

MAHATMA GANDHI'S LIFE AND FREEDOM STRUGGLE**R.Prakash**

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Abstract

This paper mainly concentrates on Mahatma Gandhi's Life and Freedom Struggle. Mahatma Gandhi came to be known as Mahatma (great soul) for the courageous, selfless, and non-violent methodologies that characterized the way Mahatma Gandhi lived as well as his attempts at instilling reform for the betterment of his fellow citizens and the world. In this chapter we look at the wisdom that can be gleaned from an individual who was neither simple to understand, nor a stranger to error or to defeat, but who continues to inspire many and interest many more. We attempt to describe the path to learning proposed by this man who was also an exceedingly shrewd tactician and strategist. Mahatma Gandhi taught us that an individual can train himself for herself to become transparent and open and also create synergy and cooperation between education, training, employment, and the community, striving always for continuous improvement. Gandhi was a performance manager for the country and a supremely practical leader for change. Mahatma Gandhi believed that truth, tolerance, sacrifice, joy, and the non-violent rejection of tyranny were the very substance of a successful life. Gandhi's ways of organizing people, of examining and producing ideas for bringing people together, are important lessons for reducing the present tensions created by global trade, commerce, and information technologies. Gandhi measured all decisions against truth.

Introduction

Mahatma Gandhi came to be known as Mahatma (great soul) for the courageous, selfless, and non-violent methodologies that characterized the way Mahatma Gandhi lived as well as his attempts at instilling reform for the betterment of his fellow citizens and the world. Aroused by the massacre of Amritsar in 1919, Gandhi devoted his life to gaining India's independence from Great Britain. As the dominant figure used his persuasive philosophy of non-violent confrontation, he inspired political activists with many persuasions throughout the world (Andrews 23). Not only was Mahatma Gandhi a great

peacemaker, but also his work to achieve freedom and equality for all people was greatly acknowledged. Gandhi's unconventional style of leadership gained him the love of a country and eventually enabled him to lead the independence movement in India. Mohandas Gandhi, later called Mahatma Gandhi, was born on October 2, 1869 in Porbandar, which is the present day state of Gujarat, India. Struggle for Indian independence (1915–1947)

At the request of Gopal Krishna Gokhale, conveyed to him by C. F. Andrews, Gandhi returned to India in 1915. He brought an international reputation as a leading Indian nationalist, theorist and community organiser. Gandhi joined the Indian National Congress and was introduced to Indian issues, politics and the Indian people primarily by Gokhale. Gokhale was a key leader of the Congress Party best known for his restraint and moderation, and his insistence on working inside the system. Gandhi took Gokhale's liberal approach based on British Whiggish traditions and transformed it to make it look Indian. Gandhi took leadership of the Congress in 1920 and began escalating demands until on 26 January 1930 the Indian National Congress declared the independence of India. The British did not recognise the declaration but negotiations ensued, with the Congress taking a role in provincial government in the late 1930s. Gandhi and the Congress withdrew their support of the Raj when the Viceroy declared war on Germany in September 1939 without consultation. Tensions escalated until Gandhi demanded immediate independence in 1942 and the British responded by imprisoning him and tens of thousands of Congress leaders. Meanwhile, the Muslim League did co-operate with Britain and moved, against Gandhi's strong opposition, to demands for a totally separate Muslim state of Pakistan. In August 1947 the British partitioned the land with India and Pakistan each achieving independence on terms that Gandhi disapproved.

The role of India in World War I

In April 1918, during the latter part of World War I, the Viceroy invited Gandhi to a War Conference in Delhi. Gandhi agreed to actively recruit Indians for the war effort. In contrast to the Zulu War of 1906 and the outbreak of World War I in 1914, when he recruited volunteers for the Ambulance Corps, this time Gandhi attempted to recruit combatants. In a June 1918 leaflet entitled "Appeal for Enlistment", Gandhi wrote "To bring about such a state of things we should have the ability to defend ourselves, that is, the ability to bear arms and to use them... If we want to learn the use of arms with the greatest possible despatch, it is our duty to enlist ourselves in the army." He did, however, stipulate in a letter to the Viceroy's private secretary that he "personally will not kill or injure anybody, friend or foe." Gandhi's war recruitment campaign brought into question his consistency on nonviolence. Gandhi's private

secretary noted that "The question of the consistency between his creed of 'Ahimsa'(nonviolence) and his recruiting campaign was raised not only then but has been discussedeversince.ChamparanSatyagraha

Gandhi'sfirst major achievement came in1917 with the Champaranagitation inBihar.TheChamparanagitationpittedthelocalpeasantryagainsttheirlargelyBritishlandlords who were backed by the local administration. The peasantry was forced to growIndigofera, a cash crop for Indigo dye whose demand had been declining over two decades,and were forced to sell their crops to the planters at a fixed price. Unhappy with this, thepeasantry appealed to Gandhi at his ashram in Ahmedabad. Pursuing a strategy of nonviolentprotest,Gandhi tooktheadministrationbysurpriseand wonconcessions fromtheauthorities.

KhedaSatyagraha

In 1918, Kheda was hit by floods and famine and the peasantry was demanding relief from taxes. Gandhi moved his headquarters to Nadiad, organising scores of supporters and fresh volunteers from the region, the most notable being Vallabhbhai Patel.[100] Using non-co-operation as a technique, Gandhi initiated a signature campaign where peasants pledged non-payment of revenue even under the threat of confiscation of land. A social boycott of mamlatdars and talatdars (revenue officials within the district) accompanied the agitation. Gandhi worked hard to win public support for the agitation across the country. For five months, the administration refused but finally in end-May 1918, the Government gave way on important provisions and relaxed the conditions of payment of revenue tax until the famine ended. In Kheda, Vallabhbhai Patel represented the farmers in negotiations with the British, who suspended revenue collection and released all the prisoners.

Khilafat movement:

In 1919 after the World War I was over, Gandhi (aged 49) sought political co-operation from Muslims in his fight against British imperialism by supporting the Ottoman Empire that had been defeated in the World War. Before this initiative of Gandhi, communal disputes and religious riots between Hindus and Muslims were common in British India, such as the riots of 1917–18. Gandhi had already supported the British crown with resources and by recruiting Indian soldiers to fight the war in Europe on the British side. This effort of Gandhi was in part motivated by the British promise to reciprocate the help with swaraj (self-government) to Indians after the end of World War I. The British government, instead of self-government, had

offered minor reforms instead, disappointing Gandhi. Gandhi announced his satyagraha (civil disobedience) intentions. The British colonial officials made their counter move by passing the Rowlatt Act, to block Gandhi's movement. The Act allowed the British government to treat civil disobedience participants as criminals and gave it the legal basis to arrest anyone for "preventive indefinite detention, incarceration without judicial review or any need for a trial".

Non-co-operation movement

With his book *Hind Swaraj* (1909) Gandhi, aged 40, declared that British rule was established in India with the co-operation of Indians and had survived only because of this cooperation. If Indians refused to co-operate, British rule would collapse and swaraj would come. Gandhi with Dr. Annie Besant en route to a meeting in Madras in September 1921. Earlier, in Madurai, on 21 September 1921, Gandhi had adopted the loin-cloth for the first time as a symbol of his identification with India's poor.

Salt Satyagraha (Salt March)

Original footage of Gandhi and his followers marching to Dandi in the Salt Satyagraha: After his early release from prison for political crimes in 1924, over the second half of the 1920s, Gandhi continued to pursue swaraj. He pushed through a resolution at the Calcutta Congress in December 1928 calling on the British government to grant India dominion status or face a new campaign of non-co-operation with complete independence for the country as its goal. The British did not respond favourably to Gandhi's proposal. British political leaders such as Lord Birkenhead and Winston Churchill announced opposition to "the appeasers of Gandhi", in their discussions with European diplomats who sympathised with Indian demands. On 31 December 1929, the flag of India was unfurled in Lahore. Gandhi led Congress celebrated 26 January 1930 as India's Independence Day in Lahore. This day was commemorated by almost every other Indian organisation. Gandhi then launched a new Satyagraha against the tax on salt in March 1930. Gandhi sent an ultimatum in the form of a polite letter to the viceroy of India, Lord Irwin, on 2 March. Gandhi condemned British rule in the letter, describing it as "a curse" that "has impoverished the dumb millions by a system of progressive exploitation and by ruinously expensive military and civil administration.

Round Table Conferences

Mahadev Desai (left) was Gandhi's personal assistant, both at Birla House, Bombay,

7 April 1939 During the discussions between Gandhi and the British government over 1931–32 at the Round Table Conferences, Gandhi, now aged about 62, sought constitutional reforms as a preparation to the end of colonial British rule, and begin the self-rule by Indians. The

British side sought reforms that would keep Indian subcontinent as a colony. The British negotiators proposed constitutional reforms on a British Dominion model that established separate electorates based on religious and social divisions. The British questioned the Congress party and Gandhi's authority to speak for all of India. They invited Indian religious leaders, such as Muslims and Sikhs, to press their demands along religious lines, as well as B.

R. Ambedkar as the representative leader of the untouchables. Gandhi vehemently opposed a constitution that enshrined rights or representations based on communal divisions, because he feared that it would not bring people together but divide them, perpetuate their status and divert the attention from India's struggle to end the colonial rule. The Second Round Table conference was the only time he left India between 1914 and his death in 1948. He declined the government's offer of accommodation in an expensive West End hotel, preferring to stay in the East End, to live among working-class people, as he did in India. He based himself in a small cell-bedroom at Kingsley Hall for the three-month duration of his stay and was enthusiastically received by East Enders. During this time he renewed his links with the British vegetarian movement.

World War II and Quit India movement

Gandhi opposed providing any help to the British war effort and he campaigned against any Indian participation in the World War II. Gandhi's campaign did not enjoy the support of Indian masses and many Indian leaders such as Sardar Patel and Rajendra Prasad. His campaign was a failure. Over 2.5 million Indians ignored Gandhi, volunteered and joined the British military to fight on various fronts of the allied forces. Gandhi's opposition to the Indian participation in the World War II was motivated by his belief that India could not be party to a war ostensibly being fought for democratic freedom while that freedom was denied to India itself. He also condemned Nazism and Fascism, a view which won endorsement of other Indian leaders. As the war progressed, Gandhi intensified his demand for independence, calling for the British to Quit India in a 1942 speech in Mumbai. This was Gandhi's and the Congress Party's most definitive revolt aimed at securing the British exit from India. The British government responded quickly to the Quit India speech, and within hours after Gandhi's speech arrested Gandhi and all the members of the Congress Working Committee. His

countrymen retaliated the arrests by damaging or burning down hundreds of government-owned railway stations, police stations, and cutting down telegraph wires.

Conclusion

Gandhi felt it was his responsibility to fight for India's rights. Mahatma Gandhi was important because he led India into freedom from the British. Also, he influenced many people and places other than India. He changed history by protesting non-violently and gaining independence for India. Gandhi is important to us today because he influenced Martin Luther King, so now African-Americans have equal rights. Gandhi was an honorable politician. Many people in the world get inspired and want to be like him. He is seen as a hero who gained India's liberation from Britain and unfair laws. Though some people like Nathuram Godse did not like him and assassinated him, the majority of people loved him as the 'father of nation' and the 'great soul'. Gandhi was a man who was able to fast for his people's freedom and was not afraid to go to jail. He was always ready to sacrifice.

End Notes;

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