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M.K. GANDHI

MAHENDRA KUMAR SINGARIA REGAR

POLITICAL SCIENCE, ACHARYA SHRI MAHAPRAGYA INSTITUTE OF EXCELLENCE, ASIND,
BHILWARA, RAJASTHAN, INDIA

ABSTRACT: Mahatma Gandhi (Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi) played an important role in India's struggle for freedom. Mahatma Gandhi is known for his policy of truth and non-violence.

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, popularly known as Mahatma Gandhi was a major political and spiritual leader of India who led the country in the non-cooperation movement in 1922 and Salt march in 1930 and later in Quit India movement in 1942 during its struggle for independence. Known as Beloved Baapu in India, Mahatma Gandhi adopted the policy of mass disobedience and non-violent resistance as weapons against the British Rule in India and followed a principle of Ahimsa (total Non-Violence). He endured several hardships, was arrested and occasionally beaten in his journey and struggle to Justice and Freedom. However, his struggle does not restrict to India itself, as the leader played a key role in the Civil Rights movement in South Africa and secured them the right to justice and equality. His birthday 2 October is commemorated as Gandhi Jayanti, a national holiday and as the International Non-Violence day across the world.

KEYWORDS: Gandhi, non-violence, independence, freedom, truth, salt march, civil rights

I. INTRODUCTION

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was born in Porbandar, a town in Gujarat in western India on 2 October 1869. His father Karamchand Gandhi was the Diwan of Porbandar state of British India. His mother Putlibai was Karamchand's fourth wife. Having born in a Hindu family Gandhi strictly followed vegetarianism and fasting as means of self-purification. At the age of 13 he was married to one year older Kasturba. In 1885, Kasturba gave birth to their first child who survived only few days. Later the couple had four sons. All along his schooling days Gandhi was an average student and passed his matriculation exam from Samaldas College, Gujarat with some difficulty. On 4th September 1888, he traveled to England to study law at the university College London and to train as a barrister, as his family wanted him to be a barrister.[1,2,3]

Famous as For His Philosophy of Truth and Non-violence
Nationality Indian
Religion Hinduism
Born on 02 October 1869 AD
Zodiac Sign Libra
Born in Porbandar, Kathiawar Agency, British Indian Empire
Died on 30 January 1948 AD
Place of death New Delhi, Dominion of India
Eepitaphs Hey Ram
Father Karamchand Gandhi
Mother Putlibai Gandhi
Spouse Kasturba Gandhi
Children Harilal, Manilal, Ramdas, Devdas
Education University College London, Alfred High School
Works & Achievements Key Role in Indian Freedom Struggle, Philosophy of Truth and Non-violence
Awards 1930 - Man of the Year by Time magazine
Civil Rights Movement in South Africa

In South Africa, he had a first hand experience of racial discrimination and prejudice directed at Indians and the injustice imposed on them. Gandhi himself experienced the humiliation and disgrace while in South Africa. Initially he was thrown off a train for refusing to travel in a third class coach while holding a first class ticket. Other similar events including being barred from many hotels in South Africa moved him and encouraged him to work for Indian people there. As a result he extended his original period of stay to protest a bill passed by the South African government to deny them the right to vote.[4,5,6]

In 1906, the Transvaal government launched a new act forcing registration of Indian population. Enraged by the act, a mass protest meeting was held in Johannesburg on 11 September in which Gandhi called on Indian people to resist the new act through non-violent and peaceful means. His methodology of Satyagraha (devotion to truth) was adopted by thousands of his followers and during the seven-year long struggle; thousands of Indians were jailed (including Gandhi), beaten and punished for striking and refusing to register. Though the government successfully repressed the protest through its harsh methods, the impact of this protest forced the government to initiate for a compromise with Gandhi. Gandhi's idea of non-violence and truth developed during this period.

Indian Independence struggle and Gandhi (1916-1945)

Gandhi's Satyagraha started from Champaran and kheda, where the condition of farmers was worsened by landlords (mostly British) by imposing taxes and leaving them in an abject poverty. The peasants were forced to grow cash crops instead of food crops necessary for their survival, and this led to a situation of famine there.

To end that devastating famine and poverty Gandhi organized detailed survey and study, based upon which he began leading the cleaning of the villages, building of schools and hospitals, encouraging villagers to condemn and combat many social evils including pardah and untouchability. Gandhi organized protests and strikes against the landlords that resulted in to the cancellation of the revenue hikes and collection of taxes until the famine ended.

Non-cooperation Movement

Gandhi employed non-cooperation, non-violence and peaceful resistance as the most effective weapons against the British rule. It was the Jallianwala Bagh massacre and the violence that followed, after which Gandhi felt an immediate need of a selfcontrolled government and total control over all Indian government institutions. The concept of Swaraj or complete individual, spiritual and political freedom evolved after this. Gandhi urged the people to boycott foreign made goods, cloths, to resign from government employment and to forsake British titles and honors. He encouraged people to wear khadi clothes instead of foreign made clothes. Gandhi himself wore a traditional Indian dhoti and shawl, made with yarn he himself spun on a Charkha.[7,8,9]

The campaign was a big success nationwide and people from all sectors, including women of India participated in it. The movement ended in Feb 1922, when a violent clash in broke in Chauri chaura, Uttar Pradesh. Gandhi was arrested in March, tried for sedition and was sentenced to 6 years imprisonment. During his years in prison the Indian National Congress began to split into two parts, one led by Chitta Ranjan Das and Motilal Nehru and the other led by Chakravarty Rajgopalachari. Cooperation among Hindu and Muslims also weaken during this period. All efforts made by Gandhi to bridge the differences had little impact on them.

Salt March & Demand for Swaraj

The British government appointed a new constitutional reform under Sir John Simon which did not include any Indian and the result was a boycott of the commission by all Indian political leaders. In December 1928 Gandhi demanded the British government to grant India a dominion status and warned them to face a new non-cooperation campaign with a complete freedom as its goal, if their demands were not met. On 31st December 1929 Indian flag was unfurled in Lahore and next year, 26 January was celebrated as the Independence Day by the National Congress Party which was commemorated by almost every Indian organization. In 1930, Gandhi launched a new Satyagraha protesting the tax on salt. He marched from Ahmadabad to Dandi, Gujarat to make salt himself. Thousands of Indian people joined him in this 400km march which was marked as his most successful campaign against the British hold.

In March 1931 the Irwin-Gandhi pact was signed according to which the British government agreed to free political prisoners if Gandhi denounced the civil disobedience movement. In 1932, the government granted untouchables separate electorates under the new constitution. Gandhi started a new campaign to improve the lives of untouchables, whom he called Harijan, the children of God. Equality and justice for Untouchables became his prime goal and it was a result of Gandhi's constant effort that in September 1932 the government agreed to adopt a more unbiased and fair arrangement via negotiation.

Freedom and Partition of India

During world war II in 1939, Gandhi opposed the inclusion of India in the war stating that India can not be a part of the war being fought for the democratic freedom, while freedom was denied to India itself. Gandhi and other Congressmen intensified their movement for a complete freedom demanding the British to 'Quit India'. It was the most vigorous movement in the history of Indian Independence struggle in which thousands of freedom fighters were killed, imprisoned and injured and violent clashes broke in every part of India. The demand this time was a complete freedom and immediate exit of the British from India. Though Gandhi appealed to maintain discipline, he made it clear that even violent act wouldn't stop their movement this time, as it was a time to Do or Die.

Gandhi and the committee of congress were arrested on 9 August 1942, and Gandhi was held in Aga Khan Palace for 2 years. During that period his wife Kasturba Gandhi died after 18 months of prison on 22 February 1944. At the end of the world war, Gandhi called off his struggle. Time had come to see an Independent India. Gandhi had always dreamed of India as a place where Hindu and Muslims lived in harmony and thus he was opposed to any plan that partitioned India into two different countries. A majority of Muslims living in India were in favor of the partition, including Muhammad Ali Jinnah. The partition plan was approved by the Congress leadership as they knew it was the only way to avoid a looming Hindu Muslim civil war. Against the wish of Gandhi, British India broke into two parts, an Independent India and Pakistan.[13,14,15]

Assassination of Mahatma Gandhi

Gandhi was assassinated on 30 January 1948 on the grounds of Birla house, New Delhi. The assassin, Nathuram Godse, who had links to the extremist Hindu group Hindu Mahasabha shot him dead because he was against Gandhi's sympathy for Pakistan. Godse and his co-conspirator Narayan Apte were tried and executed on 15 November 1949. Gandhi's memorial on Rajghat, New Delhi bears his last words He Ram!

II. DISCUSSION

Revered the world over for his nonviolent philosophy of passive resistance, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was known to his many followers as Mahatma, or “the great-souled one.” He began his activism as an Indian immigrant in South Africa in the early 1900s, and in the years following World War I became the leading figure in India’s struggle to gain independence from Great Britain. Known for his ascetic lifestyle—he often dressed only in a loincloth and shawl—and devout Hindu faith, Gandhi was imprisoned several times during his pursuit of non-cooperation, and undertook a number of hunger strikes to protest the oppression of India’s poorest classes, among other injustices. After Partition in 1947, he continued to work toward peace between Hindus and Muslims. Gandhi was shot to death in Delhi in January 1948 by a Hindu fundamentalist. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was born on October 2, 1869, at Porbandar, in the present-day Indian state of Gujarat. His father was the dewan (chief minister) of Porbandar; his deeply religious mother was a devoted practitioner of Vaishnavism (worship of the Hindu god Vishnu), influenced by Jainism, an ascetic religion governed by tenets of self-discipline and nonviolence. At the age of 19, Mohandas left home to study law in London at the Inner Temple, one of the city’s four law colleges. Upon returning to India in mid-1891, he set up a law practice in Bombay, but met with little success. He soon accepted a position with an Indian firm that sent him to its office in South Africa. Along with his wife, Kasturbai, and their children, Gandhi remained in South Africa for nearly 20 years.

Gandhi was appalled by the discrimination he experienced as an Indian immigrant in South Africa. When a European magistrate in Durban asked him to take off his turban, he refused and left the courtroom. On a train voyage to Pretoria, he was thrown out of a first-class railway compartment and beaten up by a white stagecoach driver after refusing to give up his seat for a European passenger. That train journey served as a turning point for Gandhi, and he soon began developing and teaching the concept of satyagraha (“truth and firmness”), or passive resistance, as a way of non-cooperation with authorities.

The Birth of Passive Resistance

In 1906, after the Transvaal government passed an ordinance regarding the registration of its Indian population, Gandhi led a campaign of civil disobedience that would last for the next eight years. During its final phase in 1913, hundreds of Indians living in South Africa, including women, went to jail, and thousands of striking Indian miners were imprisoned, flogged and even shot. Finally, under pressure from the British and Indian governments, the government of South Africa accepted a compromise negotiated by Gandhi and General Jan Christian Smuts, which included important concessions such as the recognition of Indian marriages and the abolition of the existing poll tax for Indians.

In July 1914, Gandhi left South Africa to return to India. He supported the British war effort in World War I but remained critical of colonial authorities for measures he felt were unjust. In 1919, Gandhi launched an organized campaign of passive resistance in response to Parliament’s passage of the Rowlatt Acts, which gave colonial authorities emergency powers to suppress subversive activities. He backed off after violence broke out—including the massacre by British-led soldiers of some 400 Indians attending a meeting at Amritsar—but only temporarily, and by 1920 he was the most visible figure in the movement for Indian independence.

Leader of a Movement

As part of his nonviolent non-cooperation campaign for home rule, Gandhi stressed the importance of economic independence for India. He particularly advocated the manufacture of khaddar, or homespun cloth, in order to replace imported textiles from Britain. Gandhi's eloquence and embrace of an ascetic lifestyle based on prayer, fasting and meditation earned him the reverence of his followers, who called him Mahatma (Sanskrit for "the great-souled one"). Invested with all the authority of the Indian National Congress (INC or Congress Party), Gandhi turned the independence movement into a massive organization, leading boycotts of British manufacturers and institutions representing British influence in India, including legislatures and schools.[16,17,18]

After sporadic violence broke out, Gandhi announced the end of the resistance movement, to the dismay of his followers. British authorities arrested Gandhi in March 1922 and tried him for sedition; he was sentenced to six years in prison but was released in 1924 after undergoing an operation for appendicitis. He refrained from active participation in politics for the next several years, but in 1930 launched a new civil disobedience campaign against the colonial government's tax on salt, which greatly affected Indian's poorest citizens.

A Divided Movement

In 1931, after British authorities made some concessions, Gandhi again called off the resistance movement and agreed to represent the Congress Party at the Round Table Conference in London. Meanwhile, some of his party colleagues—particularly Mohammed Ali Jinnah, a leading voice for India's Muslim minority—grew frustrated with Gandhi's methods, and what they saw as a lack of concrete gains. Arrested upon his return by a newly aggressive colonial government, Gandhi began a series of hunger strikes in protest of the treatment of India's so-called "untouchables" (the poorer classes), whom he renamed Harijans, or "children of God." The fasting caused an uproar among his followers and resulted in swift reforms by the Hindu community and the government.

In 1934, Gandhi announced his retirement from politics in, as well as his resignation from the Congress Party, in order to concentrate his efforts on working within rural communities. Drawn back into the political fray by the outbreak of World War II, Gandhi again took control of the INC, demanding a British withdrawal from India in return for Indian cooperation with the war effort. Instead, British forces imprisoned the entire Congress leadership, bringing Anglo-Indian relations to a new low point.

Partition and Death of Gandhi

After the Labor Party took power in Britain in 1947, negotiations over Indian home rule began between the British, the Congress Party and the Muslim League (now led by Jinnah). Later that year, Britain granted India its independence but split the country into two dominions: India and Pakistan. Gandhi strongly opposed Partition, but he agreed to it in hopes that after independence Hindus and Muslims could achieve peace internally. Amid the massive riots that followed Partition, Gandhi urged Hindus and Muslims to live peacefully together, and undertook a hunger strike until riots in Calcutta ceased.

In January 1948, Gandhi carried out yet another fast, this time to bring about peace in the city of Delhi. On January 30, 12 days after that fast ended, Gandhi was on his way to an evening prayer meeting in Delhi when he was shot to death by Nathuram Godse, a Hindu fanatic enraged by Mahatma's efforts to negotiate with Jinnah and other Muslims. The next day, roughly 1 million people followed the procession as Gandhi's body was carried in state through the streets of the city and cremated on the banks of the holy Jumna River.

III. RESULTS

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was born in Porbandar, Kanthiawar, India, to father Karamchand Uttamchand Gandhi and his fourth wife Putlibai. In 1882 he married Kasturbai Makanji, with whom he had five children. Gandhi enrolled at Samaldas College, Bhaunagar, in 1887 but left after one term. However, he was encouraged to go to London to study law and he left for London on 4 September 1888.

Arriving on 29 September 1888, Gandhi immediately went to the Victoria Hotel before relocating briefly to the suburb of Richmond and eventually settling in a room in West Kensington for a year. At first, he tried to become an 'English gentleman' but after a few months realized that he had to cut his expenditures and gave up most of his new habits. Besides his law studies he passed the University of London matriculation examination in June 1890. Gandhi did not participate in the newly established British Committee of the Indian National Congress but did attend meetings of the London Indian Society. He also attended meetings of the Anjuman-e-Islam (after 1903 called the Pan-Islamic Society),

the National Indian Association, and the Northbrook Indian Society. He passed his Roman law examination in March 1890 and passed the Bar finals in January 1891. Before leaving for London, Gandhi had promised his mother not to eat meat. He found it difficult at first but soon discovered vegetarian restaurants and joined the London Vegetarian Society. He often wrote for their journal the Vegetarian and became a member of the Executive Committee on 19 September 1890. Gandhi had also come into contact with the Theosophical Society in 1889, and was introduced to Annie Besant before he left London on 12 June 1891.

He lived in India until 1893 when he left for South Africa to practice law. It was here he raised his family, established himself as a lawyer and then a political activist fighting the discrimination of Asians in Africa. By 1906, he had emerged as the spokesman of Indians in Natal and Transvaal and in October that year he was once again in London to speak on behalf of the Indian community. In London he met with Lord Elgin to discuss the rights of Indians in South Africa, but upon his return in December 1906, Gandhi was disappointed. Imperial politics brought Gandhi to London again in July 1909. However, what concerned Gandhi the most this time was the status of highly educated Indians. In August, he visited Louth with his friend Pranjivan Mehta; later in August he visited George Allen in the Cotswolds, and on 7 November he spoke to the Indian students at Cambridge. On his voyage back to South Africa, he wrote his powerful book *Hind Swaraj*, or *Indian Home Rule*, in which he wrote about his increasing discontent with the West, the power of non-violence and the vision of self-rule.

Between 1909 and 1914, Gandhi received several invitations to return to India, but before doing so he visited London again in August 1914, two days after the outbreak of the First World War. The purpose of his trip was to visit his friend and mentor G. K. Gokhale but he had already left for Paris. With Gokhale gone, Gandhi met the poetess Sarojini Naidu instead. On 8 August, a reception was held for him at the Hotel Cecil. In attendance were, among others, Charlotte Despard, Albert Cartwright, Bhupendranath Basu, Sacchidanand Sinha, Lala Lajpat Rai, Mohammed Ali Jinnah, Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, Amir Ali and J. M. Parikh. While in London he established the Indian Volunteer Corps before he left on 19 December 1914.

From 1919 Gandhi became highly politically active in India. It was his belief in satyagraha that made him the leader of the nationalist movement against the Raj. By 1931 he had become integral to Indian national life and the sole representative of the Indian National Congress at the second Round Table Conference (Gandhi was in prison during the first Conference in 1930). He arrived in September 1931 and gave his first speech at the Conference on 15 September. The Second Round Table Conference failed to yield independence for India, and Gandhi left London on 5 December 1931. Back in India Gandhi continued to promote satyagraha and led the Quit India Movement in 1942. On 30 January 1948, Gandhi was walking through the grounds of Birla House, New Delhi, when he was shot at point blank range by Nathuram Godse.[18,19,20]

IV. CONCLUSION

Mahatma Gandhi's life and methods of struggle impact people now also. The greatness of a man is realized when his life influences people to change for the better, and so was Mahatma Gandhi's life. After decades of his death, after reading about him, people drastically changed their lives for the better. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi or Mahatma Gandhi was a renowned freedom activist and an authoritative or powerful political leader who played an essential role in India's struggle for Independence against British rule of India. He was also considered the father of the country. No doubt, he also improved the lives of India's poor people. His birthday is celebrated every year as Gandhi Jayanti. His ideology of truth and non-violence influenced many and was also adopted by Martin Luther and Nelson Mandela for their struggle movement. In South Africa for about 20 years, Mahatma Gandhi protested against injustices and racial discrimination using the non-violent method of protests. His simplistic lifestyle won him, admirers, both in India and the outside world. He was popularly known as Bapu (Father).

Mahatma Gandhi: Early Life and Family Background

He was born on 2 October, 1869 in Porbandar, Gujarat. His father's name was Karamchand Gandhi and his mother's name was Putlibai. At the age of 13, Mahatma Gandhi was married to Kasturba which is an arranged marriage. They had four sons namely Harilal, Manilal, Ramdas and Devdas. She supported all the endeavors of her husband until her death in 1944.

His father was Dewan or Chief Minister of Porbandar, the capital of a small principality in Western British India (Now Gujarat State). Mahatma Gandhi was the son of his father's fourth wife Putlibai, who belonged to an affluent Vaishnava family. Let us tell you that in his earlier days, he was deeply influenced by the stories of Shrivana and Harishchandra as they reflected the importance of truth.

Mahatma Gandhi: Education

When Gandhi was 9 years old he went to a local school at Rajkot and studied the basics of arithmetic, history, geography, and languages. At the age of 11, he went to a high school in Rajkot. Because of his wedding, at least about one year, his studies were disturbed and later he joined and completed his schooling. He joined Samaldas college in Bhavnagar in 1888 at Gujarat. Later, one of his family friends Mavji Dave Joshi pursued further studies i.e. law in London. Gandhiji was not satisfied with his studies at Samaldas College and so he became excited by the London proposal and managed to convince his mother and wife that he will not touch non-veg, wine, or women. In the year 1888, Mahatma Gandhi left for London to study law. Thereafter 10 days after arrival, he joined the Inner Temple, one of the four London law colleges, and studied and practiced law. In London, he also joined a Vegetarian Society and was introduced to Bhagavad Gita by some of his vegetarian friends. Later, Bhagavad Gita set an impression and influenced his life. In May 1893 he went to South Africa to work as a lawyer. There he had a first-hand experience of racial discrimination when he was thrown out of the first-class apartment of the train despite holding the first-class ticket because it was reserved for white people only and no Indian or black was allowed to travel in the first class. This incident had a serious effect on him and he decided to protest against racial discrimination. He further observed that this type of incident was quite common against his fellow Indians who were derogatorily referred to as coolies. On 22 May 1894 Gandhi established the Natal Indian Congress (NIC) and worked hard to improve the rights of Indians in South Africa. In a short period, Gandhi became a leader of the Indian community in South Africa. Tirukkural ancient Indian literature, originally written in Tamil and later translated into various languages. Gandhiji was also influenced by this ancient book. He was influenced by the idea of Satyagraha which is a devotion to truth and in 1906 implemented a non-violent protest. He returned to India in 1915, after spending 21 years of his life in South Africa, and no doubt, there he fought for civil rights and at this time he was transformed into a new person.

Mahatma Gandhi: Role in the Indian Independence Movement

In 1915, Gandhiji returned to India permanently and joined the Indian National Congress with Gopal Krishna Gokhale as his mentor.

Gandhi's first major achievement was in 1918 when he led the Champaran and Kheda agitations of Bihar and Gujarat. He also led Non-Cooperation Movement, Civil Disobedience Movement, Swaraj, and Quit-India movement against the British government.

Gandhi identified his overall method of non-violent action as Satyagraha. Gandhiji's Satyagraha influenced eminent personalities such as Nelson Mandela and Martin Luther in their struggle for freedom, equality, and social justice. Mahatma Gandhi's Satyagraha was based on true principles and non-violence.

"Live as if you were to die tomorrow. Learn as if you were to live forever." - Mahatma Gandhi

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was assassinated on 30 January 1948 by Nathuram Godse. Godse was a Hindu nationalist and a member of the Hindu Mahasabha. He accused Gandhi of favoring Pakistan and was opposed to the doctrine of non-violence.

Mahatma Gandhi: Literary works

Gandhi was a prolific writer. Some of his literary works are as follows:

- Hind Swaraj, published in Gujarati in 1909.
- He edited several newspapers which included Harijan in Gujarati, in Hindi and the English language; Indian Opinion, Young India, in English, and Navajivan, a Gujarati monthly. [18,19]
- Gandhi also wrote his autobiography, The Story of My Experiments with Truth.
- His other autobiographies included: Satyagraha in South Africa, Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule.[20]

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