

# THE LITERARY DIGEST

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## GANDHI, A MONK WHO IMPERILS BRITISH RULE IN INDIA

**O**NE MAN, an ascetic with a fixt idea, has concentrated largely in his own person Great Britain's problem in India. His name is Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, and he has "set India seething with discontent" that lately resulted in the dispatch to Calcutta of Lord Reading, called by many persons "Britain's cleverest man," to attempt to work out a solution of the problem. "While the troubles of the British Empire appear to be centered in Ireland at the present moment," writes George F. Authier, of the New York *Herald's* Washington Bureau, "India presents a problem which is probably more far-reaching in its effect on the fortunes of the British Empire." The writer analyzes the political, economic, and religious entanglements of the problem for the space of several columns, and finally arrives at the strange personality of the Indian monk who seems to be at the center of modern India's turmoil. Including just enough of the Indian background to make Gandhi intelligible, Mr. Authier's account runs, in the New York *Herald*:

India is a small world in itself, with a background of history which promises little success for an experiment in democracy. With a population of approximately 313,000,000, the prevailing popular element is Brahman, which in itself is divided into a number of castes from which escape or withdrawal is impossible. Its lowest rung is the large class of Pariahs, or "untouchables," who to the high-caste Hindu is all that the description implies. The Moslem is a comparatively small portion of the population, but he exerts an influence greater than his numbers would warrant. The Moslems of India are approximately 60,000,000 in number, comprising one-sixth of the entire population.

Heretofore, nationalistic movements have been opposed by the Moslem and by the low-caste Hindus, who have not relished the prospect of being subjected to the harsh and arbitrary rule of the high-caste Hindu. It was from this rule that British control rescued them.

The appeal to religious prejudice has jarred a portion of the Moslem leaders from their opposition to nationalism, while the influence of Gandhi, leader in the movement against the British, has succeeded in developing a nationalistic sentiment among a portion of the low-caste Hindus.

It is this strange influence which Gandhi exerts which makes him so dangerous an element, from the British view-point. Gandhi is fifty-one years old and is described as an extreme religionist with a sweetly beguiling tongue. Altho he walks about like a mendicant, with bare feet and the clothing of the humblest, his influence extends from the bottom strata of society upward.

His philosophy prompts him to believe that modern civilization is a curse. In modern appliances, in modern machinery, in railroads and telegraphs he professes to see nothing but the works of an evil one. In the industrial city in which he makes his home he has developed a social cult which professes to find its chief satisfaction in primitive agriculture and in the simplest forms of industry. The machine is discarded and the hand is exalted in their ideal of industry.

Gandhi, the man of mystery in dreaming India, describes himself in this sentence:

"Most religious men I have met are politicians in disguise; I, however, who wear the guise of a politician, am at heart a religious man."

While scorning modern inventions, Gandhi is understood to utilize railroad trains and automobiles in traveling about India, spreading his doctrines wherever he can, with the result that his popularity appears to have attained almost Messianic proportions.

At a congress held in Nagpur at the close of last year Gandhi, while pleading for non-violence, called for the destruction of the British Empire and declared that success of the movement

might involve "wading through oceans of blood." This was but a sample of the utterances that were made at this congress, which declared loyalty to Great Britain optional and constitutional methods matters of expedience. The congress declared for non-cooperation with the British Government in the establishment of its new system and for non-cooperation with the British under any form, except in the case of schoolboys under sixteen years of age.

This attitude suggests a resemblance to the Irish movement which is startling.

Ferment in India commenced before the world-war and there were disturbances during the war. In spite of this the British, with the aid of its vassal princes, 112 in number, succeeded in quieting most disturbances. Indian troops were taken to Europe, resulting in another complaint on the part of the Indians on the ground that their soldiers should not be asked to serve outside of India.

In an effort to solve the situation, the Montagu-Chelmsford report was submitted to Parliament, providing a limited degree of self-government and envisaging home rule as an eventual goal. This measure became a law in 1919, eighteen months after the report had been submitted. During this period unrest broke out again, resulting in rioting and disturbances of various kinds, until the British Government was moved to adopt a stern repressive measure, known as the Rowlatt Bill in England, but described in India as the "Black Cobra" Bill.

These repressive measures were vigorously enforced, finally culminating in the so-called massacre at Amritsar, where several natives were shot down by order of General Dyer and many more wounded. The Amritsar episode is described as "revolution" by certain authorities, and the British press have generally shown a disposition to commend General Dyer for the course taken. Possibly yielding to expediency, the Government censured General Dyer severely and recalled him.

In the meantime, the Indian Nationalist movement appears to be growing rather than diminishing, and the activities of Gandhi and his successes in creating unrest are increasing. With Russian Bolshevik influence pressing from the north and with revolutionary activities working from within, the British authorities are confronted with a problem of tremendous difficulties.

In spite of the "non-resistance" preached by Gandhi, says an Indian correspondent of the Manchester (England) *Guardian*, his methods mean trouble:

That they are fraught with grave danger to peace and order should be obvious. Even Mr. Gandhi himself seems to entertain some misgivings on the point, or he would hardly have gone out of his way to declare that "before this great battle ended they might have to pass through a sea of blood." Lala Lajpat Rai, too, hinted plainly at the possibility of a recrudescence of the Punjab disturbances, and tho he said that "under present circumstances armed rebellion was out of the question," he did not attempt to conceal his belief in "the right of armed rebellion against a repressive Government."

It is idle, of course, to proclaim in one breath the necessity of abstaining from violence and in the next to indulge in inflammatory utterances of this kind. Already there have been plain indications that the more disorderly elements in the Extremist ranks are getting out of hand.

A policy of conciliation, sympathy, and good feeling is the only right course to be followed by the Government, the press, and the British people as an antidote to the growing influence of Mr. Gandhi over the masses.