



Gandhi And Ambedkar- A Comparative Study

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ABSTRACT: Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (2 October 1869 – 30 January 1948) was an Indian lawyer,^[4] anti-colonial nationalist^[5] and political ethicist^[6] who employed nonviolent resistance to lead the successful campaign for India's independence from British rule.^[7] He inspired movements for civil rights and freedom across the world. The honorific Mahātmā (Sanskrit: "great-souled", "venerable"), first applied to him in 1914 in South Africa, is now used throughout the world.^{[8][9]}

Born and raised in a Hindu family in coastal Gujarat, Gandhi trained in the law at the Inner Temple, London, and was called to the bar at age 22 in June 1891. After two uncertain years in India, where he was unable to start a successful law practice, he moved to South Africa in 1893 to represent an Indian merchant in a lawsuit. He went on to live in South Africa for 21 years. It was here that Gandhi raised a family and first employed nonviolent resistance in a campaign for civil rights. In 1915, aged 45, he returned to India and soon set about organising peasants, farmers, and urban labourers to protest against excessive land-tax and discrimination.

Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar (14 April 1891 – 6 December 1956) was an Indian jurist, economist, social reformer and political leader who headed the committee drafting the Constitution of India from the Constituent Assembly debates, served as Law and Justice minister in the first cabinet of Jawaharlal Nehru, and inspired the Dalit Buddhist movement after renouncing Hinduism.

After graduating from Elphinstone College, University of Bombay, Ambedkar studied economics at Columbia University and the London School of Economics, receiving doctorates in 1927 and 1923, respectively, and was among a handful of Indian students to have done so at either institution in the 1920s.^[13] He also trained in the law at Gray's Inn, London. In his early career, he was an economist, professor, and lawyer. His later life was marked by his political activities; he became involved in campaigning and negotiations for partition, publishing journals, advocating political rights and social freedom for Dalits, and contributing to the establishment of the state of India. In 1956, he converted to Buddhism, initiating mass conversions of Dalits.^[14]

KEYWORDS: Mahatma Gandhi, Ambedkar, nonviolent, economist, dalits, civil rights, political ethicist

I.INTRODUCTION

Assuming leadership of the Indian National Congress in 1921, Gandhi led nationwide campaigns for easing poverty, expanding women's rights, building religious and ethnic amity, ending untouchability, and, above all, achieving swaraj or self-rule. Gandhi adopted the short dhoti woven with hand-spun yarn as a mark of identification with India's rural poor. He began to live in a self-sufficient residential community, to eat simple food, and undertake long fasts as a means of both introspection and political protest. Bringing anti-colonial nationalism to the common Indians, Gandhi led them in challenging the British-imposed salt tax with the 400 km (250 mi) Dandi Salt March in 1930 and in calling for the British to quit India in 1942. He was imprisoned many times and for many years in both South Africa and India.

Gandhi's vision of an independent India based on religious pluralism was challenged in the early 1940s by a Muslim nationalism which demanded a separate homeland for Muslims within British India.^[10] In August 1947, Britain granted independence, but the British Indian Empire^[10] was partitioned into two dominions, a Hindu-majority India and a Muslim-majority Pakistan.^[11] As many displaced Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs made their way to their new lands, religious violence broke out, especially in the Punjab and Bengal. Abstaining from the official celebration of independence, Gandhi visited the affected areas, attempting to alleviate distress. In the months following, he undertook several hunger strikes to stop the religious violence. The last of these, begun in Delhi on 12 January 1948 when he was 78,^{[12][13][14][15]} also had the indirect goal of pressuring India to pay out some cash assets owed to Pakistan,^{[16][17][18][19]} which the Indian government^[20] had been resisting.¹ Although the Government of India relented,² as did the religious rioters, the belief that Gandhi had been too resolute in his defense of both Pakistan and Indian Muslims spread among some Hindus in India.³ Among these was Nathuram Godse,⁴ a militant Hindu nationalist from Pune, western India,⁵ who assassinated Gandhi by firing three bullets into his chest at an interfaith prayer meeting in Delhi on 30 January 1948.⁶



Gandhi's birthday, 2 October, is commemorated in India as Gandhi Jayanti, a national holiday, and worldwide as the International Day of Nonviolence. Gandhi is considered the Father of the Nation in India⁷ and is commonly called Bapu⁸ (Gujarati endearment for 'father',⁹ 'papa'¹⁰).

Ambedkar was born on 14 April 1891 in the town and military cantonment of Mhow (now officially known as Dr Ambedkar Nagar) (now in Madhya Pradesh).¹¹ He was the 14th and last child of Ramji Maloji Sakpal, an army officer who held the rank of Subedar, and Bhimabai Sakpal, daughter of Laxman Murbadkar.¹² His family was of Marathi background from the town of Ambadawe (Mandangad taluka) in Ratnagiri district of modern-day Maharashtra. Ambedkar was born into a Mahar (dalit) caste, who were treated as untouchables and subjected to socio-economic discrimination.¹³ Ambedkar's ancestors had long worked for the army of the British East India Company, and his father served in the British Indian Army at the Mhow cantonment.¹⁸ Although they attended school, Ambedkar and other untouchable children were segregated and given little attention or help by teachers. They were not allowed to sit inside the class. When they needed to drink water, someone from a higher caste had to pour that water from a height as they were not allowed to touch either the water or the vessel that contained it. This task was usually performed for the young Ambedkar by the school peon, and if the peon was not available then he had to go without water; he described the situation later in his writings as "No peon, No Water".¹⁹ He was required to sit on a gunny sack which he had to take home with him.²⁰

Ramji Sakpal retired in 1894 and the family moved to Satara two years later. Shortly after their move, Ambedkar's mother died. The children were cared for by their paternal aunt and lived in difficult circumstances. Three sons – Balaram, Anandrao and Bhimrao – and two daughters – Manjula and Tulasa – of the Ambedkars survived them. Of his brothers and sisters, only Ambedkar passed his examinations and went to high school. His original surname was Sakpal but his father registered his name as Ambadawekar in school, meaning he comes from his native village 'Ambadawe' in Ratnagiri district.²¹²²²³²⁴ His Marathi Brahmin teacher, Krishnaji Keshav Ambedkar, changed his surname from 'Ambadawekar' to his own surname 'Ambedkar' in school records.¹⁴

As Ambedkar was educated by the Princely State of Baroda, he was bound to serve it. He was appointed Military Secretary to the Gaikwad but had to quit in a short time. He described the incident in his autobiography, *Waiting for a Visa*.¹⁵ Thereafter, he tried to find ways to make a living for his growing family. He worked as a private tutor, as an accountant, and established an investment consulting business, but it failed when his clients learned that he was an untouchable.¹⁶ In 1918, he became professor of political economy in the Sydenham College of Commerce and Economics in Mumbai. Although he was successful with the students, other professors objected to his sharing a drinking-water jug with them.¹⁷

Ambedkar had been invited to testify before the Southborough Committee, which was preparing the Government of India Act 1919. At this hearing, Ambedkar argued for creating separate electorates and reservations for untouchables and other religious communities.³⁹ In 1920, he began the publication of the weekly *Mooknayak* (Leader of the Silent) in Mumbai with the help of Shahu of Kolhapur, that is, Shahu IV (1874–1922).¹⁸

Ambedkar went on to work as a legal professional. In 1926, he successfully defended three non-Brahmin leaders who had accused the Brahmin community of ruining India and were then subsequently sued for libel. Dhananjay Keer notes, "The victory was resounding, both socially and individually, for the clients and the doctor".¹⁹

While practising law in the Bombay High Court, he tried to promote education to untouchables and uplift them. His first organised attempt was his establishment of the central institution *Bahishkrit Hitakarini Sabha*, intended to promote education and socio-economic improvement, as well as the welfare of "outcastes", at the time referred to as depressed classes.²⁰ For the defence of Dalit rights, he started many periodicals like *Mook Nayak*, *Bahishkrit Bharat*, and *Equality Janta*.¹

He was appointed to the Bombay Presidency Committee to work with the all-European Simon Commission in 1925.¹¹ This commission had sparked great protests across India, and while its report was ignored by most Indians, Ambedkar himself wrote a separate set of recommendations for the future Constitution of India.³

By 1927, Ambedkar had decided to launch active movements against untouchability. He began with public movements and marches to open up public drinking water resources. He also began a struggle for the right to enter Hindu temples. He led a satyagraha in Mahad to fight for the right of the untouchable community to draw water from the main water tank of the town.⁴⁶ In a conference in late 1927, Ambedkar publicly condemned the classic Hindu text, the *Manusmriti* (Laws of Manu), for ideologically justifying caste discrimination and "untouchability", and he ceremonially burned copies of the ancient text. On 25 December 1927, he led thousands of followers to burn copies of *Manusmriti*.⁴ Thus annually 25 December is celebrated as *Manusmriti Dahan Din* (Manusmriti Burning Day) by Ambedkarites and Dalits.⁵



In 1930, Ambedkar launched the Kalaram Temple movement after three months of preparation. About 15,000 volunteers assembled at Kalaram Temple satyagraha making one of the greatest processions of Nashik. The procession was headed by a military band and a batch of scouts; women and men walked with discipline, order and determination to see the god for the first time. When they reached the gates, the gates were closed by Brahmin authorities.⁶

Gandhi focused his attention on Indians and Africans while he was in South Africa. He initially was not interested in politics. This changed, however, after he was discriminated against and bullied, such as by being thrown out of a train coach because of his skin colour by a white train official. After several such incidents with Whites in South Africa, Gandhi's thinking and focus changed, and he felt he must resist this and fight for rights. He entered politics by forming the Natal Indian Congress.⁷ According to Ashwin Desai and Goolam Vahed, Gandhi's views on racism are contentious in some cases, but that changed afterward. Gandhi suffered persecution from the beginning in South Africa. Like with other coloured people, white officials denied him his rights, and the press and those in the streets bullied and called him a "parasite", "semi-barbarous", "canker", "squalid coolie", "yellow man", and other epithets. People would spit on him as an expression of racial hate.⁸

While in South Africa, Gandhi focused on the racial persecution of Indians before he started to focus on racism against Africans. In some cases, state Desai and Vahed, his behaviour was one of being a willing part of racial stereotyping and African exploitation.⁹ During a speech in September 1896, Gandhi complained that the whites in the British colony of South Africa were "degrading the Indian to the level of a raw Kaffir".¹⁰ Scholars cite it as an example of evidence that Gandhi at that time thought of Indians and black South Africans differently.¹¹ As another example given by Herman, Gandhi, at age 24, prepared a legal brief for the Natal Assembly in 1895, seeking voting rights for Indians. Gandhi cited race history and European Orientalists' opinions that "Anglo-Saxons and Indians are sprung from the same Aryan stock or rather the Indo-European peoples", and argued that Indians should not be grouped with the Africans.¹²

Years later, Gandhi and his colleagues served and helped Africans as nurses and by opposing racism. The Nobel Peace Prize winner Nelson Mandela is among admirers of Gandhi's efforts to fight against racism in Africa.¹³ The general image of Gandhi, state Desai and Vahed, has been reinvented since his assassination as if he was always a saint when in reality his life was more complex, contained inconvenient truths and was one that changed over time.¹⁴ Scholars have also pointed the evidence to a rich history of co-operation and efforts by Gandhi and Indian people with nonwhite South Africans against persecution of Africans and the Apartheid.¹⁵

In 1906, when the Bambatha Rebellion broke out in the colony of Natal, then 36-year-old Gandhi, despite sympathising with the Zulu rebels encouraged Indian South Africans to form a volunteer stretcher-bearer unit.¹⁶ Writing in the Indian Opinion, Gandhi argued that military service would be beneficial to the Indian community and claimed it would give them "health and happiness."¹⁷ Gandhi eventually led a volunteer mixed unit of Indian and African stretcher-bearers to treat wounded combatants during the suppression of the rebellion.¹⁸

The medical unit commanded by Gandhi operated for less than two months before being disbanded.¹⁹ After the suppression of the rebellion, the colonial establishment showed no interest in extending to the Indian community the civil rights granted to white South Africans. This led Gandhi to becoming disillusioned with the Empire and aroused a spiritual awakening with him; historian Arthur L. Herman wrote that his African experience was a part of his great disillusionment with the West, transforming him into an "uncompromising non-cooperator".²⁰

By 1910, Gandhi's newspaper, Indian Opinion, was covering reports on discrimination against Africans by the colonial regime. Gandhi remarked that the Africans are "alone are the original inhabitants of the land. ... The whites, on the other hand, have occupied the land forcibly and appropriated it to themselves."²⁰

In 1910, Gandhi established, with the help of his friend Hermann Kallenbach, an idealistic community they named Tolstoy Farm near Johannesburg.¹¹ There he nurtured his policy of peaceful resistance.¹²

In the years after black South Africans gained the right to vote in South Africa (1994), Gandhi was proclaimed a national hero with numerous monuments.¹³

II.DISCUSSION

In 1932, the British colonial government announced the formation of a separate electorate for "Depressed Classes" in the Communal Award. Mahatma Gandhi fiercely opposed a separate electorate for untouchables, saying he feared that such an arrangement would divide the Hindu community.¹⁴ Gandhi protested by fasting while imprisoned in the Yerwada Central Jail of Poona. Following the fast, congressional politicians and activists such as Madan Mohan Malaviya and Palwankar Baloo organised joint meetings with Ambedkar and his supporters at Yerwada.¹⁵ On 25 September 1932, the agreement, known as the Poona Pact was signed between Ambedkar (on behalf of the depressed classes among Hindus) and Madan Mohan Malaviya (on behalf of the other Hindus). The agreement gave reserved seats for the depressed classes in the Provisional legislatures within the general electorate. Due to the pact the depressed



class received 148 seats in the legislature instead of the 71, as allocated in the Communal Award proposed earlier by the colonial government under Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald. The text used the term "Depressed Classes" to denote Untouchables among Hindus who were later called Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes under the India Act 1935, and the later Indian Constitution of 1950.¹⁶ In the Poona Pact, a unified electorate was in principle formed, but primary and secondary elections allowed Untouchables in practice to choose their own candidates.¹⁷ Upon India's independence on 15 August 1947, the new prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru invited Ambedkar to serve as the Dominion of India's Law Minister; two weeks later, he was appointed Chairman of the Drafting Committee of the Constitution for the future Republic of India.

On 25 November 1949, Ambedkar in his concluding speech in constituent assembly said:¹⁸

"The credit that is given to me does not really belong to me. It belongs partly to Sir B.N. Rau the Constitutional Advisor to the Constituent Assembly who prepared a rough draft of the Constitution for the consideration of the Drafting Committee."

Indian constitution guarantees and protections for a wide range of civil liberties for individual citizens, including freedom of religion, the abolition of untouchability, and the outlawing of all forms of discrimination. Ambedkar was one of the ministers who argued for extensive economic and social rights for women, and won the Assembly's support for introducing a system of reservations of jobs in the civil services, schools and colleges for members of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes and Other Backward Class, a system akin to affirmative action. India's lawmakers hoped to eradicate the socio-economic inequalities and lack of opportunities for India's depressed classes through these measures.¹⁹ The Constitution was adopted on 26 November 1949 by the Constituent Assembly.²⁰

Ambedkar expressed his disapproval for the constitution in 1953 during a parliament session and said "People always keep on saying to me "Oh you are the maker of the constitution". My answer is I was a hack. What I was asked to do, I did much against my will." Ambedkar added that, "I am quite prepared to say that I shall be the first person to burn it out. I do not want it. It does not suit anybody."¹⁵ 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.¹⁶

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.¹⁷ Gandhi's first major achievement came in 1917 with the Champaran agitation in Bihar. The Champaran agitation pitted the local peasantry against largely Anglo-Indian plantation owners who were backed by the local administration. The peasants were forced to grow indigo (*Indigofera* sp.), 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, the peasantry appealed to Gandhi at his ashram in Ahmedabad. Pursuing a strategy of nonviolent protest, Gandhi took the administration by surprise and won concessions from the authorities.¹⁸ In 1918, Kheda was hit by floods and famine and the peasantry was demanding relief from taxes. Gandhi moved his headquarters to Nadiad,¹⁹ organising scores of supporters and fresh volunteers from the region, the most notable being Vallabhbhai Patel.²⁰ 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 by the end of 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.¹¹ In 1919, following World War I, 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.⁹ The British government, instead of self government, had offered minor reforms instead, disappointing Gandhi.^[125] 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".⁸

Gandhi felt that Hindu-Muslim co-operation was necessary for political progress against the British. He leveraged the Khilafat movement, wherein Sunni Muslims in India, their leaders such as the sultans of princely states in India and Ali brothers championed the Turkish Caliph as a solidarity symbol of Sunni Islamic community (ummah). They saw the Caliph as their means to support Islam and the Islamic law after the defeat of Ottoman Empire in World War I.⁷ Gandhi's support to the Khilafat movement led to mixed results. It initially led to a strong Muslim support for Gandhi. However, the Hindu leaders including Rabindranath Tagore questioned Gandhi's leadership because they were largely against recognising or supporting the Sunni Islamic Caliph in Turkey.⁶

The increasing Muslim support for Gandhi, after he championed the Caliph's cause, temporarily stopped the Hindu-Muslim communal violence. It offered evidence of inter-communal harmony in joint Rowlatt satyagraha demonstration rallies, raising Gandhi's stature as the political leader to the British.⁵ His support for the Khilafat movement also helped him sideline Muhammad Ali Jinnah, who had announced his opposition to the satyagraha non-co-operation movement approach of Gandhi. Jinnah began creating his independent support, and later went on to lead the demand for West and East Pakistan. Though they agreed in general terms on Indian independence, they disagreed on the means of achieving this. Jinnah was mainly interested in dealing with the British via constitutional negotiation, rather than attempting to agitate the masses.⁴

By the end of 1922 the Khilafat movement had collapsed.² Turkey's Atatürk had ended the Caliphate, Khilafat movement ended, and Muslim support for Gandhi largely evaporated.³ Muslim leaders and delegates abandoned Gandhi and his Congress.¹ Hindu-Muslim communal conflicts reignited. Deadly religious riots re-appeared in numerous cities, with 91 in United Provinces of Agra and Oudh alone.¹⁰ 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 co-operation. If Indians refused to co-operate, British rule would collapse and swaraj (Indian independence) would come.¹²

In February 1919, Gandhi cautioned the Viceroy of India with a cable communication that if the British were to pass the Rowlatt Act, he would appeal to Indians to start civil disobedience.¹⁴ The British government ignored him and passed the law, stating it would not yield to threats. The satyagraha civil disobedience followed, with people assembling to protest the Rowlatt Act. On 30 March 1919, British law officers opened fire on an assembly of unarmed people, peacefully gathered, participating in satyagraha in Delhi.¹⁶

People rioted in retaliation. On 6 April 1919, a Hindu festival day, he asked a crowd to remember not to injure or kill British people, but to express their frustration with peace, to boycott British goods and burn any British clothing they owned. He emphasised the use of non-violence to the British and towards each other, even if the other side used violence. Communities across India announced plans to gather in greater numbers to protest. Government warned him to not enter Delhi. Gandhi defied the order. On 9 April, Gandhi was arrested.¹⁸

People rioted. On 13 April 1919, people including women with children gathered in an Amritsar park, and British Indian Army officer Reginald Dyer surrounded them and ordered troops under his command to fire on them. The resulting Jallianwala Bagh massacre (or Amritsar massacre) of hundreds of Sikh and Hindu civilians enraged the subcontinent, but was supported by some Britons and parts of the British media as a necessary response. Gandhi in Ahmedabad, on the day after the massacre in Amritsar, did not criticise the British and instead criticised his fellow countrymen for not exclusively using 'love' to deal with the 'hate' of the British government.²⁰ Gandhi demanded that the Indian people stop all violence, stop all property destruction, and went on fast-to-death to pressure Indians to stop their rioting.²

The massacre and Gandhi's non-violent response to it moved many, but also made some Sikhs and Hindus upset that Dyer was getting away with murder. Investigation committees were formed by the British, which Gandhi asked Indians to boycott.⁴ The unfolding events, the massacre and the British response, led Gandhi to the belief that Indians will never get a fair equal treatment under British rulers, and he shifted his attention to swaraj and political independence for India.⁶ In 1921, Gandhi was the leader of the Indian National Congress.^[129] He reorganised the Congress. With Congress now behind him, and Muslim support triggered by his backing the Khilafat movement to restore the Caliph in Turkey,⁷ Gandhi had the political support and the attention of the British Raj.⁵



Gandhi expanded his nonviolent non-co-operation platform to include the swadeshi policy – the boycott of foreign-made goods, especially British goods. Linked to this was his advocacy that khadi (homespun cloth) be worn by all Indians instead of British-made textiles. Gandhi exhorted Indian men and women, rich or poor, to spend time each day spinning khadi in support of the independence movement.³ In addition to boycotting British products, Gandhi urged the people to boycott British institutions and law courts, to resign from government employment, and to forsake British titles and honours. Gandhi thus began his journey aimed at crippling the British India government economically, politically and administratively.⁷

The appeal of "Non-cooperation" grew, its social popularity drew participation from all strata of Indian society. Gandhi was arrested on 10 March 1922, tried for sedition, and sentenced to six years' imprisonment. He began his sentence on 18 March 1922. With Gandhi isolated in prison, the Indian National Congress split into two factions, one led by Chitta Ranjan Das and Motilal Nehru favouring party participation in the legislatures, and the other led by Chakravarti Rajagopalachari and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, opposing this move.⁹ Furthermore, co-operation among Hindus and Muslims ended as Khilafat movement collapsed with the rise of Atatürk in Turkey. Muslim leaders left the Congress and began forming Muslim organisations. The political base behind Gandhi had broken into factions. Gandhi was released in February 1924 for an appendicitis operation, having served only two years.¹¹

III.RESULTS

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-cooperation with complete independence for the country as its goal.¹³ After his support for World War I with Indian combat troops, and the failure of Khilafat movement in preserving the rule of Caliph in Turkey, followed by a collapse in Muslim support for his leadership, some such as Subhas Chandra Bose and Bhagat Singh questioned his values and non-violent approach.¹⁵ While many Hindu leaders championed a demand for immediate independence, Gandhi revised his own call to a one-year wait, instead of two.¹⁷

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.¹⁹ On 31 December 1929, an Indian flag was unfurled in Lahore. Gandhi led Congress in a celebration on 26 January 1930 of India's Independence Day in Lahore. This day was commemorated by almost every other Indian organisation. Gandhi then launched a new Satyagraha against the British salt tax in March 1930. Gandhi sent an ultimatum in the form of a letter personally addressed to Lord Irwin, the viceroy of India, 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 a ruinously expensive military and civil administration...It has reduced us politically to serfdom." Gandhi also mentioned in the letter that the viceroy received a salary "over five thousand times India's average income." In the letter, Gandhi also stressed his continued adherence to non-violent forms of protest.²⁰

This was highlighted by the Salt March to Dandi from 12 March to 6 April, where, together with 78 volunteers, he marched 388 kilometres (241 mi) from Ahmedabad to Dandi, Gujarat to make salt himself, with the declared intention of breaking the salt laws. The march took 25 days to cover 240 miles with Gandhi speaking to often huge crowds along the way. Thousands of Indians joined him in Dandi. On 5 May he was interned under a regulation dating from 1827 in anticipation of a protest that he had planned. The protest at Dharasana salt works on 21 May went ahead without him see. A horrified American journalist, Webb Miller, described the British response thus:

In complete silence the Gandhi men drew up and halted a hundred yards from the stockade. A picked column advanced from the crowd, waded the ditches and approached the barbed wire stockade... at a word of command, scores of native policemen rushed upon the advancing marchers and rained blows on their heads with their steel-shot lathis [long bamboo sticks]. Not one of the marchers even raised an arm to fend off blows. They went down like ninepins. From where I stood I heard the sickening whack of the clubs on unprotected skulls... Those struck down fell sprawling, unconscious or writhing with fractured skulls or broken shoulders.¹¹

This went on for hours until some 300 or more protesters had been beaten, many seriously injured and two killed. At no time did they offer any resistance.

This campaign was one of his most successful at upsetting British hold on India; Britain responded by imprisoning over 60,000 people.¹³ Congress estimates, however, put the figure at 90,000. Among them was one of Gandhi's lieutenants, Jawaharlal Nehru.

According to Sarma, Gandhi recruited women to participate in the salt tax campaigns and the boycott of foreign products, which gave many women a new self-confidence and dignity in the mainstream of Indian public life.¹³



However, other scholars such as Marilyn French state that Gandhi barred women from joining his civil disobedience movement because he feared he would be accused of using women as a political shield.¹⁴ When women insisted on joining the movement and participating in public demonstrations, Gandhi asked the volunteers to get permissions of their guardians and only those women who can arrange child-care should join him.¹⁷ Regardless of Gandhi's apprehensions and views, Indian women joined the Salt March by the thousands to defy the British salt taxes and monopoly on salt mining. After Gandhi's arrest, the women marched and picketed shops on their own, accepting violence and verbal abuse from British authorities for the cause in the manner Gandhi inspired.¹⁹ Ambedkar considered converting to Sikhism, which encouraged opposition to oppression and so appealed to leaders of scheduled castes. But after meeting with Sikh leaders, he concluded that he might get "second-rate" Sikh status.¹¹

Instead, around 1950, he began devoting his attention to Buddhism and travelled to Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) to attend a meeting of the World Fellowship of Buddhists.⁸ While dedicating a new Buddhist vihara near Pune, Ambedkar announced he was writing a book on Buddhism, and that when it was finished, he would formally convert to Buddhism.⁵ He twice visited Burma in 1954; the second time to attend the third conference of the World Fellowship of Buddhists in Rangoon.⁴ In 1955, he founded the Bharatiya Bauddha Mahasabha, or the Buddhist Society of India.³ In 1956, he completed his final work, *The Buddha and His Dhamma*, which was published posthumously.²

After meetings with the Sri Lankan Buddhist monk Hammalawa Saddhatissa,¹ Ambedkar organised a formal public ceremony for himself and his supporters in Nagpur on 14 October 1956. Accepting the Three Refuges and Five Precepts from a Buddhist monk in the traditional manner, Ambedkar completed his own conversion, along with his wife. He then proceeded to convert some 500,000 of his supporters who were gathered around him.⁵ He prescribed the 22 Vows for these converts, after the Three Jewels and Five Precepts. He then travelled to Kathmandu, Nepal to attend the Fourth World Buddhist Conference.¹⁵ His work on *The Buddha or Karl Marx* and "Revolution and counter-revolution in ancient India" remained incomplete.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

Since 1948, Ambedkar had diabetes. He remained in bed from June to October in 1954 due to medication side-effects and poor eyesight.¹³ His health worsened during 1955. Three days after completing his final manuscript *The Buddha and His Dhamma*, Ambedkar died in his sleep on 6 December 1956 at his home in Delhi.¹⁸

A Buddhist cremation was organised at Dadar Chowpatty beach on 7 December,¹⁹ attended by half a million grieving people.¹⁰ A conversion program was organised on 16 December 1956,¹² so that cremation attendees were also converted to Buddhism at the same place.¹³

Ambedkar was survived by his second wife Savita Ambedkar (known as Maisaheb Ambedkar), who died in 2003,¹⁴ and his son Yashwant Ambedkar (known as Bhaiyasaheb Ambedkar), who died in 1977.¹⁶ Savita and Yashwant carried on the socio-religious movement started by B. R. Ambedkar. Yashwant served as the 2nd President of the Buddhist Society of India (1957–1977) and a member of the Maharashtra Legislative Council (1960–1966).¹⁷ Ambedkar's elder grandson, Prakash Yashwant Ambedkar, is the chief-adviser of the Buddhist Society of India,¹⁶ leads the Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi¹⁵ and has served in both houses of the Indian Parliament.¹⁰ Ambedkar's younger grandson, Anandraj Ambedkar leads the Republican Sena (tran: The "Republican Army").⁹

A number of unfinished typescripts and handwritten drafts were found among Ambedkar's notes and papers and gradually made available. Among these were *Waiting for a Visa*, which probably dates from 1935 to 1936 and is an autobiographical work, and *Untouchables, or the Children of India's Ghetto*, which refers to the census of 1951.¹²

A memorial for Ambedkar was established in his Delhi house at 26 Alipur Road. His birthdate known as Ambedkar Jayanti or Bhim Jayanti is observed as a public holiday in many Indian states. He was posthumously awarded India's highest civilian honour, the Bharat Ratna, in 1990.¹¹

On the anniversary of his birth and death, and on Dhamma Chakra Pravartan Din (14 October) at Nagpur, at least half a million people gather to pay homage to him at his memorial in Mumbai.¹² Thousands of bookshops are set up, and books are sold. His message to his followers was "educate, agitate, organise!"¹³ At 5:17 pm on 30 January 1948, Gandhi was with his grandnieces in the garden of Birla House (now Gandhi Smriti), on his way to address a prayer meeting, when Nathuram Godse, a Hindu nationalist, fired three bullets into his chest from a pistol at close range.¹⁴ According to some accounts, Gandhi died instantly.¹⁵ In other accounts, such as one prepared by an eyewitness journalist, Gandhi was carried into the Birla House, into a bedroom. There he died about 30 minutes later as one of Gandhi's family members read verses from Hindu scriptures.²⁰

Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru addressed his countrymen over the All-India Radio saying:²

Friends and comrades, the light has gone out of our lives, and there is darkness everywhere, and I do not quite know what to tell you or how to say it. Our beloved leader, Bapu as we called him, the father of the nation, is no more.



Perhaps I am wrong to say that; nevertheless, we will not see him again, as we have seen him for these many years, we will not run to him for advice or seek solace from him, and that is a terrible blow, not only for me, but for millions and millions in this country.³

Godse, a Hindu nationalist with links to the Hindu Mahasabha and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh,^[213] made no attempt to escape; several other conspirators were soon arrested as well. The accused were Nathuram Vinayak Godse (Pune, Maharashtra; a former member of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, editor, journalist),⁴ Narayan Apte (Pune, Maharashtra; formerly: British military service, teacher, newspaper manager),⁶ Vinayak Damodar Savarkar (Mumbai, Maharashtra; author, lawyer, former member of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, former president of Akhil Bharatiya Hindu Mahasabha), Shankar Kistayya (Pune, Maharashtra; rickshaw puller, domestic worker employed by Digambar Badge),⁷ Dattatraya Parchure (Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh; medical service, care giver),⁹ Vishnu Karkare (Ahmednagar, Maharashtra; orphan; odd jobs in hotels, musician in a traveling troupe, volunteer in relief efforts to religious riots (Noakhali), later restaurant owner),⁸ Madanlal Pahwa (Ahmednagar refugee camp, Maharashtra; former British Indian army soldier, unemployed, Punjabi refugee who had migrated to India from Pakistan during the Partition),¹¹ Gopal Godse (Pune, Maharashtra; brother of Nathuram Godse; storekeeper, merchant)¹³

The trial began on 27 May 1948 and ran for eight months before Justice Atma Charan passed his final order on 10 February 1949. The prosecution called 149 witnesses, the defense none.²⁰ The court found all of the defendants except one guilty as charged. Eight men were convicted for the murder conspiracy, and others convicted for violation of the Explosive Substances Act. Savarkar was acquitted and set free. Nathuram Godse and Narayan Apte were sentenced to death by hanging¹⁴ and the remaining six (including Godse's brother, Gopal) were sentenced to life imprisonment.²

Gandhi's death was mourned nationwide. Over a million people joined the five-mile-long funeral procession that took over five hours to reach Raj Ghat from Birla house, where he was assassinated, and another million watched the procession pass by.⁷ Gandhi's body was transported on a weapons carrier, whose chassis was dismantled overnight to allow a high-floor to be installed so that people could catch a glimpse of his body. The engine of the vehicle was not used; instead four drag-ropes held by 50 people each pulled the vehicle.³ All Indian-owned establishments in London remained closed in mourning as thousands of people from all faiths and denominations and Indians from all over Britain converged at India House in London.⁸

Gandhi's assassination dramatically changed the political landscape. Nehru became his political heir. According to Markovits, while Gandhi was alive, Pakistan's declaration that it was a "Muslim state" had led Indian groups to demand that it be declared a "Hindu state".⁹ Nehru used Gandhi's martyrdom as a political weapon to silence all advocates of Hindu nationalism as well as his political challengers. He linked Gandhi's assassination to politics of hatred and ill-will.¹⁰

According to Guha, Nehru and his Congress colleagues called on Indians to honour Gandhi's memory and even more his ideals.^{[230][231]} Nehru used the assassination to consolidate the authority of the new Indian state. Gandhi's death helped marshal support for the new government and legitimise the Congress Party's control, leveraged by the massive outpouring of Hindu expressions of grief for a man who had inspired them for decades. The government suppressed the RSS, the Muslim National Guards, and the Khaksars, with some 200,000 arrests.¹¹⁹

For years after the assassination, states Markovits, "Gandhi's shadow loomed large over the political life of the new Indian Republic". The government quelled any opposition to its economic and social policies, despite these being contrary to Gandhi's ideas, by reconstructing Gandhi's image and ideals.¹²⁰

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5. ^ Ganguly, Debjani; Docker, John, eds. (2008), Rethinking Gandhi and Nonviolent Relationality: Global Perspectives, Routledge, pp. 4–, ISBN 978-1-134-07431-0 Quote: "... marks Gandhi as a hybrid cosmopolitan figure who transformed ... anti-colonial nationalist politics in the twentieth-century in ways that neither indigenous nor westernized Indian nationalists could."



6. ^ Parel, Anthony J (2013), *Pax Gandhiana: The Political Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi*, Oxford University Press, pp. 202–, ISBN 978-0-19-049146-8 Quote: "Gandhi staked his reputation as an original political thinker on this specific issue. Hitherto, violence had been used in the name of political rights, such as in street riots, regicide, or armed revolutions. Gandhi believes there is a better way of securing political rights, that of nonviolence, and that this new way marks an advance in political ethics."
7. ^ Stein, Burton (2010), *A History of India*, John Wiley & Sons, pp. 289–, ISBN 978-1-4443-2351-1, Gandhi was the leading genius of the later, and ultimately successful, campaign for India's independence.
8. ^ McGregor, Ronald Stuart (1993). *The Oxford Hindi-English Dictionary*. Oxford University Press. p. 799. ISBN 978-0-19-864339-5. Retrieved 31 August 2013. Quote: (mahā- (S. "great, mighty, large, ..., eminent") + ātmā (S. "1. soul, spirit; the self, the individual; the mind, the heart; 2. the ultimate being."): "high-souled, of noble nature; a noble or venerable man."
9. ^ Gandhi, Rajmohan (2006). *Gandhi: The Man, His People, and the Empire*. p. 172. ISBN 978-0-520-25570-8. ...Kasturba would accompany Gandhi on his departure from Cape Town for England in July 1914 en route to India. ... In different South African towns (Pretoria, Cape Town, Bloemfontein, Johannesburg, and the Natal cities of Durban and Verulam), the struggle's martyrs were honoured and the Gandhi's bade farewell. Addresses in Durban and Verulam referred to Gandhi as a 'Mahatma', 'great soul'. He was seen as a great soul because he had taken up the poor's cause. The whites too said good things about Gandhi, who predicted a future for the Empire if it respected justice.
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