

Defense of Nathuram Godse

This is an excerpt from the defense of Nathuram Godse, the one who shot Gandhi. He denied the charge that he was a madman, and didn't deny that he had killed Gandhi. Here he speaks from the standpoint of an Indian nationalist, who was opposed to Gandhi's conciliatory policies towards the Muslims in India. We see a few remarks insisting that he was in favor of eliminating the caste system (he was a Brahmin (from the highest caste in India), which class was the subject of violence on the part of other Hindus in the wake of Gandhi's assassination), his characterization of Gandhi as a leader, and his criticisms of some of Gandhi's ideas: non-violence, the national language of India, anti-Hindu violence, and the partition of India.

Born in a devotional Brahmin family, I instinctively came to revere Hindu religion, Hindu history and Hindu culture. I had, therefore, been intensely proud of Hinduism as a whole. As I grew up I developed a tendency to free thinking unfettered by any superstitious allegiance to any isms, political or religious. That is why I worked actively for the eradication of untouchability and the caste system based on birth alone. I openly joined anti-caste movements and maintained that all Hindus were of equal status as to rights, social and religious and should be considered high or low on merit alone and not through the accident of birth in a particular caste or profession. I used publicly to take part in organized anti-caste dinners in which thousands of Hindus, Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas, Chamars and Bhangis participated. We broke the caste rules and dined in the company of each other....

All this reading and thinking led me to believe it was my first duty to serve Hindudom and Hindus both as a patriot and as a world citizen. To secure the freedom and to safeguard the just interests of some thirty crores [300 million] of Hindus would automatically constitute the freedom and the well-being of all India, one fifth of human race. This conviction led me naturally to devote myself to the Hindu Sanghantist ideology and programme, which alone, I came to believe, could win and preserve the national independence of Hindustan, my Motherland, and enable her to render true service to humanity as well.

Since the year 1920,... Gandhiji's influence in the Congress first increased and then became supreme. His activities for public awakening were phenomenal in their intensity and were reinforced by the slogan of truth and non-violence which he paraded ostentatiously before the country. No sensible or enlightened person could object to those slogans. In fact there is nothing new or original in them. They are implicit in every constitutional public movement. But it is nothing but a mere dream if you imagine that the bulk of mankind is, or can ever become, capable of scrupulous adherence to these lofty principles in its normal life from day to day. In fact, honour, duty and love of one's own kith and kin and country might often compel us to disregard non-violence and to use force. I could never conceive that an armed resistance to an aggression is unjust. I would consider it a religious and moral duty to resist and, if possible, to

overpower such an enemy by use of force. [In the Ramayana] Rama killed Ravana in a tumultuous fight and relieved Sita. [In the Mahabharata], Krishna killed Kansa to end his wickedness; and Arjuna had to fight and slay quite a number of his friends and relations including the revered Bhishma because the latter was on the side of the aggressor. It is my firm belief that in dubbing Rama, Krishna and Arjuna as guilty of violence, the Mahatma betrayed a total ignorance of the springs of human action.

In more recent history, it was the heroic fight put up by Chhatrapati Shivaji that first checked and eventually destroyed the Muslim tyranny in India. It was absolutely essentially for Shivaji to overpower and kill an aggressive Afzal Khan, failing which he would have lost his own life. In condemning history's towering warriors like Shivaji, Rana Pratap and Guru Gobind Singh as misguided patriots, Gandhiji has merely exposed his self-conceit. He was, paradoxical as it may appear, a violent pacifist who brought untold calamities on the country in the name of truth and non-violence, while Rana Pratap, Shivaji and the Guru will remain enshrined in the hearts of their countrymen for ever for the freedom they brought to them....

Thus, the Mahatma became the judge and jury in his own cause. These childish insanities and obstinacies, coupled with a most severe austerity of life, ceaseless work and lofty character made Gandhi formidable and irresistible. Many people thought that his politics were irrational but they had either to withdraw from the Congress or place their intelligence at his feet to do with as he liked. In a position of such absolute irresponsibility Gandhi was guilty of blunder after blunder, failure after failure, disaster after disaster.

Gandhi's pro-Muslim policy is blatantly [seen] in his perverse attitude on the question of the national language of India. It is quite obvious that Hindi has the most prior claim to be accepted as the premier language. In the beginning of his career in India, Gandhi gave a great impetus to Hindi but as he found that the Muslims did not like it, he became a champion of what is called Hindustani. Everybody in India knows that there is no language called Hindustani; it has no grammar; it has no vocabulary. It is a mere dialect, it is spoken, but not written. It is a bastard tongue and cross-breed between Hindi and Urdu, and not even the Mahatma's sophistry could make it popular. But in his desire to please the Muslims he insisted that Hindustani alone should be the national language of India. His blind followers, of course, supported him and the so-called hybrid language began to be used. The charm and purity of the Hindi language was to be prostituted to please the Muslims. All his experiments were at the expense of the Hindus.

From August 1946 onwards the private armies of the Muslim League began a massacre of the Hindus.... The Hindu blood began to flow from Bengal to Karachi with some retaliation by the Hindus. The Interim Government formed in September was sabotaged by its Muslim League

members right from its inception, but the more they became disloyal and treasonable to the government of which they were a part, the greater was Gandhi's infatuation for them....

The Congress which had boasted of its nationalism and socialism secretly accepted Pakistan literally at the point of the bayonet and abjectly surrendered to Jinnah. India was vivisected and one-third of the Indian territory became foreign land to us from August 15, 1947. Lord Mountbatten came to be described in Congress circles as the greatest Viceroy and Governor-General this country ever had. The official date for handing over power was fixed for June 30, 1948, but Mountbatten with his ruthless surgery gave us a gift of vivisected India ten months in advance. This is what Gandhi had achieved after thirty years of undisputed dictatorship and this is what Congress party calls 'freedom' and 'peaceful transfer of power'. The Hindu-Muslim unity bubble was finally burst and a theocratic state was established with the consent of Nehru and his crowd and they have called 'freedom won by them with sacrifice' - whose sacrifice? When top leaders of Congress, with the consent of Gandhi, divided and tore the country - which we consider a deity of worship - my mind was filled with direful anger.

One of the conditions imposed by Gandhi for his breaking of the fast unto death related to the mosques in Delhi occupied by the Hindu refugees. But when Hindus in Pakistan were subjected to violent attacks he did not so much as utter a single word to protest and censure the Pakistan Government or the Muslims concerned. Gandhi was shrewd enough to know that while undertaking a fast unto death, had he imposed for its break some condition on the Muslims in Pakistan, there would have been found hardly any Muslims who could have shown some grief if the fast had ended in his death. It was for this reason that he purposely avoided imposing any condition on the Muslims. He was fully aware of from the experience that Jinnah was not at all perturbed or influenced by his fast and the Muslim League hardly attached any value to the inner voice of Gandhi....

I do say that my shots were fired at the person whose policy and action had brought rack and ruin and destruction to millions of Hindus. There was no legal machinery by which such an offender could be brought to book and for this reason I fired those fatal shots....

I now stand before the court to accept the full share of my responsibility for what I have done and the judge would, of course, pass against me such orders of sentence as may be considered proper. But I would like to add that I do not desire any mercy to be shown to me, nor do I wish that anyone else should beg for mercy on my behalf. My confidence about the moral side of my action has not been shaken even by the criticism levelled against it on all sides. I have no doubt that honest writers of history will weigh my act and find the true value thereof some day in future.