

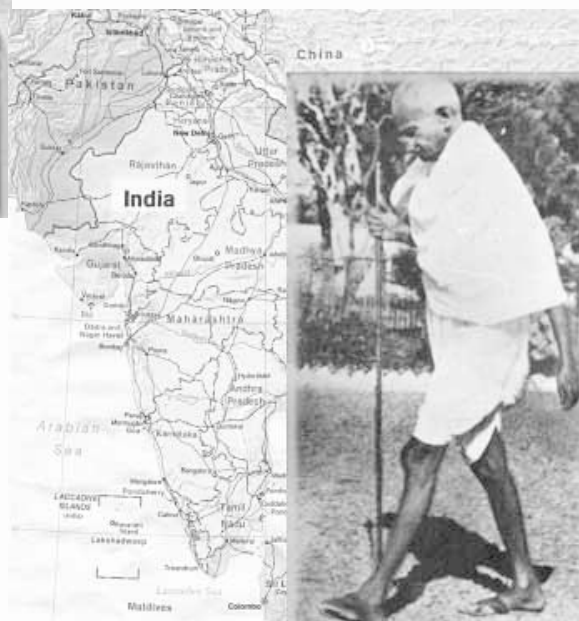
# Mao and Gandhi

## Alternate Paths to National Independence and Social Change

A Unit of Study for Grades 9–12

**DONALD JAMES JOHNSON**

**JEAN ELLIOTT JOHNSON**



**National Center for History in the Schools**

**University of California, Los Angeles**

**and**

**The Asia Society**

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## TEACHER'S BACKGROUND

### I. UNIT OVERVIEW

Among the giants of the twentieth century, Mao Zedong (1893–1978) and Mohandas Gandhi (1869–1948), stand out as exemplars of contrasting philosophies of nationalism, economic development and especially the place of violence in modern political life. Mao's famous dictum that "political power grows out of the barrel of a gun" places him squarely in the tradition of military might and physical force as the best methods to achieve social change, while Gandhi clung, all the while he engaged in his "Experiments With Truth," to the value of *Ahimsa*, or non-violence to any living thing. Ironically Mao, the man of might, died a natural death at age 85; while Gandhi, the man of personal and political peace, died by an assassin's bullet at age 79.

Both Gandhi and Mao were born into comfortable circumstances: Gandhi, the son of a minor government bureaucrat and Mao to a well-to-do educated family. Yet both chose to identify with the poor villagers and farmers who made up a vast majority of both India and China during the first half of this century. Both men mobilized mass movements of common people, each faced a form of western imperial and colonial rule, both espoused not only political independence but insisted on changing the hearts and minds of people, not only in their own nations but around the world. Each man left lasting legacies in India and China as well as large ideological followings around the globe. Mao helped shape the French student movement of 1968, the Vietnamese and Cuban nationalist movements, and continues to influence a strong group of American students and professors to this day. Gandhi, whose political legacy probably has not been as significant as Mao's, nonetheless greatly influenced the Martin Luther King wing of the Civil Rights movement, the Nelson Mandela faction of the African National Congress, and peace movements around the world.

Gandhi and Mao worked out their methods of social reconstruction during the waning days of European colonialism and the nascent development of nationalism among the colonized people in Asia and Africa. Both leaders were challenged to expand their nationalist movements beyond the small middle class educated elite to the broad stream of mass support and participation. Each man sought in his own way to infuse his respective nationalist consciousness with a revolutionary element of personal transformation drawn from the rich traditions of China and India, culminating in large scale social reform. In that sense both hoped to resocialize their people to become a new "Maoist man," and "Gandhian man."

The idealism that shaped the Maoist and Gandhian movements in the first half of this century has largely eroded in contemporary China and India. In the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution the Deng Shao Ping inspired move to a market economy has taken China a considerable distance from Mao's idea of the "socialist man." At the same time India, after Nehru's efforts prior

to 1963 to combine socialist and Gandhian principles of peace and non-violence, has also come to accept both market economic principles and factional interest politics as normative. In the wake of the increasing irrelevancy of Mao and Gandhi, their own nations have drifted into a moral vacuum where self-interest and materialism largely shape cultural values.

## II. UNIT CONTEXT

This unit focuses on the historic period from 1920 to 1966 when Mao Zedong and Mohandas Gandhi constructed and applied their social and moral visions to their respective nationalist movements. These leaders developed contrasting methods to achieve social change and to establish the goals set for achieving the ideal society. Each had differing ideas about the place of industry and agriculture, the values and symbols needed to mobilize people, the place of violence and force in effecting social change, and the role of personal morality in the larger arena of public morality.

This unit may be taught as part of a twentieth-century world history course or as a section in an elective course on nationalism or comparative politics. Both Gandhi and Mao have been subjects of a large number of biographies and analyses of nearly every aspect of their lives and thought. There is, of course, no definitive interpretation of either leader. This unit seeks to place before the student selected primary sources taken from each man's writings to encourage the student to make analytical comparisons.

## III. CORRELATION TO THE NATIONAL HISTORY STANDARDS

*Mao and Gandhi: Alternate Paths to National Independence and Social Change* provides teaching materials that address the *National Standards for History*, Basic Edition (National Center for History in the Schools, UCLA, 1996) **World History Era 7** and **8**. Lessons specifically address **Standards 5C in Era 7**, 'An Age of Revolutions,' 1750–1914, and **Standards 1B and 5B on Era 8**, 'The Twentieth Century.'

## IV. UNIT OBJECTIVES

- ◆ To examine the lives of Mao Zedong and Mohandas Gandhi.
- ◆ To contrast the views of Mao and Gandhi on the use of violence as a personal and political method.
- ◆ To contrast the place of ends and means in the philosophies of Mao and Gandhi.
- ◆ To contrast Mao's and Gandhi's views on colonialism and the "oppressor."
- ◆ To compare and contrast Gandhi's and Mao's approaches to mobilizing mass support.
- ◆ To compare and contrast Gandhi's and Mao's views on industrialization and modernization.

## **V. LESSON PLANS**

1. Mao's and Gandhi's Attitudes toward Violence
2. Applying Mao's and Gandhi's Attitudes toward Violence as a Means of Effecting Social Change.
3. The Long March and the Salt March
4. A Comparison of Mao's and Gandhi's Approach to Development
5. Mao's and Gandhi's Views on the Distribution of Wealth and their Attitudes toward the Rich
6. Application of Gandhi's and Mao's Approaches to Reform
7. Speaking with Images

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## LESSON I: MAO'S AND GANDHI'S ATTITUDES TOWARDS VIOLENCE

### A. OBJECTIVES

- ◆ To analyze Gandhi's concept of *ahisma* and its historic roots in Indian civilization.
- ◆ To understand how Gandhi drew upon *ahisma* and other Indian values to create his principle of *Satyagraha*.
- ◆ To analyze Mao's reliance on violence and war as a means to social change.
- ◆ To compare and contrast Gandhi and Mao's views on violence and war.

### B. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

#### Mao Zedong

Mao's father was very physical and quick to anger, and he disliked Mao's physical weakness. His father's bursts of temper often drove young Mao into hiding. Mao's mother, on the other hand, was a devout Buddhist who taught her young son that killing any living thing was wrong and that personal salvation depended on giving to the poor.

Mao inherited his father's quick temper and worked most of his life to control it. At the age of 13 in 1906, Mao's Buddhist non-violence was severely challenged. The area had experienced a major famine, and in the fall peasants had armed themselves and demanded that the government open the rice granaries. The leaders of the rebellion were arrested and publicly executed. Mao was so sympathetic to the peasant rebels that he almost became labeled a rebel himself. During these formative years of his life, peasant rebellions, mostly in search of food, punctuated Hunan's political life. By age 13, he had seen two such uprisings first-hand.

In his early life Mao was not attracted by the military. He was not really involved with the army until 1927 when he journeyed to Hunan to study what the peasants were doing and to mobilize the peasant uprisings into a more politicized program. The Autumn Harvest Uprising of 1927 was a turning point in his life and the beginning of his respect for military solutions to the social problems he saw all around.

In Hunan, Mao witnessed first-hand the exploitation of peasants by the gentry and landlords and grew to respect the peasants' courage in carrying out armed revolts against what he termed their "class enemies." After his Hunan experience he became a life-long advocate of armed struggle and military solutions to China's intractable problems.

During the Hunan experience Mao met and joined forces with Chu Teh, the great military genius of the Communist movement. The two men were able to rally the peasant armies and inflict several defeats on the Guomindang. With Chu's skillful military assistance, Mao established the Kiangsi Soviet in the late 1920s. It was within this peasant-based Communist inspired social experiment that the power base for his major challenge to Chiang Kai-shek's Guomindang army was tested and implemented. Mao and Chu organized their new army according to The Three Rules of Discipline and Eight Additional Rules. The leaders also developed a workable military strategy against the vastly more numerous and better equipped Guomindang army. Their strategy, strongly evocative of Sun Tzu's classic *The Art of War*, was to become the gospel of guerrilla warfare around the world, including Ho Chih Minh's approach in the Vietnam War.

### **Mohandas Gandhi**

The scholar Joan Bondurant suggests that perhaps the only dogma in Gandhi's philosophy was "that the only test of truth is action based on the refusal to do harm." Yet, Gandhi began life, like Mao, far removed in outlook from the philosophy and courage that would guide his adult life. Gandhi says of his own childhood:

I was a coward. I used to be haunted by the fear of thieves, ghosts, and serpents. I did not dare to stir out of doors at night. Darkness was a terror to me. It was almost impossible for me to sleep in the dark, as I would imagine ghosts coming room one direction, thieves from another and serpents from a third. I could not therefore bear to sleep without a light in the room.

Source: Eknath Easwaram, *Gandhi the Man* (Petaluma, CA: Nilgiri Press, 1978), pp. 11–12.

After taking his first genuine law assignment in South Africa in 1893, Gandhi, as the rising leader of the Indian community seeking its human rights, began to experiment with his long commitment to *ahisma* (non-violence to any living thing) and weave the concept into his emerging philosophy of *Satyagraha* (truth force).

With his formulation of *Satyagraha*, Gandhi, as early as 1896, was able to fuse his personal value of non-violence with his public and political philosophy and move on to hundreds of applications of this approach in both the Indian Nationalist movement and in his own reform program for Indian society, particularly his campaign to end untouchability.

Gandhi's and Mao's attitudes toward violence and its uses, more than any other value, separate the two men, as well as many of their millions of followers.



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**C. LESSON ACTIVITIES** (Completion time: one day)

Assign as homework the documents for this lesson (**Student Handouts 1 and 2**) or carry out a close reading of the documents in class. Although the readings are short, they will require significant analysis. As each document is discussed, the teacher should ask for comparisons not only between Gandhi and Mao, but also how each of these leader's views compares to the student's own philosophy of violence.

The following questions can serve as guides for a class discussion on the documents.

- a. What axiom do Mao and Lin Piao take from Marx on the place of force to attain the desired social change?
- b. What does Mao see as the relationship between armed force and revolution? What does Lin Piao see as the major reason we have wars in the twentieth century?
- c. What does Mao see as the key relationship between war and imperialism? Who are the imperialists? How should China emulate their methods?
- d. What does Mao mean by "contradictions" and what does he see as the best way to resolve them?
- e. How does Mao justify the Hunan peasants' use of violence against the gentry and landlords?
- f. Why does Mao think it is good that the peasants "create terror" in Hunan?
- g. What does Mao mean by "political power grows out of the barrel of a gun?" What does he think are some good historic examples of the use of force?
- h. Gandhi defines *ahisma* or non-violence in a new way. What are some of his examples of violence that go beyond physical abuse? How does Gandhi make *ahisma* into a more active force than just not physically hurting someone?
- i. What does Gandhi see as the relationship between self-suffering and non-violence?
- j. What does Gandhi see as the relationship of *ahisma* to courage, power and strength?
- k. What are the implications of Gandhi's advice that we should use *ahisma* for our enemies as well as our friends?

**Final Question or Essay Assignment**

What are the major points of difference between Gandhi and Mao on the use of violence and military force? Which position comes closest to your own personal philosophy and why?

**MAO ZEDONG READINGS**

Lin Piao, one of Mao's greatest military commanders and in the late 1950s minister of defense, wrote about his leader:

**Reading 1—Mao on Revolution**

In the last analysis, the Marxist-Leninist theory of the proletarian revolution is a theory of the seizure of state power by revolutionary violence, the theory of countering war against the people by people's war. As Marx so aptly put it, "Force is the midwife of every old society pregnant with a new one."

It was on the basis of the lessons derived from the people's wars in China that Comrade Mao Tse-tung, using the simplest and most vivid language, advanced the famous thesis that "political power grows out of the barrel of a gun." He clearly pointed out:

The seizure of power by armed force, the settlement of the issue by war, is the central task and the highest form of revolution. This Marxist-Leninist principle of revolution holds good universally, for China and for all other countries.

War is the product of imperialism and the system of exploitation of man by man. Lenin said "war is always and everywhere begun by the exploiters themselves, by the ruling and oppressing classes." What should the oppressed nations and the oppressed people do? . . . Comrade Mao Tse-tung answered this question in vivid terms. He said that after long investigation and study the Chinese people had discovered that all imperialists and their lackeys "have swords in their hands and are out to kill. The people have come to understand this and so act in the same fashion." This is called doing unto them what they do unto us. . . .

In view of the fact that some people are afflicted with fear of imperialists and reactionaries, Comrade Mao Tse-tung put forward the famous thesis that "the imperialists and all reactionaries are paper tigers."

All reactionaries are paper tigers. In appearance, the reactionaries are terrifying, but in reality they are not so powerful. From a long-term point of view, it is not the reactionaries but the people who are really powerful.

Source: Lin Piao "The International Significance of Comrade Mao Tse-tung's Theory of People's War," in Franz Schurmann and Orville Schell, eds., *The China Reader* (New York: Vintage, 1973), pp. 186–188.

**Reading 2: Mao on War**

War is the highest form of struggle for resolving contradictions, when they have developed to a certain stage, between classes, nations, states, or political groups, and it has existed ever since the emergence of private property and of classes. Unless you understand the actual circumstances of war, its nature and its relations to other things, you will not know the laws of war, or know how to direct war, or be able to win victory.

Source: Mao Zedong, “Problems of Strategy in China’s Revolutionary War,” December, 1936, *Selected Works I* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1964), pp. 179–82.

**Reading 3: The Question of “Going too Far”**

Hunan Province in 1926–27 was the center of Communist organization of the peasants, and when reports circulated that there had been a massive slaughter of landlords, Mao went on a thirty-three day inspection tour. The following is part of his “Report on an Investigation of the Peasant.”

Then there is another section of the people who say, “Yes, peasant associations are fine, but they are going rather too far.” This is the opinion of the middle-of-the-roaders. But what is the actual situation? True, the peasants are in a sense “unruly” in the countryside. Supreme in authority, the peasant association allows the landlord no stay but sweeps away his prestige. This amounts to striking the landlord down to the dust and keeping him there. . . .

People swarm into the houses of local tyrants and evil gentry who are against the peasant association, slaughter their pigs and consume their grain. . . . Doing whatever they like and turning everything upside down, they have created a kind of terror in the countryside. That is what some people call “going too far,” or “exceeding the proper limits in righting a wrong.” Such talk may seem plausible, but in fact it is wrong.

First, the local tyrants, evil gentry and lawless landlords have themselves driven peasants to this. For ages they have used their power to tyrannize over the peasants and trample them underfoot; that is why the peasants have reacted so strongly. . . .

Secondly, a revolution is not a dinner party, or writing an essay, or painting a picture, or doing embroidery; it cannot be so refined, so leisurely and gentle, so temperate, kind, courteous, restrained and magnanimous. A revolution is an insurrection, an act of violence by which one class overthrows another. A rural revolution is a revolution by which the peasantry overthrows the power of the feudal landlord class. . . .

To put it bluntly, it is necessary to create terror for a while in every rural area, otherwise it would be impossible to suppress the activities of the counterrevolutionaries in the countryside or overthrow the authority of the gentry. . . .

Source: Bruno Shaw, *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung* (NY: Harper Colophon Books, 1970), pp. 12–13.

**Reading 4: “Political Power Grows out of the Barrel of a Gun”**

Every Communist must understand this truth: Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun. Our principle is that the Party commands the gun; the gun shall never be allowed to command the Party. But it is also true that with the gun at our disposal we can really build up the party organizations; the Eighth Route Army has built up the Party organization in North China. We can also rear cadres and create schools, culture and mass movements. Everything in Yen-an has been built up by means of the gun. Anything can grow out of the barrel of a gun. Viewed from the Marxist theory of the state, the army is the chief component of the political power of the state. Whoever wants to seize and hold on to political power must have a strong army. Some people have ridiculed us as advocates of the ‘theory of the omnipotence of war’: yes. We are, we are advocates of the theory of the omnipotence of revolutionary war. This is not a bad thing. With the help of guns, the Russian communists brought about socialism. We want to bring about a democratic republic. Experience in the class struggle of the era of imperialism teaches us that the working class and the toiling masses cannot defeat the armed bourgeois and landlord except by the power of the gun; in this sense we can even say that the whole world can be remoulded only with the gun. As advocates of the abolition of war, we do not desire war; but war can only be abolished through war—in order to get rid of the gun, we must first grasp it in hand.

Source: Mao’s Concluding Remarks at the 6<sup>th</sup> Plenum of the Central Committee, Nov., 1938, in Stuart R. Schram, *The Political Thought of Mao Tse-tung* (New York: Praeger, 1969), p. 290–91.

**Reading 5: Chairman Mao Has Given Me a Gun**

(by Hsiang Yang)

Chairman Mao has given me a gun  
To guard our red political power;  
Clear what I love and hate, firm in my stand,  
Holding my course through densest clouds and mist.

Chairman Mao has given me a gun  
To guard our red political power;  
The skies may fall but I shall never falter,  
Determined to consolidate proletarian dictatorship.

Chairman Mao has given me a gun  
To guard our red political power;  
I shall support the Left, make revolution,  
Ready to shed my blood or lose my head!

Chairman Mao has given me a gun  
To guard our red political power;  
If the enemy dare attack  
They will meet their doom!

Chairman Mao has given me a gun  
To guard our red political power;  
All my life I shall follow Chairman Mao  
To make our land impregnable for ever.

Source: Hsiang Yang, "Chairman Mao Has Given Me a Gun," in Leon Hellerman and Alan L. Stein, eds., *Readings on the Middle Kingdom* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1973), pp. 240–41.

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**GANDHI READINGS****Reading 1: Ahisma**

*Ahisma* is usually translated as “nonviolence,” but as we have seen, its meaning goes beyond that. *Ahisma* is derived from the Sanskrit verb root *han*, which means to kill. The form *hims* means “desirous to kill”; the prefix *a-* is a negation. So *ahisma* means literally “lacking any desire to kill,” which is perhaps the central theme upon which Hindu, Jain, and Buddhist morality is built. . . . The word nonviolence connotes a negative, almost passive condition, whereas the Sanskrit term *ahisma* suggests a dynamic state of mind in which power is released. . . . Gandhi’s adherence to nonviolence grew from his experience that it was the only way to resolve the problem or conflict permanently. Violence, he felt, only made the pretense of a solution, and sowed the seeds of bitterness and enmity that would ultimately disrupt the situation. . . .

*Ahisma* is not the crude thing it has been made to appear. Not to hurt any living thing is no doubt a part of *ahisma* . But it is its least expression. The principle of *ahisma* is hurt by every evil thought, by undue haste, by lying, by hatred, by wishing ill to anybody.

I accept the interpretation of *Ahisma* namely that it is not merely a negative state of harmlessness but it is a positive state of love, of doing good even to the evil-doer. But it does not mean helping the evil-doer to continue the wrong and tolerating it by passive acquiescence. On the contrary, love, the active state of *Ahisma*, requires you to resist the wrong-doer. . . .

My field of labour is clearly defined and it pleases me. I am fascinated by the law of love. It is the philosopher’s stone for me. I know *ahisma* alone can provide a remedy for our ills. In my view the path of non-violence is not the path of the timid or the unmanly. *Ahisma* is the height of the Kshatriya’s [warrior’s] dharma as it represents the climax of fearlessness. In it there is no scope for flight or for defeat. Being a quality of the soul it is not difficult of attainment. It comes easily to a person who feels the presence of the soul within. I believe that no other path but that of non-violence will suit India.

Sources:

Eknath Easwaran, *Gandhi the Man* (Petaluma, CA: Nilgiri Press, 1978), pp. 153–55.

Joan Bondurant, *Conquest of Violence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), p. 24.

Mohandas Gandhi, *Collected Works*, in Stephen Hay, ed., *Sources of Indian Tradition*, vol. 2, *Modern India and Pakistan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), p. 252.

**Reading 2: Touch the Heart**

Up to the year 1906 I simply relied on appeal to reason. I was a very industrious reformer. . . . But I found that reason failed to produce an impression when the critical moment arrived in South Africa. My people were excited . . . and there was talk of wreaking vengeance. I had then to choose between allying myself to violence or finding out some other method of meeting the crisis and stopping the rot; and it came to me that we should refuse to obey the legislation that was degrading and let them put us in jail if they liked. Thus came into being the moral equivalent of war. . . . Since then the conviction has been growing upon me, that things of fundamental importance to the people are not secured by reason alone but have to be purchased with their suffering. Suffering is the law of human beings; war is the law of the jungle. But suffering is infinitely more powerful than the law of the jungle for converting the opponent and opening his ears, which are otherwise shut, to the voice of reasons. . . . I have come to this fundamental conclusion, that if you want something really important to be done you must not merely satisfy the reason, you must move the heart also. The appeal to reason is more to the head but the penetration of the heart comes from suffering. It opens up the inner understanding in man.

In his biography of Gandhi, Fisher quotes Gandhi as saying “If India takes up the doctrine of the sword, she may gain momentary victory, but then India will cease to be the pride of my heart.” Gandhi’s rejection of violence, Fisher said, was adamant to the point almost bordering on fanaticism.

Out of the experience in South Africa, Gandhi worked out the concept of *satyagraha*, “a movement intended to replace methods of violence and a movement based entirely upon truth.”

Non-violence in its dynamic condition means conscious suffering. It does not mean meek submission to the will of the evil-doer, but means the pitting of one’s whole soul against the will of the tyrant. Working under this law of our being, it is possible for a single individual to defy the whole might of an unjust empire. . .

Suffering injury in one’s own person is . . . the essence of non-violence and is the chosen substitute for violence to others. It is not because I value life low that I can countenance with joy thousands voluntarily losing their lives for *Satyagraha*, but because I know that it results in the long run in the least loss of life, and, what is more, it ennobles those who lose their lives and morally enriches the world for their sacrifice.

Sources:

Eknath Easwaran, *Gandhi the Man* (Petaluma, CA: Nilgiri Press, 1978), pp. 161–62.

Louis Fisher, *Gandhi: His Message for the World* (New York: Penguin Books, 1982), in Joan Bondurant, *Conquest of Violence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), pp. 15, 26, 27.

**Reading 3—Non-violence as Love**

All society is held together by non-violence, even as the earth is held in her position by gravitation. But when the law of gravitation was discovered the discovery yielded results of which our ancestors had no knowledge. Even so when society is deliberately constructed in accordance with the law of non-violence, its structure will be different in material particulars from what it is today... What is happening today is disregard of the law of non-violence and enthronement of violence as if it were an eternal law.

Having flung aside the sword, there is nothing except the cup of love which I can offer to those who oppose me. It is by offering that cup that I expect to draw them close to me. I cannot think of permanent enmity between man and man and, believing as I do in the theory of rebirth, I live in the hope that if not in this birth, in some other birth, I shall be able to hug all humanity in a friendly embrace.

It is not non-violence if we merely love those that love us. It is non-violence only when we love those that hate us. I know how difficult it is to follow this grand law of love. But are not all great and good things difficult to do? Love of the hater is the most difficult of all.

Non-violence is the weapon of the strong. With the weak it might easily be hypocrisy. Fear and love are contradictory terms. Love is reckless in giving away, oblivious as to what it gets in return. Love wrestles with the world as with the self and ultimately gains a mastery over all other feelings.

Source: Mahatma Gandhi, *Collected Works*, in Stephen Hay, ed., *Sources of Indian Tradition*. vol 2, *Modern India and Pakistan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), pp. 252–55.