MDPI

Article

Gandhi and the Gender of Nonviolent Resistance

Louise Du Toit [1,2]

[1] Philosophy Department, Stellenbosch University, Stellenbosch 7600, South Africa; louisedt@sun.ac.za
[2] Wallenberg Research Centre at Stellenbosch University, Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Study (STIAS), Stellenbosch 7600, South Africa

Abstract: The special issue of which this article forms a part looks at human violence and tries to investigate religious potentials to strengthen the case for nonviolence as the preferred method of social change. This article's focus is on Gandhi's version of a faith-based form of nonviolent resistance, called *Satyagraha*, and its relation to gender. In particular, the article asks whether this Gandhian tradition holds any value for women's struggles and for contemporary feminist politics. The first section follows the historical development of Gandhi's thinking on women's participation in *Satyagraha*, from South Africa to India. The second section gives a brief overview of the recent empirical work conducted by Erica Chenoweth on the impact of women's participation on the outcomes of mass movements over the past century. The final section places these two thinkers in conversation and draws out the value and limitations of Gandhi's thinking for contemporary women's struggles and feminist resistance. Although the direct focus is on the relation between women and nonviolent revolutionary campaigns and movements, indirectly the unstable gendered dichotomies, male–female, masculine–feminine, and violence–nonviolence, will be simultaneously drawn upon and problematised.

Keywords: nonviolent resistance; Gandhi; Chenoweth; gender; creative transgressions; revolution

Citation: Du Toit, Louise. 2022. Gandhi and the Gender of Nonviolent Resistance. *Religions* 13: 467. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13050467

Academic Editor: John McDowell

Received: 10 May 2022
Accepted: 19 May 2022
Published: 23 May 2022

Publisher's Note: MDPI stays neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

Copyright: © 2022 by the author. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

1. Introduction

Different contemporary thinkers are redirecting attention to Gandhi for our times—for example, Mark Juergensmeyer (2005), Pankaj Mishra (2017), Brown and Parel's (2011) *Cambridge Companion to Gandhi*, Ramachandra Guha's (2018) recent biography, and Wolfgang Palaver (2019), linking his work to current challenges, including global terrorism and the environmental crisis. However, the relation in Gandhi between *Satyagraha*[1] and women, and its relevance for women's and feminist politics, is a topic that has not yet been extensively explored. This article aims to kick-start this conversation. When, as part of this project, I started to understand the concept of *Satyagraha* better, I was immediately struck by what might be called its gendered frame.

On the one hand, the practice of *Satyagraha* emerged and received its name in the context of all-male activism in the Transvaal, in opposition to the Black Act of 1906. Within this context, and in opposition to two important contesting viewpoints, Gandhi emphasised that *Satyagraha* was a 'manly' form of activism. As we shall see in the detailed analysis that follows, these two alternatives, from which Gandhi needed to distinguish *Satyagraha*, were firstly 'passive resistance', which he associated with passivity and weakness, and secondly violent resistance to oppressive regimes. Whereas the former was for him characterised by weakness (either in numbers, political power, or inner strength) (Gandhi 1928), the latter was characterised by force without love or truth, or by 'brute force'. The term *Satyagraha* was carefully chosen to reflect forceful action (*agraha*) propelled by love and truth (*satya*). Steering between the absence of force (passive resistance) and the absence of love (brute force), Gandhi tried to develop a new method for social transformation, namely the deployment of the force of love. At many instances, he had to insist on the 'manliness' of this method, and he did this by arguing that one requires greater courage for *Satyagraha*

or nonviolent resistance than for armed resistance. For example, in *Hind Swaraj*, he writes, 'Physical-force men are strangers to the courage that is requisite in a passive resister'. And further on in the same text: 'Who is the true warrior—he who keeps death always as a bosom-friend, or he who controls the death of others? Believe me that a man devoid of courage and manhood can never be a passive resister.'

And yet, on the other hand, as I will show in detail, Gandhi over time comes to associate *Satyagraha* more and more strongly with women and typical feminine virtues. This for me points to a fundamental gender ambiguity within the heart of the concept and the very reason why Gandhi had so often to defend it as 'manly', typically in the sense of 'courageous'. It is no secret that many of the historical examples of nonviolent resistance that had inspired him were women-led, e.g., the suffragettes (Gandhi 1928), the Boer women in the British concentration camps (Gandhi 1928), and the Ireland Ladies Land League of the 1880s (Chenoweth 2022)[2]. And in *Hind Swaraj*, as elsewhere, he emphasised that even though (or maybe because) *Satyagraha* did not require physical or 'brute' strength but, rather, exceptional courage and moral strength, even those who are physically weak (including women and children) could participate in it. Put simplistically, *Satyagraha*'s surprising 'third way' between counter-violence and acquiescence also means that it upsets the traditional gender binary between active masculine courage (too often equated with the willingness to engage in violence) and passive feminine fear and submission. It is a surprising or unexpected third way beyond the gender binary in that it neither acquiesces nor engages in violence. It combines traditional 'masculine courage' with traditional 'feminine love and pity'. For Gandhi, the latter means that *satyagrahi* must purify themselves of enmity and hate towards the opponent, and their methods of resistance may never include the deliberate infliction of harm.

Despite Gandhi's insight into the advantages that women in the frontlines of *Satyagraha* brought to the movement, as I will discuss, it also seems that he remained hesitant about the greater risk women ran in these frontlines, especially those of sexual harassment and attack. It was also because of this greater risk that he thought the numbers of women signing up for frontline participation would remain low for the foreseeable future (Gandhi 1941). Inspired by the Ireland Ladies Land League, Gandhi saw *Satyagraha* as consisting of two prongs, namely mass non-cooperation and obstruction on the one hand and, on the other, the constructive work of the development of alternatives that would make the group self-reliant and wean it from dependency on exploitative systems (Chenoweth 2022). For example, Indians should burn their imported saris and spin their own cloth to gain self-reliance vis-à-vis colonial products and services. From his writings in *The Women* (Gandhi 1941), with all the (non-frontline or 'constructive') resistance activities he sees women as especially well-suited for, and his reluctance about them being on the frontlines, one might glean that Gandhi saw these two prongs as gendered to some extent, with women more involved in developing alternatives and men possibly more involved in offering *Satyagraha*. This will correlate with his understanding of gender as simplistically dichotomous and given in nature, with men being more prone to temptations of violence and sex and women being naturally more capable of suffering and self-sacrifice, especially as learnt through motherhood. He sees the genders as equal but different, in a supplementary or complementary way.

In what follows, I will first (Section 2) pay detailed attention to the development of Gandhi's thought on women's roles in *Satyagraha,* in social transformation, and in the Indian struggle for independence (*Hind Swaraj*) and decolonisation more broadly understood. In the second section of the article (Section 3), I give a brief overview of the important work of Erica Chenoweth. They[3] have of late been doing ground-breaking empirical research on women's participation in revolutionary movements globally and are in the process of co-authoring a book titled *Bread and Roses: Women on the Frontlines of Revolution* with Zoe Marks. In the third and last section (Section 4), I aim to place Gandhi's understanding of the 'gender of nonviolent resistance' in conversation with Chenoweth and thereby show

the relevance as well as the limitations, particularly with regard to Gandhi's later views, for contemporary women's and feminist resistance politics.

2. Gandhi, *Satyagraha*, and Gender

In this section, Gandhi's gendered understanding of *Satyagraha* is discussed in detail, and some of his wider views on gender will inevitably also feature. It is characteristic of Gandhi's thinking that it was always rooted in his religious, practical, and political life and in what he called his 'experiments with truth', which means that it was an organic kind of thinking, always growing and morphing with new insights gleaned from new experiences. In 'Question Box'[4], he refers to his early insight in South Africa (Transvaal) that the form of resistance developed by the Indian community in response to the Black Act was not the same as 'passive resistance', which he understood as 'the weapon of the weak' (see also Gandhi 1928, p. 121). He associated both of these labels with the British suffragettes. At the time of its initial development in the Transvaal, *Satyagraha*, which for Gandhi was much more 'the weapon of the strongest' (Gandhi 1941, p. 223), was still practiced exclusively by men. At this point, he made an effort to distinguish *Satyagraha* from passivity, acquiescence, and cowardice: nonviolent resistance is characterised by the deliberate, disciplined, and prolonged *suspension* of brute force or violence, rather than an unwillingness or incapacity to engage in it. In 'Question Box', he states: 'Morality which depends upon the helplessness of a man or woman has not much to recommend it. Morality is rooted in the purity of our hearts' (Gandhi 1941, p. 224). This is echoed in, 'The argument of pity is a trap in which it is dangerous to fall' (Gandhi 1941, p. 66). He therefore often calls *Satyagraha* 'manly' to distinguish it from helplessness and the pity that helplessness evokes: *more* courage and strength of character is required for its practice than for the practice of violence (CWMG (The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi) Gandhi 1958, vol. 10, p. 93). It is noteworthy that Gandhi does not regard the 'offering' or 'performance' of *Satyagraha* as the parading of one's weakness with the aim to evoke pity; instead, one performs one's strength, dignity, and fearless determination in the face of (in facing off) degrading treatment, with the aim of evoking respect from others, but also to evoke and sustain self-respect in the oppressed group (Gandhi 1928, p. 67). This is the sense in which the emphasis on force and manliness must be understood. One might be offended by his use of the term 'manly' here if the implication is that women are strangers to courage. But the charge of sexism softens somewhat if one reads his use of 'manly' as a way to emphasise that *Satyagraha* is an active principle, characterised by a specific manifestation of the universal cosmic *soul force* that inheres in everyone and everything.

Recall that those who practice *Satyagraha* align themselves with the 'soul force' or 'force of love and pity' that pervades all of reality: 'God', also described as 'the indefinable mysterious *power* that underlies everything' (CWMG 10, p. 90; emphasis added). In a way that is counter-intuitive to many modern and secular readers of Gandhi, his faith position means that he views this divine and benevolent force of love/soul saturating the cosmos, the social world, and nature as an 'infinitely greater force' than the force of arms (brute violence, destruction, and coercion). During his lifetime, there were many who opposed *Satyagraha* as too passive, too patient, and too slow and instead viewed direct violence as the only proper and effective ('manly') response to the racist and colonial systems of oppression Gandhi fought in South Africa and India. It was particularly in response to these opponents of *Satyagraha*—who nevertheless shared his political aims—that Gandhi insisted on the 'manliness' of the political movement and its methods. Du Toit and Vosloo (2021, p. 10) fleshed out Gandhi's view of *Satyagraha* as active and forceful, in conversation with Judith Butler's notion of performativity. They described its action as a bodily performance of non-cooperation and as a form of communicative action that expresses, simultaneously, relationality with the opponent and resistance to him, in one and the same public gesture. The bodies of *satyagrahi* are inserted into a field of structural or latent force, in opposition to the latter, as a soul force pitted against brute force. Therefore, *satyagrahi* fully expect to suffer physical injury when the latent oppressive force is compelled by their counterforce

of soul to show itself in physical form, such as when the police start to whip or arrest the nonviolent protestors. Note here the complex interplay between violence and nonviolence: essentially violent oppression often does not need to display any overt violence unless it is explicitly challenged. Then, it must 'show its force', make manifest what was only latent before, namely that it is secured through brute force. Du Toit and Vosloo emphasised in their analysis of *Satyagraha*'s performative nature an aspect which is underlined by Gandhi (1941, p. 23) when he states, 'our *acts* will have a more powerful influence on the public than any number of speeches and writings' (emphasis in original); and 'acts [have] immense potency'.

I indicated above that the suffragettes in England (Gandhi 1928, p. 109) and the Boer women in the British concentration camps[5] (Gandhi 1928, p. 22) were early womanly examples that had inspired Gandhi greatly in the development of nonviolent resistance. Another instance of a woman's exemplary behaviour is recounted about the time in 1896 when Gandhi was accosted by 'an enormous mob' of white people in Durban (Gandhi 1928, p. 60). Gandhi had been hit with stones from the crowd, then slapped and kicked by 'a burly fellow' up to the point of losing consciousness. Mrs Alexander, the wife of the Superintendent of Police in Durban, an acquaintance of Gandhi, then coincidentally came on foot from the opposite direction and saw his predicament. He says 'she was a brave lady'—she opened her sunshade to protect him and led Gandhi to safety (Gandhi 1928, p. 60). She effectively formed a one-woman 'human shield' because the crowd would not injure the respected (white) wife of the superintendent; she was an early practitioner of *Satyagraha*. Another decisive influence on his life came in the person of Ms Sonja Schlesin, who started working for him when she was sixteen. Gandhi remarked of her: 'She was then only sixteen years of age, but she captivated my clients as well as the fellow Satyagrahis by her frankness and readiness to serve. This young girl soon constituted herself the watchman and warder of the morality not only of my office but of the whole movement . . . When all the leaders except Sheth Kachhalia were in jail, Miss Schlesin had control of large funds and was in charge of the accounts. She handled workers of various temperaments. Even Sheth Kachhalia would have recourse to her and seek her advice' (Gandhi 1928, pp. 168–69). Gandhi would later hold her up as an example to women in India, of how they could contribute to the movement (Gandhi 1941, p. 196). However, at this stage in South Africa, Gandhi saw women as contributing mostly to the 'back office' of the cause, rather than on the frontlines.

Here, Gandhi (1928, p. 255) describes his view at that time: 'Some brave women had already offered to participate, and when Satyagrahis went to jail for hawking without a licence, their wives had expressed a desire to follow suit. But we did not then think it proper to send women to jail in a foreign land. There seemed to be no adequate reason for sending them into the firing line, and I for my part could not summon courage enough to take them to the front. Another argument was, that it would be derogatory to our manhood if we sacrificed our women in resisting a law, which was directed only against men.' However, when on 14 March 1913 the Cape Supreme Court passed a judgment that rendered all Indian customary marriages illegal, the women were outraged because they were 'degraded to the rank of concubines' (Gandhi 1928, p. 256), and their children lost their inheritance rights. This event led Gandhi to the active recruitment of women *satyagrahi*. Gandhi says, 'Not only could the women now be not prevented from joining the struggle, but we decided even to invite them to come into line along with the men' (Gandhi 1928, p. 257). Among the first 11 women volunteers, one was pregnant and six 'had young babies in arms', but they were not put off when Gandhi explained to them the risks involved. One of the greatest concerns at this point was that the women would be ignored by the police, not get arrested, and *not* go to jail. This would almost definitely happen if the police were to find out they were related to Gandhi. It was therefore decided that two groups of women would simultaneously cross the Natal-Transvaal border in different directions without permits, i.e., illegally. If the Transvaal group did not get arrested on the border, they were to move on to the Newcastle coal mines and persuade the Indian

labourers there to go on strike (Gandhi 1928, pp. 257–58). Gandhi thought such direct political action would force the authorities to arrest the 'sisters' together with the striking labourers, and clearly, such a 'gendered' provocation of the authorities was what he hoped to achieve with the women's frontline participation.

It is further interesting to note that Gandhi would not ask his wife, Kasturbai, to join in the struggle, for reasons that he explained to her: 'In matters like this everyone should act relying solely upon one's own strength and courage. If I asked you, you might be inclined to go just for the sake of complying with my request' (Gandhi 1928, p. 259). This view is fully consistent with the very first meetings of the movement, when Gandhi cautioned the men against joining from peer pressure or momentary enthusiasm. Each man had to investigate his own heart to know whether he was fully committed and strong enough (mentally) for the challenges that lay ahead. If Kasturbai was only following Gandhi's orders to participate, she would likely not be strong enough in herself to withstand the hardship of arrest and jail. Kasturbai answered as follows: 'You may have nothing to do with me if being unable to stand jail I secure my release by an apology. If you can endure hardships and so can my boys, why cannot I? I am bound to join the struggle' (Gandhi 1928, p. 260). Kasturbai's insistence and her eventual excellent endurance of prison (three months, with hard labour) must have also played a large part in changing Gandhi's earlier position on the role of women in nonviolent resistance.

Moreover, the women's campaign in Natal succeeded beyond all expectation: 'Their influence spread like wildfire. The pathetic story of the wrongs heaped up by the three pounds tax touched the labourers to the quick, and they went on strike. I received the news by wire and was as much perplexed as I was pleased. What was I to do? I was not prepared for this marvellous awakening' (Gandhi 1928, p. 261). He described the women's bravery in jail as 'beyond words.' A girl prisoner of 16 years old, Valliamma, died after her release from jail with a fever and without repenting of going to jail even if it cost her life. Gandhi emphasised that 'the sacrifice offered by these sisters' was 'absolutely pure'—a key theme in his understanding of *Satyagraha* as an offering or a sacrifice—it must always be accompanied by self-purification and inner conviction. As discussed above, *Satyagraha* is inseparable from Gandhi's faith ontology and his politics from spirituality. He writes, 'The world rests upon the bedrock of *satya* or truth. *Asatya* meaning untruth also means non-existent, and *satya* or truth also means that which *is*. If untruth does not so much as exist, its victory is out of the question. And truth being that which *is* can never be destroyed. This is the doctrine of *Satyagraha* in a nutshell' (Gandhi 1928, p. 264). For Gandhi, thus, the universe will disappear without 'the force of love and pity' which is 'infinitely greater than the force of arms' (CWMG vol. 10, p. 84), and this soul force works constantly, quietly, and unspectacularly in the background to build and maintain the human world, consisting of social and familial bonds, institutions, and friendships. He sees violence as the spectacular destruction and interruption of this constant, slow, and patient labour of love and creation, and he clearly associates men more with the former and women more with the latter, although not in a deterministic way: Gandhi's stance never suggests men might be excused for being violent; instead, he sees male violence as a diminishment of their manhood as well as their humanity.

The selection of essays and other short pieces collected in the 1941 publication *The Women*, shows a more mature Gandhi working in India, commenting on women's interests, issues, and involvement in *Satyagraha* and *Swaraj* (Indian independence). If Gandhi had been 'perplexed' and caught off guard by the runaway success of women's nonviolent work in South Africa[6], by this later date he had come to view women as the natural leaders in this work. For example, in the essay 'What is Woman's Role?' he states 'Let her transfer her love [of her children] to the whole of humanity, let her forget she ever was, or can be, the object of man's lust. And she will occupy her proud position by the side of man as his mother, maker and silent leader. It is given to her to teach the art of peace to the warring world . . . She can become the leader in *satyagraha*, which does not require the learning that books give, but does require the stout heart that comes from suffering and

faith' (Gandhi 1941, p. 29). The indication we find in this citation that Gandhi now sees women as naturally more suited to *Satyagraha* than men is found in many other passages in the same publication. Women's extraordinary ability to endure suffering and their capacity for self-sacrifice are for him a function of motherhood. For example, he writes, 'I have suggested . . . that woman is the incarnation of *ahimsa* [meaning nonviolence]. *Ahimsa* means infinite love, which, again, means infinite capacity for suffering. Who but woman, the mother of man, shows this capacity in the largest measure? She shows it as she carries the infant and feeds it during nine months, and derives joy in the suffering involved. What can beat the suffering caused by the pangs of labour? But she forgets them in the joy of creation' (Gandhi 1941, p. 29). It is thus as mothers that women most clearly learn or know, from nature, what it means to suffer and to sacrifice oneself for another and for love.

Recall that in his earlier work, especially in the attempt to defend himself against the proponents of violent resistance, Gandhi often insisted that *Satyagraha* was manly because it required extraordinary courage. Now, in 'What is Woman's Role?', he argues that women in fact excel in precisely this type of courage: 'Woman is more fitted than man to make explorations and take bolder action in *ahimsa*. For the courage of self-sacrifice, woman is any day superior to man, as I believe man is to woman for the courage of the brute' (Gandhi 1941, p. 33). This theme of two different types of courage and strength (the higher courage and inner strength to *endure* violence versus the lower courage and strength to *inflict* violence) runs throughout many of his writings. It is the same two types of courage that face off when *satyagrahi* endure violence from an unjust government and the police, for instance. In the essay 'To the Women of India', Gandhi gives possibly the most explicit and strongest version of this conviction that women excel in the higher type of courage. He writes, 'In this non-violent warfare, their ['sisters'] contribution should be much greater than men's. To call woman the weaker sex is a libel; it is man's injustice to woman. If by strength is meant brute strength, then, indeed, is woman less brute than man. If by strength is meant moral power, then, woman is immeasurably man's superior. Has she not greater intuition, is she not more self-sacrificing, has she not greater powers of endurance, has she not greater courage? Without her, man could not be. If non-violence is the law of our being, the future is with women' (Gandhi 1941, p. 36). This leads him to state that certain nonviolent campaigns (such as the picketing of liquor shops) should even be 'initiated and controlled exclusively by women', who should accept men's assistance, but 'the men should be in strict subordination' to them (Gandhi 1941, p. 37). The striking practical reason for women's leadership in the nonviolent work is also given in the same essay: men's picketing of liquor shops succeeded up to a point, Gandhi says, but in 1921 'failed because violence crept in'. Gandhi explains why recourse to violence amid nonviolent resistance is fatal: 'If [picketing] remains peaceful to the end, it will be the quickest way of educating the people concerned. It must never be a matter of coercion, but conversion, moral suasion. Who can make a more effective appeal to the heart than woman?' (Gandhi 1941, p. 37). With the picketing of liquor shops, the logic of resistance-in-relation is required: the acts are aimed at persuading the owners and clients of the wrongfulness of their business, of the harms thereby inflicted. Gandhi denies that real (deep and lasting) social change can happen through coercion (cf. Gandhi 1928, p. 94).

We should, however, also note that what Gandhi describes in 'What is Woman's Role' as women's leadership in social transformation through *Satyagraha* is written in a somewhat conditional tone, such as when he says, '*Let her* transfer her love . . . , *let her* forget . . . *And* [then] *she will* occupy . . . ' (Gandhi 1941, p. 29; emphases added). It is telling that he suggests in the quotation above that '*If* non-violence is the law of our being' (which he emphatically believes), *then*, it must follow that '*the future* is with women' (emphases added). Here too, we see the need for concrete political life to catch up with the faith-based ontological truth about the stronger force of truth and love over violent coercion if women are to become the political leaders in the way he foresees. As I read him, he is envisioning what we would call a feminist social revolution: women's full participation in public life will 'purify' public life by importing 'feminine values', such as love, care, community, and

change-through-persuasion[7]. But there is a bit of a chicken-and-egg dilemma here: women must first find their own strength. Moreover, their full political participation and a more feminine world are mutually interdependent. He often alludes to woman not knowing or not understanding 'the status that is hers' (for example on p. 29 of the same text), which he links with a divine status. Her leadership position in *Satyagraha* is therefore dependent upon a certain awakening to a higher truth. *Everybody*, men as well as women, should wake up to this truth about women's real but hidden status, which flows from Gandhi's understanding of God as a force of love.

Gandhi understood very well that oppressive systems could not be indefinitely maintained without the tacit support of the oppressed, whether through ignorance and internalised lies or through fear. For example, he equates *Satyagraha* with 'ceasing to play the ruled', and the Indian movement for non-cooperation with a refusal to play the colonised. The same is true about women's oppression by men, which is why he is deeply concerned that women should stop 'playing the doll' to men's lusts and fantasies. For example, in the speech 'Advice to Girl Students', he tells the students that only if they 'refuse[d] to disappear into the kingdom of dolls', and instead will 'aspire to be *Satis* [goddesses] like Parvati, Damayanti, Sita and Savitri', will they have finally done justice to the good education they were receiving at that college (Gandhi 1941, p. 121). Elsewhere (Gandhi 1941, p. 214), he uses the divine examples of Sita and Draupadi as female figures of 'robust independence', 'imperiousness', and 'in no need of protection', to argue against the *purdah* as an attempt to impose chastity on women from the outside. He further suggests that men lack the 'manfulness', i.e., the necessary courage, to 'resist the brutal custom [of the *purdah*] and sweep it away at a stroke' (Gandhi 1941, p. 213). He is similarly forcefully opposed to child marriage and enforced child widowhood (e.g., Gandhi 1941, pp. 147–49), even calling upon boys to consider marrying only widowed girls, thereby playing their part in abolishing the custom. His reinterpretation of *Satihood,* furthermore, suggests that 'self-immolation at the death of the husband is not a sign of enlightenment, but of gross ignorance as to the nature of the soul' (Gandhi 1941, p. 136). His attempts to radically transform those traditions that seem to him to violate the equal dignity of women are connected to the national goal of *Swaraj*: 'Fight for *Swaraj* means, not mere political awakening, but an all round awakening—social, educational, moral, economic and political' (p. 123).

In the pages of *The Women*, Gandhi is often exasperated by the way women's powers and labour are, as it were, privatised and monopolised for the benefit of men within the home. He understands that *Swaraj* (liberation, independence) requires not only political independence from Britain, but a comprehensive social revolution, inclusive of women's liberation, so that women may do their much-needed part for national liberation and maturation. Underlying this understanding is a radically egalitarian view of humans: 'In the eyes of God Who is the creator of all, His creatures are all equal . . . It can never be an act of merit to look down upon any human being as inferior to us' (Gandhi 1941, p. 209). 'Man and woman are of equal rank, but they are not identical' (Gandhi 1941, p. 21). 'Women must have votes and an equal legal status' (Gandhi 1941, p. 16). In the name of this radical equality, the *purdah* must be abolished, which seeks today 'to interfere with the free growth of the womanhood of India', which, crucially, in turn interferes 'with the growth of free independent-spirited men' (Gandhi 1941, p. 215). Gandhi often repeats the idea that 'anything that will impair the status of either of them [man or woman] will involve the equal ruin of them both' (Gandhi 1941, p. 21)[8]. He thus supports 'an intensive campaign against the system, which puts a cruel ban on social service by one half of Bihar humanity, and which denies it freedom in many cases and even the use of light and fresh air.' 'The sooner', he says, 'it is recognised that many of our social evils impede our march towards *Swaraj*, the greater will be our progress towards our cherished goal . . . Surely, we must be incapable of defending ourselves or healthily competing with the other nations, if we allow the better half of ourselves to become paralysed' (Gandhi 1941, p. 217). The oppression of women is thus seriously detrimental to the nation, as a whole and to its status among nations.

But in the name of that same faith-based understanding of equality, orthodox widows who refuse to dine with the Harijans (Dalits, untouchables) Gandhi prefers not to have enlisted as *satyagrahis*, since restrictions on 'interdining' are 'a hindrance to spiritual and national progress' and to a pure heart (Gandhi 1941, pp. 225–26). Yet, in 'Women and Untouchability', Gandhi goes much further and urges women to play a leading role in destroying 'this evil' that will 'eat us up'. He sees the issue of untouchability as a sin so great that it might destroy the Hindu religion itself: 'There will not be a single Hindu left even to do penance, and I think we shall well deserve it if such a fate overtakes us' (Gandhi 1941, p. 210). If women 'root out untouchability' from their hearts and 'serve the Harijan boys and girls as [they] would serve their own children' and regard all of them as 'children of the same Mother India', then 'Hinduism will be purified', and this self-purification of one-fifth of the human race 'cannot but have a healthy reaction on the whole of humanity' (Gandhi 1941, pp. 208–9). Women's practical tasks in this respect are both personal and structural: they must 'befriend the Harijans, by going to their quarters, by hugging their children . . . , by interesting [them]selves in their welfare' (the personal) and pledge themselves to wear *Khadi*, a local fabric produced by the Harijans (the structural, economic level), in order to support their industry (Gandhi 1941, p. 212).

Another prominent woman-focused campaign Gandhi drove was to ask women to give up their jewellery as donations for feeding the Harijans (see, e.g., 'Kaumudi's Renunciation'). For him, the public renunciation of jewellery was beneficial, in the first place, because it underlined his view that expensive decorations were 'a criminal waste of money in a poor country like India' (Gandhi 1941, pp. 187, 192). Moreover: 'No man or woman is entitled to the possession of wealth, unless he or she has given a fair share of it to the poor and helpless . . . He who does not offer this sacrifice has been called a thief' (p. 200). It was, secondly, good for the individual woman because often her jewellery was all that a woman truly could call her own; thus, it was an act of true sacrifice and self-purification on her part (Gandhi 1941, p. 193). Thirdly, Gandhi emphasised the 'tremendous moral effect that such a step on the part of the rich daughters of India will produce upon the nation, and particularly the starving masses' (p. 192). He also saw that great public renunciations had a contagious effect, so that one powerful example could lead to 'a shower of ornaments' (p. 201)—this example again underlines the power of surprising, self-sacrificial actions that are performed in collective settings. They can start to shift social relations towards greater solidarity between rich and poor, for instance. A fourth motivation for his call for the renunciation of jewellery is distinctly feminist. He writes in 'To the Sinhalese Women': 'I tell you if you want to play your part in the world's affairs, you must refuse to deck yourselves for pleasing man. If I was born a woman, I would rise in rebellion against any pretension on the part of man that woman is born to be his plaything' (p. 195). Women should thus refuse *en masse* to be 'the slaves of men' and a good place to start is to refuse to decorate yourself (p. 196). Gandhi (1941, p. 34) quotes Tolstoy, who said women 'are labouring under the hypnotic influence of man'. Again, we clearly see the theme of an *awakening to one's own dignity* and worth: 'It is your birth right [to captivate not man, but humanity]. Man is born of woman; he is flesh of her flesh and bone of her bone. Come to your own and deliver your message again' (p. 196).

Thus, for Gandhi, women were destined to play a key role and to participate equally with men in the achievement of *Hind Swaraj*. In the essay 'Swaraj Through Women', he describes the Salt Campaign as having 'brought out tens of thousands [of women] from their [domestic and private] seclusion and showed them that they could serve the country on equal terms with men' and it 'gave the village woman a dignity which she had never enjoyed before' (Gandhi 1941, p. 174). It is precisely because the methods of resistance employed by *Satyagraha* are nonviolent, and in more than one sense 'feminine', that women can, and indeed have a duty to, become leaders in the movement. A further example beyond picketing and embracing the Harijan children and renouncing jewellery and the wearing of Khadi, the locally produced cloth, is *spinning*, as a form of political and economic self-empowerment and the boycott of foreign products. By and large, Gandhi accepts that

there must be division of labour between the sexes, based on what he considers to be their natural aptitudes and tendencies. It is important for him that women do not emulate men in the public and political spheres but rather bring something true to their different nature into the public. 'In trying to ride the horse that man rides, [woman] brings herself and him down. The sin will be on man's head for tempting or compelling his companion to desert her special calling [as mistress of the house and bringer up of infants]' (Gandhi 1941, p. 27). So, for example, he believes that 'Adam wove and Eve span', and '[i]n spinning [women] have a natural advantage over men' (Gandhi 1941, p. 174). Nevertheless, as was made clear throughout our discussion so far, he does not hesitate to challenge traditions in the name of equal dignity and the duty of self-sacrifice. Thus, he started his spinning campaign by spinning himself and by convincing the men to spin as an integral part of 'India's peaceful campaign for deliverance from the imperial yoke' (p. 174). He mentions that the men initially objected to spinning on the grounds that as women's work it was below their dignity, but on the principle of equality, he could not accept such reasoning, and 'men nowadays do not object on the ground of dignity' (p. 174). Nevertheless, because of its very nature, such as its slowness, he believes spinning 'will remain women's speciality' (p. 174). We see how Gandhi vacillates here between 'nature' and 'nurture'; he still thinks there are natural differences between the sexes that must be respected, but he also draws on custom when he says that 'a proof of the different functions of the sexes is unnecessary for my purpose', and then, 'at any rate in India, millions of women regard spinning as their natural occupation' (p. 175) and thus, when the Working Committee decided to make spinning 'an indispensable condition of civil disobedience', the women were naturally drawn into the movement and called upon to turn their everyday occupation into an act of civil resistance.

If one reads this essay together with another moment where Gandhi was in conversation with a sex worker, one can see how Gandhi in a radical manner relates his own self-purification to the notion of 'becoming woman'. After talking to the young girl sex worker in Barisal and hearing her story, he writes: 'As I listened to that girl my heart sank within me, and I asked God why I was also not born a woman[9]. But if I was not born a woman *I can become a woman*, and it is for the women of India ... that I am going about the country with my spinning wheel and my begging bowl' (p. 177; emphasis added). In 'What is Woman's Role?' Gandhi describes his 'envy' of woman for 'the status that is hers, if she only knew' (p. 29). Moreover, in 'To the Sinhalese women', Gandhi, after stating that *if he were born a woman*, he would rise in rebellion against the notion that women should be the playthings of men, adds: 'I have *mentally become a woman* in order to steal into her [woman's] heart. I could not steal into my wife's heart until I decided to treat her differently than I used to do, and so I restored to her all her rights by dispossessing myself of all my so-called rights as her husband' (pp. 195–96; emphasis added). Here, Gandhi renounces his patriarchal and husbandly rights over his wife in order to 'restore to her all her rights', thereby, by my reading, showing that men cannot remain as they are if women are to be restored to their true equality and equal dignity with men; their fates are intertwined. This call for change on the side of men can be expressed by this enigmatic notion of 'becoming-woman', roughly equated with being stripped of historically embedded but unfair patriarchal entitlements. At the same time, however, he calls them to a new idea of 'manliness'—we saw how men should be 'manly', i.e., brave enough to erase traditions that oppress women, in the name even of *men's own dignity*. Gandhi further redefines manliness in the essay 'For Contraceptives', when he writes 'Man's estate is one of probation ... He is ever prey to temptations. He has to prove his manliness by resisting and fighting temptations. He is no warrior who fights outside foes of his imagination and is powerless to lift his little finger against the innumerable foes within' (Gandhi 1941, p. 78). In his view, men are more prone to temptations than women, especially the temptations of sex and violence, and their manliness consists almost exclusively in controlling these inner demons. As is always the case with Gandhi, the deeply personal, the familial, and

the intimate (gender identities and roles) cannot be finally separated from the public, the political, and the national.

Satyagraha, the nonviolent movement for social and political transformation, is the link between women's 'nature', as viewed by Gandhi, and the world at large, the anticipated world of the future. It is in this sense that 'the future is with women', or the future is feminine, as he said. 'Woman is the embodiment of sacrifice, and, therefore, non-violence. Her occupations must, therefore, be, as they are, more conducive to peace than war.' Elsewhere (Gandhi 1941, p. 99), he proposes that woman 'lacks the brute instinct of man' and 'is weak in striking'; but 'she is strong in suffering' and 'the embodiment of sacrifice and *ahimsa*'. Gandhi places much hope and belief in what he views as woman's essentially peaceful nature when he says she will 'instinctively recoil from a function that belongs to man, [i.e., violence, such as hunting or warfare]' if placed in positions where she must take up arms herself (p. 175). Participation in violent war would 'contaminate women with the evil' (p. 30). He also believes European wars will be ended if European women steadfastly opposed their men in this respect (Gandhi 1941, p. 34). For his nonviolent struggle, women are Gandhi's natural allies: 'I would love to find that my future army contained a vast preponderance of women over men. If the fight came, I should then approach it with much greater confidence than if men predominated. I would dread the latter's violence. Women would be my guarantee against such an outbreak' (p. 175). It is noteworthy, as I have said, that Gandhi often lapses into the conditional or future tense when he speaks about women becoming the leaders of movements for social and political change. Even though he seemed to change his position significantly about women's participation in the frontlines of *Satyagraha* after certain specific campaigns, as I showed above, he remained reluctant to see women sent to prison for the struggle[10].

In 'Women's Part', this reluctance seems to be related to the women's 'honour' and what he fears may happen to them in jail. Gandhi is not unduly concerned about the physical suffering of the *satyagrahi* in general—he told them to expect to be whipped, tortured, jailed, tried, to be forced to do hard labour, and even to be exiled (Gandhi 1928). I can therefore only understand this reluctance about women's frontline work as a concern about sexual harassment and rape in this concrete instance where three women from the movement in Calcutta had been arrested alongside the men. He repeats his view that women 'should have as much share in winning *Swaraj* as men' and are in many respects better suited than men for 'this peaceful struggle'. He calls on more women to participate, and then asserts that 'God will protect their honour' (Gandhi 1941, p. 172). The impression that he is here talking about rape is strengthened when he then directly refers to the myth of Draupadi being stripped naked, with only 'the power of her own virtue [preserving] her honour'. We saw earlier Gandhi also rejecting in the name of woman's freedom of movement, independence, and dignity, the idea that she (or her honour) must be protected externally, e.g., through seclusion in the home or through the *purdah*. Here too, he talks about a situation where men are unable or unwilling to protect her, such as prison. Women should not (have to) rely on male protection. He holds that 'even the weakest physically have been given the ability to protect their own honour' and that 'one who knows how to die need never fear any harm to her or his honour' (p. 173). These are somewhat enigmatic statements and should thus be correlated with other comments he made in this respect.

In 'Obscene Advertisements', Gandhi (1941, p. 99) writes: '[Woman] has to learn not to rely on man to protect her virtue or her honour. I do not know of a single instance of a man having ever protected the virtue of a woman. He cannot, even if he would ... [The noble women Sita and Draupadi] protected their own virtue by the sheer force of their purity. No person loses honour or self-respect but by his consent. A woman no more loses her honour or virtue, because a brute renders her senseless and ravishes her, than a man loses his because a wicked woman administers to him a stupefying drug and makes him do what she likes'. In this passage, he clarifies what he means. For Gandhi, one's honour or inner strength and dignity cannot physically be either protected or violated because it is a quality of one's soul, not a state of one's body. One can only lose one's honour by

consenting to do what is shameful. Another important piece in this regard is 'Students' Shame[11]' (Gandhi 1941, p. 103), in which he discusses the letter of a female student from Punjab who talks about sexual harassment on campus and asks specifically about 'what part non-violence can play on such occasions.' Although her focus is on non-violence (*ahimsa*), she also relates that she in fact, when harassed by a youth on a bicycle, and felt 'in danger', 'hurled [a] heavy book at the cycle' and 'roared' at the man, who was thrown off balance, and then sped away. To this, Gandhi responds in an interesting way, saying this 'was quite correct' and 'an age-old remedy'. Because of technological advances, even 'a little girl with sufficient intelligence can deal death and destruction'. Young women can (and he seems to say should) train themselves in self-defence and thereby protect themselves (p. 107). Elsewhere (Gandhi 1941, p. 57), he states, 'I want woman to learn the primary right of resistance [even to her husband]. She thinks now that she has not got it'. He seems to say that in the immediacy of a personal attack it is better for women to violently defend themselves than to acquiesce. Whatever the outcome of her resistance, whether she manages to flee or gets sexually violated or even killed, the man's actions alone cannot violate her dignity.

But he also realises that this is no long-term solution to a pervasive problem; more important are the systemic solutions, such as that by which 'names of the offenders should be published when they are traced'[12]; thus, the force of public shame should 'castigate public misconduct' (p. 106). Moreover, men should be called upon 'as a class' to guard their own reputation 'and deal with every case of impropriety occurring among their mates'; it is also the work of (adult male) professors and schoolmasters 'to ensure gentlemanliness among their pupils' (p. 107). For those girls who pursue the higher goals and way of life of *Satyagraha*, however, 'they must [ideally] develop courage enough to die rather than yield to the brute in man' (p. 106). It is furthermore helpful to recall in this context that Gandhi does not regard the principle of non-violence as absolute. This is clear in *Hind Swaraj* where he discusses the examples of the justified use of physical violence or force: to resist when a child rushes into a fire, or a thief breaks into one's house—this cannot be understood as an act of violence (CWMG 10, p. 46). As other authors have also pointed out (Palaver 2021, p. 12; Chandhoke 2014, pp. 92–94), Gandhi increasingly acknowledged the entanglement of violence and non-violence and the sometimes blurred line between them. So, for example, when a nation defends itself violently against a one-sided, aggressive invasion by a stronger party, their self-defence he wants to describe as 'a justifiable war' (CWMG 68, p. 138), to be 'counted almost as non-violence' (CWMG 70, p. 181). And when a woman defends herself with force against a sexual attacker, he describes her actions similarly as 'nonviolent' (CWMG 72, pp. 387–88)—there are clear analogies between the house-breaking incident, the one-sided invasion, and the sexual attack.

I thus suggest that one may read his description of these instances of forceful (self-) defence as indicative of a distinction between the immediacy of a personal attack or imminent threat to life and the long-term strategic work of social transformation which is *Satyagraha*. As we have seen from many examples above, *Satyagraha* as nonviolent opposition to violence and oppression is a calculated risk one takes on voluntarily and fully autonomously and often as part of a larger, collective movement. When *Satyagraha* is deliberately entered upon as a social movement meant to communicate the dignity of the protestors and the injustice of their treatment to a wider audience, then it is of the utmost importance that the participants steadfastly adhere to nonviolent yet forceful action. It is often a long-term struggle in which one's endurance is tested. We have seen Gandhi's views on how the eruption of violence on the side of the *Satyagrahi* derails the nature and aims of the movement. I think it is fair to say that nonviolent opposition and resistance are for Gandhi instruments for social education, building social solidarity, and bringing about social transformation that are vastly superior to politically motivated violence but that in cases of surprise attack and the immediate threat of injury, rape, and death, it is often unrealistic to think one can win over the aggressor in such a short space of time through strictly nonviolent resistance. In such cases, he seems to approve of violent or forceful

self-defence much more than acquiescence and would call such forceful action '(almost) nonviolent'. As discussed before, *Satyagraha* can never be the stance of those who cannot or dare not engage in violence; it must always be the deliberate suspension of one's violent capacities for the achievement of a higher goal.

Acquiescence (especially out of fear) is for Gandhi the worst possible response to oppression and violation because it makes one complicit in one's own degradation. The offering of *Satyagraha* is always about overcoming fear in oneself because that courage is what starts to shift relations of domination (Du Toit and Vosloo 2021, p. 11). Gandhi wants to see women walking around in public spaces fearlessly and confronting evil-doers openly and collectively. Active resistance is always much better than submission, and if it can be nonviolent (depending on the situation), it will be even better than violent resistance. I think Gandhi has in mind here that women run campaigns, for instance to publicly shame sexual harassers, i.e., use nonviolent means to raise awareness and change attitudes more thoroughly and over the longer run. Nonviolent action works over the long-term and pre-emptively. But clearly, in the heat of the attack, it would be better for lone women to violently resist their degradation than to meekly submit to it. In contrast, the longer-term solution, even to something like gender-based violence, is to transform societies, hierarchies, and attitudes—and for this, again, nonviolent force and persuasion are more efficient than the forces of counter-violence, punishment, and coercion. Gandhi wants to wean us off the notion that violence can only be effectively opposed through violence. Thus, although he admits that the line separating violence and nonviolence is sometimes blurred, as we can see from his use of the term 'almost nonviolent', he nevertheless wants to distinguish clearly between the force of violence and the alternative types of force that might be deployed in a variety of nonviolent options.

Moreover, he wants to stick to his faith-based position that the latter is ultimately more effective for bringing about lasting change than the former. The point is thus not to say women should not defend themselves violently from sexual violence, but it is rather to say that women and others who support their sexual liberation should, when not under direct attack, fight tirelessly in all manner of creative nonviolent action to change the larger reality that leads to gender-based violence and rape (what we today call 'rape culture'). A large-scale, long-term movement aimed at empowering women will strengthen their self-respect and personal power and also enable them to resist men, both privately and publicly, and to counter the prevalent image of women as powerless and fearful victims or pre-victims of sexual violence. The effect of violence (even in self-defence), in contrast, is for Gandhi limited because it lasts only while the threat of harm and the fear of it lasts; it does not change anyone. *Satyagraha* by comparison is less a single act than a way of life, a kind of virtue (Du Toit and Vosloo 2021, p. 13), something which is cultivated over time and practiced through what Butler calls 'an egalitarian imaginary' fed by collective action and continuous performative resistance (Butler 2020, pp. 64, 77).

3. Chenoweth on Nonviolent Revolutions and Gender

To those who believe violent opposition is the only effective response to an autocratic regime and systems of oppression, it must come as a surprise to read the conclusions of Erica Chenoweth's co-authored comprehensive study of revolutionary movements from 1900 to the present day (Chenoweth and Stephan 2013, p. 220). They conclude not only that 'nonviolent resistance campaigns have been more effective in achieving their goals than violent resistance campaigns', but also that they produce more stable democratic outcomes in the long run. In contrast, the social and personal costs associated with the casualties of instances of armed resistance are very high, and although they might bring about a change in power, the chances are higher that they will deliver similar or more repressive political conditions than 'transitions driven by nonviolent civic pressure' (Chenoweth and Stephan 2013, p. 60). Chenoweth, as earlier indicated, is currently busy with a more focused project, specifically investigating the role of women-identified activists (WIA) in revolutionary movements, i.e., in movements that aim at the removal of an incumbent leader from power

or the achievement of national independence. In their earlier work, they had already found that there are four factors in particular that determine the difference between success and failure in these types of movements. The four factors are as follows (Chenoweth and Stephan 2013, pp. 192–93):

i. Numbers: the larger and more diverse the movement in terms of visible participants, the more likely it is to succeed.
ii. Tactical innovation: how effective the movement is in using and creating innovative tactics of disruption that place significant pressure on their opponent plays a large role in their success.
iii. Defections: a movement's ability to affect defections and loyalty shifts within those pillars of support (such as security forces, the military) that are crucial to the incumbent regime is a key indicator of success.
iv. Resilience and self-discipline: a movement that can withstand escalating repression and that has the infrastructure and organisational agility to manoeuvre in a disciplined way, e.g., to change tactics, i.e., a movement that expects and can handle losses and setbacks while sticking to its original overall aim is more likely to succeed.

In terms of both short-term (regime change[13]) and long-term (establishing egalitarian democracy[14]) outcomes, nonviolent or unarmed campaigns achieve greater success than violent ones because they do better on each of these four points. In terms of both numbers and internal diversity, diversity of age group, class, occupation, ideology, and gender is important because such an inclusive campaign attracts larger numbers in sympathy with the core issue and because a more diverse group is 'likelier to have links to members of the regime and its support structure'. In terms of defections, nonviolent campaigns fare much better than violent ones in shifting loyalties among security forces. In contrast, violent campaigns 'embolden opponent regimes' and often seem to justify greater repressive force. For example, Chenoweth and Stephan (2013, p. 193) describe the situation in Israel during the First Intifada, when there were initially 'significant defections', but after violent factions emerged, this phenomenon 'largely reversed the Israeli divisions and unified the Israeli government'. In terms of the point of tactical innovation, they write that resistance campaigns are more effective (and resilient) when they can use a 'mixture of concentrated methods (e.g., protests, sit-ins and so on) and dispersed methods (e.g., stay-aways, boycotts, strikes, leaflets, and so forth)'. Such a campaign, working on multiple fronts, is 'better able to evade regime repression and force the regime to extend its forces beyond its capacity' (p. 193). The ability to make use of a variety of tactics is, moreover, linked with greater resilience, better organisational capacity, and greater discipline within the movement. One can thus see how these four key factors are all interlinked, describe a diverse yet focused movement with a social network penetrating a large part of society, and are typically much more strongly present in nonviolent than in violent campaigns and movements. This is thus the first major point I want to show from Chenoweth's work: there are good reasons why nonviolent revolutionary movements have become much more prevalent across the world than violent ones, armed resistance has declined over the past century, and the former are much more likely to achieve both short-term and long-term success than the latter.

The second important point relates to Chenoweth's more recent focus on the impact of women-identified activists' (WIA) participation in the outcomes of mass movements. They claim that women are always present in revolutions, but there is great diversity in their 'frontline participation'. Moreover, across the world, WIA argue that 'their frontline work has either been underrepresented or erased altogether in the global history of revolution'. Although feminist scholars have been working to recover these histories in specific campaigns (e.g., McGuire 2010, in relation to the civil rights movement in the USA), Chenoweth (2022) is the first to try and provide a 'full and systematic accounting of the ways in which women's participation in mass movements has affected the strategic options of those movements, their successes, [and] the consequences globally . . . '. Crucially, nonviolent campaigns are much more likely to exhibit an extensive women's presence

(that is, where WIA make up 50% or more of the participants) in the frontlines than armed campaigns, which are more likely to either exclude women altogether or have only small numbers of women present. However, women's notable presence in the frontlines changes other aspects of the campaigns as well. The data show that where women were extensively present in the frontlines, the actual number of participants tended to be *7.5 times higher* (instead of the expected 2 times higher) than when women were only barely visible.

One can now look at all four key factors for success in the revolutionary campaigns above and correlate them more closely with women's extensive and active (leadership) participation. For instance, women tend to bring to campaigns 'horizontal network effects' as opposed to the 'vertical network effects' existing among men. Women's social networks and bonds mean that they are generally differently, both more horizontally and more extensively, situated/embedded within society than men, and they bring 'a high degree of social knowledge about which levers of society might be vulnerable to pressure' (Chenoweth 2022). Chenoweth (2022) gives the example of the Ireland Ladies Land League referred to earlier: their innovative tactics (after their male-dominated counterpart organisation, the Ireland *National* Land League, had been banned) included refusing to provide services, the withholding of labour, the reinstatement of evicted tenants, physically building huts for evicted people, and withholding their cooperation generally. Their coordinated actions made life as usual impossible on multiple fronts and thus forced the embattled English landowner Charles Boycott to leave Ireland and return to England, whereafter 'boycotts' became a household name for the kinds of activities they had engaged in. Women's extensive participation in nonviolent campaigns thus facilitates tactics that are not so readily available to male-only groups.

Chenoweth (2022) therefore sees many nonviolent resistance tactics as 'highly gendered', with WIA facilitating 'new avenues for transgressions that help build power for the movement rather than alienate potential supporters.' As a pertinent example, they describe the 'Igbo Women's War', when Igbo women were resisting the Nigerian colonial tax system and the co-opted chiefs' powers, by 'sitting on the man'—a traditional form of social sanction where a group of women would surround the culprit's home and refuse to leave, sometimes occupying the home, singing, or screaming hostilities, even sometimes tearing down the house. Another example is a group of 'beauty queens' from Myanmar (March 2021) who held a beauty parade in explicit opposition to the 2021 military coup (Chenoweth 2022). There is also the example of women in Kenya stripping out of protest, thereby drawing on a powerful taboo against seeing elderly women naked; this was used to shame members of the police force (Chenoweth 2022). These nonviolent and highly gendered forms of resistance and protest are simultaneously very creative and powerful because they bring the everyday and private lives of people to bear on the resistance struggle. Clearly a whole different constituency of people will be affected by a beauty parade than by other forms of resistance.

Chenoweth (2022), moreover, shows that more women on the frontlines translate into more defection on the side of security forces—a key indicator of when a regime starts to collapse. When women 'bring their social networks and social power to bear on key political moments', the members of the police and other security forces may start to wonder if their children or other individuals dear to them are in the protesting crowd and may decide not to follow the order to shoot (as happened in Serbia on 5 October 2000, according to Chenoweth 2022). A majority of women in revolutionary movements helps to maintain the discipline of nonviolence and strengthens the perception of the movement as nonviolent and therefore safer to join—this leads to greater numbers joining. According to Chenoweth (2022), the emergence of violent armed activity within the context of an otherwise nonviolent campaign often backfires and allows for greater repression and thus an escalation of violence. Conceivably, it will also discourage many civilians from joining out of fear of getting caught up in violence, and as in the case of Israel mentioned above, this strengthens the resolve and unity of the beleaguered regime and its supporters.

4. The Value of *Satyagraha* for Feminist Politics Today

The echoes and resonances between Gandhi's thinking and Chenoweth's work are numerous, intricate, and instructive, even apart from the latter's explicit references to the former's influence. Looking through a gendered lens, one notices that many of the movements that inspired Gandhi were women-led, and many campaigns subsequently led and extensively participated in by women had been inspired by him. In South African history, there is a long tradition of black women's nonviolent resistance to colonial and apartheid labour regulations, restrictions of movement, and economic measures. Examples include the 1956 multiracial Women's March on Pretoria and many others, dating back as far as black women's protests in Bloemfontein in 1913 (the Waaihoek women's protest). Many of these campaigns, as well as the decades-long nonviolent policy of the liberation movement itself, the African National Congress, were indebted to the Gandhian tradition of successful *Satyagraha* in South Africa. It is impossible to capture the full influence of Gandhi on women-led and women-initiated mass movements around the globe—in the US civil rights movement, of course, Martin Luther King Jr. was directly influenced by Gandhi and inspired further nonviolent movements himself, but the decisive role of women in these campaigns has been vastly underplayed. It is thus important to acknowledge that beyond Gandhi's personal views on women's participation in *Satyagraha*, his example was in fact (and still is) adopted by many nonviolent campaigns, which include seeing thousands of women in the frontlines. However, the focus here is on Gandhi's own views, read alongside Chenoweth's findings, and what we can learn from them for women's resistance today.

When we bring Gandhi and Chenoweth in conversation with one another, the first remarkable insight is how Gandhi's faith-based ontology (namely that God, or the cosmic force of love, truth, and pity is a force stronger than the force of violence) is echoed in Chenoweth's striking (purely secular) findings about the socio-political effect (success, 'force') of nonviolent revolution being significantly greater than that of violent or armed resistance or revolution. Gandhi's view of violence as having only a limited and short-term (fear-based) coercive impact and therefore being an ineffective tool for deep and lasting social transformation is thereby borne out. Based on his understanding of *ahimsa* and *satya* as cosmic, divine principles, he believed that history/God/nature is finally on the side of love and truth and thus of the creative (constructive) forces of relationships, communication, and cooperation. Violence and destruction (brute force), therefore, by the very nature of reality cannot build or rebuild or transform human worlds. On the other hand, however, neither can mere speeches and writing; action is what is needed. The successful nonviolent movements described by Chenoweth correspond with these insights: they draw their strength on the building of alliances across differences and perform these cross-cutting solidarities through mass action. The success of large and diverse movements in affecting defections and dividing the loyalties of the pillars of support of the regime is a great example of Gandhi's idea that change only happens through persuasion or conversion and that women are somehow experts at appealing to and changing hearts. We have seen Chenoweth's finding that extensive female participation in nonviolent campaigns significantly increases defections.

Their work further supports Gandhi's intuition that male-only campaigns increase the chances of violence 'creeping in' and that this tends to undermine the self-disciplined nonviolence of the movement and, accordingly, its effectiveness in persuading or converting others. Women's extensive frontline (visible, performative) participation strengthens both the perception of a campaign as nonviolent and the internal discipline and thus the resilience of the group to stay with nonviolence, even if provoked through escalating repression. At least some of the power of nonviolent resistance lies in the spectacle of dignified and nonviolent, unarmed, vulnerable bodies being attacked by state forces. The sharper the contrast between the 'soul force' of the protestors and the 'brute force' of the oppressors, the greater the power of the spectacle to convert others to support of the protestors' cause. The visible presence of women in the frontlines tends to heighten the contrast between the protestors and the armed forces because of our traditional associations with femininity and

vulnerability. We saw how exulted Gandhi was when he discovered this principle, even though he remained concerned about 'sending' women into such positions throughout his life. Like Mrs Alexander, the superintendent's wife, women must, of their own volition, take up the role of human shield, driven only by their own courage and conviction; clearly, it would be wrong for Gandhi or anyone else to coerce women into such a vulnerable position and to instrumentalise them in this way. This is also why it is important, as Chenoweth shows, that women are not merely present on the frontlines, but that they are there in numbers at least equal to those of the men, including in leadership roles. Campaigns led or completely dominated by women employing gendered tactics (e.g., the Women's March in Washington the day after Trump's inauguration or the Igbo Women's War) can also work well.

We thus see that Chenoweth's conclusions support many of Gandhi's insights drawn from his experiences and intuitions based on his faith in God. Chenoweth's work clearly underscores his understanding that the landscape of resistance is strongly gendered and that WIA bring tactics, social networks and familial bonds, and social knowledge with them that are often not readily accessible to men. Moreover, the extensive participation of women and their leadership seems to considerably strengthen the nonviolent character of the movement over time and with that its overt emphasis on persuasion rather than threat and coercion. A steadfastly and visibly nonviolent movement with many women on the frontlines is more likely to draw a variety of supporters from different ideological persuasions to the core cause—a kind of mass support that comes under threat should violent factions emerge. If high numbers of women are in the forefront of demands for change, their presence brings the private, familial, and the personal into the public sphere. Security force members start to worry that their lovers, wives, friends, or children might be in the crowds and may defect more easily or at the very least refuse to shoot. Although a contemporary feminist scholar such as Chenoweth may be concerned about Gandhi's attribution of natural differences to the sexes, viewed in a dichotomous but complementary way, they will nevertheless, it seems, strongly agree with him that the difference that women's presence seems to make in unarmed or nonviolent revolutionary movements is a highly valuable one that will be lost if women were to act just like men.

As said, Gandhi's thinking was constantly informed by what he learnt in practice. It is commendable of him to have realised a century ago the potential that women's frontline participation holds for revolutionary action and to foresee that women's role would grow in the future as insight grows into the effectiveness of mass nonviolent action. His acknowledgement of earlier women's campaigns as sources of inspiration for *Satyagraha* and his later view that women are pre-eminently suited for it stand as a judgement on those later histories of revolutionary movements that have tried to minimise or erase women's often pioneering and leadership roles. As Chenoweth (2022) also indicates, the erasure of women's roles in social transformation is an erasure of their role in building democratic institutions, to the detriment of all, but especially of course to the detriment of women themselves, who might again be side-lined once the social transformation has been achieved (as might arguably be said of South Africa's transition to democracy in 1994).

Very briefly, Gandhi's position might also hold limitations for contemporary feminist politics. His naturalisation of sexual difference and his view that men are naturally more prone to violence and sex and women are naturally more self-sacrificial cannot, to my mind, but strengthen a kind of 'slave morality' in women, which expects of them to forever carry the burden of unpaid care work, however large their public contribution might be on top of that burden. And of course, it absolves men from care obligations. Joy Kroeger-Mappes (1994) explains convincingly that an ethic of private care does not simply stand alongside an ethic of public justice, but that the two ethics form one hierarchical system, with the ethic of care forming the material basis of society which maintains the male-dominated public sphere, at a great cost to the crucial but unacknowledged caregivers. As women's participation in the public domain increases, they are increasingly held to both of these ethics at the same time, while men are exempted from the ethics of care. This leads to a

kind of 'moral madness' in women, because the obligations of the two ethics often clash. These feminist insights challenge Gandhi's call that women should fulfil all their private care duties while also taking the lead in transforming society according to more feminine principles. Moreover, to instill self-sacrifice and endurance of suffering in girls and women as their special power seems set in an imperfect world to reinscribe women's servitude to the public world of men. It is possible that Gandhi's faith vision blinded him somewhat to the intractable nature of relations of gender domination.

On the positive side, Gandhi's formulation of the idea of 'becoming woman' is promising because it further destabilises the gender dichotomy that he himself mostly upheld as a natural given, and it shows, moreover, that the personal is political—not only for women, but importantly also for men, who must consider how their oppression of women is in fact impeding their own dignity and freedom and stifles democracy nationwide. These are radical gestures on the side of Gandhi which would endear him to many contemporary feminists, who would do well to engage more fully with his deep and prolonged, practice-based concern about women's roles in revolutionary movements, in national liberation, and in national sovereignty, more broadly understood. Placed in conversation with Chenoweth's findings, his ideas obtain a force that was surprising for its time and might again today surprise us as contemporary feminists and stimulate us to come up with ever new ways to transgress oppressive systems and put them under pressure.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Data Availability Statement: Not applicable.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Notes

1. I spell *Satyagraha* with a capital letter and italics throughout this article. When I quote directly, I leave the spelling as it is in the original. *Satyagrahi*, referring to the 'soldiers of peace' or nonviolent resisters, I will spell with a small letter and italics.
2. Note that the (Chenoweth 2022) is a very recent source. It is an online lecture Chenoweth gave at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced study at Harvard University, presented on 23 March 2022. This source is therefore referenced without page numbers. The full lecture is available online: Women on the Frontlines of Revolution | Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard University.
3. Erica Chenoweth identifies as nonbinary. I will therefore use the they/them pronouns throughout the article to refer to Chenoweth.
4. For this discussion, I will be drawing much on the text *The Women* by Mahatma Gandhi (1941) and will use the headings chosen by the publishers for each paragraph or short chapter. 'Question Box' (Gandhi 1941, p. 223) is an example of a short section that falls under the larger heading of 'Of Tamil Women'—the final section of the book.
5. He believes that it was the dignified suffering and steadfastness of the women in the camps, much more than the men's guerrilla warfare, that led to the desire from England's side to end the war.
6. In a lovely piece of archival research, Corder and Plaut (2014) show through Molteno's private correspondence how the intimate involvement of influential white women, Betty Molteno, Olive Schreiner, and Emily Hobhouse, in Gandhi's cause helped to secure the success of his important 1913 campaign in South Africa.
7. This reminds strongly of Sara Ruddick's (1989) book, *Maternal Thinking: Towards a Politics of Peace*, and some proponents of feminist care ethics that would like to see a value such as care become a pervasive socio-political value (e.g., Sevenhuijsen 1998; Tronto 1993, 2013).
8. An important aspect of Gandhi's faith-based ontology is that he views all humans as radically equal and also sees everyone as bound up in the same social bond. Therefore, in the case of women's oppression, their oppressors (men) are also harmed and degraded. These strong insights are also what led Gandhi to the position that a *satyagrahi* is never allowed to hate or to have enemies (Gandhi 1928, p. 124). This is why harm done to the opponent is ruled out, and change must come about purely through persuasion.
9. Read 'Our Unfortunate Sisters' alongside this passage. Gandhi's enormous shame on behalf of Indian manhood is probably what makes him long to have been born a woman. Prostitution 'is an evil which cannot last for a single day, if we men of India realise our own dignity' (Gandhi 1941, p. 167). For him, prostitution is nothing but 'the degradation man [the lawgiver] has imposed upon the so-called weaker sex', due to his 'unlawful and immoral indulgence' (p. 166).
10. In 'Women's Part', he writes: 'I had hoped that in the initial stages, at any rate, women would be spared the honour of going to gaol' (Gandhi 1941, p. 172).

[11] In 'The Modern Girl' Gandhi makes it clear that 'The Students' Shame' deals with the male students' shame, rather than with 'the frailties of girls' (Gandhi 1941, p. 109).

[12] In this respect, it is interesting to note that female students both in South Africa and in India, have recently published lists of names of alleged male perpetrators of campus harassment and rape.

[13] Chenoweth (2022) explains that 'short-term success' was measured using the following criterion: whether a movement achieved its stated aim such as regime change within one year of the peak of its mobilisation.

[14] There is also a clear standard for long-term success: the establishment of what they call 'a genuinely egalitarian democracy plus women's formal (legal) empowerment' within five years after the campaign has ended.

References

Brown, Judith, and Anthony Parel. 2011. *Cambridge Companion to Gandhi*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Butler, Judith. 2020. *The Force of Nonviolence: An Ethico-Political Bind*. London: Verso.

Chandhoke, Neera. 2014. Negating Violence: The Gandhi Way. In *Between Ethics and Politics: Gandhi Today*. Edited by Eva Pföstl. New Delhi: Routledge, pp. 72–96.

Chenoweth, Erica. 2022. *Lecture: Women on the Frontlines of Revolution*. Harvard: Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Harvard University.

Chenoweth, Erica, and Maria Stephan. 2013. *Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Corder, Catherine, and Martin Plaut. 2014. Gandhi's Decisive South African 1913 Campaign: A Personal Perspective the Letters of Betty Molteno. *South African Historical Journal* 66: 22–54. [CrossRef]

Du Toit, Louise, and Jana Vosloo. 2021. When Bodies Speak Differently: Putting Judith Butler in Conversation with Mahatma Gandhi on Nonviolent Resistance. *Religions* 12: 627. [CrossRef]

Gandhi, Mohandas Karamchand. 1928. *Satyagraha in South Africa*. Printed and published by Jitendra T. Desai. Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House.

Gandhi, Mohandas Karamchand. 1941. *The Women*. Karachi: Anand T Hingorani.

Gandhi, Mohandas Karamchand. 1958. *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*. New Delhi: Publications Division, vol. 100.

Guha, Ramachandra. 2018. *Gandhi: The Years That Changed the World, 1914–1918*. London: Allen Lane.

Juergensmeyer, Mark. 2005. *Gandhi's Way: A Handbook of Conflict Resolution*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Kroeger-Mappes, Joy. 1994. The Ethic of Care vis-à-vis the Ethic of Right: A Problem for Contemporary Moral Theory. *Hypatia* 9: 108–31. [CrossRef]

McGuire, Danielle L. 2010. *At the Dark End of the Street: Black Women, Rape, and Resistance—A New History of the Civil Rights Movement from Rosa Parks to the Rise of Black Power*. New York: Knopf.

Mishra, Pankaj. 2017. *Age of Anger: A History of the Present*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, ISBN 9780374274788.

Palaver, Wolfgang. 2019. Sacrifice between West and East: Rene Girard, Simone Weil, and Mahatma Gandhi on Violence and Non-Violence. In *Mimesis and Sacrifice: Applying Girard's Mimetic Theory across the Disciplines*. Edited by Marcia Pally. New York: Bloomsbury.

Palaver, Wolfgang. 2021. Gandhi's Militant Nonviolence in the Light of Girard's Mimetic Anthropology. *Religions* 12: 988. [CrossRef]

Ruddick, Sara. 1989. *Maternal Thinking: Towards a Politics of Peace*. London: The Women's Press.

Sevenhuijsen, Selma. 1998. *Citizenship and the Ethics of Care: Feminist Considerations on Justice, Moralty and Politics*. Translated by Liz Savage. London and New York: Routledge.

Tronto, Joan C. 1993. *Moral Boundaries: A Political Argument for an Ethic of Care*. New York: Routledge.

Tronto, Joan C. 2013. *Caring Democracy: Markets, Equality, and Justice*. New York: New York University Press.