



Abba Hillel Silver Collection Digitization Project

Featuring collections from the Western Reserve Historical Society and
The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives

MS-4787: Abba Hillel Silver Papers, 1902-1989.

Series IV: Sermons, 1914-1963, undated.

Reel
160

Box
57

Folder
681

Gandhi, 1943.

616
GANDHI
The Fable of the British Lion and the Hindu Mouse

WRHS
By
Dr. Abba Hillel Silver



At
The Temple

On
Sunday morning, February 28, 1943

One of the most intriguing men in our generation destined perhaps to outlive most of the men of this generation, is again on the front page of the world's news today, competing even with the most important war news. This man with his feeble hands and starved body is today defying the might of the British Empire.

He is again a prisoner and his captors are even more worried about the possibility of his death, as a result of his self-imposed fast of protest, than they had been by his stormy and, to them, very troublesome life. For his death might unleash another wave of violence, riot and rebellion in India. There are hundreds of men who regard him as a Saint.

This man as you look on him is just a bundle of skin and bones, an ungainly person, an unsightly figure, very much like that man described in the 53rd Chapter of the Book of Isaiah -- "No form nor comeliness, that we should look upon him; nor beauty that we should delight in him."

In Anglo-Saxon lands some wits have called him "Mickey Mouse". Yet this Hindu Mouse has been leading the British Lion by the nose for the past twenty-five years in India. It has been an unwilling lion, a roaring lion frequently striking out with his paws and inflicting wounds, but moving forward reluctantly enough to the goal which the Mouse had set for him -- a goal for the full freedom and independence of India.

Gandhi, called the Mahatma, might perish in prison. His death will not solve the Indian problem. It will aggravate it and entangle it further with the bitterness and resentment of a people which will come to look upon ^{him} not only as a Saint, but also as a Martyr. Gandhi has a sufficiently large number of very capable disciples and leaders. There is in India today a sufficiently organized movement to carry on the work after his death. The greatest achievement of his life can no longer be undone. Gandhi aroused and informed and capitalized Indian nationalist sentiment as no one has been able to do it.

Gandhi may be released, and practical statesmanship, if no other consideration, suggest that he should be released. His release will not solve the Indian problem.

It might ease the way by allaying haste -- I say it might ease the way towards the inevitable solution -- the independence of India within or outside, preferably within the Empire. The people of India know that this war is a great opportunity for which they have been waiting. They know that India is greatly needed in this war. The United Nations, not only Great Britain, stand in need of wholehearted cooperation of India in their war on Japan. China needs India very bitterly in this war. The United States has its troops in India today and war material. India has become one of the bases of our own battle front. A hostile or even an indifferent India is a terrible liability in this global war of all members of the United Nations. The peoples of India know it full well.

The Indians do not like the Japanese. They fear them. They would resist a Japanese invasion. They have no love for Hitler. They would like to not/embarrass Great Britain in their war on the Axis. But they want to know whether the war for the Four Freedoms into which they had been rushed without the consent of the Indians -- they want to know whether this war also means the freedom of India.

Churchill took occasion to point out quite specifically that it applied only to European countries. That has troubled them greatly. They want tangible proof. They want to be shown right here and now whether these Four Freedoms do actually apply to them. They want to know now their men when/services, / resources ~~are~~ the war are in demand. Promises of ultimate freedom after/they do not regard as enough. They have been disillusioned with earlier promises before, in the last war and after the last war. They do not trust England and English promises. They have been led to the conclusion from past experiences that when promises are made during an emergency, when the emergency disappears, somehow England, and for that matter all other countries, find ways of disencumbering themselves of promises made, or of whittling down these promises. The Jews have had the same experience with the Balfour Declaration affecting Palestine.

Sir Stafford Cripps' mission, last Spring, to India failed largely because of this unfortunately background of distrust, broken promises which the years had built up. The offer of Sir Stafford Cripps was a generous one, which given a different background might have served as the basis for agreement. But all the promises which Sir Stafford Cripps brought to India concerned the future, after the war. And for the present, nothing. The promises was for Indian union after the war with full Dominion status, but again, this only was promised after the war. No definite date was affixed.

. But there were other provisions in this resolution which because of this unfortunate background of the years were quickly interpreted or misinterpreted as a cunning and sinister device to circumvent this promise after the war. Thus it was intended that the Declaration sanction practically the partition of India, the breaking up of India into three separate states, British India, Moslem India and the native states, because the provision was made for native states to stay out of the Indian union if they so desired. The provision stated that the Moslem could stay out of the Indian Union if it so desired. This was interpreted as meaning an attempt by the British Empire to remain in full control of the situation in India by dividing the country and creating such a condition where continued intervention of Great Britain in affairs of India would be almost inevitable.

Gandhi called the Cripps Declaration a "post-dated check on a bank that was obviously crashing." Remember Cripps visited India in Spring when the Japanese were conquering one British outpost after another -- Hong Kong, Malay, Singapore. Gandhi believed in the collapse of the Empire. Even those who did not believe that the British Empire was breaking up condemned this Declaration for these same reasons.

The people of India were asked for their fullest military support in the war. They said, very well, we will give that support. But in evidence of that new status coming to India we would like to set up an Indian Defense Ministry

with full power. The people of India are ready, of course to accept the control of armed forces by a Commander-in-Chief, General Wavell -- but all other matters they wanted entrusted to the Indian Defense Ministry. That was denied.

It was suggested that for the duration of the war a National Government be set up in India. The Indians agreed to call into existence this national government, but they said, we must insist in this national government that the Governor General or the Vice-roy shall no longer possess any over-riding power, any power of veto, that he shall act only as the Indian National Government. That, too, was denied.

So Sir Stafford Cripps' proposal was rejected both by the Indian Congress and the Moslem League. You know what followed -- resentment, violence, arrests, and among those arrested was Gandhi. And now with Gandhi's self-imposed fast, the situation in India is moving to another crisis. It is very difficult for an outsider to step into the picture and to express an opinion involved in such a picture as India. The difficulties of the problems are not all of Great Britain's making. There has always been in India very bitter and sharp communal strife between the Hindus and the Moslems. There are some 75 million Moslem people in India. This Moslem minority has been fearful at all times of Hindu majority domination, and will favor no arrangement in India unless all of its full rights are protected. Many Moslems organized in a Moslem League have demanded what has been known as "absolute political independence within India". But there are also in India a considerable number of native states ruled by native princes which have possessed considerable sovereignty and allegiance to Great Britain, defined by treaty obligations. There are over 60 million who live within native states who have been loyal to Great Britain during the last war and this, and they demand that their rights be protected.

There are other religious and racial minorities. Indians, as you know, are not one race, but 45 races speaking 200 different languages. There are

700 feudatory states in India. In that continent which is as large as the United States east of the Rockies, there is this vast conglomeration of races, peoples, nationalities, religions. It is not easy to find any simple formula that will adequately meet the political requirements of that very complex world.

There still is in India a caste system -- 50 millions of people spoken of as the despised classes, the notorious untouchables -- the outcasts of India. They, too, must be considered in any final arrangements.

The heritage of mutiny, of riots and indignities, suspicions and broken promises -- that will be hard to overcome. Nevertheless friends of Great Britain, and we are all friends of Great Britain, because Great Britain is a powerful ally in this war -- friends wish that they did not permit the situation to drag on as it is today. It is too full of danger and menace to everyone involved. "This is a time for greatness". Someone has used that statement well. This is the time which calls for testing in the greatest skill in British Statesmanship. India will be a greater asset to the British Continent as an absolutely free dominion within that British Dominion. India would come to welcome an alliance with Great Britain in the self-same way as the Philippines who at first resented and fought with us. When we finally offered them complete independence and offered the date, 1946, as the date for complete independence, the Philippines began to demand a greater and closer alliance with the United States.

Gandhi, however, has significance to the world not only as a unique political leader, but as a unique personality possessed of ^a unique philosophy. It is not wise in the heat of controversy to derogate this man, to speak of him as a "politician"..... Gandhi is one of the most heroic and dramatic spiritual figures of our day. He has devoted his life to the well being of humanity. Long before he became interested in self-government for India he had been devoting many years of his life to helping his fellow Indians in

South Africa, where he lived for 23 years after having been graduated from an English School as a lawyer. South Africa had many Indians who had migrated there. They were treated as coolies there. Mohandas Gandhi gave up his career as a successful lawyer to devote himself to the well-being of his wretched countrymen in South Africa. For more than two decades he championed their cause. He demanded laws to protect them and he succeeded in a remarkable degree to achieving improvement of his countrymen by methods of which I will speak in a moment.

In India, itself, he had for years devoted himself to the major task, apart from the task of liberating his countrymen, of improving these untouchables. There are in India four great caste systems, the Brahmins, who are the scholars, religious leaders, priests, the Warriors -- the administrators, the Merchants, who consist of the agriculturalists, the farmers and the Laborer. The condition of the laborer is bad enough. But below these four recognized castes, there is another, that of the out-castes, the untouchables. To touch one of these is to pollute oneself, so that one requires to purify himself by ablution. Even to have the shadow of one of these fall upon him or to see eye to eye with one is to pollute oneself. You must not walk on the same street, the same road. They are the most despised, the most miserable of all the Indians -- those who eat the offal, the leavings. It is interesting how the caste system is developed in the Aryan system, and it is interesting how the modern exponent of Aryanism is trying to re-establish this system and to make millions of other peoples untouchables.

The orthodox Indian looks upon the caste system as a natural division of society. Each man must fill his destiny within the sphere in which he is born, but your caste, according to Gandhi, does not confer on you any special privileges, does not make you any more preferable. The work of one is just as important as another.

So Gandhi devoting his life to the improvement of the life of the untouchables,

brought one of the little untouchable girls into his home. He eats with them, meets with them, teaches them....

Much of the suffering in India is due to the terrific division between the Hindus and the Moslems. Whenever rivalry exists between these two, it is Gandhi who castigates himself. He takes on his own shoulders the crimes of his fellow men. In 1924, rioting broke out between the Moslems and the Hindus. Gandhi, just over a serious operation, subjected himself to a twenty-one day fast to shock his people into an awareness of their sinfulness and wrong-doing. This peculiar technique of his, of punishing himself for the sins of others, is part of his unique philosophy, the philosophy of non-violence, the philosophy of pacifism.

Gandhi maintains that of course there is great evil in the world, but that you cannot resist that evil by other forces of evil, by violence. You cannot subdue physical force by exercising other force, but only by exercising Soul Force, spiritual force. You must confront evil with good. If there is an unjust law which works against you, you cannot resist that law by violence, by physical rebellion, by striking back at it. What you should do is to disobey that law and take the consequence. If it means imprisonment -- very good; if it means confiscation of your property -- good. You must submit for that form of resistance will ultimately overcome the evil, maintains Gandhi.

Gandhi has given a unique application to the philosophy of pacifism. He learned much, he maintained from Jesus and Tolstoi. However, his philosophy was very unlike either of their philosophies. This is interesting to ~~note~~ observe. Jesus of course was a pacifist. But he never used it as a technique for revolution. Jesus believed in the end of the world, that was fast coming to be. A Kingdom of God was coming to be and that evil might of itself be destroyed. Therefore he said: All that you should be concerned with is preparing yourself so that you will be privileged to be admitted into the Kingdom of God. His philosophy was that of "Turn the other cheek".

Tolstoi was a more thoroughgoing pacifist than either Gandhi or Jesus. Tolstoi was opposed to war, but also to all forms of compulsion in the state. He looked upon compulsion as organized violence and compelled men never to share not to participate in the state, not to hold office, not to accept conscription, not to sit on a Jury. Tolstoi regarded all property as wicked, as a principal source of violence. Tolstoi was opposed to all revolutionery activities, even for a good cause. Revolutionery activities breed hatred and violence, and human beings should believe in love and forgiveness.

Tolstoi went a degree beyond Gandhi. He writes: "Everything that once seemed to me right and important -- honors, glory, civilization, wealth, the complications and refinements of life, luxury, rich food, fine clothing, etiquette, -- has become for me wrong and despicable. Rusticity, obscurity, poverty, austerity, simplicity of surroundings, of food, of clothing, of manners, all have now become right and important to me."

Gandhi, however, does not fear the state. He does not look upon the state as organized violence. He wants freedom in the state, freedom for the people of the world. Nor does Gandhi eschew revolutionery activity, but to rebel through non-violent methods, to resust by a peculiar method of non-cooperation. Don't cooperate with the ruling power. Don't hold office. Don't buy merchandise imported. Don't pay taxes. Refuse to cooperate. In other words, non-violent resistance. His followers, of course, have not always been able to follow this technique which Gandhi devosed for them. I am afraid that Gandhi is expecting too much of human beings, of human nature. Frequently those who began non-violent activities burst forth into violence, riots, and to atone for the sins of his followers Gandhi fasted and tortured his starved body. Either you believe in the technique of Gandhi's whole philosophy, or you do not.

It is inspiring to know that in an age when the fist has been glorified to a degree that it has never been in any past history of mankind, when violence,

and force and terror, when the highest expression of people's culture is found in tanks, guns, etc. -- that here is a great land, of hundreds of millions of men who proclaim that it is all false, that it is all wicked, that it is all wrong, that there is only one way in which a people can express itself clearly, through soul-force, through an unbroken spirit of man.

Judaism, of course, rejects all forms of pacifism. Judaism believes in peace, but not in pacifism. Judaism believes in resisting evil. The whole prophetic message of our religion is to hold war on evil. It even recognizes that when all other methods fail, you must even resort to war, a "mandatory war" to overcome evil. Judaism, of course does not extol war, or idealize it. (Quote from Micah) "And they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." We are to achieve that not through the individual's practise of pacifism, but through organized society, society organized into forms of collective security that will discourage the aggressor from forcing people in to war. Either we believe in Gandhi's philosophy, or not. Here is an amazing personality.... who is today the symbol of a great people's up-thrust of freedom and self-government. We hope that a way may be found through the genius of British statesmanship, and in the indubitable genius of Gandhi to cooperate together not only for the benefit of India and Great Britain, but for mankind.

1) One of the most intriguing men of our generation - destined per-
haps to outlive all the men of this age - Lenin - is again
on the front-page, the world's news, competing even with ^{most} important
war news - ~~not by his past~~ ^{and} with his feeble hands
and starving body is again defying the night, the whole
the Empire.

He is again a prisoner, and his captors are even more
worried about the possibility of his death ~~death~~ ^{as a result} of his
self inflicted tort of protest, ~~as they~~ ^{that} had been by his stormy
and, to them, very unbecoming life. For his death might
unleash another wave of riot and rebellion in Eastern-
whether hundreds will see him as a saint -

A bundle of sticks and bones, an ungainly unsightly
figure, (3NDJ1 @ ON 68 17 1021 > 33 11 11 > 1 1 1 1 1)
No form more comeliness, that we should look upon him
"an beauty that we should delight in him"

In Anglo-Saxon lands, wets have called him "wretched
Unwe" - yet this Hindu Unwe has been leading the
British himself by the nose in India - then 25 yrs -
a roving and unceasing him, striking out with his hands
frequently & uplifting unwieldy, but moving forward
the substantive to the goal which the Hindu Unwe has
set - Indian Independence

2) G. might die in his palace - prison. His death will not
solve the I problem. It will appeal it & extend it further
with the intensity & unwavering of a people - in which there

2

Saint will also be their leader. G. has represented to
of poor disciples ^{+ organized movement} to carry on his work. His practical
achievement cannot be undone by his death - crossed
upheld, + crystallized Indian nationalist sentiment and
demand for Swraj - Indefatigable for his rule.

4/ G. may be released - and practical state warship, with
no other consideration, suggest that he should be - but
his release will not solve the I. problem. It might
clear the way, by alleviating hate, toward the imperial system
- the Ind. of India with or without the Br. Empire.

5/ Indians know that ^{this} war is their greatest opportunity.
India is greatly needed in this war. United Nations
her side in this war as Japan. China needs her highly.
The U.S. has troops + war material in India. This one
of our losses, too. A hostile or unfriendly India is a
terrible liability in this global war. Entrance

The Indians fear ^{the} Japs. They have no love for Hitler.
But they want to know whether this war is for freedom
into which the India has been needed without the con-
sent of the Indians, also means freedom for India.
(Churchill). And they want ^{+ tangible proofs} to be shown, right here
and now - when their services, + fighting men, + resources are
wanted.
Promises are not enough. Disillusioned more & more.
They don't trust English promises.

(3)

When the Emergency despatch - England & others - find
way of disencumbering ers - a whittly done (Balfour)
(Declaration)

4/ Sir Stafford Cripps' mission lost spungy (faded) body
be of this unfortunate back-peddle of disturb & broken prom-
ises where the years have been up. The offer which
he but was generous, and, quite and off. history look-
ed up just how soon as a basis for agreement.
But it showed all its weakness was for the future after
the war. To the present nothing! no war certified!
Charge! The Promise was for an Anglo-American Joint with
all ended after the war - but again, only a
promise and no defined date!

There were other provisions in the Treaty Declaration
which, because of the last period, are generally interpreted
as causing & strategic devices to circumvent the promise
of David Stones by reaffirming what amounted to a
Partition of Judea with British Jordan the Marshall Islands
the nature of all. By this date, 9-13
would still maintain his

7/ G. called this play "a post-dated cheque on a
bank that was obviously crashing". Others, less
defeatist, are unwilling to negotiate also
condemned it

8/. Indian were asked for fullest military support in war.
Very well! Set up an Indian Defence Ministry with
full power. Ready to accept, of course, the control of
armed forces by Command-in-Chief - Gen. Wavell.
all other functions, ~~a war~~ ~~Indian~~ ~~Dept.~~ Evidences
of their new status. Also Denied!

9/. ~~Sir Stafford's proposals repeated by the Congress Working~~
~~Committee~~ The govt for the Dominion was to be a National
Govt - But the Indian expected that ^{in that} the ~~Cabinet~~ ^{that they}
members shall have full power - the Viceroy or
Gov. General shall not possess any over-riding
power, shall have no right to act only as a
Constitutional Head - Denied.

10/. Sir Stafford's proposals repeated - Prots - Arrest -
with fast-moving to another crisis -

→ G.B. should make another attempt.

Not in our terms. Terribly different problem, not
all the diff. caused by G.B.

— Sharp inter-communal strife - bet. Hindu & Muslims
Muslim minority, ^{Muslim League} demanding - "Pakistan" - in des. for
provision Muslim provinces in India - a separate nation, in fact

Native States - Princes - 60th - more or less Sirengs!

Treaties -

- Other racial & religious minorities - want justice

45 Races - 200 languages - 700 princely states

in that sub-continent as large as U.S. - East, Rother

Hindu caste system - 50 M. "Depressed"

Heritage of traditions - Rites - Indignities - or justice

10). But "Time for Greatness" - Best in Eng. Statesmanship

India will be a greater asset to Br. Empire as an
absolutely free & independent Dominion - it is to-day.

India will come to welcome Br. influence & Phelps
did often use of them Independence 1934-1946

11). G. has significance not only as unique Pol. leader.

- A unique personality - a unique philosophy.

- Derogate him - a "politician". (statesman)

- An heroic & dramatic sp. figure - greatest / an Day

- Dedicated his life to well-being & humanity. S. Africa

23 M. - Wretched - Corrupt - Segregated & Exploited

Gave up his Career to serve them - laws

① In India - Unapproachable. Brahmins
Warren P. Adams
Merchant & Opponent
Slender - Colours -

Parables - to find them is to pollute myself - Purify
himself by adventures - Scavengers - Eat of all things
must not walk on same Road - ~~the~~ Very secret place
J. believes in Love - nat. division / human society
unfettered by self-interest - Fulfills his destiny within
himself. Does not accept any privilege - Unselfish
Scavenger is just as important -

Meets with them. Eats with them. Teaches them
a little Unconquerable Guts - adapts her as can she do

② Hindus - Warren Vint - Costigales himself - ^{the son}
to atone for their sins - to take upon his shoulders
1929 - after operation - 21 days post.

12/ Chinua - Wan - U. Lewis . Pacifist .

There is Evil in world . You cannot resist it by

Violence by other Evil .

You cannot subdue Physical force by Physical force

Only by Soul Force !

If a law - Disobey law Make Conscience

13/ Jews. of course - But act as Technique for
Revolution - End, Wald -

Non-resistance - led to non-cooperation - refers to
bold g/a - purchase English made goods = Pol. Change

14/ Had learned much - Tolstoy - "Yasnyya Polyana"
lives in his teachings as even was extreme? f.
{ The Tolstoy never had a great nat. uprising.

T. was Pacifist - not only opposed to war - all forms
of compulsion inherent in ^{State was org. violence} State. Refuse conscription.
{ ten, accept no part in State, Do not sit on jury
All property is wicked. - Self means violence
Offered to ^{all} Rev. activity - breeds hatred & violence
Ascetic (Drab)

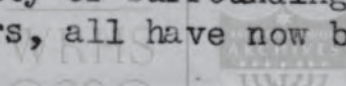
15/ But J. does not fear the State. Does not eschew
Rev. activity. Insists on non-violent resistance
Unique apprehension of power. Pacifism.

16/ Followers did not always follow him in that
Forced - Expects too much of human nature.

17/ To be above, & unswayed and detached - Self detached beyond
Judaism - peace - not pacifist

18/ A unique personality. Confused & unprincipled
1. diablic, orthodox - not, loyalty - Squallor as values within
to Freudism

Everything that once seemed to me right and important -- honors, glory, civilization, wealth, the complications and refinements of life, luxury, rich food, fine clothing, etiquette, -- has become for me wrong and despicable. Rusticity, obscurity, poverty, austerity, simplicity of surroundings, of food, of clothing, of manners, all have now become right and important to me.



KADDISH CARD

ADOLPH EINSTEIN

and

LIZETTE RITTER MYERS
JOSEPH J. COPENHAGEN
CHRISTINE PALADY
ANITA S. FERTEL

The anniversaries of whose deaths occurred during
the past week.