Mss Eur D950/4, fol. 71.

⁶⁹⁹ Elwin, *Tribal World*, p. 49.

⁷⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

⁷⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 137.

⁷⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 106.

As Elwin became engaged in the tribal world of the Northeast, his interest in Chhatisgarh waned as did the financial support for Hivale's work. Then, and after Elwin's death when the money came to an absolute end, Hivale scrimped and saved, sold his few valued possessions and sacrificed his health to keep the effort alive. He would travel by country bus over dusty and muddy tracks, in fair weather and foul, to keep his faith with the people of Chhatisgarh, continuing until the late 1960s when his health and his resources made it impossible to go on. Neglected by his trusted friend, his hope was virtually extinguished when Elwin suddenly died in 1964.⁷⁰³

Shamrao wrote to Hawkins of Elwin's death: 'I can't get used to it and feel as if he would call me "Sham" from any side.' He remembered how happy he was when Hawkins and Elwin were talking together when they were staying, as they often did, in Hawkins' house in Bombay: 'And now I shall never see that sight again.'⁷⁰⁴ Despite the years of separation Elwin had remained Shamrao's inspiration and ideal; without the man himself, Shamrao, who had given up so much to follow him, became even more lonely and inevitably profoundly depressed. He died, twenty years after Elwin, on 3 September 1984.⁷⁰⁵

'India changes. The old guards fade away.'

On the morning of 15 August 1942, five years to the day before Indian Independence, Mahadev, imprisoned in the Aga Khan's palace in Poona, suffered a sudden attack of what seems to have been an apoplectic fit, dying within a matter of minutes. His body was decorated by Mirabehn with flowers from the palace garden and was cremated just outside the palace fence, Gandhi lighting the funeral pyre. The cremation site was marked by a mound on which Mirabehn moulded the mystic letter OM with, as wished by Gandhi, a small cross. Crescents for Islam were added to the

⁷⁰³ Carter, Thomas R., 'Shamrao Hivale, 2005',
<<http://www.suniljanah.org/sjanah/related/shamrao-hivale.htm>> [accessed 27 November 2020].

⁷⁰⁴ Shamrao to Hawkins, 12 March 1964, quoted in Guha, *Savaging the Civilized*, p. 328.

⁷⁰⁵ Carter, Thomas R., 'Shamrao Hivale'.

four corners. Gandhi visited the memorial mound every day for readings from the Gita and to place flowers in the cross, reminding Mirabehn of how he had been so taken with the crucifix in the Sistine Chapel in Rome. She noticed that from now on Gandhi's choice of a Christian hymn gradually changed from 'Lead Kindly Light' to 'When I Survey the Wondrous Cross'.⁷⁰⁶

From 1918 until his death Mahadev had been at Gandhi's side. His funeral eulogy was written by Elwin, in a politically uncontroversial if deeply committed contribution to a collection of essays for Gandhi's seventieth birthday.⁷⁰⁷ Elwin described him as 'simple, kindly, affectionate, natural'. 'His heart was filled with pity, gentleness and love; his mind was dominated by a great and holy cause.' Elwin commends Mahadev's *The Nation's Voice*, frequently cited as a source in the third chapter of this thesis.⁷⁰⁸ 'It revealed to the people of India their Mahatma and representative moving freely among the greatest and the humblest of the land, moving with dignity and freedom and at every point giving his message in a spirit of truth and love.' He refers not only to Mahadev's careful, accurate writing in idiomatic English, but also to Mahadev's wide cultural background, catholic in both Indian and European 'poetry, art, and literature'. If Guha's interpretation of Mahadev's 'Translator's Preface' to his English translation of Gandhi's autobiography is correct, Elwin had read and corrected this work, making him a well-qualified judge.⁷⁰⁹

But perhaps even in this thoughtful and beautiful piece of writing Elwin does not make enough of Mahadev gifts for friendship and for acting as friendship's courier for the Mahatma who addressed everyone as 'Dear Friend'. Elwin does allude to Gandhi

⁷⁰⁶ Slade, *Spirit's Pilgrimage*, p. 246.

⁷⁰⁷ Verrier Elwin, 'Mahadev' in *Gandhiji, His Life and Work: Published on His 75th Birthday, October 2, 1944*, ed. by D. G. Tendulkar and others (Bombay: Karnatak, 1944), pp. 18–22.

⁷⁰⁸ Gandhi and Desai, *Nation's Voice*.

⁷⁰⁹ Guha, *Savaging the Civilized*, pp. 143–44.

and Mahadev's visit to his mother's North Oxford home: Mahadev 'so charmed my own dear mother that she, of very orthodox stock, was completely converted to his politics and half-converted to his religion in an afternoon'. But this was just one example of Mahadev's cross-cultural friendships; even if Elwin had of necessity broken his political links with Gandhi, and by choice his religious links with the Eremo Franciscano, it was Mahadev who wrote to the Sorelle of the *Eremo* to reassure them that Elwin and Shamrao had made it safely back to India from England just before the outbreak of the Second World War.⁷¹⁰

Tragically the Aga Khan's Palace soon had another cremation memorial mound, this time for Gandhi's wife Kasturba, who had died in his arms on 22 February 1944, aged 74. Mohandas and Kasturba had been married for sixty years. Then on 5 May 1944 the detainees heard that they were to be set at liberty at 8 a.m. the following day. In her memoir Mirabeau described how early that last morning they had laid flowers at the cremation ground for the last time: 'It was a hard moment to go out into the world without those two.'⁷¹¹

Gandhi's assassination on 30 January 1948 as he was joining the public prayer meeting at Birla House stunned the world then and continues today to influence Indian politics and South Asian political theory, neither of which fall within the scope of this thesis. For his many personal friends, who in Derrida's sense had his image constantly before them, it was a heavy loss, but also a fulfilment of their friendships. Three examples illustrating these friendships will be discussed.

⁷¹⁰ Mahadev to Turton, 16 July 1939, in *Frammenti Di Un'amicizia* <<https://www.yumpu.com/it/document/read/7346042/frammenti-di-unamicizia-senza-confini-madonna-della-neve>> [accessed 7 March 2022], Letter 42.

⁷¹¹ Slade, *Spirit's Pilgrimage*, p. 258.

Sarojini Naidu first met Mohandas and Kasturba Gandhi in their Bayswater lodgings in London ('an obscure part of Kensington', up 'the steep stairs of an old unfashionable house') on the afternoon of 7 August 1914, the day after their arrival, third class, from South Africa, and three days after the outbreak of the war that no one was expecting. The Gandhis had come to meet Gopal Gokhale, who, absent in France, had asked Sarojini to meet them. She found:

An open door framing a living picture of a little man with a shaven head, seated on the floor on a black prison blanket and eating a messy meal of squashed tomatoes and olive oil out of a wooden prison bowl. Around him were ranged some battered tins of parched ground nuts and tasteless biscuits of dried plantain flour. I burst instinctively into happy laughter at this amusing and unexpected vision of a famous leader, whose name had already become a household word in our country. He lifted his eyes and laughed back at me, saying: "Ah, you must be Mrs. Naidu!" Who else dare be so irreverent? "Come in", he said, "and share my meal." "No, thanks," I replied, sniffing; "What an abominable mess it is!"⁷¹²

Her amused experience of that meeting set the tone for their unbroken friendship over the next 34 years, providing another example of an attribute of primary friendship not considered by Derrida or his authorities, this the ability to joke together, often at each other's expense.⁷¹³ In Gandhi Sarojini found the perfect foil, used as he was to tease his friends. Confirmation of his humorous nature can be seen in many of his letters quoted in this thesis, but it was also a recent privilege for me to hear in person someone who had 'as a young teenager' attended his prayer meetings, Romila Thapar, say that while she had always been a firm supporter of Nehru, Gandhi was much more fun!⁷¹⁴

When Gandhi was assassinated, Sarojini was at her post in Lucknow as Governor of the United Provinces. She travelled to Delhi the next morning for his funeral and the following day broadcast nationwide, in terms that matched Derrida's funeral eulogy:

⁷¹² Forward to H. S. L. Polak, *Mahatma Gandhi* (London: Odhams, 1949), quoted in; Padmini Sengupta, *Sarojini Naidu: A Biography* (London: Asia Publishing House, 1966), pp. 88–89.

⁷¹³ Guha, *Gandhi*, pp. 22–23.

⁷¹⁴ In response (not recorded) to a question after Romila Thapar and others, 'Civil Resistance: The Originality of Gandhi', 16 October 2017, <http://podcasts.ox.ac.uk/civil-resistance-originality-gandhi> [accessed 8 May 2022]

Some of us have been so closely associated with him that our lives and his life were an integral part of one another. Some of us are indeed dead in him ... The time is over for private sorrow. ... The time is here and now to stand up and say, 'We take the challenge with those who defied Mahatma Gandhi! ...' I for one, before the world that listens to my quivering voice, pledge myself as I did more than thirty years ago to the service of the Mahatma! ... May the soul of my master, my leader, my father, rest. Not in peace! Not in peace—my father—do not rest. Keep us to our pledge. Give us strength to fulfil our promises—⁷¹⁵

Yet this warrior, who had joked at Gandhi's meeting with Mussolini as 'the meeting of two dictators', now saluting Gandhi's paternalistic and fictive parental role, was also the friend who mothered the inmates of the Aga Khan's Palace, cooking for them, serving them, as Mirabehn remembered, like children, and insisting that the birthdays and annual festivals should be observed inside the prison just as outside:

Not one of us, not even Bapu, had realised ... the full richness of Sarojini Devi's nature. Of course we all know of her poetic genius, her amazing oratory, and her sparkling wit, but it was only now, through direct experience, that we came to know of the bigness of her motherly heart, and the strength of her character in moments of suffering and sorrow.⁷¹⁶

Mirabehn, busy with her agricultural project in Uttar Pradesh, was staying in a guesthouse near Rishikesh when the news reached her of Gandhi's death.

I stood silent and still. A vast emotion held me in a trance. The only thought that came to me was "Bapu, Bapu, so it has come!" I looked up to the heavens and, through the boughs of the trees, the stars were shining in peaceful splendour far, far, away. They told of Bapu's spirit released and at peace, and as I gazed on them it was as if Bapu was there—yes, there and with me too. It all became one.⁷¹⁷

She remembered how in Rome Bapu had inspected and gazed at the crucifix; she felt that he knew that the cross was the way to what he was seeking. 'In knowledge, humility and love he had to be ready to give all'. 'The long-drawn-out crucifixion of Bapu's spirit was over, completed and consummated in the crucifixion of the flesh. It

⁷¹⁵ Sengupta, *Sarojini Naidu* pp. 328–29.

⁷¹⁶ Slade, *Spirit's Pilgrimage*, p. 248.

⁷¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 292.

might take years, it might take centuries, but this last sacrifice, willingly given for the love of humanity, would conquer where all else might fail.’⁷¹⁸

Mirabehn’s description of Gandhi’s ‘crucifixion’, first in spirit and then in the flesh, presents an interesting historical parallel. Leaving aside the Christian beliefs in Jesus’ resurrection and divinity, both Jesus and Gandhi sought to universalise their respective faiths and to encompass within them the poor, the excluded, and indeed their enemies. Both were sent to their deaths by co-religionists who could not accept their teaching. This is the extreme culmination of Devji’s concept of an invitation to friendship by a solitary form of suffering.⁷¹⁹

Those setting off to Delhi for Gandhi’s funeral asked Mirabehn to join them, but she refused, remembering the letter Gandhi sent her as he started his fast to the death: ‘... there is no meaning in having the last look. The spirit which you love is always with you’.⁷²⁰ Here again, in Gandhi’s second sentence, Derrida’s ever-present friend remains with the survivor even after death.

Sorella Maria had written from the *Eremo* on 2 October 1947, Gandhi’s birthday, expressing a similar thought:

Another saying of yours which I have heard is that you would be willing to live 125 years to serve India. Service is a supreme desire. You will serve as long as you live on earth or beyond, because after you have gone ahead, many, not only from India, will continue to hear your voice and receive a ray of light from you. So be it for ever!⁷²¹

Like Mirabehn, Sorella Maria took comfort from the sky. On the evening of the day of the assassination Sorella Maria, Sorella Jacopa, and another sister, Sorella Agnese, were watching the sunset from Sorella Maria’s room in the *Eremo* and saw a marvellous

⁷¹⁸ Slade, *Spirit's Pilgrimage*, p. 293.

⁷¹⁹ John 12. 32. ‘And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.’

⁷²⁰ Slade, *Spirit's Pilgrimage*, p. 167.

⁷²¹ Patmury, *Gandhiji and Sister Maria*, p. 73.

light spreading right across the horizon, which Sorella Maria later described as a sacrament and an ineffable mystery. When the news of the assassination reached the Eremo, Sorella Jacopa was initially reluctant to tell the now elderly and infirm Sorella Maria, fearful for her state of mind.⁷²² When she did tell her, on 7 February, that Gandhi was dead, without saying that he had been killed. Sorella Maria told her that the pilgrim (Gandhi in the image of him walking seen from behind of which the Eremo had a picture postcard, similar to, but not identical with, **Figure 8**) was moving around her as if he had something to tell her, something that she needed to know.⁷²³



Figure 8. 'Lead Kindly Light'.

Cover picture from *Mahatma Gandhi: sketches in pen pencil and brush* by Kanu Desai (London: The Golden Vista Press, 1932)

On the evening of 8 February, they listened to Beethoven's Eroica symphony in his memory, with his picture before them. On 9 February, Sorella Jacopa told her that

⁷²² Dante, *Gandhi e Sorella Maria*, p. 158.

⁷²³ Dante, *Gandhi e Sorella Maria*, Foto 12, facing p.129.

Gandhi had been assassinated, and next day asked Sorella Maria if she had seen the pilgrim again. No, she had not, from the time she had been told how he had died. Under her guidance Gandhi was commemorated in the Eremo with the flag of India (a gift from long before Independence from Nehru) on their altar, together with a photograph of Nonna Amata (Turton), Gandhi's now deceased disciple, an olive branch, and a little thread, spun by the 'smallest' of the Sorelle.⁷²⁴ According to Sorella Maria's and Sorella Jacopa's notes, Sorella Maria subsequently continued to remind the Sorelle about Gandhi and his teaching.⁷²⁵

I was too young at the time to be aware of Gandhi's assassination, although I can remember the occasion when my father told me that new British coins would no longer include the royal title 'IND IMP', Emperor of India. I can also remember my grandfather pointing out Nehru in the Coronation Procession of 2 June 1953. Obviously, this was highly significant for my grandfather, a staunch supporter of Churchill, but of course I then had no idea why. In general, around that time a child's questions about India, as about Ireland, particularly regarding the colours on new maps, tended to be met with ambivalent responses.

Almost eleven years later, on the afternoon of 27 May 1964, I was visiting Agra with the student son of the Indian family with whom I was staying. We reached the Taj Mahal and to our surprise the site was closed. Why? Pandit Nehru had died. After a little while it reopened, and we were able to visit.

Next day I went to New Delhi as already planned, as I needed to go to one of the consulates for a visa for my journey back to the United Kingdom. This meant that I found myself on the route of the funeral procession, between Teen Murti and Rajpath,

⁷²⁴ Dante, *Gandhi e Sorella Maria*, pp. 142–46.

⁷²⁵ Dante, *Gandhi e Sorella Maria*, pp. 155–56.

and crowds were gathering. As far as I can remember, the crowd where I was waiting was peaceful, and their mood was one of respect (**Figure 9**). The funeral followed the same protocol as Gandhi's, very different from the still imperial 'ornamentalism' of Churchill's funeral the following year.



**Figure 9. Jawaharlal Nehru's Funeral, 28 May 1964, New Delhi.
Author's photograph.**

Nehru's letter of 9 March 1945 to Thompson (the letter following the news of Frank's death, that was mislaid, and eventually sent as a copy on 12 August 1945) contained the following penultimate paragraph:

No, I do not think death frightens me much. What terrifies me is the fearful load of hatred and bitterness that we accumulate all over the world and leave as a legacy to those that come after us. And so the old cycle goes on. In this barren desert the oases of friendship and understanding are few but very precious, and more and more I have come to realise how much they mean to me and to others. The books that you sent me have been my companions here and your occasional messages have brought you near to me. Often I have felt that physical companionship is only just one way, and not always the closest, of meeting together. We can overcome the lack of it and understand each other even more sometimes from a distance.⁷²⁶

⁷²⁶ Nehru to Thompson, 12 August 1945, (copy of letter written 9 March 1945), MS. Eng. c. 5305, fol. 59, also in *Nehru*, XIII, 572–73.

Nehru's oases of friendship and understanding have been evident in the networks discussed in this thesis, and have stood out against a background, in India, Europe, and the world, of violence, hostility, bitterness, and cruelty, that characterized so much of the period described. Nehru's death marked the end of the 'long' independence story, and with the consensual selection of his successor the coming of age of India as a democracy.⁷²⁷ It was also the culmination of these affective networks of friendship.

In conclusion this chapter has described the impacts on friendships of impending and actual deaths. The deaths of Andrews, Mahadev, Kasturba, Frank, Thompson, Gandhi, Nehru, and Elwin have been found to be associated with a variety of funeral eulogies, as postulated in Derrida's politics of friendship. The differences in these eulogies reflect the varieties of friendship, for Andrews the discipleship of Mallik; for Frank the fictive father-ship of Nehru; for Gandhi the disrespectful follower-ship of Sarojini, the fictive daughter-ship of Mirabehn, and the spiritual friendship of Sorella Maria; for Thompson and Nehru their agnostic but mutually undergirding friendship; for Elwin the tragically betrayed devotion of Shamrao. Letters supplement the published memorials, Nehru writing to his daughter with very personal memories of Andrews, Thompson finding solace in Nehru's letters after Frank's death and as his own approached, Shamrao losing hope after Elwin's death. The protagonists had come to India following their faith, their commitments to Indian freedom remained to the ends of their lives, but it was their friendships that counted for most at the time of their deaths.

⁷²⁷ Brown, *Nehru*, pp. 336–37.

CONCLUSIONS

This thesis has examined the experiences of three British missionaries, C. F. Andrews, E. J. Thompson, and V. H. Elwin, from the Amritsar massacre of 1919 until the death of Jawaharlal Nehru in 1964. The three owed their missionary vocations to their Christian religious faith and their choice of the Indian mission field to links through friends or family. Once in India their interpretations of the teaching of the founder of their religion brought them into conflict not just with the imperial project, but also, at least for Andrews and Elwin, with the church in which they had been ordained. Through their links with the Indian nationalist movement, especially with Mahatma Gandhi and his followers, they developed the networks of friendship which the thesis investigates.

In the first chapter of the thesis two linked case studies relate to an episode during martial law in the Punjab, the flogging of a former soldier in the Punjab exactly a week after the Amritsar massacre. Andrews's physical encounter with the victim, described in three sources, was reported within a context of Christian faith as an act of repentance, forgiveness, and reconciliation. The second case study is of the actual incident of the flogging, seen as exemplifying the imperial justification of violence as paternal correction of a child, with its discussion by the Hunter Committee and its recall by its perpetrator in his memoir. Driven by his faith, Andrews was convinced by the unacceptable violence of the Punjab government that nothing less than full independence for India could create an equitable postcolonial future, as he urged in his pamphlet, *Indian Independence: The Immediate Need*, which was to be lauded by Nehru.

Reaction among the British in India to the metropolitan censuring of General Dyer led to Andrews's suggestion that Thompson should be a co-signatory to the missionaries' letter to *The Statesman*, which specifically cited the Christian principles which had led

them to condemn both the violence and the support for violence. On his return to England Thompson wrote *The Other Side of the Medal*, which claimed that British memories of the 1857 uprising had been behind the failure of the British in India to condemn the violence of the 1919 massacre and of martial law in the Punjab. More ambivalent than Andrews about the route to Indian Independence, in his writings and contacts he continued to pursue the theme of freedom for India.

The second chapter relates how, again at Andrews's suggestion, Elwin, recently arrived in India, provided a link of friendship between an unconventional Roman Catholic female community in Italy, the Eremo Franciscano, and Gandhi, principally through his correspondence with the Anglican sponsor of the Eremo Amy Turton, who translated his letters into Italian for the founder of the community, Sorella Maria. Elwin at this time was increasingly supportive of Gandhi who adopted him as his fictive English son. Sorella Maria, again with Turton as translator, also corresponded directly with Gandhi. Close reading of this correspondence, treating the letters as objects for study in themselves rather than just sources of information, has shown the progressive development of strong intercultural affective relationships, based on shared faith in the importance of the search for truth and of prayer and worship. The high points of these relationships were a 1931 meeting in Rome between Gandhi and Sorella Maria and a 1932 meeting in Villeneuve, Switzerland, between Elwin and Sorella Maria. These were friendships that overcame the challenges of cultural, political, and religious difference, spatial misalignment, and temporal disconnect.

A challenge that eventually broke some of these friendships came from these friends' shared rule of celibacy. When Elwin and his English fiancée announced their intention to marry, Turton's response was that the Eremo's love would continue but that 'it does make a difference'. The letters, especially Turton's drafts for her reply, dramatically

illuminate this difference, even if, as a result of Gandhi's intervention, the marriage never took place. In the years that followed his letters show Elwin progressively distancing himself from his church, which had already rejected him because of his support for Gandhi, and from his religious faith, and eventually, after his marriage to an Adivasi, from his friends of the Eremo, a distancing that was an enduring source of distress for Sorella Maria.

The third chapter of the thesis examines Gandhi's 1931 visit to Europe, which his correspondence with Rajagopalachari, together with Sundaram's letters to the Eremo during his preparatory trip, show was already in the planning stage, with its aim for Gandhi to meet Romain Rolland and others, well before the invitation to attend the Second Round Table Conference. Gandhi's contributions achieved little in terms of progress towards India's independence, or of Rolland's hope that he might be a new leader for Europe, but the meetings arranged by Andrews and Thompson provided ample opportunity for him to propound his philosophy and his insistence that freedom for India must be negotiated between equals, leaving both countries free to remain friends. As well as his meetings with members of the Anglican hierarchy and of the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge he established strong rapport with his neighbours in the East End of London and with the Lancashire cotton workers, a rapport that was similar to that he had already created with the people of India. Many new and lasting friendships were established during his visits and during the frames of space and time of his homeward voyage.

Gandhi's letters and comments to Thompson described at the beginning of Chapter IV jokingly stress Thompson's sometimes reluctant bonding to India and allude to the forthcoming imprisonments of the Indian nationalist leaders. Gandhi's note to Elwin at the time of Gandhi's arrest and Gandhi's correspondence before and after his 'fast to

the death' emphasized the fundamental importance to him of continuing friendships, on no account to be put in jeopardy by his political moves. Nehru's visits to Thompson and their times together in India in 1939 made possible the progressive development of the close friendship which becomes evident from their correspondence and from Nehru's prison diary, and from the subterfuges Thompson used to keep in touch (to which the Viceroy was a party) despite the prison restrictions on Nehru's mail. This was a secular friendship that differed from Gandhi's offer of a spiritual friendship to all, both Thompson and Nehru being more selective in their choice of friends

The last chapter examines the deaths of several of the subjects of the thesis in the light of Derrida's postulate of the funeral eulogies of primary friends. Andrews' achievements and death are recorded in Nehru's letters and diary, and in memorial contributions from Tagore and Mallik. The deaths of Mahadev and Kasturba while confined with Gandhi in Poona are seen through the reactions of Gandhi, Mirabehn and Elwin. Nehru's correspondence with Thompson and with Palmer following Frank's death and immediately before Thompson's death confirms Nehru and Thompson's friendship based on shared values rather than political agreement. Nehru's mutually advantageous friendship with Elwin is contrasted with Elwin's effective abandonment of his previously intense friendship with Shamrao. Reactions to Gandhi's assassination of three of his female friends, Mirabehn, Sorella Maria, and Sarojini, emphasize Gandhi's role as a spiritual, if patriarchal, leader. Elwin's and Nehru's deaths bring to an end the networks of friendship discussed in this thesis.

These chapters make possible an analysis of the friendships shown in the network map in **Figure 1**. Despite their very different beliefs and political positions, Tagore and Gandhi maintained a relationship of primary friendship, as shown for example in Tagore's journey to Poona during Gandhi's fast to the death and his participation in its

end. The younger Nehru, agnostic and socialist, nevertheless returned Gandhi's paternal love, as seen in their letters, and had the greatest respect for Tagore.

Despite the difference in their religious backgrounds Andrews proclaimed his discipleship to Tagore, to whom he had a deeply emotional attachment. With 'Mohan' (Mohandas Gandhi) he had a longstanding primary friendship with cooperation from the time of their first meeting in South Africa. Nehru demonstrates a relationship of love and respect for Andrews, tolerating what he saw as Andrews's occasional mistakes.

Thompson's initial friendship with Tagore, who perhaps over-generously encouraged the much younger poet to assist with his translations into English, was wrecked for a time by Tagore's reactions to Thompson's criticism of his work. But despite the resulting anti-Thompson campaign in Bengal some degree of reconciliation was eventually achieved. Mahalanobis and his wife (who do not appear on the network map) remained Thompson's loyal friends, and Thompson happily remembered their discussions during his visits to India. Despite Andrews and Thompson's rivalry as translators for Tagore, Thompson cooperated with Andrews over the missionaries' letter and for Gandhi's visit to Oxford, and their later correspondence suggests they were subsequently on friendly terms.

Initially Elwin, who had been introduced to Gandhi's thinking by his Oxford friend Aluwihare, accepted Gandhi's offer of fictive 'English Son'-ship. His ten-year correspondence with Turton and the Sorelle provided a bridge linking these friends to Andrews and Gandhi, and he shared with them his increasing doubts and difficulties. He was aware of, but not close to, Thompson. His tragic betrayal of his intense friendship with Shamrao was made all the worse by his distancing of them both from Gandhi and from the Sorelle, to whom Shamrao had become very attached during the

1931 journey back from Europe. His friendship with Nehru, happy as it was, would not have developed as it did without their common interest in the Adivasi.

Mallik was a disciple of Andrews's and a friend of Elwin's, who for a time considered joining Elwin's ashram. Well-known to Gandhi and Tagore, he became a key member of Visva-Bharati, and was accepted by the Society of Friends as a 'Hindu Quaker'.

As well as Gandhi (together with Shamrao and Aluwihare, whose links to Rolland are not shown on the chart), Tagore (and Mahalanobis), Andrews, Elwin, and Nehru were at different times guests of Rolland and his sister. After Gandhi's visit Rolland recorded his increased affection for Gandhi, despite their political disagreements.

The correspondence between Thompson and Nehru, facilitated at times by Wavell, shows how much their friendship meant to both of them, fully meeting Derrida's criteria for primary friendship, especially in respect of the funeral eulogy, but also demonstrating the significance of the friends' children in such a primary friendship. The development of this friendship over time has been traced in the changing salutations in their letters and in their inscriptions in gifted books.

This review of the friendship networks provides answers to the research questions posed in the Introduction to this thesis. How did the protagonists' faith drive their alienation from the British raj? Did their alignment with the call for freedom contribute to their separation from their churches? When, how, and why did they develop their cross-cultural networks, and through these, while working through different postcolonial approaches to the needs of the looked-for Indian nation, make friendships that overcame the challenges of cultural, political, and religious difference, spatial misalignment, and temporal disconnect? What kinds of politics of friendship do these networks demonstrate? How far in participating in these networks did the protagonists escape from orientalism and racism? Given the common assumption of the impending

independence of India, might the protagonists' politics of friendship reasonably be described as postcolonial?

The protagonists' Christian faith did indeed drive their alienation from the British raj. Andrews, while always careful to maintain his links with government at its highest levels, found the violence of imperial control in the Punjab incompatible with his Christian faith, and following this experience wrote his manifesto pamphlet arguing for India's immediate independence. Thompson, while less prepared to adopt such a firm position as Andrews, joined the argument from Christian premises in the missionaries' letter for the Raj to accept the need for reconciliation. Elwin as a young Christian saw Gandhi's actions and the government's responses as having close parallels with the experience of Jesus and gave whole-hearted support to the nationalist cause until forced to renounce this on pain of exclusion from India.

This alignment with the call for freedom had different impacts on their separations from their churches. Andrews's renunciation of his Anglican orders was based primarily on theological disagreement, but also reflected a desire for a more universal approach to religion. His association with the nationalist cause was much criticised within his church, and on occasions he was excluded from church services. Elwin's failure to swear loyalty to the King Emperor led to his bishop's refusal to licence him (and to accept Elwin's colleague Shamrao as a candidate for ordination) which led in turn to Elwin's leaving his church. In contrast, Thompson's parting from his church was almost by default, as his writings and interests shifted almost entirely to India.

Through these changes the protagonists gained freedom from national, racial, religious, and cultural constraints to become nodes in transnational, transcultural, and inter-religious networks, finding friendship within these networks. Andrews, an ardent networker, derived much from his friendship with his colleague Rudra, and linked

closely with both Tagore and Gandhi. Thompson gained political support and advice from his American wife, slowly finding his way in the academic world, while making and losing Bengali friends through his association with Tagore. Later he developed a close friendship with Nehru, based mainly on correspondence but also on occasional meetings in India and England, a friendship which Nehru especially valued when imprisoned and Thompson especially valued following his son's death and in his final illness. Elwin's friendship with Turton and the Sorelle of the Eremo was for a time foundational for his ashram, where he was also for practical purposes dependent on his close friend Shamrao. Later his friendship with Nehru took them both forwards in supporting the Adivasi.

This freedom to develop friendships was not risk free. When the friendship was built around common beliefs and aspirations, as with Elwin and Shamrao's friendships with Gandhi and with Amy Turton and Sorella Maria, certain rules of life would be expected, which with time might prove unsustainable. When the friendship involved fictive kinship, as in Mirabehn's 'English Daughter'-ship and Elwin's 'English Son'-ship of Gandhi, these obligations might become all the more intense and restrictive, reducing the freedom gained. Even Nehru's unacknowledged fictive 'Father'-ship of Frank and Palmer Thompson proved for him a heavy emotional burden.

These friendships showed acceptance, humility, and mutual respect (as discussed in the thesis' introduction), with the friends willing to take risks in developing their relationships, and apparently untroubled by racist concerns. All three protagonists in their friendships and in their writings were sufficiently respectful of India's diversities to avoid Orientalist essentializations. Within the spectrum described in Derrida's 'Politics of Friendship' almost all of these friendships were primary friendships, shown by affective attachments maintained despite political or religious differences. Freedom

from colonial and religious restraints created the potential for postcolonial friendships, both friends looking forward to a postcolonial world in which they placed the Derridean images of each other.

Neither Derrida's category of primary friendship nor Leela Gandhi's of affective communities matches exactly Gandhi's universal invitation to friendship, as described in this thesis. Devji's suggestion, contrasting this friendship with brotherhood, that Gandhi's invitation removed this relationship from the liberal world of interests and contracts, seems to create a new politics of friendship, postcolonial in its difference from the more limited imperial imperative of friendship. In this thesis this politics of friendship can be seen in Gandhi, Tagore and Elwin's ashrams and in Sorella Maria's eremo, and reaching even into Gandhi and Nehru's prisons. Two aspects of primary friendship emerge from this thesis that are not discussed by Derrida, Devji, or Forster. One is the ability of friends to joke together, even at each other's expense, as shown by Gandhi and his friends. The other is the importance of the friends' children in friendships, shown most clearly in Nehru's concern for Thompson's sons.

Forster's *A Passage to India* refuses friendship between Aziz and Fielding, and by implication between Indians and Englishmen, with 'No, not yet' and 'No, not there', setting limits in time and space. The cross-cultural friendships described in this thesis were situated in time in the colonial period (Elwin's post-independence friendship with Nehru had its roots much earlier), and in spaces including India. The thesis argues that Forster's refusal of friendship could be overcome by a postcolonial politics of friendship even before the arrival of the postcolonial moment. Now that moment has arrived, these friendships serve as examples for the flourishing of similar friendships, which can now be hoped to be the rule rather than the exceptions.

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Oral History

Daniela Maria, Sorella (Conversations with Sorella Daniela Maria, Eremo Francescano, 27 July 2018, and, by telephone, 15 February 2022)

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