

THE GANDHIAN STUDIES CENTRE

Dr. Bhanuben Mahendra Nanavati College of Home Science

ENGAGING WITH THE



Mahatma

MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES

Engaging with the Mahatma: Multiple Perspectives



The Gandhian Studies Centre

Dr. Bhanuben Mahendra Nanavati College of Home Science

Engaging with the Mahatma: Multiple Perspectives

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The Gandhian Studies Centre



The University Grants Commission recognized Gandhian Studies Centre was established in 2013 at Dr. BMN College of Home Science. The primary objective of the centre is to create an understanding and appreciation of Gandhian philosophy among the youth of today. The centre organizes numerous events and activities for students with an aim to generate awareness on Gandhiji's values and ideology. There is a designated 'Gandhi Smriti Ashram' reading and reference room in the library wherein books on, and by Gandhiji are displayed. Students have unrestricted access to the books and are encouraged to read and contemplate over the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi. It is modeled after the Sevagram Ashram in Wardha and has a peaceful environment for quiet study and relaxation. The centre posts relevant thought-provoking quotations and articles on Gandhiji throughout the campus on a regular basis. Value based sessions, orientations and lectures are conducted on campus in collaboration with various departments of the college as well as other esteemed colleges and institutions across Mumbai on versatile topics such as understanding Gandhi's message of life, symbolism of Khadi, Gandhi's views on education, vegetarianism, mindfulness and universal oneness among many others. Shri Mohanlal Pathak Endowment Lecture Series on "Gandhian Principles and Values" by Dr. Bharat Pathak and family is specially curated wherein eminent Gandhian scholars are invited to deliver lectures. The centre also arranges movie screenings for films and documentaries such as Richard Attenborough's 'Gandhi', 'Lage Raho Munnabhai', and 'The Making of the Mahatma'. Resource persons are invited to conduct workshops on building self-esteem, creative writing,

self-reflection, demonstrations of Charkha and Kusti spinning along with the annual seven part workshop series on ‘I Transform, India Transforms’ in collaboration with Chinmaya Mission Youth Wing. Additionally, an international symposium on Gandhi’s legacy in different parts of the world, especially South Africa was been co-organized with Goethe University, Frankfurt, University of Mumbai and Constructions of Home and Belonging – Indian Diaspora Centre (CoHaB IDC) on ‘Current Dynamics and Future Perspectives of India-Africa Relations’ (2018). A Gandhian Studies Intervention.” Annual field visits to Mani Bhavan in Mumbai, Sabarmati Ashram in Ahmedabad and Sevagram Ashram in Wardha are organized for students and faculty, especially on occasions such as Gandhi Nirvan Divas and Gandhi Jayanti. Students visit Yusuf Meherally Centre, Panvel, Museum Society of Bombay and National Gallery for Modern Art for photo exhibitions and music tributes to Gandhiji. The students are also taken on visits to different places of worship in Mumbai to promote respect for each other’s religion and faith. As part of the centre, students contribute likewise by displaying a collection of books on or by Gandhiji during the Annual Book Exhibition organized by the library. Student volunteers also take part in ‘Swachh Bharat Abhiyan’ cleanliness drives, mangrove tree plantation drives and peace rallies with the NSS Unit of the college. The centre organizes various cultural and literary intercollegiate competitions such as essay writing, postcard writing, bhajan singing and Shri. Dattatraya Ramchandra Parulekar state level painting competition based on Mahatma Gandhi and conducts an annual examination on Gandhiji’s life in collaboration with Mumbai Sarvodaya Mandal. One day seminar is organized yearly on various themes such as ‘Good Citizenship’, ‘Self-reliance’, ‘Understanding Diversity, Respecting Pluralism’ where key note addresses, interactive sessions and bhajans, dance and dramatic performances based on Gandhian principles are followed by a prize distribution ceremony for all winners of different competitions conducted by the college. Notably, the centre has undertaken various research projects such as publications titled ‘Advocating Peace Education and a Strategy for a Better Tomorrow’ by Dr. Shilpa Charankar and ‘Understanding Differences, Respecting Diversity: Advocating Peace Education through Gandhian Values for Holistic Development’ by Mrs. Vidya Subramanian for the 19th World Congress of IAEWP (2016) on the theme of ‘Peace

Education for Good Governance’, a reader on ‘Understanding Difference: Respecting Diversity’ highlighting the significance of Gandhi with respect to religion (2016), a monograph “In Search of Kasturba: An Auto/biographical Reading of the Mahatma and his Wife” (2017), an undergraduate research project under the P.U.K.A.R Youth Fellowship Program titled “Problems and Strengths of Students from Non-English Medium while Studying in a College of English Medium”, which draws from Gandhi’s views on use of English and the Vernacular languages and paper presentation titled by Dr. Mala Pandurang and Ms. Huda Sayyed on “The Good Wife: Kasturba and M. K. Gandhi in South Africa” for the International Interdisciplinary Conference on A Mahatma in Waiting: The Diasporic Gandhi Revisited on his 150th Birth Anniversary (2019). In order to further develop awareness, the college has introduced two different courses for one semester based on the Gandhian model of life. A Life Skills Course where the life experiences of Gandhiji are used to identify and instill various life skills such as intrapersonal abilities, interpersonal relationships, critical thinking, time-management, leadership and decision-making to encourage the students to effectively deal with the challenges faced in everyday life. An enriching Universal Human Values Course to make students learn the relevance of universal human values by providing them the means to inculcate and develop personal and moral codes of conduct, practice emotional competency and understand the importance of ethical decision making thus inspiring an integral human being, realizing their full potential. The Gandhian Studies Centre is dedicated to promoting Gandhian values and actions which are essentially relevant in every walk of life even today.



Introduction

The world has changed dramatically over the last 150 years since Gandhi lived and worked. However, the tribulations and challenges faced by the Mahatma, and his responses to the same, remain relevant to date. Gandhi's timeless principles continue to guide us to a just and better world. To mark the conclusion of the sesquicentennial year of Mahatma Gandhi the centre brings forward a collection of essays on the continued relevance of Gandhian values in the 21st Century. *Engaging with the Mahatma* is a collected rendition of perspectives. The collection brings forth insightful commentaries through creative writing and academic reflections, thus encompassing an elucidating journey that contemplates, revives and paves way for a novel dialogue with the enigmatic Mahatma.

Sabhi Log Apne Jan, written by Dr. Ramdas Bhatkal, the implication of which he asserts is difficult to grasp. The essay highlights Gandhi's evolving notion of religion right from the very beginning of his career as a barrister in England. It was through a continuous exposure to religious texts and his engagement with people of varied religious beliefs that enabled him to conceptualise the foundational message that was common to all the religions, one that relies on morality. This enabled him to scrutinize the mysticism of Hinduism as well. According to Bhatkal, it is this process of constant contemplation and study that aided Gandhi to reject the idea of conversion or reconversion as all religions have a strong moral base but may not be free from defects. Gandhi thus advocated equal respect for all religions – 'Sarva Dharma'. Gandhi followed this approach in all aspects of life, instances of which can be noticed abundantly, inspiring many great leaders all over the world.

In *Gandhi in Central and Eastern Europe*, Dr. Roxana-Elisabeta Marinescu firstly examines the extent to which Gandhi and his role in India's development are known and internalised in Central and Eastern Europe and secondly, analyses how his theories and principles - especially satyagraha and ahimsa - have been adopted in the post-1989 period in the fight for democratic freedom and active citizenship. The essay points out that Gandhiji's presence in Central and Eastern Europe remains scarce; limited to erection of statues, emission of stamps, a book published here and there, some conferences, or singing his favourite bhajan in Gujarati by local artists. The cause of which the author draws from Madina Tlostanova's

conceptualization of the “victimhood rivalry”, i.e. euro centricity and bland racism of the post socialist reality towards the postcolonial space. The essay demonstrates the often unrealized influences of the Gandhian thought of non-violent protests/ resistance against many of the systemic violence of state institutions that took place in Central and Eastern Europe which show the will of the people in these countries to protest non-violently. Similarity is also drawn from the author's own country, Romania, where on several instances people's non-violent protests have been met by institutionalised violence, a virtual record in terms of photographs and videos exist.

Gandhi-of the earth, earthy.... by Dr. Betty Govinden attempts a critique of *The South African Gandhi- Stretcher-Bearer of Empire* (2015) written by Ashwin Desai and Goolam Vahed. According to the author “The task that Desai and Vahed have set themselves is to question such adulation, wherever it occurs, intent as they are on ‘demystifying’ Gandhi and the way Gandhian iconography has developed, progressed and gathered momentum over the decades. Desai and Vahed’s main complaint is against the mythology or saintliness that has gathered around Gandhi, and of the subsequent ‘heritage mythmaking’ by his acolytes, and they feel compelled, as a matter of duty, to set the record straight.” On the other hand, Govinden presents a critique by engaging with the various opinions on Gandhi that emerge in the book by viewing him through the prism of his illustrious contemporary, John Langalibelle Dube. It enquires into some of the major perceptions that one may be confronted with in their encounter with Gandhi through different narratives. The author emphasizes the importance of finding a common ground in order to carry on the work of building a better world where race is not a fundamental factor to accomplishments of goals.

In *Gandhi: The Making of a Mahatma*, Dr. Preeti Shirodkar studies the relevance of Gandhi by diving into the many lessons that one can learn from the life of Gandhi whilst examining the ten 'truths' that he embodied which still can add value to life. The paper thus begins with one of the most significant of Gandhian values, the concept of ahimsa which emerged as a principle derived through personal instances of dishonesty, guilt and subsequent confession. The other crucial values like self-dependence, self-control, resilience to make a difference, clarity in vision to determine a goal and the courage to lead, the ability to take a step back and acknowledge ones mistakes, utmost intolerance towards any form of oppression and the awareness of self and of the opponent are all enshrined providing an

elaborate narration of some of the crucial application of these values as a message for humanity, relevant beyond the years since Gandhi strived to live by them.

Relevance and Significance of Gandhian Thoughts for Women in the Contemporary World by Dr. Vibhuti Patel traces the Gandhian perspectives on women and their everlasting contributions to a family, a nation and the world as a whole. The author illustrates how Gandhi's value system and principles can be credited to his mother. According to Patel "Motherhood became increasingly his model for liberation of India." Later, it was his wife, Kasturba who emerges as a source of great inspiration to the Mahatma. As a firm opposer of gender-based discrimination Gandhi described woman as the embodiment of sacrifice and ahimsa. He thus strived for the empowerment of women and duly commending the role of women in all spheres of life.

Why now? Hey Ram? by Sridhar Rajeswaran is a contemplative account of his view on the changing perceptions of Gandhi through the years, beginning with his early acquaintance of the Mahatma as a schoolboy both at home and in the outside world. The writer narrates a rather personal journey of understanding the manifold personality of Gandhi and how the many criticisms also could not undermine his values and principles even in the time of 'Gandhi Must Fall' movements. He therefore asserts, "Well how may we, as try hard as we may, we may manage to take India out of Gandhi but never The Gandhi out of India and by extension the worlds of his times."

Mr. Pheroze Nowrojee, born in Nairobi, is a leading human rights lawyer, a poet, and a writer, who over many decades has been an influential part of the political and social movements for constitutional and social change in Kenya. *Close to the Mahatma* is an account of Rev. Charlie Andrews's work as a Satyagrahi in Kenya under the guidance of Gandhi. Woven in the form of a short story the reader is taken back in time witnessing the historical contribution of Gandhian thoughts in the Kenyan milieu.

Gandhi's Earth and Other Poems by Dr. Betty Govinden is collection of poetry dealing with the underlying attributes of Gandhian thoughts, symbols and values. Ahimsa, satyagraha, peace, brotherhood, truth, patriotism, sarvodaya and spirituality are some of the themes woven in this engagement of the poet with the Mahatma.

Sabhi Log Apne Jan

-Ramdas Bhatkal

Ramdas Ganesh Bhatkal, a publishing executive, writer and musician, has a doctorate from the University of Mumbai on 'Gandhi and his Adversaries'. His major works include 'Mohanmaya' about Gandhi and his friends before 1915 and 'Jagadamba', a play about Gandhi as seen by Kasturba which has been translated and staged in many languages. Dr. Bhatkal is also a founder and Managing Director of Popular Prakashan Pvt. Ltd, an independent company concentrating on publishing works in English and Marathi. Recipient of the Prakash Bharati Samman, Varnamala, Orissa, India, 1993. Public's award, Maharashtra Foundation, 1994. Honorary secretary Group 77, Mumbai, India, 1977—1982; Member of Federation Indian Publications (president 1987-1988, Outstanding Contribution English Publication 1995)

Mahatma Gandhi has contributed to nearly every aspect of our life. He is identified with Truth and Non-violence. Satyagraha, as a powerful force was his unique effort to find a more humane solution to conflicts. His study of history led him to point out that love was a more potent force than armed struggle in settling disputes and his theory of man's moral evolution from animal using brute force to humans depending on soul force was, indeed, a significant contribution.

Yet the lesson most important to me is his strong faith in 'sabhi log apne jan'. The full implication of this verse is, however, not easily comprehended. At the young age of twenty-five, Barrister Gandhi got concerned about moral questions raised by different religions. In England while keeping terms at the Inn he was exposed to Christianity, Theosophy, Atheism and strangely Hinduism as well. He read the Bible, *The Song Celestial*, and *Light of Asia* by Edwin Arnold and Carlyle's *Muhammed: The Hero as Prophet*. After returning to India he met the Jain Muni Kavi Rajachandra. He continued his quest for true religion by correspondence with Rajachandra and others in England including Edward Maitland. Tolstoy's *The Kingdom of God Is Within You* and other works influenced him a great deal. He made a special effort to study the Koran and the life of Zarathustra. Rajachandra had sent to him several books on Hinduism and suggested that Hinduism had many subtle mystic things to say. He met Christians of various sects, theosophists, and Muslim traders. All were

hoping that this young man, not at ease in his own religion, would join them.

As a result of this study, Gandhi came to the conclusion that all religions have a sound moral base. As it develops, some defects are also incorporated and thus no religion is perfect. But conversion implies rejection of good and noble things one has inherited. So, he rejected any thought of conversion. In later life he was to even reject the thought of reconversion. He advocated sticking to the religion one is born into, rejection of those elements that one finds abhorrent — practice of untouchability among the Hindus for example — and acceptance of what one rationally approves from other religions. This concept of Sarva Dharma Sama Bhava was something he strove for in his entire life. His Satyagraha movement in South Africa and India had followers from all religions and sects.

Sarva Dharma Sama Bhava may be difficult to follow, yet most people know about it. What is not fully realized is that he extended this approach to all aspects of life. Though Gandhi said on many occasions that he believed in Varnashramdharma, there is no instance of his taking any action based on caste. His definition of caste was based on some vague idea of Varna and not Jati. He did not believe in any hierarchy among castes and made it a point to assert the dignity to all types of work. More importantly he underlined the importance of one's mother tongue just as he insisted on sarva dharma. Both in England and in South Africa he lived with and worked with persons of different race, nationality and religion. Additionally, the Marxists and those who advocated Welfare State worked for the greatest good of the largest number thus adopting Gandhi's concept of Sarvodaya — the good of all with everyone getting what he needs and from everyone what he is capable of Sarva Bhasha Sama Bhava and Sarva Vansh Sama Bhava are as important as Sarva Dharma Sama Bhava.

Even decades after his death he had followers like Martin Luther King Jr., Barak Obama, Nelson Mandela, Lech Walesa, Ang Sang Su Chi and many others spread all over the world.

Gandhi in Central and Eastern Europe

-Roxana-Elisabeta Marinescu

Dr. Roxana-Elisabeta Marinescu is an Associate Professor with the Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Romania. Her main research interests are in the areas of postcolonial literature, postcolonial and postcommunist studies, with an emphasis on feminism and gender issues. Dr. Marinescu has authored four books: Salman Rushdie and Multiple Identities (2013), Northern Ireland. Border Country (2013), Self-Constructs of Identity: The Case of Northern Ireland (2012) and A Cross-Cultural Reading by Writers of South-Asian Origin (2009). She has published chapters in six collective volumes, and over sixty articles in academic journals. Dr. Marinescu is the president of AnA Society for Feminist Analyses, an NGO with a vast experience in community development

At the celebration of Mahatma Gandhi's 150th birth Anniversary it is perhaps interesting and important for the general public in his native country to read a presentation of how he is known in Central and Eastern Europe, in a region similar in many ways to India. Central and Eastern Europe is a region imagined by the Western part of the continent as a sort of exotic proximal Orient and a liminal third world in what concerns economic, social, political and cultural development. It is a region currently passing through a period similar to decolonisation, after the 1989 liberation from Soviet semi-colonisation which had started at the end of the Second World in 1945, and included military occupation by Soviet troops. This semi-colonisation included economic exploitation, under the form of an institution in theory meant to offer inter-regional assistance: COMECON – The Council for Mutual Economic Assistance, created at the initiative of the USSR in 1949. It also meant social, political and cultural destruction of local elites and their replacement with the “mimic men”, so well described in postcolonial literature as a sort of intermediaries between the colonisers and the colonised, with the role of transmitting the former's values and initiatives to the latter. However, it did not include direct administration of overseas territories and it only managed to partially erase the collective memory of the people and re-write the national history of the colonised countries.

In fact, in the past ten or fifteen years, a great number of Central and Eastern European scholars and academics have started looking into the

obvious similitudes between the postcolonial and the postcommunist spaces which can be regarded, as a Romanian author put it “siblings of subalternity.” By this, Ștefănescu meant that both postcolonialism and postcommunism can be regarded within the same framework, as they mainly belong to the same type of subalternity, and, although there are differences in the types of colonisations they had been subjected to and a half-century gap in their respective decolonisation periods, as well as in the proximity of the colonisers, there are important and relevant characteristics that unite them. Among these characteristics, I would like to name just a few: a sort of hybridity of transition, an ambiguity regarding both their past and the present period and - perhaps more importantly – a sort of marginalisation regarding their relationship with the West.

It is this very marginalisation which I think creates the basis of a rapprochement between the two spaces, and which could constitute the substance for a common ground of at least a theoretical nature (if not a practical one, too) to consistently challenge their subaltern status and reposition themselves in the transnational global reality of today. In this context, Mahatma Gandhi’s life principles could stand as a starting point for this common theoretical ground.

In this essay, I would like to conduct a double endeavour: firstly, to examine the extent to which Gandhi and his role in India’s development are known and internalised in Central and Eastern Europe and secondly, to analyse how his theories and principles – especially *satyagraha* and *ahimsa* – have been adopted, sometimes without acknowledging it, in the post-1989 period in the fight for democratic freedom and active citizenship.

But let us first look into Gandhi’s own views of the region and how he understood European civilization at large. Besides his well-known critique towards the British Empire and its lack of empathy for the peoples it colonised, Gandhi has a special understanding of the Europeans in terms of their own internal subalternity determined by class and not by race in face of the hierarchical order within the limits of their country. Thus, a parallel between the people of Europe and India is made in an article in *Young India* regarding their subaltern condition. For, although Europeans can enjoy political self-governance, their subaltern condition is emphasised by their exploitation for the benefit of the rulers. In Gandhi’s view, liberation for the Europeans can come from applying the same principle of

non-violence which is valid in the case of the subcontinent's decolonisation from the British Empire:

I, however, feel that fundamentally the disease is the same in Europe as it is in India, in spite of the fact that in the former country the people enjoy political self-government. (...) The people of Europe have no doubt political power, but no Swaraj. Asian and African races are exploited for their partial benefit, and they, on their part, are being exploited by the ruling class or caste under sacred name of democracy. (...) The same remedy is, therefore, likely to be applicable. (...) Violence on the part of the masses will never remove the disease. (...) It seems to me, therefore, that sooner or later the European masses will have to take to non-violence, if they are to find their deliverance. (Young India, 3.09.1925, online)

At the beginning of the Second World War, Gandhi wrote some articles in which he presented his views about the war, violence and resistance against Nazism and fascism in Europe. In one of these articles, he made the case of Poland – at the time invaded by Hitler's army – and, writing from the point of view of a female friend who felt as much Polish as Indian, he twisted the understanding of non-violence as bravery-oriented violence for a common good:

If Poland has that measure of utter-most bravery and an equal measure of selflessness, history will forget that she defended herself with violence. Her violence will be counted almost as non-violence. ("A Polish Sister's Agony" - Harijan, 23.09.1939, online)

This Polish sister, who considered herself entitled to speak for both Poland and India, presented by Gandhi as a firm believer in non-violence, felt she needed to go back to Europe to fight for her native country, and in doing that, to raise herself above the actual violence of the war to a conceptual level and a universal principle. As she put it, "I believe Poland bleeds and struggles not only for her own rights but for the Right, the Just, the True; for the freedom of all nations, India including." ("A Polish Sister's Agony" - *Harijan*, 23.09.1939, online)

In another article, Gandhi made the claim that "small" and "weak" nations must understand their role in the respective context, which is "either come or be ready to come under the protection of the dictators or be

a constant menace to the peace of Europe.” (“If I were a Czech” - Harijan 15.10.1938, online) So the solution for these small nations is to fight on their own, non-violently, for their own freedom. They should not ask the larger nations to defend them, but, instead, they should defend their own honour:

If I were a Czech, therefore, I would free these two nations [England and France] from the obligation to defend my country. And yet I must live. I would not be vassal to any nation or body. (...) My honour is the only thing worth preserving (...) Unarmed men, women and children offering non-violent resistance without any bitterness in them will be a novel experience for them. (“If I were a Czech” - Harijan 15.10.1938, online)

But what is left of these Gandhian principles in the minds and souls of contemporary Central and Eastern Europeans? How much do they know and apply them in their private and public lives? Also, to what extent are people in this region aware of the impact these life principles have had on their existence? Not much, I have to say. In the next part of this essay I will refer to the almost total absence of Gandhi’s writings or ideas in the intellectual market in this part of Europe. Whenever something has been done in the sense of raising awareness of the Central and Eastern Europeans towards Gandhi and his philosophy since the fall of communism in 1989, this has been done from the initiative and with the direct help of the Indian authorities in the respective countries or through the effort of some local enthusiasts, but their effort is only punctual and not consistent enough to trigger a fundamental change in the public mentality.

Even so, very little has been achieved in terms of information and action. In this region, Hungary seems to be the country with most activities dedicated to the memory of Gandhi. Some of the actions include the emission of a stamp with the image of Gandhi in Hungary, as far back as 1969 (istampgallery.com), and another version in 2019, celebrating 150th anniversary of Gandhi’s birth.(wopa-plus.com) Some of the actions in Hungary are private, such as the establishing of an NGO, by the name of The Mahatma Gandhi Human Rights Organization in Budapest in 1992, with the main objective “to fight for the rights of migrants and refugees, to combat racism and discrimination against foreigners and to encourage at all

levels social inclusion in our community.” (gandhi.hu) There is also a school in Hungary, set up in 2012 within a project called Hungary for Love (clearly referring to Gandhian life principles) and bearing his name – The Gandhi School. The founders pride themselves on their site as being “unique to Hungary, aiming to bring equal access to education and career opportunities to Roma youth, foster pride in Romani culture, and break the cycle of poverty amongst Europe’s largest minority.”(hungaryforlove.org) Also, in terms of books published by or about Gandhi, Hungary has the greatest number of titles. (regikonyvek.hu) At a visual level, it is important to note the creation of a cluster of statues entitled “The Garden of Philosophy” by Hungarian sculptor Nándor Wagner in 1997.(atlasobscura.com) It was set up on Gellért Hill in the capital Budapest, as a tourist attraction and includes the founders of the world’s major religions (Abraham, Jesus, Buddha, Laozi, and Akhenaten) and also the statues of Mahatma Gandhi, Daruma Daishi and Saint Francis, regarded by the sculptor as some of the greatest thinkers of humankind.

Another bronze statue of Gandhi by sculptor Gautam Lal was gifted by The Indian Council for Cultural Relations to The University of Warsaw Library, Poland, in 2002. (zeenews.india.com) Interestingly, Lech Walesa, former President of Poland, elected immediately after the 1989 liberation from communism, and former leader of the first independent trade union – Solidarity – who had led the fight against communism, expressed an interest in Gandhi and in Richard Attenborough’s Oscar-winning feature film depicting his life. According to a newspaper article published in 1983 in *Times of India*, he had written to the film director to express this interest (upi.com).

In Sofia, the presidents of India and of Bulgaria unveiled a monument of Mahatma Gandhi, sculpted by a Bulgarian artist, Ivan Rusev, in 2018, to celebrate both Gandhi’s birth and the 133rd anniversary of Bulgaria’s unification. The Bulgarian president noted Gandhi’s role in India’s independence and connected that to Bulgarian history and at the same time made the link with Indian contemporary society: “Today modern India is led by Gandhi’s messages – they are that strong connection for the multifaceted Indian society” (president.bg).

Vaclav Havel, the first postcommunist president of the Czech Republic, received the Gandhi Peace Prize in 2003 for “his outstanding

contribution towards world peace and upholding human rights in most difficult situations through Gandhian means.” -timesofindia.indiatimes.com
Havel had been imprisoned for actions against the dictatorial communist regime in (then) Czechoslovakia, such as founding the civic initiative group Charter 77 (1976 - 1992), which drew attention to the lack of human rights in the country, and the Prague Spring (1968), when a short period of opening and political and social reforms were ended by the military invasion of Soviet Union led Warsaw Pact countries.

A rather unusual situation was reported in 2019 in the Czech Republic, and it involved an Israeli brewery which apparently created a limited-edition beer named Mahatma Pale Ale, the label bearing the image of Gandhi on the background of the Indian flag. The beer was described by its producer as “light colonial beer type India Pale But brewed in the name of the Great Spirit and Father of the Nation contains a wide range of exotic fragrances – fruity hints of blackberries and mangoes combined with citrus to floral aroma. Beer against violence and freedom” (deccanherald. com) However, the beer was withdrawn from the market after an Indian-based Foundation protested to the Czech authorities and to the Indian President and Prime Minister.

In Romania, the only important event concerning the image or learnings of Gandhi was the long-delayed publication of his biography by Romain Rolland in 2017. The book, originally published in 1924, appeared in Romania under the title *Mahatma Gandhi. A Legendary Life (The Biography)*.

But most of the events connected to Gandhi in Central and Eastern Europe took place in 2018-2019 and were initiated by the Indian Embassies at his 150th birth anniversary. They were correlated, in the sense that the same event took place simultaneously in several countries. Such events included emission of stamps or involving local artists in playing and singing Gandhi’s favourite bhajan. The latter action was launched at Gandhi’s 149th anniversary, with artists from 124 countries in the presence of UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, and continued globally throughout the following year, including in this region¹.

¹ Indian missions in Central and Eastern European countries present these events in the respective countries.

As can be seen by the examples shown above, Gandhiji's presence in Central and Eastern Europe is scarce and at a very shallow level: erection of statues, emission of stamps, a book published here and there, some conferences, or singing his favourite bhajan in Gujarati by local artists. Of course, these are important and create some awareness at the level of public conscience in what regards the important figure of Mahatma Gandhi and what he has done not only for the independence of India, but also for humanity.

However, we can say that Gandhi is mostly absent in the European postcommunist space. It might be relevant to investigate why. Romanian philosopher Eugen Ciurtin attempted an answer when he realized that some of the marches and rallies in postcommunist Romania resemble the ones in the period in which India was striving to obtain its independence. For example, in 2013 there were a series of marches in the capital Bucharest and in a number of larger cities in the country against a gold mining exploitation in a village in Transylvania by a Canadian company, which would have meant the sheer destruction of the natural beauty of the place and the selling of natural resources to a foreign profit-driven corporation. Ciurtin saw the similarity with Gandhi's 1930's Salt March Campaigns. To go back to the question of why there is so little circulation of Gandhian ideas in the Romanian intellectual space, Ciurtin claimed it had to do with the double complex – of superiority and inferiority - of the Romanian people, combined with their *provincialism* and *arrogance*, which can be translated in Eurocentric *orientalism*, a collective “shameless form of shame”, which “is wrong, incomprehensible, amazing, unacceptable” (Ciurtin, 2014, online).

Indeed, in Central and Eastern Europe in general and in Romania in particular, this translates into what Madina Tlostanova called the “victimhood rivalry”, i.e. the Euro centricity and bland racism of the postsocialist reality towards the postcolonial space. It comes from a sort of imaginary classification of victimhood, of worthiness of this status in the Western imaginary of the two spaces:

Hence the Eastern European clinging to Europeanness, hence the postsoviet reluctance to be associated with the ex-third world. In this case the postcolonial analogy is used negatively, and with

indignation: “How can we be compared with Africans or Arabs? We are European and White. (Tlostanova, 2018, online)

It is a sort of jealous attitude towards any other postcolonial subject(s) who may take their place (considered the only deserving one) in the hierarchy of victimhood in the 20th century. As victims of communism, they consider they are above any other type of rival victims, be them colonial or otherwise. This becomes apparent, for example, in the reluctance of all the postcommunist countries in Central and Eastern Europe (to various degrees, though) to accept refugees and migrants from the Middle East in the recent refugee crisis.

Nevertheless, this part of the world has seen Gandhi’s principles put into practice, most often without even realising where those principles were coming from. Starting with the change of regime in 1989, the following Gandhian quotation has become one of the triggers of main actions in the decolonisation period, also called *transition*².

Civil disobedience therefore becomes a sacred duty when the State has become lawless, or which is the same thing, corrupt. And a citizen that barter with such a State shares its corruption and lawlessness. (Gandhi, 5-1-1922, Young India, p. 5)

The issue of corruption and the citizens’ attitude in face of a corrupt state is standing now valid when we discuss the situation in Central and Eastern Europe, as it was when Gandhi was leading the independence fight in India. As mentioned before, Gandhi very well noticed that Western European states in the 1930’s were not only exercising their power over their colonies overseas, but also internally, over their own citizens. In the latter situation, power was exercised through class rather than race, but the mechanism was the same.

² I prefer the term decolonisation to express the aftermath of a revolutionary departure from the semi-colonisation, which I equate with the full colonisation which happened in the South Asian subcontinent. In this respect, we can see a parallel between the two decolonisations. For more on this, see my article “Border Crossing: From Communist to Postcommunist Romania” (2018).

Similarly, in contemporary Central and Eastern Europe, the corrupt and lawless states pose the same problem in face of their citizens: what should they do to confront this danger? And the answer the citizens have come up with – apparently without realising – is the very Gandhian principle of *ahimsa*, put into practice through non-violence. To give the word to Mahatma himself, *Ahimsa* is understood as “the farthest limit of humility” (*An Autobiography*: 454), as it is...

...not merely a negative state of harmlessness, but it is a positive state of love, of doing good even to the evil-doer. But it does not mean helping the evil-doer to continue the wrong or tolerating it by passive acquiescence. On the contrary, love—the active state of *Ahimsa*—requires you to resist the wrong-doer by dissociating yourself from him ... (*Young India*, 25-8-1920, p. 2)

Leela Gandhi underlined the universal character of *ahimsa*, which can be understood both as non-violent protest and resistance, but also as a protest against violence:

As a category and practice of resistance, Gandhian *ahimsa* can be understood in two ways: first, as a form of nonviolent protest and second, as a form that protests against violence. In either case, *ahimsa* can be identified as a concept constituted within and occasioned by the rhetoric of struggle, particularly struggle against the state—whether it be the Transvaal government in South Africa, the colonial state in India, or the increasingly centralized postcolonial Indian state. (Gandhi, L., 1996: 114)

In Central and Eastern Europe, as in Gandhian India, these took the forms of demonstrations, vigils, sit-ins, marches, petitions, boycotts, etc., different forms of non-cooperation with corrupt justice or injustice. Non-violent resistance is, indeed, an alternative to power politics, as it constitutes a moral right of citizens, conducing towards a more just juridical system, as they have the sacred duty not to participate in evil actions. And unfortunately, most of the times these actions were met with violence by state institutions, as it is indeed the case in the interaction of this type of state with its citizens.

Some examples from countries in Central and Eastern Europe exercising non-violent protests/ resistance include Czechoslovakia and its

resistance against Soviet rule, especially the Velvet Revolution (1989); Poland – with its Solidarity movement; Serbia under Slobodan Milosevic (1991-2000); Kosovo's ethnic conflict negotiated through civil resistance (1990-1998); Georgia's 'Rose' Revolution in 2003 or Ukraine's 'Orange Revolution' of 2004. All these examples show the will of the people in these countries to protest non-violently against the systemic violence of their state institutions. It is a way of showing adherence to Gandhian philosophic principles in a genuine manner, even though more often than not without realising it.

In Romania, the country I know most as it is my native country, the same type of non-violent protests occurred in the postcommunist decolonisation period, i.e. since 1989. These show the fact that Romanians also have behaved in a democratic and peaceful manner, although they had to oppose the undemocratic and violent actions of state authorities. The first example is the Romanian anti-communist Revolution of 1989 in which peaceful demonstrators were met by tanks and the military in an attempt to stifle the popular revolt. There are 1166 victims recognised officially by the authorities in the only violent revolution in Central and Eastern Europe in 1989 (violent only due to the response of the authorities faced with the public attitude). Another such example is the miners' revolt in 1990, in which they were used by the Romanian police to dismantle a peaceful demonstration in favour of the democratisation of society. Six civilians were – again officially – reported dead in these violent acts. I already mentioned the 2013 marches against the selling of gold reserves in Transylvania to a Canadian corporation, another situation in which peaceful protest were met with state violence. The latest such event is a series of rallies which took place between 2016-2019, with millions of people protesting against the perceived corruption of the government and which were met with institutionalised violence: there are photos and videos showing peaceful demonstrators putting up their hands signalling a peaceful attitude and the riot police using water cannons and gas against them.

Finally, I would like to end on a positive note, by quoting Mahatma Gandhi's words which link non-violent action with a real democracy for all the citizens, including the weakest ones:

[Because] democracy, so long as it is sustained by violence, cannot provide for or protect the as the strongest. That can never happen except through non-violence. (Harijan, 18.05.1940, online)

In Gandhi's view it is only such democracy which comes along with non-violence that proves capable to bring real equality and equity among the citizens. It is this type of democracy envisaged by Gandhi that proves its global and unifying character:

In the democracy which I have envisaged, a democracy established by non-violence, there will be equal freedom for all. Everybody will be his own master. (Mahatma, vol. Vi, pp. 188-90, online)

Hopefully, the image and the life principles of Mahatma Gandhi will find from now on a larger and more consistent circulation in Central and Eastern Europe, a region perhaps quite far from India in distance, but close in so many ways in terms of learnings from history. The non-violent democracy he was dreaming of has undeniably a universal character, which it is high time people in this region should start internalising more.

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Gandhi -- of the earth, earthy...

- Dr. Betty Govinden

Dr. Betty Govinden is author of the award-winning book, Sister Outsiders – Representation of Identity and Difference in Selected Writings by South African Indian Women, and of A Time of Memory – Reflections on Recent South African Writing. She is co-editor, with Professor Kalpana Hiralal, of the recently published book, 1913, Satyagraha, Passive Resistance and its Legacy.

I deny being a visionary.

I do not accept the claim of saintliness.

I am of the earth, earthy...

[Gandhi 1920]

The South African Gandhi – Stretcher-Bearer of Empire [2015] by Ashwin Desai and Goolam Vahed, is a provocative and polemical biography of Gandhi, with particular reference to his South African years. Ashwin and Goolam, two academics whom I also deem as colleagues and friends, and from whom we have learned to expect wide-ranging and prodigious scholarship, have set themselves the responsibility, as they see it, of setting the record straight about Gandhi's South African years.

From the tenor of the book, especially the concluding lines, and the narratives that Ashwin [see September 13, 2015, p.21], in particular, has recounted on the role that Gandhi played in his young impressionable life - inhabiting as Ashwin did, the tenements and corridors of Kismet Arcade in Durban's Grey Street Complex of yesteryear, where members of Gandhi's family lived - it seems that this book is Ashwin's own long walk to freedom...freedom from the aura, attraction, fascination, if not stranglehold, that Gandhi had on him. It seems that Ashwin is suggesting that he himself has long been Gandhi's prisoner and it is time to let go of him, even if "with some reluctance".[306]

Of course, no less than Gandhi's illustrious son, Manilal Gandhi, was described as Gandhi's Prisoner [to use the title of Professor Uma Dhupelia-Meshtrie's biography on Manilal Gandhi, published in 2004], although in

his case, he found the example of his father compelling and captivating enough to spend his entire life emulating him, and he himself did much to deepen and broaden the legacy of Gandhi in South Africa.

The task that Desai and Vahed have set themselves is to question such adulation, wherever it occurs, intent as they are on “demystifying” Gandhi and the way Gandhian iconography has developed, progressed and gathered momentum over the decades. Desai and Vahed’s main complaint is against the mythology or saintliness that has gathered around Gandhi, and of the subsequent “heritage mythmaking” by his acolytes, and they feel compelled, as a matter of duty, to set the record straight [Arundhati Roy, who is highly critical of Gandhi in her Introduction to the new book on Ambedkar, however points out that a “critique of Gandhi need not automatically be taken to be a critique of all Gandhians”. 2014:40]. As Desai and Vahed’s study progresses, and to the very last page, this becomes an all-consuming mission and crusade. Their quarrel is that the Mahatma-hood was ill-deserved and they, to all intents and purposes, attempt to present the ‘real’ Gandhi.

Of course, critique of Gandhi is not new. Alongside many hagiographical renderings of Gandhi’s life, there has also emerged a trenchant, interrogative culture around him, and it is fair to say that such critical works, many with measured and balanced objectivity, have greatly extended the understanding of Gandhi’s historical stature and significance. Such approaches have also drawn attention to the complexities and even contradictions that have surrounded Gandhi’s strategies, especially Satyagraha.

Faisal Devji’s *The Impossible Indian: Gandhi and the Temptations of Violence* [2011], for example, provides a critique of the tendency to “beatify” Gandhi. Devji who, incidentally, endorses Desai and Vahed’s South African Gandhi [although with some reservations], argues that while Gandhi was committed to non-violence, he had a complicated, dialectical relationship to violence [see Singh 2012]. In their critique of Gandhi, Desai and Vahed take a simplistic view, and suggest that Gandhi was actually deceptive in his advocating of non-violence, promoting and choosing violence as an option when it suited him.

Joseph Lelyveld's book, *Great Soul – Mahatma Gandhi and his struggle with India* [2011], is also critical of Gandhi on many fronts and, on publication, was banned in Gujarat, in India. However, Lelyveld eschews an essentialist portrait of Gandhi; he is all too aware of the “many-sided Gandhi”, as he points out V S Naipaul had suggested and, rather than a combative, cut-and-thrust approach, provides a very human portrait of a man whom he also describes as a “great soul”. Other works that are critical of the Gandhi of the South African years include those by T K Mahadevan [1982] and Maureen Swan [1985].

Indeed, a healthy skepticism is necessary, and “casting Gandhi in strict binary terms” [Dhupelia Mesthrie 2014:215] is certainly unhelpful. But what seems lacking to me in Desai and Vahed's book [compared to Lelyveld and Devji, for example.] is a nuanced, measured and modulated approach, an approach that balances the positive and negative aspects of Gandhi's South African years, as well as an acknowledgement, whatever their views on Gandhi himself, of the undeniable impact and influence that Gandhian thought has had, directly or indirectly, on political and social life locally and internationally for more than a century.

Desai and Vahed contend that Gandhi was a servant and apologist of Empire and that his “political imagination was limited to equality within Empire” [2015:25]. They argue against the “existing narrative of Gandhi as a great inventor of the new tactic and philosophy of non-violent politics and as a pioneer of anti-colonial resistance” [2015:25]. They find it disconcerting that despite “the historical evidence that Gandhi had little interest in or concern with the social, economic and political circumstances of Africans in South Africa, and that he made no effort to reach out to other oppressed groups Gandhi continues to be wrapped in the halo of an anti-racist, anti-colonial fighter on African soil”[2015:305].

My response here relates broadly to their estimation of relations between Gandhi and Africans at the turn of the century. My purpose is not to construct a rebuttal, but to widen the parameters of the discussion. And in order to do this I take a slight detour – by looking at Gandhi, albeit obliquely, through the prism of his illustrious contemporary, John Langalibele Dube. Indeed, Desai and Vahed's book has prompted me to look at Dube again, and I must say that it has been salutary to read the one

in the light of the other. My purpose is certainly not to criticize Dube, or to exonerate Gandhi by looking at Dube, but to reflect on the way in which Dube and Gandhi understood and responded to the challenges that confronted each at the same historical moment but, ironically, in spite of their physical proximity, in vastly different political and social spaces. It becomes evident to me that Dube and Gandhi, next-door neighbours as they undoubtedly were, lived in different universes, followed different political trajectories, and were preoccupied with different priorities and strategies of resistance.

Desai and Vahed bemoan the fact that Gandhi did not support Dube and argue, citing Heather Hughes, a biographer of Dube, the portrayal of camaraderie between Gandhi and Dube is “born out of political expediency” [2011:209]. Lelyveld also states that “such sanctification of their imagined alliance rests on little more than the political convenience of the moment and a wispy oral tradition” [2011:65].

It is necessary to emphasise that, by the time Gandhi arrived in South Africa, Africans had already inserted themselves into colonial history, and were actively shaping its course and re-making it, regardless of whoever supported or recognized it. In fact, Desai himself rightly points out that African resistance was in motion long before Gandhi appeared on the scene [see Post, 16 September, 2015, p.17]. One needs to remember that the times produced highly competent and influential Black leaders in their own right. Dube was a powerful, visionary leader, founding the Natal Native Congress in 1900 [Lelyveld sees a parallel here in the model offered by Gandhi’s Natal Indian Congress], and the South African Native National Congress, that later became the ANC, in 1912, when Gandhi was still in the country and had launched his Satyagraha Campaigns.

Dube’s US-based education gave him a good foundation to inaugurate the Ohlange Institute already in 1901, an Institute which aimed to equip young African students with education and skills. This was an educational project with far-reaching goals, modeled on the Tuskegee Institute in the US, which was founded by Booker T Washington. [Dube’s brother, Charles, and sister-in-law, Adelaide Tantsi Dube, also studied in the US.] Dube also established his ground-breaking newspaper, *Ilanga lase Natal* in 1903, which appeared just before the establishment of Indian

Opinion. All this shows an African leader who certainly had his finger on the pulse. If anything, Gandhi was the one very likely influenced by the communal ethos of Dube's Ohlange, alongside Tolstoy and others [see Swan 1985; Nauriya 2012]. Hughes points out that "Dube remained fiercely committed to both Ohlange and Ilanga as living symbols of what Africans could achieve by and for themselves." [Hughes 2011:140]. Gandhi was also impressed with the ethos of *ora et labora* at Marianhill Hill Monastery, which he visited, and spoke favourably about. It has also been argued that Gandhi was aware of and impressed by Washington [see Hughes 2007; and Nauriya 2012]; although, as far as I can see, Gandhi was more diverse and eclectic than Dube in respect of the influences he drew from.

Further, African leaders like Dube were orbiting in different circuits and flows of solidarity and interdependence, reflecting different priorities and concerns at the time. Dube was greatly influenced by the strong Black liberatory movements in the US. Dube's principal alliances and supportive links were in the US, where he studied and was ordained as a pastor, and he was reporting to the likes of Booker T Washington, who was an established African American leader of the early 20th Century and, by all accounts, Dube's inspiration from afar. Dube called Washington "my patron saint ...my guiding star" [in Lelyveld 2011:63]! Other Black leaders at the time, like Sol T Plaatje, also gravitated to other centres of influence. Plaatjie travelled to England, Canada and the United States, where he met and sought the support of the likes of great pan-Africanists like Marcus Garvey and W.E.B du Bois [see Boehmer 2000:8; this is a point made by Desai and Vahed as well].

In the Natal Colony, Dube, as a leader among the Amakholwa [converts] and ordained Congregational Church minister, was supported by, among others, Harriet Colenso, the daughter of the Anglican Bishop of Zululand, John Colenso. Both daughter and father were well-known, even in the face of ostracism and criticism by some in the Anglican Church, for their sympathetic stance towards African traditional religions and practices. Dube was concerned about the dynamics of conversion to the Christian faith among his fellow countrymen, juxtaposed as they were between the competing demands of tradition and modernity. [All this was far removed

from Gandhi's focus at the time on the legal rights of Passenger Indians and of his later, growing awareness of the trials and tribulations of indentured labourers.]

Although Desai and Vahed suggest that there was hardly any contact between Gandhi and Dube, Lelyveld shows that there was some connection between the two. He does concede that it is surprising that they did not have more to do with each other [2011:62-65], and also suggests that their careers ran parallel to each other and did not show evidence of "crossing of paths" to the extent that one would expect, a situation exacerbated, he reminds us, by Gandhi's spending more time in Johannesburg at this time. He notes that Gopal Krishna Gokhale's visit in 1912 to Dube was in Gandhi's company, and that Dube used the Phoenix printing press for a short time to print *Ilanga*. This itself does show a spirit of good neighbourliness.

However, Lelyveld points out that Manilal, "the other Gandhi", did cultivate the acquaintance of Dube and Shembe, the two significant African leaders in the locality [a fact pointed out by Sita Gandhi in her Memoir [2003] as well]. Ela Gandhi's recent article, "Time for an objective assessment" [in *Post*, 23-27 September, 2015, p.16], shows factual examples of supportive relationships between Gandhi and Dube in particular, and Gandhi and Africans in general. An earlier meeting between Dube and Gandhi, in 1905, is also mentioned, and the impact Dube had on Gandhi [see Nauriya 2012]. [Desai and Vahed's book prompts one to resort to ferreting out and counting up these different meetings almost in a mechanical way, in order to formulate a response to such criticism against Gandhi, while the broader qualitative impact of Gandhi, I believe, is what we should focus on.]

Most importantly, Empire and frontier politics put Indians and Africans in different, if not opposing, camps at the time. The very *raison d'être* for Gandhi's arrival in South Africa [to fight the legal battles of a Passenger Indian] and, indeed, of the prior arrival of Indian indentured labourers and of the Passenger Indians who followed, was questionable, if not inimical, to African interests. Keletso Atkins is one of the historians who suggests that at the time of the arrival of indentured labourers, Africans resisted being moulded into "a European ideal of what workers

ought to be like”, a model based on the Protestant capitalist work ethic [1993:2] - something that Dube, nonetheless, was gradually to covet for his fellow men and women, given the competitive field that the Colony grew into. During Dube’s time, the arrival of indentured labourers and Passenger Indians was an accomplished fact, and one of the direct consequences for Africans, as Hughes [2007:161] points out, was the purchasing of large tracts of farm land by Passenger Indians or the renting and leasing of land by “free” Indians, many of whom became small-scale Indian growers, in places like Inanda [the vicinity where two of the largest sugar mills were located, and which was also close to markets for the sale of garden produce].

Dube understood his entitlement, neither as settler or migrant, “intruder”, “stranger” or “sojourner”, but as owner and rightful heir of the land, and now gradually becoming dispossessed in his own land. Dube was deeply concerned about the colonists’ policy of depriving Africans of access to land and education [see Hughes 2011:126]. Of course, this was to become complicated by the ensuing “discursive shifts” in the meaning of “belonging”, as Suren Pillay carefully argues, where the “native” elided into “Bantu” into “immigrant”, and was actually rendered as “foreigner”, while the settler became naturalized and rendered as “native” [see Pillay 2004]. Deploying the “empty land” thesis, colonials were able to dispel the criticism of “displacement”. Pillay also shows how distinctions between settler and colonial societies, with different subjectivities and positioning were created, by developing and using different historical narratives.

Gandhi, on the other hand, had to seek his “entitlement” elsewhere, in invoking his rights as a member of the British Empire, and argued for the “elementary rights”, due to all subjects of the Empire [see Markovits 2004:85]. He saw Indian migrants in South Africa, at this stage, neither as Indians [people from India] or South Africans, but as citizens of and “stakeholders” in the Empire, providing labour and soldiers for its domains [as Devji, for example, cited above, has argued]. Charles DiSalvo, in researching the legal aspects of Gandhi’s practice in South Africa, in his book, *M. K. Gandhi – Attorney at Law – The Man Before the Mahatma* [2013], shows how Gandhi’s developing understanding of law and jurisprudence shaped his political philosophy, and influenced his dealings

with Empire. [Gandhi, of course, was to later appeal to other centres of authority, especially moral authority, as he progressed and evolved.]

Up to 1906, Gandhi was principally involved in fighting the battles of the Indian commercial community in South Africa, and was to broaden his struggle in the years to come, especially from the first Satyagraha Campaign of 1908, and in 1913, when he supported the coal miners' strike of Newcastle [see Hiralal 2013]. On another score, Markovits endorses Maureen Swan's view that Gandhi actually learnt from Indians in South Africa in the formation of his political strategies, and stresses the agency of South African Indians in the making of their own history", and the influence they had on Gandhi [Markovits 2004:48]. And it was only in 1913-1914, during his last Satyagraha Campaign in South Africa, before he left for India, that Gandhi included the demands of the indentured labourers in his opposition.

Gandhi, who remained a "loyal subject of the Crown" [Markovits 2004:82] even after he left South Africa, began to develop a clearer non-co-operation sentiment and strategy towards the Empire from the early 1920's. It is interesting too, as Markovits points out that "this exemplary citizen of the British Empire really discovered his Indianness in South Africa" [Markovits 2004:84], and this, was of course the background against which he fought the British politically and culturally in later decades to the end of his life.

Crucially, Gandhi was to come, in time, to understand the entitlement of Dube and Africans. Lelyveld quotes an article that Gandhi penned in *The Indian Opinion* when he heard Dube, on one occasion, speak: "They made loyal subjects, and Natal was the land of their birth. For them there was no country other than South Africa; and to deprive them of their right over lands, etc, was like banishing them from their own home" [Lelyveld:2011:63]. Reciprocally, Africans themselves supported the Indian's struggle for the franchise. *Inkanyiso*, an African journal, at the time, was supportive of the Gandhi on the subject of the Indian franchise, arguing on the basis of sheer human rights, and that Indians would enjoy such rights in India [see Nauriya 2012 : 46-47].

For their part, the British colonial authorities saw neither Africans as owners of the land nor Indians as settlers, but both as labourers, or units of labour – a case of unconscionable “occupation of soil and soul” [as Fanon would have said. See Fanon 1967:65]. As far as the Africans were concerned, the Reserves System and the Location System, with their subsistence economy, did not warrant wage earning among them on settler farms, and the colonialists had to turn to imported labour - an “experiment” that was to have far-reaching consequences for the Colony [see du Bois 2011:15] and the rest of the region, as did the colonial capitalism that warranted it.

Desai and Vahed criticize Gandhi for a vacillating strategy towards the colonial authorities. It needs to be remembered that the colonial policies at the time constrained both Gandhi and Dube in different ways, and it behoved them to try out different responses in a difficult time. Dube was himself forced to take an apologetic stance towards the British authorities at times. Hughes [2011:128] points out that Dube had imbibed a strategy of accommodation from his exemplar, Booker T Washington, and that his conciliatory stance was also linked to his need for funding for the Ohlange Institute [this was similar to the attitude of Indian merchants in South Africa at this time].

Yet Dube could also be decisive and act against the colonial powers when he was morally compelled to do so. Although the accommodationist approach increased in his later years, this does not diminish Dube as far as his general resistance to Empire at the time was concerned, and his influence and stature as one of the founding fathers of the South African liberation struggle [with others, like Pixley Isaka ka Seme, Dube’s contemporary, who was, incidentally, also born and raised in Inanda].

Dube was clearly in an invidious position as he was simultaneously under pressure to be loyal to the Colonial authorities and to act oppositionally. Lelyveld writes of the strain on Dube that the Bambatha Rebellion, for example, had caused [2011:67, 68]. Dube was criticized for not restoring peace in the Colony by the colonial authorities, who made it Dube’s responsibility to restrain violent resistance [Hughes 2011:17]. Any ambivalence may also be explained by a vexed colonial context, as post-colonial critic, Elleke Boehmer, has pointed out, where “racial oppression

generates pathologies in both the black consciousness and the white” [2008:32]. She recalls what W E B du Bois observed regarding the “double consciousness” of oppressed peoples [although George Orwell might call it doublethink!]. Du Bois was speaking of African America in 1903, and this was equally true of Colonial Natal at precisely the same time - which also resonates with what Shula Marks calls, “the ambiguities of dependence” [my emphasis 1986]. Marks shows how the “blending of the liberal and radical historiographical traditions, with their respective concentration on the individual and on groups and structures” [Frost 1986/2010:106] promotes a more critical understanding of the complexities of this period in Colonial Natal, and later.

Predictably then, as Hughes argues, although Dube and Gandhi respected each other as leaders, “they defined their politics in narrowly racial lines. Neither could see any purpose in joint action; in fact, both perceived deep dangers in such a course.” [Hughes 2007:164]. Historicizing the presence of racial attitudes and race-based strategies at this time tempers the criticism of both leaders.

Desai and Vahed also criticize Gandhi for his sense of Aryan racial superiority vis-a-vis Africans. Isabel Hofmeyr shows the contradictions in Gandhi’s ideas at this time, ideas that were, paradoxically, “universal” and “bounded” at the same time. Indeed, Gandhi’s ideas of India were “capacious” and exaggerated: “Influenced by hierarchical ideals of civilisationism, Gandhi defined Africa as outside the pale of India and Empire. In so doing, he installed Africa as a boundary of India” [Hofmeyr 2013:10].

It is clear that the frontier politics I have tried to sketch above was complicated by these further “frontiers” that oppressed groups [referred to as ‘also-colonised others’] invoked among themselves. As Isabel Hofmeyr observes:

Such use of the ‘also-colonised other’ as a frontier of definition was common place. Proponents of African nationalism likewise took ‘India’ as a boundary in terms of religion [Christian Africans versus ‘heathen’ Indians], indigeneity [sons of the soil versus Indian settlers], and commerce [‘intruding’ Indian traders taking over ‘African’ markets]. The arm’s-length

relationship between Gandhi and his neighbour, John Dube...embodies these frontiers. Each involved in creating his own miniature 'continent,' the two men defined themselves in opposition to each other, admiring each other's projects from afar but deprecating each other's 'people' – Gandhi being as well known for his anti-African statements as Dube for his anti-Indianism [even while his newspaper carried advertisements for Indian merchants]. [Hofmeyr 2013:10]

One of the unfortunate effects of this frontier mentality was that oppressed groups did not find more common cause with one another at this stage to the extent that they might have done [a matter which rightly concerns Desai and Vahed]. Describing Gandhi's Phoenix Settlement, Isabel Hofmeyr argues that in spite of Gandhi's apparent expansiveness,

“...Africans were not numbered among the fraternity of Gandhi's cosmopolitanism. Yet in the hinterland of Phoenix such limits were not unusual. Here 'race-making' projects like Gandhi's and Dube's shaped ideas of Africa and India wrought in relation, and, in opposition to each other. While easy to judge in hindsight, these undertakings form an important strand in shaping ideas about 'race' that...were not the sole prerogative of European policy makers, triaging subjects by race and civilization according to the administrative logics of the imperium. The Indian Ocean world contained a rich archive of precolonial ideas of 'race,' culture, and civilization that meshed with, and challenged, colonial categories, creating a hierarchical world in which utopian ideals of 'race' could be both anticolonial vis-à-vis white imperial interests and colonial in relation to 'also-colonized others'.” [my emphasis. Hofmeyr 2013: 68]

The important point, that Desai and Vahed do not stress, is that individual aberrations were clearly entrained in convoluted, systemic, historic realities. What we need to celebrate, then, is that solidarity politics emerged in the long haul of the 20th Century in the struggle against apartheid in spite of these early divisive realities.

As far as the Bambatha Rebellion was concerned, Desai and Vahed mount a scathing criticism against Gandhi for actively supporting the

colonial authorities. Although Gandhi was not directly confronting Dube here he was, by implication, “on the other side”. The provocative sub-title of their book - *Stretcher-bearer for Empire* - refers to Gandhi’s ambulance work during the Anglo-Boer War and the Bambatha Rebellion. Desai suggests that Gandhi’s “ambulance missions were limited to showing loyalty to Empire” [Post, 16 September 2015, p.17]. Desai and Vahed, invoking Kathryn Tidrick [2006], a Gandhian critic, also suggest that Gandhi only “fell back on ambulance work” because the Natal Government was opposed to arming Indians.

Markovits, author of *The Un-Gandhian Gandhi – The Life and Afterlife of the Mahatma* [2004], a book also critical of Gandhi, however points out that Gandhi’s raising of a unit of ambulance workers among the South African Indians to help the British during the Boer War was, however, at a time when he still believed in the benevolent character of British imperialism [2004: 159]. Lelyveld also argues that Gandhi believed that such a show of “Indian fealty to the empire” would be the “ultimate guarantor of Indian rights” [2011:66]. Desai and Vahed argue that Gandhi’s behaviour during the Rebellion [as with the War before] is tantamount to “the erasure of Africans as a people who suffered and resisted a brutal system” [2015:116]. Gandhi’s actions and words at this time certainly raise many questions, and his participating in a humanitarian way to alleviate the casualties that resulted from the conflict, understandably, gets obscured.

The Bambatha Rebellion will continue to be a contested historical event for a long time to come, and will be interpreted from different angles. Gandhi is rightly criticized for treading the precarious line between violence and nonviolence; and his using these killing fields as a human laboratory [moving from himsa to ahimsa, in peculiarly and eccentric Gandhian logic] is hard to defend. What Desai and Vahed do not seem to highlight, however, is that Gandhi regretted his involvement in the Bambatha Rebellion, and that the violence on the killing fields of places like Maphumulo affected him deeply and dramatically [see Hughes 2011:129].

Lelyveld also points this out, in spite of his otherwise trenchant critique of Gandhi on this score [2011:72, 73]. Devji, referred to above, also shows that Gandhi began to lose faith in Empire, and was to change

his disposition to it in the years to come. There was a slow evolution away from co-operation with Empire and any other unjust order. If, at the time of the Bambatha Rebellion, Gandhi's involvement might be described "as the stumblings of a pre-Damascene" [Anderson 2013], it is worth pointing out that the "stretcher-bearer for Empire" did in later decades become the driving force and inspiration [albeit with the subalterns in the vanguard, as Ranajit Guha (1997) reminds us], for the historically singular anti-colonial and anti-imperial revolution in India and the rest of the colonized world. [I do not wish to be prescriptive, but a possible revisionist project - where attention is directed to the "politics of the people" [Guha 1997] during Gandhi's South African years - might have tempered the historiography on the role of elites [like Gandhi] in resistance politics at this time . This is certainly evident, as a subtext, in Desai and Vahed's *Inside Indenture* [2007].

Desai and Vahed, quoting Lelyveld, speak of the effect that Gandhi's involvement in the Bambatha Rebellion had on Dube. They state: "With this kind of attitude it is no wonder that John Dube, the moderate founding president of the ANC, reflected in 1912 that 'people like Indians have come into our land and lorded it over us, as though we who belong to the country are mere nonentities' " [Desai and Vahed 2015:117; Lelyveld 2011:74]. From Hughes we conclude that Dube actually made this statement in Zululand, years later, when Dube was enlisting support for the formation of the SANNC, and appealing to Zulu ethnic sensitivities and sympathies.

Further, Desai and Vahed do not include the conciliatory response that Gandhi himself makes years later, seemingly haunted by the Bambatha Rebellion, but recorded by Lelyveld: "My heart was with the Zulus" [2011:70]. Even if we allow for some "retrospective tidying up" [Lelyveld 2011:71; Desai and Vahed 2015:116], Lelyveld himself observes that the Indian stretcher-bearers in fact ended up treating Zulu prisoners who were badly wounded, and largely "flogged beyond submission" [2011:69]; and he emphasizes that the sheer brutality and horror of the Bambatha Rebellion resulted in intense "soul-searching" [about violence and counter-violence, among other things] on the part of Gandhi [2011:70].

Monumentally, both Dube and Gandhi opposed the Native Land Act passed in 1913, and both were eloquent in denouncing it. The seeds of a slow

evolution from parochial to nationalist sympathies were beginning to take root...As Lelyveld records: “So, strikingly, was Gandhi, in what was really his first serious engagement with any measure weighing on Africans. ‘Every question, not excluding the Indian question, pales into insignificance before the great Native question,’ he now wrote in Indian Opinion. ‘This land is theirs by birth and this Act of confiscation – for such it is – is likely to give rise to serious consequences unless the Government take care’ ” [2011:72].

Indeed, the most remarkable aspect, which Desai and Vahed roundly diminish and dismiss in importance, is that the two political groupings that Dube and Gandhi founded respectively, the African National Congress and Natal Indian Congress, were to become key players in the subsequent resistance against apartheid in the rest of the 20th Century [although Dube himself in ensuing decades moved into ethnic politics, and formed Inkatha, and Gandhi was soon to leave the shores of South Africa, and begin a new political struggle].

All told, we need to be cognizant of the dynamics of race on the colonial frontier at this time, its vexed and volatile nature, and the way resistance leaders “all walked tightropes in a colonial situation” [Saunders 1988:306]. “If Gandhi was in a flux, so was the country,” writes Lelyveld [2011:60]. These were indeed perplexing times, and they were certainly mirrored in the changing choices made by the two great luminaries of the time.

In support of their argument on the nature of race relations on the colonial frontier, Desai and Vahed dissect a selected, frozen segment of Gandhi’s life. However, we do well to remember that Gandhi lived his life prospectively rather than retrospectively, refusing to be “sealed in the materialized Tower of the Past”, to use Fanon’s words in *Black Skin, White Masks* [1967/2005:44]. Notwithstanding, it is almost a cliché now to suggest that Gandhi’s life reflected experiments with truths, and I hesitate to use this in a facile manner to “absolve” Gandhi from accountability and culpability for his actions... Although, it must be pointed out that Gandhi, in the preface to his Autobiography, “refuted the view that his biography could be written as one story ...and perceived his life as a succession of ‘experiments with truth’ rather than a continuum” [Markovits 2004:44].

Desai and Vahed are critical of the way the iconic image that developed around Gandhi after he left South Africa, is used retrospectively, to influence the way his South African years are read. This is their major criticism of Ramachandra Guha's *Gandhi Before India* [2013]. And they seem intent on setting the record straight and asserting the "truth" about Gandhi's South African years. In turn, they deploy their severe critique of the Gandhi of the South African years, to question and discredit the influence Gandhi had on subsequent history in South Africa and that which is attributed to him to this day, arguing that this is tantamount to mindless idolatry.

It seems churlish to "begrudge" the "posthumous life" [Markovits 2004] of Gandhi on the basis of this argument. Arguably, Desai and Vahed are intent on forcing the different Gandhis at different historical moments into the same, static mould, and seem to diminish the possibility for change or evolution, even reversal, and for the likelihood that Gandhi himself could be "unGandhian" [Similarly, the later Marx was quite different from the earlier Marx]. Their intention - to problematise certain received historical knowledges around Gandhi - is not contested. Indeed, we have often been reminded that history, generally, is a construct, a signifying system; that history has a penchant for ideological and essentialised narrativisations. But appealing to the veracity of archival sources, as they do, is inadequate and incomplete. The work of Frederic Jameson, among others, has reminded us that "History is not simply there, ready for us to access. It exists only in textual forms, forms which have to be interpreted. So interpretation is grounded or "horizoned" by history; but history can only be accessed by interpretation" [Roberts 2000: 51].

In taking what seems to be a narrowly linear approach, and working within the ideology of "a unitary self", Desai and Vahed are bordering on a positivist approach, that does not allow for the extraordinary "polysemy" of a multi-faceted figure" such as Gandhi [Markovits 2004:43], or anyone else for that matter. It is arguable that Desai and Vahed are as one-dimensional as the Gandhi hagiographers they [rightly] criticize.

In conclusion, I certainly think that as Gandhi is brought before the Pilates of our time [my friends, Ashwin and Goolam, invoke Biblical language themselves by speaking of a "resurrection" of Gandhi], Gandhi

himself, an “Argumentative Indian” [from Sen 2005], if ever there was one, would today remain very, very silent.

After all is said and done, I think that what is more important is to allow one another’s truths to compete with one another, to order to develop a broader, critical understanding of the issues involved, rather than being dogmatic on either side of the debate. I honestly believe that we should not create opposing camps in relation to our views on Gandhi but find the common ground from which we may work, even with, and in spite of, our differences.

I believe that Ashwin and Goolam and I, together with the rest of our fellow compatriots, are called to join hands in the unfinished business of envisioning and building a brave new world where race is not the defining factor of who we were and are, and who we can become. We have much work to do to reach that moment - the true post-apartheid moment – where we realise the utter “poverty of an ethics and a political morality founded on race” [See Sekyi-Otu 2011]. A search for the sovereign, independent, freed self [true swaraj], in spite of and away from the tyrannies of history, and its interpretations – which Gandhi and Fanon in their different ways ultimately fought for - is the imperative of our times. This is also what Ashis Nandy, the Gandhian scholar, hoped would be achieved, where we transcend the dichotomy between the colonizer and the colonized [Nandy 1988], and become the “intimate enemy” from within our very contexts. Our world needs it more now than ever before...

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Gandhi: The Making of a Mahatma

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Gandhi, like most iconic figures in India, is a man with whom we share a love-hate relationship. In the 150 years, since his birth, he has become a figure, who has been lauded for his principles, his contribution to the national and international space and whose words have slipped from oft quoted lines, to being used in the common parlance, without being recognised as his thoughts. That is the greatness of the man. On the other hand, equally true is the hatred against him, his thoughts and beliefs, the numerous controversies that have stemmed from his words and deeds and the denunciation of him - both as a person and as a public figure. What this birth, but remains unsaid, however, is that these complete contradictions that surround the man are an indication that he is a figure, who refuses to die and go out of the public eye, proving thus his value at a very basic, though ironic level. In fact, an article in Shodhganga tries to capture his impact in 3 stages-“the during-Gandhi period in which Gandhi was usually treated as demi-God, followed by after-Gandhi period which saw the beginning of critical reviewing of Gandhi and finally the post-nineties phase wherein Gandhi is being caricaturised with all sorts of contradictions and rejections” (Shodhganga. com). Juxtaposed to this are the laudatory remarks made by many thinkers and prominent figures of the 20th and 21st centuries, who have found his thoughts, philosophy, actions, in fact his very life, inspiring. One such figure is Dr Martin Luther King, Jr., who has opined, “If humanity is to progress Gandhi is inescapable..... We may ignore him at our own risk.”

Often, like all great truths, the truth of Gandhi - the figure, who has outlived his times - may lie somewhere in between. However, it is not in the purview of this paper to attempt to research this 'truth', what this paper shall however try to do is justify the belief that whoever the being, there are some things that one can learn from and some things that one would not agree with however great or small. Wisdom lies in being able to let go of what one does not find worth considering, while learning from and emulating what is likely to illuminate one's life and add value to it.

Against this backdrop, this paper will try to examine 10 'truths' that Mahatma Gandhi embodied, that, if emulated and brought into practice, can add immense value to each one of our lives; for, as Geoffrey Wardmarch has rightly pointed out, "Gandhi had many messages, some ignored, some misunderstood, some as relevant today as when first enunciated."

- i. Gandhiji was not born a saint, but made a journey towards sainthood: When we refer to or quote a great persona, the reaction of most usually is 'I really can't be as great as him/her, s/he was different! I am a fairly ordinary person.' The unsaid of this however is that we attempt to try to, by using this as an excuse, shield our ego and excuse our inadequacies and unwillingness to rectify our behaviour and make a progress in the desired direction. However, no one is born great or perfect, the great become so, by learning from their mistakes and admitting to their inadequacies, so that not only do they not repeat them, but learn from them to acquire greatness. The still greater make an example of themselves, for others to learn from, without being afraid of being judged; so that the others can avoid these pitfalls or, in actuality, learn from them.

A case in point is the childhood of Mahatma Gandhi, as has been captured in his numerous biographies, each of which has been able to capture hardly a part of this multi-layered persona. In fact, as Geoffrey Ashe points out, about his early life, "In almost nineteen years of education and wedlock, he had shown no outward signs of any distinctive ideas, outstanding virtues, or special talents." As one of his many biographies note, he was timid, diffident and mediocre as a student in school and afraid of ghosts and spirits and rebellious at home.

In fact, his early life had also been dotted by actions that most would consider forbidden or be ashamed of, which included pilfering from his ailing father's wallet and leaving his father's bedside, to indulge in carnal pleasure, as his father lay dying and ultimately passed away.

However, unlike most who attempt to hide or deny their mistakes, he not merely went on to admitting to and learning from them; but went a step ahead to record them, as a lesson for others to learn from; as Mandelbaum remarks "There was little or nothing in his life that he wanted to keep private."

Actually, he went a step further to derive greater principles from his mistakes that go beyond the scope of the issue at hand, to birth a principle that has a far wider applicability. One among these was the notion of ahimsa, which was enshrined in repentance that could be demonstrated through a 'clean confession', like the one he offered his father, when he realised that pilfering from him was an incorrect action. On the other hand, was also the attempt at giving up brute force that he is recorded to have employed with his wife, by learning the value of self-control, which became one among his primary principles. He believed that this self-control was eventually what could lead to renunciation and ultimately to self-actualisation.

- ii. Shramadaan: As Tanveer Jafri wrote in an article, "Gandhi wanted to make the younger children self-dependent. So, he was in favour of 'Shramdaan' (Voluntary Labour). Its motive was that students should learn to be self-dependent and learn voluntary labour contribution for the cause of public interest (Shramdaan). They should learn the dignity of labour and if the need arises, they should be able to do farming themselves. They should be able to help in construction of bridges, dams, tanks, roads, streets etc. The lack of mentality of 'shramdaan' in the society is making the society completely dependent on the government set up."

Ironically, after over a century today we are still divided on this – there is one group, which is as yet stuck in the late 20th century attitude of consumerism that has resulted from globalisation and liberalisation and has birthed a populace, which believes that they or their children are

meant for greater things, which they have earned through inheritance, hard work or intellect. Enrolled in ‘modern’ schools that offer top end facilities, while living in homes, where every notion of comfort is taken care of, doing anything physically is not only unrequired, but is sadly frowned upon and mocked at.

The other is a group that is still further divided into those who, out of a pseudo sense of being ‘in the right’ or then out of a genuine understanding or the force of a policy, are turning towards shramadan or voluntary service, at different levels. In fact, the CSR policy has even turned today’s corporate sector, towards contributing to development, rather than looking merely for profits, though even here those unconcerned find a simpler way out, by merely donating the money.

The need of the hour is to understand the value of each one of us contributing towards national welfare, rather than waiting for the government to resolve all our problems and blaming it for failing to do so. If followed in letter and spirit, this value will not only contribute towards national growth and wellbeing, but also contribute towards shaping better individuals, who are imbued with empathy and who understand the value of service.

- iii. A single person can make a difference: Another common argument that we most often put forth to protect our image and ego is ‘what can I do alone, against such a strong and deeply entrenched system’; this helps us convince ourselves, at all times, and others, about our genuine desire to do something, but the inability to do so because of reasons outside our control. Gandhi was a figure, who proves the contrary. Whether in South Africa or India, Gandhi initiated movements against what he found not acceptable or unjust. He made his intentions and plans clear, many offered to join him, many didn’t and still others opposed him, some of these being from his family and followers. But Gandhi continued undeterred; at times, he and the others with or against him could see the results, at other times they could not. But that did not keep him from trying. Whether it was setbacks or isolation, nothing kept him away from the pursuit of what he believed in. As Stanley

Wolpert points out, “Once he resolved to do something, Gandhi rarely abandoned its practice, pursuing every "experiment" until his "inner voice" dictated otherwise.”

He thus opposed the various injustices meted out to people in South Africa and thought up various strategies to fight for India’s freedom, whether it was Satyagraha or Ahimsa and attempted to put it in practice, through diverse ways – non-cooperation, civil disobedience, fasting and constructive programs, among others. Furthermore, he also widened its scope to tackle social evils, such as racial discrimination and untouchability. Yet, when he started out on his mission, he could never have been sure whether anyone would follow him and if at all they did how many they would be; yet he continued with self-belief that he was doing right and without fear of the consequences. And make a difference he did, not only when and where he led, but indirectly through the influence he had on others – chief among whom were leaders as diverse as Martin Luther King Jr., Nelson Mandela, Ho Chi Minh, Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan and The Dalai Lama, who have openly acknowledged his impact on them.

What drove him, as Balwant Bhaneja points out, was “a deep sense of public duty and a belief that one must be loyal to the State one lives in.”

- iv. Clear vision and the courage to follow through: It is often very simple to fall in line with what the majority is doing, whether right or wrong, either due to the fear of standing out or the faith that, if something were to go wrong, the blame could be shifted or at least the consequences could be shared. What is difficult to do is understand what is right and have the courage to stand by it. While one cannot deny that Gandhiji, at times, gave in to temptations (like the instance when he pilfered from his father), what is equally true is that he had the vision to understand what was right, in a given situation and stand by it, even if alone. One such instance is that of an inspector coming to his school and asking the students to spell five words; while the others spelt them correctly, Gandhi was the only one to make a mistake in one word, as he refused to be prompted by the teacher. He thus rather chose to be wrong than to

be untrue. What is equally interesting about this episode is that this did not create in him a sense of being on a high moral ground or a sense of superiority, as it would have done in most. Consequently, despite the episode, his respect for his teacher did not diminish.

This clear vision also led him to perceive life's higher truths, whether it was that the 'earth has enough for everyone's needs but not for everyone's greed' or that the rich needed to restrict their wants as also treat their wealth as a trust for the poor and use it for their welfare. Moreover, he translated this vision into action, where he was concerned and set an example, by putting his own precepts into practice.

- v. **Courage to admit mistakes and take a step back:** Very often, it is a false sense of bravado or ego or a misplaced sense of hope that keeps us from stepping back, when we realise that a course of action chosen by us is not yielding the results, we had expected. To take such a stance requires great courage; even greater courage is moreover required to take a step back, assess what went wrong and rethink a strategy and march ahead again, after plugging the loopholes. Often, there is a tendency, as mentioned earlier, to keep pursuing the planned course of action, even if one realises that something is going wrong; ironically, even when one has the courage to do so, usually it is followed by the person giving up entirely, arguing that at least s/he has tried; or then, there is a tendency to abandon that route entirely as a mistake and search for/choose a totally different path. In extremely rare cases do people have the courage to admit a mistake, take a step back and rethink the strategy. A case in point, where one witnesses Gandhiji doing this is during the Non Cooperation Movement, when a mob became violent, in Chauri Chaura, in Uttar Pradesh. The individuals involved burned a police station, killing 23 police officials. Gandhiji stopped the movement, remaining true to his stance on non-violent protesting. However, it was a tactic that became one of his signature moves; one which was followed with varied success by numerous leaders, from across the world, though it had its own sceptics. In fact, Satyagraha too works on the same premise that there could be an alternative truth and one must therefore be flexible to seeing, admitting to and standing by it.

Equally poignant, in this context, is his openness to admitting to the mistakes he made, in his married life earlier, in the context of Kasturba and his admission to her having taught him nonviolence, when he tried to bend her to his will. As Dr. Ram Ponnu has remarked, “Her determined resistance to his will, on the one hand, and her quiet submission to the suffering his stupidity involved, on the other, ultimately made him ashamed of himself and cured him of his stupidity in thinking that he was born to rule over her and, in the end, she became his teacher in nonviolence.”

Unlike many public figures Gandhiji shows an unabashed willingness to project them as lessons for others to learn from. Both these – admitting to and learning from one’s mistakes and being candid enough to share them, to serve as examples for others, are indeed traits that anyone, who possesses them is bound to benefit from. Expressed in Gandhiji’s own words, “I am painfully conscious of my imperfections and therein lies all the strength I possess, because it is a rare thing for a man to know his own limitations”. While some may dismiss this as arrogance, a close examination of diverse episodes from his life, a reading of his autobiography and an examination of what multiple leaders have said about him will enable one to understand its value and try to emulate it in letter and spirit.

- vi. Leading from the front: One of Gandhi’s oft quoted statement is ‘My life is my message’, which stands testimony to the fact that he practised what he preached. Whether it is in the context of Satyagraha, Ahimsa, Non Cooperation, brahmacharya, simplicity or frugality, he led from the front. Possibly, that is why he could garner such a wide support. Whether hartals, marches, fast or any other form of social or political protest, he was actively at the forefront. He not only followed this in the public space, but also at home, expecting strict adherence even from family members and showing a willingness to stand up for the principles at the cost even of personal comfort or, at times, the feelings of the person, he was dealing with. One such instance is when he shifted to minimal clothing – that of a loin cloth – and that too, one which was home spun. It is recorded that when Kasturba protested against it, finding khadi too heavy and cumbersome for home chores,

he is famed to have told her not to cook at all, in that case, as he would rather not eat food prepared by her, while wearing an ‘unholy’, foreign cloth. This extreme adherence to principles, and the willingness to go to any length to test them, won him many enemies and opponents, some of whom were from within his own family and close circles. What however needs to be remembered, in this context, is the fact that he stood by what he propagated and did not have different principles in the public and private spheres. In fact, according to some scholars, this is what made him a popular and enduring leader. To quote Surhud, “leading others becomes possible only when you are able to lead yourself, and if you are able to constantly reduce the gap between your words and your deeds.”

- vii. Unwillingness to admit defeat: It was not as if every move and strategy of Gandhiji was successful. There were many setbacks, both in the execution and the failure in achieving the desired results. However, he was not one to give up. He continued undeterred, with his focus, like Arjuna, only on the goal he had set out to achieve. Whether it was in the context of what he set out to achieve in South Africa or India, he carried on, merely on the basis of his firm belief, in what he defined as his goal. He did try alternative means, but never compromised on the goal, whatever the obstacles. Moreover, as Wardmarch points out, “He made a host of enemies along the way — orthodox Hindus who believed him overly sympathetic to Muslims, Muslims who saw his calls for religious unity as part of a Hindu plot, Britons who thought him a charlatan, radical revolutionaries who believed him a reactionary”. Furthermore, for him, the means were as important as the goal. Both these become traits that one can learn from, in an age where shortcuts to achieving objectives have become common, under the misplaced belief that the goal needs to be attained, at whatever cost. In Gandhiji’s own words, “I do disobedience when something is repugnant to my conscience and I choose to recognise a higher law”; an ideal that if followed in spirit would be worth emulating (shodhganga.com).

viii. Opposition to unfair treatment of self/others: Biographers of Gandhi often say that the seeds of his journey towards greatness were laid in South Africa. This may not be far from the truth. It is a well-known fact that Gandhi was evicted from a train compartment in South Africa, despite carrying a valid ticket, due to him being non-White. Instead of accepting his fate, as most would have, in such situations, he chose to fight, not only against the instance – i.e. his unfair treatment – but went on fighting against the principles of discrimination against Indians in South Africa. Moreover, when he was arrested for refusing to carry an obligatory I-card, he made it into a movement involving men and women, leading many into protesting against it, till he achieved victory. As an American biographer of Gandhi has remarked, in this context, “In the end, General Smuts did what every Government that ever opposed Gandhi had to do - he yielded.”

Furthermore, General Smuts was also struck with admiration for Gandhi’s resilience and determination. In lauding his opponent – Gandhi, he said, “The Saint has left our shores; I sincerely hope for ever”. This compliment, though left-handed, goes on to show the perseverance and courage with which had made his rebellion successful.

Equally famous is Gandhi’s stand on giving Pakistan 55 crores in the post-Partition era, which, according to many, eventually led to him being shot. He went on a hunger strike, to push for fulfilling this demand, which was a sum that was mentioned as a part of the division of assets and liabilities, between the two nations, post the separation. This attempt to be fair to a country, which was born of a partition, of which he was not in support, indicates his desire to do what was right, despite his belief or the consequences of his action.

Often our thirst for the right stems from what is good for the self; and this also determines the efforts to see it transform into a reality. On the flip side, there is also a tendency to keep away from what doesn’t directly affect us, usually citing the reason of not wanting to interfere. What Gandhi stood for and taught us, however, was the desire to stand by what is right, despite whether it directly concerned/affected us on

the one hand and its possible consequences on the other. In fact, in the words of Lelyveld, whose biography is not otherwise too flattering of Gandhi, Gandhi “made the predicament of the millions his own, whatever the tensions among them, as no other leader of modern times has.”

- ix. Focused movement towards one’s goals: In his life span of 78 years, Gandhiji worked consistently towards what he believed was right. Whatever the constraints, internal or external, he did not shy away from rising above the challenges, to strive for what he set his sight on. In fact, he truly epitomised one of his oft quoted lines, ‘Be the change you want to see in the world.’ He brought about this change by using every opportunity, however slight, to stand up for what he believed in. A case in point is when he visited the Durban courthouse, in South Africa, soon after his arrival there and was asked to remove his turban, as per the precedents there. He walked out of the court refusing to do so because removing a headgear was a sign of disrespect in India. The South African paper, which reported it, highlighted Gandhiji’s strong sense of personal dignity. He did what he believed was right and marched defiantly towards his objectives without compromising on his principles. The change in him was continuous throughout his life, learning from his experiences and experiments.

More importantly, his experiences and experiments were varied. Yet, whether in the personal or professional pursuit he became, according to Mandelbaum, “something other than he had been before; in each he made a turning that developed out of his previous experience.”

This focus both towards his objective and the lessons that he got while striding towards it, assimilating and drawing inspiration from them, made it possible for him to innovate and carry on. This single-minded focus also made him a strong and difficult opponent. It is in this light that Gilbert Murray “warned persons in power to be ‘careful how they deal with a man who cares nothing for sensual pleasure, nothing for riches, nothing for comfort or praise or promotion, but is simply determined to do what he believes to be right. He is a dangerous and

uncomfortable enemy because his body, which you can always conquer, gives you so little purchase upon his soul.”

- x. Understanding the opponent before fighting it: Many critics of Gandhi argue that he could achieve what he did in the context of British through satyagraha and ahimsa, merely because the empire was already on the wane and it was only a matter of time before the British would leave from the colonies. However, attempting to belittle Gandhi’s contribution, in this manner, would be foolhardy; what one needs to realise and admit is that Gandhi knew his opponents very well and that made him aware of what strategy would help him win against them. Whether it was in the context of South Africa or India, whether against General Smuts or the British Government in India, his studied and multi-pronged approach helped him to reach his objectives and achieve what he wanted. In fact, his belief behind launching the non-cooperation movement was that the British were able to maintain control over India, merely because Indians were cooperating with them in the matter and non-cooperation would thus compel the British, who were in a minority, to quit.

In fact, Patrick French argues that “Having lived in Britain and South Africa, he was familiar with the system that he was attempting to subvert. He knew how to undermine the British, when to press an advantage and when to withdraw. Little wonder that one British provincial governor described Mr. Gandhi as being as ‘cunning as a cartload of monkeys’.”

What one needs to learn from this is the importance of understanding the enemy and choosing one’s strategy accordingly, to minimize efforts and maximize the impact of one’s actions. Usually, one tends to approach an opponent from the strategy one is habituated to or one that has worked in the past. Understandably, not only does it not have the desired effect, but results in predictability, delay and at times wastage of efforts.

Gandhi’s words, actions and deeds have not only been the subject of great controversy, but one of great learning. His influence has been widespread and refuses to die out, even after 150 years. There is no denying that he was human and therefore fallible, yet there was much that could be learnt through his ‘experiments with truth’. However as Patrick French has

pointed out, “Gandhi has become, in India and around the globe, a simplified version of what he was: a smiling saint who wore a white loincloth and John Lennon spectacles, who ate little and succeeded in bringing down the greatest empire the world has ever known through non-violent civil disobedience.”

One may hate him, worship him or try to see him for what he was; however, one thing is certain – one cannot ignore him. For, he was beyond doubt a person, who created ripples not only during his time, but for 150 years since. Despite being all this influential however, he never lost his humility or candid approach. To put it in his words, “There is no such thing as ‘Gandhism’, and I do not want to leave any sect after me. I do not claim to have originated any new principle or doctrine. I have simply tried in my own way to apply the eternal truths to our daily life and problems...The opinions I have formed and the conclusions I have arrived at are not final. I may change them tomorrow. I have nothing new to teach the world.”

This is the humility and courage of a man, who definitely had a lot to offer to those, who could look beyond his limitations and accept him as a human being, with his own set of blemishes and positives. He needs to be seen not as a figure from history, but a person whose story reflects values and principles, which, if emulated, can serve as guideposts to avoid the pitfalls of today and prevent some of the mistakes of tomorrow. In the words of Dalai Lama, “He was a great human being with a deep understanding of human nature. He made every effort to encourage the full development of positive aspects of the human potential and to reduce or restrain the negative.”

We need to see him as a Mahatma that he was – whose greatness lay in his experiments with an ever changing truth, whose journey was ridden with mistakes and who yet chose to learn from them and surge ahead, to achieve what he could in his own way, a man who in Naipaulian terms was a ‘bits and pieces man’, who learnt from diverse sources and constantly reinvented himself. Understanding and accepting this is what would get us above the need to see him in black and white and would liberate us and help us in choosing from among his truths what best suits our needs as individuals and as citizens of the world. He is, after all, what Rushdie calls ‘a product

up for grabs'. Yet whatever the truth, this much remains, to quote Longfellow:

Lives of great men all remind us
We can make our lives sublime,
And, departing, leave behind us
Footprints on the sands of time;

Footprints, that perhaps another,
Sailing o'er life's solemn main,
A forlorn and shipwrecked brother,
Seeing, shall take heart again.

Let us, then, be up and doing,
With a heart for any fate;
Still achieving, still pursuing,
Learn to labour and to wait.

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Relevance of Gandhian Legacy for the Contemporary Women's Movement

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Contemporary feminist's analysis on empowerment of women includes not only sexism but also factors related to racism, classism and imperialism as determining factors in shaping women's status in the private and public realm. This development seems consonant with Satyagraha for which Gandhi was on an inclusive quest to find creative solutions for all forms of oppression. In India and elsewhere, there are healthy movements of Gandhi's followers, and there are more moribund Gandhians who speak in Gandhi's name but also subvert the power of his theory and practice by failing to be open to new movements. Feminists and other women are engaged in many forms of action that Gandhi may not have anticipated. We have much to learn from Gandhi's theory and practice, but not to the exclusion of modern ideas and movements. He said: "I do not want my house to be walled on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any. I refuse to live in other people's houses as an interloper, a beggar or a slave." Mahatma Gandhi's vision of Swaraj in all its facets has permeated the discourse on India's contemporary history. As the most towering figure in India's freedom struggle, Gandhi's role will remain unchallenged. All over the world the imprint of his moral philosophy as a workable political ideology has been particularly indelible. Yet Mahatma Gandhi's positions on social, political and economic matters are transparently evolutionary, a continuing examination of reality, the human condition and truth. Gandhi's attitudes towards women were as much shaped by his innate sense of comparison and justice as they were by the patriarchal albeit benevolent conservatism that was the sheet anchor of

his cultural and social discourse. The contradiction between his liberal feminist pronouncements, his egalitarian, loving and respectful concern for women, and his belief in their role in politics and in society are sometimes difficult to reconcile. Yet Gandhi, more than anyone else, struggled with these paradoxes in the existing social milieu. Comparing his vision of women with the current status of women and the ongoing struggle for women's empowerment will provide a measure of what has been achieved.

In a letter written to Rajkumari Amrit Kaur from Wardha on 21, October, 1936 Gandhi writes,

“If you women would only realize your dignity and privilege, and make full use of it for mankind, you will make it much better than it is. But man has delighted in enslaving you and you have proved willing slaves till the slaves and the slave-holders have become one in the crime of degrading humanity. My special function from childhood, you might say, has been to make women realize her dignity. I was once a slave-holder myself but Ba proved an unwilling slave and thus opened my eyes to my mission. Her task was finished. Now I am in search of a woman who would realize her mission. Are you that woman, will you be one?”

Gandhi was able to devote himself to such a mission and formulated views on all aspects of a woman's life, political, social, domestic and even the very personal or intimate. He was able to do this by liberating himself from the sexual desires that identify the difference between man and woman and thereby positioned himself well above the feminist, becoming instead a reformer of humanity. “True affection does not demand identity of outlook...my passion for brahmacharya has that meaning. I must be wholly pure, if I have true love for womankind” (July 1938). While this gave him the right to demand far-reaching changes in the attitudes of society towards women and the attitudes of women about themselves, he rooted his views on distinctly Indian soil. It was also for the non 'Intellectual among Indian woman.

“I began work among women when I was not even thirty years old. There is not a woman in South Africa who does not know me. But my work was among the poorest. The intellectuals I could not draw...you can't blame me for not having organised the intellectuals among women. I have not the gift...but just as I never fear coldness on the part of the poor when I approach them, I never fear it when I approach poor women. There is an invisible bond between them' and me.” (8 July, 1938)

This is particularly clear in his response to a question asked of him in an issue of the *Harijan* in 1934, in which described the ideal within which he placed as the real “What would determine a woman's varna? Perhaps you will answer that before marriage a woman would take her Varna from her father, after marriage from her husband. Should one understand that you support Manu's notorious dictum that there can be no independence for woman at any stage of her life ...?” In his reply Gandhi analysed the prevailing social situation and went on to state an ideal objective and finally reiterated the reality embedded within the question. He says: “.... owing to the confusion of varnas today, the varna principle has ceased to operate. The present state of Hindu society may have described as that of anarchy; the four varnas exist today in name only. If we must talk in terms of varna there is only one varna today for all, whether men or women; we are all *shudras*. In the resuscitated varna Dharma, as I conceive it, a girl after her marriage, would naturally adopt her husband's varna and relinquish that of her parents. Nor need... any such change... imply a slur since...the age of resuscitation would imply absolute social equality of all four varnas.” (Gandhi, *Harijan*, 1934). Not only does Gandhi automatically accept the secondary status of the woman vis a vis the social identity of her husband or father but he goes on to say, “I do not envisage the wife, as a rule, following an avocation independently of her husband” (Gandhi, 6-3-1937, *Harijan*).

Again, in a letter to Rajkumari Amrit Kaur in answer to a question about the religion of children in mixed marriages, Gandhi reveals his patriarchal bias. “I am quite of opinion the children of mixed marriages

should be taught in the male parent's religion. This seems to me to be self-obvious for common happiness and interest. That the instruction should be liberal goes without saying. I am considering merely the question of choice of religion. The children cannot profess two religions. They must respect the female parent's religion. If the female parent has not that much discretion and regard for her husband's religion, the marriage becomes superficial." One sees Gandhi grappling with what is just and moral on the one hand and with the necessity to assert the paternity rights of the father on the other. In reality, even if there is no respect and the marriage is not a true meeting of minds, the father's religion still prevails, seems to be the unsaid part of the answer.

While adopting a high moral and often conservative position he could the next moment seemingly abandon it for a more fruitful and dynamic postulation that brings him to the forefront of extreme liberalism. Typically, Gandhi was able to step out of his traditional attitudes through the medium of education. When asked to write a primer for school children by Kakasaheb Kalelkar, Gandhi did it in the form of a mother teaching her child in which she explains to her son that housework was good for both mind and body and helped in character building. "Men and women need to be educated equally in housework because the home belongs to both", he wrote. This was part of his efforts to build a wholly new society, without which he believed it was impossible to make an appreciable difference to improve the lot of mankind with the cultural discourse of society as it was, and he never shied from providing direct and practical methodologies to achieve his goals. From feminist ideas in a text book to spinning the charkha for swaraj, he always came up with a constructive proposal to bring women out of their traditional mental fetters and into a more dignified life.

In describing the woman's role as householder and housekeeper, he goes even further in stressing the need for man and woman to "do the duty for which nature has destined us" by finding it "degrading, both for man and woman, (if) the woman should be prevailed upon or induced to forsake the hearth and shoulder the rifle for the protection of that hearth. It is a

reversion to barbarity and the beginning of the end. In trying to ride the horse that man rides, she brings herself and him down. The sin will be on man's head for tempting or compelling his companion to desert her special calling. There is as much bravery in keeping one's home in good order and condition, as there is defending it against attack from without." The contemporary argument for wages to be calculated for women's work at home and the need for economic independence for them to be truly able to act in their own interest overtakes by far Gandhi's traditional perceptions. Today's liberated woman would find his position almost unacceptable. They would argue that while women's special calling may be child nurturing, peace loving and preservation they are capable of performing all tasks hitherto left to men.

But Gandhi revealed a deep understanding of the pulse of society, and reflected its rhythm. He offered spinning and the salt agitation as nonviolent ways for women to join the political movement for swaraj. He saw it as right as well as possible for women at that time in history. By 1940, he had provided modifications to his earlier more generalized approach to women's contribution to public life. In an issue of the Harijan of that year there are questions about the rising participation of women in activities outside the home:

- Q. The awakening of civil and political consciousness among Indian women has created a conflict between their traditional domestic duties and their duty towards society. If a woman engages in public work, she may have to neglect her children or her household. How is this dilemma to be solved?
- G. More often than not a woman's time is taken up, not by the performance of essential domestic duties, but in catering for the egoistic pleasure of her lord and master and for her own vanities. To me this domestic slavery of the kitchen is a remnant of barbarism mainly. It is high time that our women kind was freed from this incubus. Domestic work ought not to take the whole of a woman's time.

Despite a change in attitude, he seems to have the middle class woman rather than the poor woman in mind, and adheres to the position that a woman should be able to order her household duties in such a manner as to complete them and yet have enough time for public work where she has to abjure vanities. The onus is still on the woman. However, Gandhi was always willing to modify his own stated positions. He simply resolved his contradictions by responding instinctively and practically to a situation as he saw it. For instance, in the second set of questions and answers he tackles the male offenders thus:

Q: At the elections, your Congressmen expect all manner of help from us, but when we ask them to send out their wives and daughters to join us in public work, they bring forth all sorts of excuses, and want to keep them close prisoners within the four domestic walls.

G: Send the names of all such anti-diluvian fossils to me for publication in the Harijan.

Liberation of woman, as Gandhi saw it, was linked to a deep-seated malaise. Dr. S. Muthulakshmi Reddy wrote a long letter to Mahatma Gandhi as far back as 1929, in which she raised some fundamental issues concerning social reform. She also questioned him as to why the Congress, which was fighting for the freedom of the nation and the individuals, should not first liberate their women from the evil customs and conventions that restricted their healthy all-round growth. She considered it a specific instance of social tyranny. Indian women, with a few exceptions, have lost the spirit of strength and courage, the power of independent thinking and initiative which actuated the women of ancient India, such as Maitreyi, Gargi and Savitri. Although Gandhi agreed with her in a rather perfunctory way, he was not prepared to tackle the issues of social and religious customs so directly at that point of time and centered his response thus, "Men are undoubtedly to blame for their neglect, nay their ill use of women, and they have to do adequate penance, but those women who have shed superstition and have become conscious of the wrong have to do the constructive work of reform. The question of liberation of women,

liberation of India, removal of untouchability, amelioration of the economic condition of the masses and the like, resolve themselves by penetration into the villages, reconstruction or rather reformation of the village life”(Barot & Pargi, 2017). To achieve one's goal of liberation from the various shackles of society he believed that had to work for total change starting in the villages. The late Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay, a well-known freedom fighter, political and social activist, an effective constructive worker, and motivator of India's cultural renaissance asserted that while the progressive status of women in the freedom movement was amply propelled by male social reformers, it was actually the advocacy of women which influenced many male leaders including Gandhi.

In 1983, the women's movement in India was just beginning to mobilize itself. Kamaladevi was witness to and part of valiant efforts by women to “not only push forward their own progress but act as levers to help other oppressed sections, while facing fierce hostility.... there were no grants to feed such activities; no awards, titles, national recognition, no press publicity instead a lot of abuse.” She defines women's actions of that time to be for equal rights which could not be described as feminist. “Women’s problems were never sought to be treated on a sex basis but as social maladies of a common society, men and alike. What is indeed significant is the danger signals she saw at this time.” Habit, complacency and consequent lack of vigilance which fast undermined women and eventually deprived them of whatever gain they have been able to secure over the years. There are numerous subtle ways of ignoring women and abridging their rights. She lamented that woman had docilely accepted the situation of "helper" and that their work in political parties was only to mobilise support for the party and not to assert their personalities or strength as political entities. Mahatma Gandhi believed that satyagraha was the most powerful weapon in a nonviolent struggle. Satyagraha involves defiance. It involves the willful, peaceful, breaking of laws that are unjust. It means picketing, protesting, squatting, obstructing, challenging and publicly resisting wrongs. Since women were the most nonviolent and ardent lovers of peace, it could be sharpened and extended as a weapon in women's struggles for justice and equality. To him the ultimate ahimsa and

satyagraha was when women, in vast numbers, rose up to put an end to the destructive aspects of male dominance in society. Had the momentum of freedom struggle not been slowed down, such mobilization could have attracted many more women into public life. Political activity geared towards the transformation of society into the holistic, integrated entity as Gandhi had visualized has not yet crystallized. Satyagraha is now just a word, a mere symbol, that serves no purpose for the academic or the elite, or even the middle class feminist whose dialectic emerges from a theoretical background far removed from Gandhi's poor women who act because they have no use for words to explain themselves. Among those women who today have made satyagraha a mode of struggle for a better world are the *meira peibi* of Manipur who stand in clusters on the roadside outside their village with flaming torches to protest against men who indulge in drugs and alcohol which are jointly ruining the youth of north-eastern India. These women also raise their voices against the excesses the security forces and form a protective shield around their villages against them. They do not quote Gandhi nor term their struggle as satyagraha but their steadfast, powerful and peaceful picketing has all the elements of struggle in the manner, Gandhi himself would have wished.

The anti-liquor movement of Andhra Pradesh built up gradually in the minds of poor and illiterate women who for long years suffered the ill effects of alcohol consumption by their men folk. For families steeped in poverty, for women who were subjected to domestic violence related to alcohol, for wives rebelling because they had nothing to lose, they fulfilled Gandhi's wish of deciding no longer to be slaves of the situation as "No one can be exploited without his or her willing participation". Gandhi said that women "strengthen my belief in swadeshi and satyagraha. If I could inspire in men devotion as pure as I find in the women, within a year, India would be raised to a height impossible to imagine. As for swaraj it was the easiest thing in the world" (Singh, 2001). Gandhi expected them to battle from their homes, while still fulfilling their traditional roles. "If we send them to the factories, who will look after our domestic and social affairs? If women go out to work, our social life will be ruined and moral standards will decline" (Ranchod-Nilsson & Tetreault, 2000). The superior qualities of

women and the intrinsic difference between man and woman was highlighted by Gandhi consistently. Since he believed that women could bring about swaraj better and were the very embodiment of nonviolence, for him they were greater soldiers and beneficiaries of his swaraj campaigns. The three famed spearheads of these campaigns were the manufacture of salt, boycott of foreign cloth and shunning of liquor which he said “were specially meant for the villages and the women would benefit especially.” In 1930, Mithiben Petit reported to Gandhi that habitual drunkards were enthusiastically breaking earthen jars containing toddy and that thousands of persons in Surat who gave in to drinking had started having resolutions passed by their castes prohibiting drinking.

Somewhere along the way, however, the issues close to Gandhi’s heart have been largely left by the wayside by women who became part of the power structure, as well as by the emancipated women’s groups. Organizations involved in trade union work, social reform and development issues have in part or in whole addressed the issue of prohibition, but neither have women as a group in parliament nor through institutional structures raised this demand loudly and effectively. Prohibition is not accepted when it is presented as a moral issue alone and therefore the argument has to include developmental priorities, revenue collection, and budgetary allocations to social welfare, health and other sectors which rural women are unable to undertake.

The salt satyagraha and boycott of foreign cloth emphasizes the indigenous, but the feminist movement has not associated itself with the swadeshi movement except for the Gandhian elements within the various groupings. The wearing of khadi and handloom among the younger activists is more as the badge of a progressive liberal rather than as a commitment to the foods of indigenous manufacture. These are no longer taken up as issues of struggle although many women are part of the wider movement against the neo colonial pressures of the new world trade regime which destroy both sovereignty and national resources. Many institutions and organizations representing women’s rights have a high visibility in the cosmopolitan arena and have effectively expressed their concerns. Their

members have also decisively moved far ahead of Gandhi's vision of fearless women. Alert, active and bold, they engage in constant discussion and introspection for genuine equality. While all women's agendas prescribe peace and nonviolence, the feminisation of the military and police and, the expanding membership of women in militant groups that do not abjure the use of arms are all a sad cry away from what Gandhi viewed to be a woman's special role.

While middle class women were visibly active side by side with Mahatma Gandhi, wearing khadi, going to jail, organising resistance against the British in some creative and selfless way, the socially conscious middle class woman of today has largely shunned direct political activity, preferring to seek more secure ground in funded social work through voluntary organisations. A growing number of emancipated, educated, young women are being diverted by market oriented consumerism in the name of modernity and liberation. They become packaged products for marriage, beauty or fashion markets, a professionalised catering to "the vanities" that Gandhi spoke of. This depoliticizes them to such an extent that the cream of young women students is unavailable to articulate the needs of their underprivileged sisters. This results in a wider cultural and social divide emerging between the rural and urban woman. It also demonstrates that emancipation does not mean empowerment in the Gandhian sense if women move away from involvement with the deeper seated problems facing India.

Compared to the momentous work of stalwarts like Sarojini Naidu, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, Dr. Muthulakshi Reddy, Lakshmi N. Menon and Annie Besant and organisations like the All India Women's conference, the Arya Samaj and many others during Mahatma Gandhi's time, the collective or individual work of women in the political arena in the post-independence era has been unremarkable. This clearly does not take into account the phenomenon of Indira Gandhi or the many successful efforts of various women's organisations in bringing about legislation to improve the status of women. Self Employed Women's Association of Ahmedabad is a fine example of Gandhi's ideas put into practice but it lacks political power to

influence change in the society around it. The fact that women have never held more than 10 percent of the seats in parliament or jobs in the decision making levels of the administration shows that there is a long way to go before gender parity is achieved.

While in some spheres women have implemented Gandhi's words on shedding their role as slaves and facing patriarchal challenges, women have largely slipped away from the paths of political action that Gandhi had opened out for them during the freedom movement. For instance, outside the home and far from the hearth, individual women from the middle classes have achieved remarkable prominence in fields such as aviation, science and space technology, administration, education, literature and the arts. Unfortunately, the women of the rural classes are subjected to the same oppression as before, not only by the men within their caste but by upper caste communities who carry out reprisals on communities from the under castes. The recent political empowerment of the backward castes has found a corresponding rise in the suppression of their own women, reflecting the existing ethos of rural society. Neither has an effective political leadership risen from amongst them to give courage nor are emancipated urban women able to provide the kind of sustained leadership rural women need largely because of class and caste differences.

On paper, India is far ahead in policies and legislation favouring women. It adopted universal franchise before many other nations. Yet men in the political structure refuse to acknowledge the relationships between social justice and gender justice while women outside the political system are unable to effectively implement and integrate the two most powerful national and international agendas. The increasing criminalization of politics and the use of vast sums of unaccounted money and ugly muscle power by caste and criminal gangs present an entire hostile environment for women who wish to pursue a political vocation. With both caste and gender groups perpetuating traditional and modern divisions and indigenous human resources being replaced by western technologies the mission of Gandhi and the dreams of women are yet to be fulfilled.

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Why now? Hey Ram! Gandhi 2019 and the New Graffiti on an already bleeding tombstone

- Dr. Sridhar Rajeswaran

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All narratives, even if they are attempts at a paper, at some point or other, become personal and it is my belief that on a subject like Gandhi, it cannot be, for obvious reasons anything else. His life was his message and an absence of the practice of his tenets, in some small way or the other, or at least as a palatable memory, offers one no point of entry into either the Man or his writings. Having said this, his writing is the only conclusive statement on the man for, he was writing meaning, writing amidst historical turmoil, writing in history, writing history, and doing so when he himself was the history he was writing about, in short, being history as also the interrogations of it – a ‘Bearing Witness’ self and narrative. That precisely ironically perhaps, is the reason behind, why some scholars when they take a new glance at the times gone by, from the vantage point of the present, hear newer resonances while there are others who choose to remain blinded by the aura and the glow, as it helps them retain the same awe and wonder that inspired the persons around him as it continues to inspire certain Gandhians the conscience keepers of the world, as evidenced in this august audience, as evidenced in some people I know.

My knowledge of Gandhi was shaped in a household that had no ostentatious display pictures of him – they had been taken away – but a household that echoed ideals of service, a household that reverberated continuously to some comment or other about him and the freedom movement. I was born 13 years after Independence 12 years after his martyrdom and 10 years after the Constitution of India. Nehru, Gandhi, Annie Besant, Ambedkar and EVR, constituted political discourse, white Spartan clothing the general habit, and evenings were for prayers and studies for the little ones, me and my sisters and cousins, and then the family, nine in number, somehow found itself all together in the living room, all in one place, a different kind of learning time. It usually ended with the irate monologist voice of disgruntled angst from my disillusioned grandfather silencing alternate view-points before dinner could be served. I remember this as I was eternally hungry and waited with bated breath for the early signs of anger and heaved a sigh of relief, the moment I could spot it, for he was very short-tempered and as regards his disgust it was quicker, and, I knew that, when it arrived, dinner was just a few moments away. We all shared the meal and ate in surreptitious silence. There were occasions when I with pride cast a mischievous sideways glance at the other members on the eating line and silently smirked when I was the culprit who had hastened the old man's ire and which I had become adept in doing with consummate ease - certain posture shifts, just about audible sighs with some gestures that pointed to the stomach and mouth which he was perceptive enough to register. I was so clever the family had much to thank me for and I felt gratified as the little plans I hatched never pushed things beyond a threshold, in short the perfect limit of going just that far and no further.

Night happened for me at 8:25. My biological clock was unerring. Sleep was always induced by songs of Swami Vivekananda, or on Gandhi, or some freedom song, or the maritime arrival of the British, sung by my grandmother in her almost a whisper contralto voice – the old man needed to hear the sounds of silence – as she stroked my hair and lulled me to sleep. At times it used to be a grandmother's tale or some odd personalized freedom narrative that involved my grandfather, always punctuated by his

obduracy, obstinacy and irate indignation that wrote him out of the thick of things, that he wrote himself out of the thick of things and transformed himself from a very rich man to a man landless having given away his estates to Indian National Congress. He never retained anything, except his sense of service to many a poor. He did not find place even as a footnote in the freedom struggle, though his service as a doctor did not go unnoticed.

To us he was a real practicing doctor of western medicine LM&S (Licentiate in Medicine and Surgery, Register number 932, Madras Medical College) and he was also a 'Vaidyar' of repute, an authority on Ayurveda, his articles on comparative medicine winning for him 25 rupees per article those days. In retrospect though, he, Gandhi and Nehru are indicted for leaving me a very poor man. Gandhi's 1920 visit to Malabar, Calicut beach actually began it, the 1934 visit heightened it and Nehru's letter on his return from his Dehra Dun jail, between his 8th and 9th term, after February 28th and before April 19th 1941 sealed it in a manner of speaking, and tongue in cheek, he could have at least left me his imported Willys Jeep, Studebaker Champion and Vauxhall cars – light six 14 models, that were popular between 1933 and 1948.

I did not understand much of the political discourse nor did I realize at that time what was being said. When I was nine I was one day sent to my school to deliver an absolutely hagiographic – a word which I learnt much later -speech on October 2nd 1969, commemorating the centenary of the Father of the Nation, ghost-written of course by my wise cousin, punctuated by his mother my widowed aunt who brought me up, and of course with the man who knew Gandhi and Nehru personally, adding the finishing touches with customary words of “learn'd length and thundering sound to amaze the gazing rustics gathered around. I must confess though I felt happy if the old man intervened, but my cousin wrote me anything as he did almost always used as his turn of phrase though high-flown was very pleasant and easy to memorise. He was always there to write me a speech for almost any occasion including the one which still reverberates in my mind, my Independence Day speech of 1971, significant, for it gave me more importance than all others. The one time, my Head-Mistress wrote me a speech, I scoffed at it and delivered it to imperfection as a punishment to

my aunt who was in the audience. I liked the speeches thus, because for one I felt it show-cased me as someone who was better than my class mates, second I had a real speech written with very many big words, third I knew my teachers too were impressed and four I liked theatricality, the aplomb and I strutted – well! My wife and guide is quick to point out to me that I am worse with my writing today, more melodramatic, much to my chagrin.

I remember the beginning of that speech, October 2nd 1869 is indeed a memorable day in the annals of Indian history for it saw the birth of one of the greatest of men Mahatma Gandhi, to commemorate whose centenary we have assembled here today. I did not know the meaning of the word annals or commemorate in the very first statement nor why was he one of the greatest of men and I confess much of what I had spouted were just words and sentences memorized with underlined stress marks, tones and informed pauses. Neither did I know Hume, Wedderburn and W.C. Banerjee, Lal Pal and Bal characters from the other speech or the reason behind alliteration of words like, dauntless dominant and decisive force in the freedom struggle being Gandhi and the Indian National Congress.

Slowly with the passage of time many new names were getting added to my repertoire and further I had also heard and chanted slogans for Old Congress with the same tenacity as I had recited the Vedic slokas, sung patriotic songs of Bharati and also Christmas carols and it was during these formative years I got to know the spinning wheel and the couple of bullocks before the ‘proverbial hand’ took over. My home that was a mix of many streams, confluence of contradictory thoughts, eclectic, without caste differences at least in practice. This I must high-light as I was often fed by my domestic help – another surrogate mother, Parvati by name- in her hut, along with her son, fish which I was not supposed to eat but demanded I too be given and then in quickness double breaking a promise and rushing home to reveal our secret to my aunt who went ballistic and took it out on the hand that fed me.

Should I have learnt though not to lie but to hide the truth – Gandhi would not want it – I do not know but then there were other hypocrisies and

high-handedness which I needed to unlearn and sought to do so unsuccessfully I guess, but one which I never unlearned was the fondness for a man, who stole and stopped stealing tidbits to munch, like me, though in my instance it extended to the neighbour's mangoes and gooseberries and guavas, a respect for his ability to utter truth and much later in high school reliving his superfluous starch on collars even as I starched my white poplin school uniforms and much later my white, almost blue - made blue with tin opal and robin blue – khadi shirts for a monochromatic habit with my blue jeans, ideas of labour and Americanisms creeping into my life.

I had also by eighteen realized the white in our household, the simplicity and the Spartan order was also due to precarity other than altruisms idealisms and ideology. I was a bearing witness to the passing away of an older order confused by the alarms of fear and fright, but the one thing remained intact was the deep embedding that I would not have been free but for a man called Gandhi, a Mahatma. The irony is I learnt this as a student of English Literature in the year 1979, trying to understand the machinations of a minute man Macaulay even while simultaneously reveling in the theatricality of Shaw's *Pygmalion* enforced through Alan Jay Lerner's *My Fair Lady*, Audrey Hepburn – tongue in cheek – still my original crush with whom I have had vicariously many a *Breakfast at Tiffany's*.

Ever since personally I have added newer names and newer ideas to the repertoire - Marx, Fanon, revolutionists, revolutionaries learnt of existential angst, nihilist attitudes, the absurd order, the so many revolutions and wars perforce. One has witnessed ever new problems in an ever-changing world order and played host to falsifying new structures of feeling, confounding the confusion one is already trapped in with one becoming a prisoner without a name in a cell without a number.

One has tried to desperately distance oneself from this impossible man, tried pointing him out from afar as secluded royalty, tried to salvage oneself from being branded a pseudo secularist, a lip-level practitioner of his tenets, an altruistic idiot, a very clever hypocrite and an anachronistic

loser. But try as you may there is his shadow like the looming proverbial red rock beckoning you:
(Come in under the shadow of this red rock), he says

And I will show you something different from either
Your shadow at morning striding behind you
Or your shadow at evening rising to meet you;
I will show you fear in a handful of dust.

It is four decades since, forty years; one still can't get the man out of one's system. This in spite of the various fights one has had imaginatively with his tenets that are beyond my ability to practice, with ideals that are difficult for me to even dream, with a commitment that is a nightmare, with a vision I have difficulty grasping, with sacrifice and selflessness that appear a fairy tale, with experiments with truth in the laboratory of life looming fictional, with his really real self being history, with our having made him a myth, in short him being the impossible i.e., Gandhi. Well how may we, as try hard as we may, we may manage to take India out of Gandhi but never The Gandhi out of India and by extension the worlds of his times.

In the course of these years one has re-educated oneself, been able to see the man in his true light, the stances he took, the minor contradictions he subordinated in favour of negotiating major ones as is the norm, the only possible alternative that is available to anyone, a Satyagrahi, practicing ahimsa and fighting violent forces. Inconsistencies in the order of his self and the political decisions he took have been interrogated, in many instances also in tones that do not do justice to his greatness and the monumental task he had in front of him. The issues of caste, colour and his secular stand have been the ones that have invited the worst detractors and the fact of the matter is Gandhi knew about this and strove to unlearn the inconsistencies of his own traditional intellectualism.

In fact Ambedkar and his writings, as pointed out by Guha in his classic and iterated in his interview to NDTV, if I have grasped it right,

clearly showcased that it was a the dialogue between the two, a dialectical engagement with practices in the field of praxis with the one locating the loophole in theories of reform and with the other trying to personally and politically resolve it, was the momentum that is the stuff social changes seek and are made of. One may not at any point in time obviate the attempts and if there are scar marks in his vision that raises questions, we must remember that Gandhi spared no efforts in his too relentless pursuit to erase them

Until the recent past, writing as it had emanated, even the ones that interrogated him viciously, were positive inputs to a body of knowledge on Gandhi that was edifying especially in its tone which is very important when such discourse is stylistically understood and processed.

One could until recently maintain the love for this man and respect for what he did to us within the specific binary of what he was and what he became. The same was the case with what we knew of the man in his twenty-year sojourn in Africa. Lesser minds like me felt this was the testing fields and the most significant years in the life of a man who became a father of a nation, a spokesperson for humanity. Consequently for the purposes of this short piece that borders on personal ramblings I have decided to focus on this period, especially in the light of the Gandhi Must Fall movements that have surfaced at a time when we need the man so much more and which seems to have received covert and overt support. Further this was the space which made him the man who gave me my freedom and hence is definitely a person I cherish and this despite my formative years and or the proselytization process, as some of my friends opine when I become blind to any counter view-point about this man

In 1893, at Pietermaritzburg station, he got thrown out of a train and came to realise the difference between Britishness and Englishness, the difference in being a colonial subject as opposed to being an imperial citizen, the difference the colour of one's skin made. This turning moment also marks the beginning of Gandhi the Public Speaker, and within a year in 1894 he founded the Natal Indian Congress. He becomes an ambulance

driver during the Boer War of 1905, a strategic decision perforce, due to not wanting to completely alienate himself from the British. He returned to India, moved a resolution on South Africa at the Calcutta congress session, and at the insistence of his fellow countrymen went back to South Africa the very next year. A year after that, in 1903 he founded the Transvaal British India Association. In 1904 he took the management responsibilities of the 'Indian Opinion'. After that it was the Phoenix Settlement in 1906, passive resistance movement in 1909. This year was also note-worthy in that he wrote the classic Hind Swaraj હિંદ સ્વરાજ. On 9th January 1915 he returned to India, the second phase of his life completed, he was 46.

A point is in order here. There was a lot in the initial stages that was not desirable in Gandhi, especially in the eyes of the South African children of the soil, and he continues to receive flack even today. To be fair to Gandhi, this particular phase needs to be divided into two parts; one as the man who arrived from India and the other the man who left South Africa as they were two different persons. Further, as pointed out earlier there were certain historical compunctions which impinged on his conscience perhaps taking a back-seat in the man who had arrived in South Africa though it is not to absolve him of the certain stances he took which were not consistent with the Mahatma he was to become. That is precisely the point, the Mahatma is in waiting. This definitely was not the case with the Man who left South Africa and judging this man with the same optics and parametric frames will tantamount to passing a judgment "under a foreign code of conscience." Suffice to state that the man who got it right was none other than Mandela.

Mandela crystallized it when he said, "India gave South Africa Gandhi the barrister and Africa gave India back Mahatma Gandhi the Great Soul."

He did start as a racist immature settler in South Africa alright much to the chagrin of many people. It may even be safely argued that the 1893 episode did not still make him a world citizen. It only made him understand that he was no more British. He had to wait a little longer to evolve. He recanted many of his prejudices only after 1906 perhaps to earn the tag of a

Mahatma in Waiting. Actually 1893 begins a personal quest that totally transforms the man by 1906. Nelson Mandela³ actually locates the chronotopic moment of transformation in the Bambatha rebellion⁴ – chronos: 1906, topos: Nkandla Forest. Mandela goes on to add, that “He (Gandhi) took a vow of celibacy and wrote to his brother that he had no interest in worldly possessions”.⁵

A brief look at some of the important statements from Gandhi after 1908 actually showcases the transformation best.

Come 1908, Gandhi was a different man. He had long moved away from his kafir stand and also realized the centrality of the Africans and the true meaning of a rainbow civilization. During the course of the struggle, Gandhi widened his horizon and publicly supported African rights. He declared in an address to the YMCA in 1908: “South Africa would probably be a howling wilderness without the Africans...” “If we look into the future, is it not a heritage we have to leave to posterity that all the different races commingle and produce a civilisation that perhaps the world has not yet seen.” In October 1910 he said: “The whites... have occupied the country forcibly and appropriated it to themselves. That, of course, does not prove their right to it. A large number even

3 “His awakening came on the hilly terrain of the so-called Bambatha rebellion... British brutality against the Zulus roused his soul against violence as nothing had done before. He determined on that battlefield to wrest himself of all material attachments and devote himself completely and totally to eliminating violence and serving humanity.” *ibid*.

4 In mid-1906, the Natal colonialist in the face of rising Zulu resentment against the imposition of a 'Poll Tax' unleashed one of the most brutal and bloody armed campaign to suppression the challenge to British colonial rule. The protest and subsequent armed rebellion against the tax has become popularly known as the Bambatha/Bambatha* Rebellion after Chief Bambatha kaMancinza, head of the Zondi, a Zulu clan that lived in the Mpanza Valley in the Greytown district. Chief Bambatha, with the support of other chiefs in the area, refused to accept a new tax that was being implemented by the colonial administration. Together with a small group of supporters, he launched a series of attacks against the colonial forces, using the Nkandla Forest as a base. The campaign, later known as the Bambatha Rebellion, culminated in a pitched battle against the colonial forces at Mome Gorge, where Bambatha and his followers were finally defeated. In general terms, the Rebellion was a response to the harsh policies that the Zulu population was subjected to by the colonial administration in Natal, as well as a number of other contributing factors. <https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/bambatha-rebellion-1906>

5 Op.cit, (Gandhi) Bracketted content my own for purposes of clarity.

from among them believe that they will have to fight again to defend their occupation.” This was the reason behind Gandhi being with the Empire, after all we in India did manage to impel them. Gandhi was moved by the courage and determination of women in the last stage of Satyagraha in 1913. The heroism of the working men and women led him to declare in 1914, “These men and women are the salt of India; on them will be built the Indian nation that is to be.”

That the practitioner of Non-violence unparalleled perhaps after Christ met with a very violent end is a lesson for humanity.

What is strange though is the new graffiti on his tomb stone, scathing in tone, re-possessing history, scarring and marring, which however academically brilliant does not stand the test of poetic commitment, gets muddled and wrapped up in the politics behind, at a time when the world perhaps needs him more.

Further, “Gandhi left behind, for better or worse, not only the Natal Indian Congress but also the very practice of a Congress representing a population in a manner officially unrecognized by the legitimate state. Even more, he pioneered much of the essential pattern of the urban South African leader: ecumenical, spiritual, self-sacrificing, participatory, and media-aware. His reworked memory was deployed again in “passive resistance” campaigns, in favour of unity after the terrible killings in Cato Manor in 1949, and in the 1950s and beyond. Was this a baneful legacy? Did he bequeath South African progressive politics a viable mode for opposing oppression? Or as claimed he was just a stretcher bearer?” Just imagine the width and length of the Empire, there was the Irish ascendancy actually fighting for the British in the Boer war. The world order was different and so was the resistance and so were the agendas of the resistance

Men can be shot, statues can be broken, tombstones effaced, made to bleed but for now why want a Mahatma hanged thirty years earlier and tomorrow we will want the Nile dredged to remove the silted traces of his ashes. We forget he is responsible for giving you the tongue;

You taught me language; and my profit on't
Is, I know how to curse. The red plague rid you
For learning me your language!

These new graffiti render him a question mark. It has emerged because they have different optics, with some looking through passively reflecting convex lenses, with some through active concave ones and some looking through dark glasses, and some looking through dark glasses, darkly.

See through lenses that do away with one's own myopic vision and what we see clearly is not merely the man or a statue but a Mahatma.

On this note Satyamevjayate.

Close to the Mahatma

- Mr. Pheroze Nowrojee

Mr. Pheroze Nowrojee, born in Nairobi, is a leading human rights lawyer, a poet, and a writer, who over many decades has been an influential part of the political and social movements for constitutional and social change in Kenya. He has written on Kenyan and Diasporan history and delivered the Yale Annual Gandhi Lecture 2017 at Yale University. He has co-authored the Asian African Heritage Trust, Nairobi, Kenya. Pheroze has been awarded the Republic of India Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award in 2007. He is a poet, newspaper columnist and author of a Kenyan Journey and has published numerous articles in legal and constitutional areas.

In the chill dark of the Highlands, small groups stood on the cleared ground that served as the station platform. Mist moved about. It was long past midnight. In the approaching train, a man was still reading a book. He had been alerted by the guard. As it neared Lumbwa on the Western Rift, the train slowed unexpectedly, for it was not a scheduled stop. The man stood up and, lowering the window, looked out.

His name was Charlie Andrews. In 1904, the Reverend Charles F. Andrews had come out to India from Britain as a Missionary. After spending time at Delhi University, he joined Tagore at Shantiniketan. Then, at the request of Prof. Gokhale, he had gone to South Africa to see Gandhi and *satyagraha* at work. There in the Mahatma's South African struggles had been forged a close and lasting bond between them. After Gandhi left South Africa, their work continued in India, together in the struggle against the British. And now, in 1920, this trusted friend of Gandhi was in Kenya, at the direction of the Mahatma, to report on the discriminatory treatment of the Indians here, and more importantly, on the intense political push by the colonial settlers for White Self-rule and racial supremacy in Kenya.

Ahead he saw a few lanterns along the line of the train. Over the grating metal of the brakes bringing the train to a hissing halt, he heard voices in the dark. Some were calling, 'Here, here.' From the other end,

fainter voices also said, 'Here, here.' Yet others said, 'No, no. Here.' He heard sounds of people slipping on the high ballast around the sleepers, and stumbling as they ran in the darkness, unsure of where to find him. The women called out anxiously to the children, 'Where are you going? Come back here.'

When at last it was discovered which window he was at, an irregular semi-circle of the lanterns materialized below his compartment. They recalled for him simple Diwali lamps in a small town. The ladies, clad in sarees and meekness, stood at the edges, holding garlands of flowers in their hands. Several people spoke at once. A small boy kept calling out, 'Mr. Andrew, Mr. Andrew, Mr. Andrew.' One of the mothers stepped forward shyly and said, '*Namaste*.' Andrews joined his palms in response and bowed his head quickly. A bigger boy in a school uniform with a tie and blazer kept raising his hand up, offering something to Andrews. Andrews leaned down and took the object and held it up to the compartment light. It was a one shilling coin. Andrews leaned down again and said, 'I will give it to Bapu. It will be put to good use. Thank you, thank you.'

Different voices sought to engage him, till someone hushed them. Mr. Barot cleared his throat. In the silence of the dark, it sounded unduly loud. He was about to make a speech. Mr. Barot was the senior clerk in the High Court at Kisumu. On receiving his instructions from Congress earlier in the day, he had rushed over to Lumbwa. On his way, he had thought back to the speech of the Chief Justice when the latter had opened the Criminal Appeal Sessions that year, and Mr. Barot tried to incorporate as much of it as he could in his speech. The Station Master whispered, "Quickly, quickly. The train must go."

Mr. Barot looked disdainfully at the insignificant official, who, unlike him, was not among those who habitually were near the Chief Justice and the Puisne Judges. Assuming his deeper voice, he started: 'Distinguished Reverend Andrews, we thank the Almighty for return of peace. We are thanking you also for all efforts for freedom that you are making for us. We condemn bad behaviour to you by certain persons in

Nakuru. We know you have been treated in hospital by doctors. But that has not stopped you, you are still helping us. You are good man. [There were murmurs of approval.] We know you have been berated and beaten for working for Mahatma Gandhi and for our freedom. God Save the King.’ He stopped abruptly. ‘My youngest daughter will now present you with our flowers.’

He held up the small girl to the carriage window, while the ladies with the garlands stepped forward and gave them to the girl who stretched and handed them over one by one to Andrews. Andrews was deeply moved. He was very familiar with their significance, and with awkward movements placed them around his own neck. A few people clapped. He kept repeating, ‘Thank you, thank you.’

The Station Master shifted uneasily from one foot to the other. He would have to explain the halt in the night and the consequent delay and wanted it as short as possible. The passenger train did not normally stop at Lumbwa. But, in the evening, he had received a call on the railway telephone, and the Station Master, Nakuru had begun speaking to him in an urgent voice. Quite improperly, the instructions had been given only in Punjabi. After he had received the instructions, unsupported by any official telegraph memoranda, he understood the situation, and knew that Driver Bishen Singh Bedi on the passenger train that night, was also in the know. He had willingly agreed, but he felt the shorter the time it took, the better the explanations would hold.

Two days ago, shocking news had reached the Indian community throughout the colony. The Reverend Charles Andrews, the messenger of Mahatma Gandhi, his trusted friend, a freedom fighter known throughout India, who was visiting to report on the situation of the Indians in Kenya, had reached Nakuru. There, he had been dragged out of his train compartment and been kicked and beaten by a gang of British settler youths. Andrews had been taken to hospital and had been treated by doctors.

There was satisfaction when the community learnt that, in London, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, then Mr. Winston Churchill had expressed his view that the offenders should have received the punishment they deserved. But the Rev. Andrews had declined to press charges. The community agreed that that only showed how worthy the Reverend was to be the representative of the Mahatma.

This deeply offending conduct and attack had constituted great disrespect to the Mahatma. Having also been aimed at the community itself, it had angered everyone. Quick consultations had flowed between the East African Indian National Congress offices in Nairobi, Nakuru, Kisumu and other centres. It had become necessary for the community to show its condemnation of this display of racist supremacy. It would also be a show of support for the Rev. Charles Andrews' visit and for his continuing work for the Indians in the Empire. A decision had been taken.

That night, Lumbwa had been made the first unscheduled halt, and Mr. Barot's group the first to show their appreciation. At the next station, the train was again halted, and Rev. Andrews again honoured. Pandit Rawal had prayed for him, and a trio of schoolgirls had sung a short *bhajan*. The Pandit had then given him some *prasad*. When Andrews had thanked them briefly in his imperfect Hindustani, their faces had lit up, bringing light in the darkness.

At dawn at Kibos, the Chairman of the Sikh Sabha had offered the protective services of four fierce looking young men carrying swords. Andrews had declined their offer with profuse thanks telling them Mahatma Gandhi would prefer a non-violent response to the Nakuru outrage.

The train had finally pulled in at Kisumu Station an hour late. Letters full of indignant complaints from the European passengers in the First Class carriages had followed. Their pages were full of the unwarranted delay, the unacceptable noise, the uncivilized music, and most of all, of their unmitigated contempt for unhygienic people who did not know how to behave. But the displeased Railway Administration in Nairobi had also not

relished the idea of receiving complaints from Indian religious bodies about the illegality of Railway officials breaking up religious ceremonies, real or pretended, for the Mahatma's emissary.

Nor was the prospect of attacks on Andrews on the way back, and a repeat by the staff of their peaceful but unwelcome remonstrance through more delays, any the more attractive. Accordingly, a discreet phone call had been made to the Commissioner of Police, and on his return journey the following week, Andrews had been provided with police protection while on the train.

At Lumbwa, when the train moved away into the darkness, and the diminishing red rear light on the guard's van had finally dissolved into the night, the groups had turned away and walked out slowly, talking quietly. One of the men whispered, 'Do you know even the Mahatma was thrown out of a train in South Africa and beaten for fighting for freedom. Now his friend has suffered in the same way.' His companion replied, 'It is God's sign.'

The night remained with them through their lives. Mr. Barot had proudly reported to Manilal A. Desai, the president of the Kenya Indian Congress, that their *satyagraha* of non-cooperation and delay had annoyed the whites greatly and had been a great success. Neither the Reverend Andrews' words, nor the impulse to freedom that had made him part with his meagre saving, ever left the student. The young women were often asked by their own children to tell them the story of that night.

Many, many years later, when the news had reached Kenya of Gandhi's assassination, all had thought of that night and how they had become part of the struggle and had become too, so close to the Mahatma.

*Pheroze Nowrojee's fictional tale is from his collection of short stories *DUKAWALLA and Other Stories* (Nairobi, Manqa Books, 2017).

Gandhi's Earth And other Poems

- Dr. Betty Govinden

Gandhi's Earth⁶ – Phoenix at Dawn

The early morning breaks
over the cluster of small white
homes shrouded in shadows.

A larger home of wood and iron,
surrounded by a flower garden.
quietly commands the allotment.

At the edges of the homestead
are large mango trees.
In the centre a coconut palm
and a Christmas tree.

The Printing Press
with its machinery now still
will whirl into motion soon.

The dogs are rousing
while the calves edge closer
to their mothers standing erect
with glazed eyes.

Far from this sacred ground
the city is stirring
plotting machinations for the day.

Here in this ashram
The rhythms of work and prayer
are experiments with truths...

You took command and
spoke in clear and simple words

Believing in the force of your
ideas
Rather than of a gun.

Soul force -
Is not the weapon of the weak
But the weapon of the strong.

Soul force -
When will and heart,
And body and mind,
Work in unison.

Soul force -
That alone could prevail
Against the gates of hell.

Fired not with hate for the Other
But with love
For wholeness and humanity.

With the strength to say,
“Enough!”
We will not be trampled on like
dust.
We will be free!”

⁶This title is adapted from the title of Wole Soyinka's poem, "Mandela's Earth".

Song of Ascents

It is not in erudite thoughts
But in the sinews
Of a spinning wheel

Serving my neighbour
I see truth's cause
And freedom's gain

In women's sighs its liturgy
And widows' tears an altar
For the sacrament of love

Song of the Atman

From blades of grass
To birds tired in flight

I seek eternal truths.
In this great interweaving

Is born freedom of the self
And the bliss of being

One Soul
In a many-bodied universe

Universal 1

From the ancient groves
The spirit of ahimsa blows.

You catch the offering
And breathe new life into it.

Through the sacrifice of love
Home rule has no borders.

Blessed are the meek
Who will inherit the earth.

Universal 2

From your womb
You longed for peace
Among all peoples of faith.

To see hatred abate
And earthly kingdoms cease
You implored against zealots.

For truth and love
You gave your body
To be burned.

Out of the ashes
Your spirit quickens,
Refusing to die.

White Light

You began at the white city and
Slowly trudged across the world

Covered in the cloak of Ahimsa
Led by faith and not by fetish

Safe on a land of love and truth
You built the Shilpa of freedom

For a beloved motherland
And for the world transcendent

A loin cloth filtering out light
From the darkness around you

Sarvodaya

Unto this last
I give the same
As unto the first.

He who worked from the first
hour
is equal to he
who worked from the eleventh.

Both meet in the dignity
of work and in the dignity of pay.

The gift of bread for all
Is the bequest of
Peace for the world.

A heart of flesh

A heart that is the
Pulse of progress
Goes back to
The very source
Of a cosmic music
To hear itself beat

Satyagraha

You stood tall and still,
Clad in loincloth,
Stripped bare of pomp
And the garlands of adulation

Hind Swaraj Poems

1

We inherit the cosmos,
sky, sea and
hallowed earth
to hold in sacred trust.
It is not in the state machine
but in self-rule
that true swaraj is found.
Not in the gilded wealth of hoard
houses
but in the scattering
of grain on tilled soil.
You and I are
stewards of creation
threaded through with love.
We find our calling
in the dignity of nature
and the manifold of work.

3.

From prison houses,
degraded and coarsened,
the human soul arises
to seek justice without faltering,
refusing the sacrilege
of silence.

Post blood on the lintels.
Mark the foreheads for peace.

2.

The bonds are lifted,
the pall of violence
over each village

dissipates. The air is suffused
with reverential sighs,
imbuing new destiny

to the mundane.
The state of livelihood
is elevated

to the stature of holiness.
And Truth is the force
for the good of all

4.

As you ply the thread on the
Spinning wheel
wrapped in contemplation
Hands and mind in placable
unison

Stave off the anarchy
Loosened on the world.

And nurture a planet
For bounty and bread.

You come to a hospitality of the
heart
Towards yourself and your
neighbour.

Collected Annotations

Compiled by Ms. Huda Sayyed⁷ & Ms. Jinal Baxi⁸

As the Gandhian Studies Centre is committed to promoting literature on and by Gandhiji, collected annotations on various books that are available at the centre and the library, especially pertaining to Mahatma Gandhi's engagement with life, his experiences and his family are included for reference.

Kumarasamy, Anand. *Gandhi On Personal Leadership*. Jaico Publishing House, 2006.

Kumaraswamy's work stretches into forty chapters that aim to provide some principles, ideas and alternatives that can help address some of the pressing social and ecological challenges of our times. It studies the life of an extraordinary individual, Mahatma Gandhi, and presents with 39 powerful lessons of personal growth and transformation. The lessons, gleaned from Gandhi's life, offer invaluable advice on leading an enlightened life- a more meaningful, self-aware, socially responsible and saner life.

The four core objectives of the book are:

- To inform the reader about the life of Gandhi. This book traces the life-journey of one man from being a timid, young child to the visionary leader who bequeathed to the world a novel method of fighting oppression, thus becoming an inspiration to millions in India and abroad.
- To inspire to stretch beyond ourselves, and to get in touch with the power that lies hidden within us. Gandhi's life offers compelling

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⁸ Ms. Jinal Baxi, interned at the Gandhian Studies Centre of Dr. BMN College of Home Science as part of MA Part II English Literature from SNDT University, Churchgate for the academic year 2019-2020.

evidence that we can become the conscious shapers of our own destinies, rather than being merely shaped by circumstances.

- To remind us of what ‘the better angels of our nature’ are capable of. People like Gandhi are powerful reminders of the greater capacities and farther reaches of the human spirit.
- To guide for our own journey of self-discovery, maturity and learning. It is a roadmap for all those who are in pursuit of a more meaningful existence.

The book begins with a brief biographical chapter on the life of Gandhi, marking crucial events mentioned in his autobiography, *My Experiments with Truth*. The 39 life lessons are deduced from the life of Gandhi and connected to the moral principles that one may seek to attain a sustainable life. Some of the initial lessons are as follows:

A Strong Sense of Purpose

Kumaraswamy asserts that a powerful sense of mission gives our lives a clear sense of direction. It takes all our energies-which are normally diffused- and gives them a laser-like focus. It is this idea that is common and shared by personalities like Gandhi, Mother Teresa, Albert Einstein and Martin Luther King Jr. A strong sense of purpose can accomplish three things. First it can be a rich source of happiness. It can lead to a healthy sense of self-esteem, and a sense of fulfilment that is derived from doing something that truly matters to u. Secondly, it can make life worth living, thus enabling life. Finally, it helps us transcend the work-joy dichotomy. When one is doing something that one truly, deeply cares about, work becomes play.

The Importance of Character

Gandhi worked on his character. He concentrated his efforts on who he was, rather on what he possessed. The author asserts on the vice of an image-focused or a possession-centered approach in character building. Gandhi strived towards character-based activities, and they contributed greatly to his sense of self-worth, happiness and effectiveness in the long run. Character is foundational, image is residual. As Gandhi stated, “All

your scholarship, all your study of Shakespeare and Wordsworth would be vain if at the same time you do not build your character and attain mastery over your thoughts and your actions”.

The Power of Our Everyday Choices and Actions

Growth always occurs through a sequential series of stages. There is an organic process and transformation that cannot be circumvented. Gandhi intuitively understood this organic process, and used this natural law to his benefit to grow in small ways. Understanding that” a journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step.” He seized each day and made it count. There was no single defining moment but an aggregation of his daily choices, small changes, little actions and many defining moments that cumulatively added up over a period of time to determine the quality of life and its impact.

Intrinsic Sense of Satisfaction

Gandhi derived tremendous pleasure from the activities that he engaged in. Whether it was writing or other manual activities, he immensely enjoyed what he was doing. For Gandhi, the primary motivation was the task itself; there was no outer compulsion- only intrinsic motivation. Gandhi’s life exemplifies the principle of picking and choosing our interests based predominantly on their intrinsic pay-offs, rather than their external payoffs such as monetary rewards and other incentives.

Channelizing Anger

Gandhi consistently attempted to move beyond anger- to rise above it, and to transcend it. He knew that anger more often than not clouds our judgement and disables us from seeing the situation clearly. Both John Walsh and Candy Lightner became tireless advocates for their respective causes and used their anger to bring about positive change. In many such cases anger was transformed into a life-sustaining energy, and was ultimately healing to both the individual and society. They channeled their anger in courageous, creative and life enhancing ways.

The Power of a Dream

Only when we have a dream- a vision of what we want to accomplish – will we truly know the extent and the depth of our potential. Drawing from the perseverant virtue of Gandhi as well similar ideal can be deduced. When we care about something deeply, it unleashes within us immense courage, it inspires in us great daring and we can venture forth boldly.

The Importance of Risking Failure

Gandhi did not see failure as catastrophic, but rather as a feedback mechanism. He understood that to learn, to create or innovate he had to risk making mistakes. Gandhi like many other extraordinary visionaries, interpreted setbacks and negative events as positive challenge. He saw them as “essentials” or necessities on the path to growth, maturity and self-actualization.

The Value of Creative Tension

People like Gandhi welcome tension into their minds’ they entertain within themselves a sense of creative discontent. All great creators understand that this creative tension is a prerequisite for any creative breakthrough which enables them to create. It is an integral and indispensable and integral part of growing, learning and maturing. This inner tension can be suppressed and denied, but ultimately for growth to occur, it cannot be avoided.

The Power of Spiritual over Material

To create anything of significant worth, a human being must first become aware that he or she holds the capacity within to transcend outside circumstances and external limitations. We attach great significance to outside events and external circumstances, and very little significance on inner forces such as faith, hope, courage, imagination and so forth. Gandhi placed a greater emphasis on the inner, spiritual reality while others placed a greater emphasis on the outer, material reality. Therefore, Gandhi saw himself as the proactive shaper of events and circumstances, as a co-creator of reality.

Choosing Growth over Fear

People who live a life of significance and worth- people who make a positive and long-standing contribution to the world – have chosen to follow the self that desires growth, maturity, learning and creativity, rather than the self that is fearful of growth and wants to stay behind. Gandhi writes that with any new task or responsibility, he would accept in “fear and trembling” – but accept them he did, because he chose to follow the growth impulse rather than the fear impulse.

Stewardship: The Urge to Serve

Studies suggest that helping others has a healing/beneficial effect on both the helper and the helped. These studies, among many others, seem to suggest that not only do we all have a deep-seated yearning to tend to and care for others, but that such caring and tending to others is also physically, mentally and emotionally nourishing to all involved. People such as Gandhi, mother Teresa or Albert Schweitzer, were able to bring about a positive difference in their own lives by making a difference in other people's lives.

Beyond Competition

We are socially conditioned to see a world where competition is inevitable. The competitive spirit was remarkably absent amongst personalities like Gandhi. In fact, we could say that they tended towards the opposite; cooperation. Their lives show that exemplary character can be built without the competitive spirit, and in the process, they shatter the myth that competition is necessary to achieving excellence in a field.

Gandhi, Arun. *Daughter of Midnight - The Child Bride of Gandhi*. Magna Publishing Co. Ltd, Mumbai, 2014.

Written by Kasturba Gandhi's grandson, this book investigates the relationship shared for over 62 years by two extraordinary human beings, vis a vis their mutual quest for truth and freedom of oppressed nations and their people. Through interviews and records, Arun Gandhi traces the previously undocumented life of Kasturba, her journey from being Kastur Kapadia to Ba, her 'role in making the Mahatma' and her unparalleled

contribution in the freedom struggle of India. Many biographers and historians have attempted to lay down the legacy of Gandhiji and his life, placing central emphasis on his path of becoming a 'Mahatma', his philosophy and his contribution to independence. Through this book, however, Arun Gandhi highlights the relationship between his grandparents as he learned and experienced, whilst supporting and refuting certain claims and assumptions made in previous hagiographies, especially about his grandmother. The text is a biographical bildungsroman on the life of Kasturba and Mohandas Gandhi enmeshed with ordeals as experienced by Gandhi in his struggle as a freedom fighter accompanied by his wife and his countless followers. It also includes detailed descriptions of the intricacies faced by the members of the Gandhi family to provide a chronological narrative of their lives to the readers.

Arun Gandhi documents the immeasurable contribution of Kasturba in Gandhi's experiments in search of truth, in the matters of the family or the country, right from their childhood to their final moments. The text demonstrates how Kasturba was often caught between her loyalty to her husband and the traditions she had grown up with, about marriage and community resulting in immense inconvenience and distress in carrying out her responsibilities as a woman, wife, mother and a freedom fighter while learning and assimilating into her husband's way of living and thereby being constantly 'thrust into an alien everyday world'. The author rejects the notion that his grandmother was a 'spineless woman, blindly following her husband' and asserts that Kasturba not only expressed her views and opinions but also taught invaluable lessons of non-violence, of renouncing personal enjoyments and temptations to Gandhi himself. The text reminds us how Kasturba practiced Satyagraha in 'her own terms' and in spaces, such as family, hospitals, ashrams among others where her contribution would be most helpful. It highlights the hardships faced by Kasturba and Mohandas who braved it all together, amidst long years of separation, disease, suffering and personal losses, frequent arrests, and multiple imprisonments on the account the freedom of the masses. Overall, the text reveals to the readers the relationship of Bapu and Ba and their joint efforts in emancipating millions of people from subjugation and oppression, ultimately leading the country to its freedom.

Bhatkal, Ramdas. *Jagadamba: The Kasturba Story*. Seagull Books Private Limited, New Delhi, 2016

Jagadamba: The Kasturba Story written by Ramdas Bhatkal in 2010 was originally written in Marathi, translated into English by Yashodhara Deshpande Maitra (2016). Bhatkal writes about Kasturba's life in the form of a play, a dramatic monologue. Bhatkal has been associated with Marathi theatre over the past 60 years, as a drama critic, reader, publisher and as a close friend of many theatre personalities. Having immersed himself in Gandhian ideology for his dissertation and have written various articles on similar topics, he was able to critically develop new perspectives in his study of the Mahatma. *Jagadamba* was written on a request by Jayadev Hattangadi for his wife Rohini, who had come to be identified as Kasturba after Richard Attenborough's film *Gandhi*.

The play charts the journey of a simple girl who went on to become "Jagadamba," or the "Universal Mother," as the wife of the Mahatma. As Shanta Ghokale writes in her introduction: "Wives of great men have hard lives, often lived in negation of values they hold most dear. *Jagadamba* is the personal feelings of a devoted wife who had held her own in a life made mentally, physically, and morally turbulent by her husband's ideas and political work." The monologue is a chatty rendition with phrases in Gujarati provides a new perspective to the imagined life of Kasturba. Although Bhatkal portrays Kasturba in events that she witnessed that were crucial moments in Gandhi's life, the devoted wife is presented in a playful persona, resorting to humour and light hearted reactions to some of the widely sensationalised events of Gandhi's life. No time is wasted in explaining the grief of separation between the couple but consciously highlights how Kasturba would alternatively look forward to travelling to Durban and starting an independent family life away from the in-laws house. Gandhi's residence in South Africa, be it Durban or Johannesburg was always open to all, Kasturba phrased this in a slogan- *Aao jaao ghar tamarun*. Her religious beliefs and observances were challenged, she struggled with residents who spoke only in English, but the major struggle was to give up caste observance and untouchability. One of her concerns were in relation to the education of her children. While Gandhi was adamant to not send them to the missionary school nor the public school,

the children's educational instructions were ever inconsistent due to the busy schedule of their father who had taken up the responsibility to teach them. Kasturba also found her husband's way of educating through life events amusing.

Gandhi's pledge to become a Brahmachari in his way to attain salvation is a topic often discussed, in the monologue Kasturba's reaction to Gandhi's decision is rather unique. While she tries to control her laughter in order to not disturb her husband, she supports his decision living up to her duty as his *ardhangini*. Gandhi's experiments with health and hygiene also meet with similar support and diligence from Kasturba. Although, Gandhi was successful in nurturing Kasturba through her delivery of her third born child and also cured their son from a double attack of pneumonia and typhoid, Kasturba playfully called it 'doctor-giri'. Later in life Kasturba is doubly challenged with the strife between her son Harilal and Bapu, although she continued to abide with her husband's decision in this matter, the separation from the son was a source of great misery to her. Kasturba emerges as an active *satyagrahi*, but the text also brings to light the innate being that she truly was.

Gandhi, Arun. *The Gift of Anger*. Penguin UK, 2017.

An autobiographical work, this book unravels personal recollections of Bapuji and his teachings at Sevagram Ashram as recorded by his grandson Arun Gandhi. Having lived with him for two years, in the adolescent ages of twelve to fourteen, the author learnt 'ten spiritual lessons' for the 'self' that forever changed his perspective towards life. By incorporating countless personal anecdotes from the life of the writer as well as his grandfather, this book attempts to highlight the pressing need to implement those lessons from Mahatma Gandhi in the contemporary times. Arun Gandhi categorizes the book in a way that each lesson investigates how Bapu resolved certain conflicts in his life and how the same lesson can be applied to various issues and challenges faced in the 21st century.

Gandhi's message of Satyagraha, non-violence, love, peace and forgiveness remains very well-known even today. However, according to the author, the current world seems to be using their resources to engage in

acts of violence and hatred, quite contrary to the ideals followed by his beloved grandfather. The principle theme of this text is to provide ways in which this deep rooted anger, which finds its outlet in mass killings, school shootings, violent protests and terrorist acts, can be distilled and used wisely for the transformation of the soul which has perhaps become corrupt due to the misuse of technology and social media. The book provides ten extraordinary lessons from Gandhi, highlighted as the title of each lesson, one must observe in order to change their attitude towards the world around them. ‘All humanity is one family’, ‘be humanitarian’ and don’t only strive for ‘empty fame’, ‘be thoughtful in your speech’, ‘forgo lies and follow the truth’, ‘time is too precious to waste’ are some of the carefully worded morals and sentiments that Gandhiji ardently followed. The author also mentions seven sins of the society along with five tenets of non-violence that form a part of Bapu’s teachings. Being a part of the Gandhi heritage, the author’s own family promoted Gandhian philosophy in their family and workplace. The author maintains that these lessons were not only for Gandhi’s followers, rather must be adopted by people of all professions including celebrities, musicians, artists, teachers, doctors and even parents and children to navigate through life using the ‘soul force’ instead of brute physical force.

Arun Gandhi thus borrows from the fond, yet at times troubling memories of his childhood in South Africa, and later in India and America to bring to the readers the effectiveness of practicing the ideals taught by his grandfather on a personal level in hopes to encourage today’s generation to apply the remarkable lessons offered by Gandhiji on their everyday lives and in doing so, work towards a healthier and peaceful future for the world as a whole.

Hepworth, Margaret *The Gandhi Experiment: Teaching our teenagers how to become global citizens*. Arise Rupa Publication India Pvt Ltd, New Delhi, 2017.

“Too many people are experimenting with war and violence. We need more people experimenting with peace and non-violence”- This quote by the writer Margaret Hepworth herself at the preface of the book sets the tone for what she aspires to do with her applications of Gandhian

principles, returning to the primary idea that “both violence and non-violence are conscious choices.” Every chapter consists of a lesson plan that was used for a sample group of teenagers, acknowledging that teenagers have a part to play to bring about change in the world.

In the first chapter *The Dinner Party to Save the World*, the writer takes up Gandhi’s constant meeting with colleagues, politicians, friends and strangers, to invest time into public and private conversations. Hepworth narrates the proceeding of a similar gathering of thirteen people invited to “think”. Every individual is asked to become a critical thinker and not just a passive listener. Gandhi’s teaching and methodology, told us, ‘We all need to step up beyond our own expectations of ourselves’, providing accountability to every member of the party.

While the members play out the *Dinner Party to Save the World*, the writer enlists these questions to keep in mind:

- How can we use the multiple intelligence to engage our learners in the *Dinner Party*?
- How do we explore different pathways for different people, ostensibly leading to the same goal to make this world a better place for all?
- How do we, in this different day and age, actively choose to not cooperate with injustice?
- We will need to think deeply and laterally, to open our eyes to our own connection with injustice- seen and unseen-- to become honest about the role we play.

According to the plan, this proceeding can be applied to deal with any problem faced by the community through interaction and zeroing down to potential solutions.

In the second chapter: *The Best Forgiveness Role-Play Ever*, the writer works with another of Gandhi’s quotes: “Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong” narrating anecdotes from his life. The idea that the ability to think differently and therefore react or respond differently, and to empathize is emphasised in order to deal with the notion of ‘forgiveness’. The role play involves the engaging of students in a situation dealing with an offender and the natural responses of the people around him/her. Once the students exchange responses, the facilitator narrates the alternate

solution that is practiced by the Babemba tribe. The manner in which the situation is later dealt with after the alternate practice of the tribe allows for forgiveness and reconciliation to follow. The overall success of this activity can be summed up in this phrase “Someone who knows your song and sings it to you when you have forgotten it.”

The third lesson The Utopian Scale, deals with finding out the perspective or the scale on 1-10 on how many members from the target group are for and against questions asked. Some questions include:

- Do you believe in the concept of world peace? Is this something the world wants, or should be aiming for?
- Do you believe we can achieve world peace?
- What is dystopia and utopia?

The group then engages in a discussion on the ideas that emerge while answering the questions. The facilitator then leads the discussions that begins with: “Now we are entering the realms of imagination, moving away from the confined and the blinkered, to a *place of possibility*.” The questions would now be turned to the idea of “belief that it can be done”, with questions such as, What was the first thing that Wilbur and Orville Wright had in order to achieve the flight? What did the suffragettes have when they campaigned for women’s right to vote? What has every inventor had that has led to the eventual success of his or her inventions? The writer here professes that whilst maintaining a realistic view of the more negative events unfolding in the world, if teenagers are also presented with the amazing things people are doing to help find solutions to these global issues, the teenagers respond in the most altruistic way. So, the idea is to ‘flood them with hope’ in order to find nothing but greater potentials in them to bring about change.

The fourth chapter, deals with finding the root cause of a problem at hand. Drawing from Einstein’s Theory of Why? Why? Why?, the writer has created an educational tool. According to Hepworth, through this tool we can equip our teenagers with lifelong strategies to be able to unravel conflict, often before it grows into deeper and more problematic tensions. She also draws from the Gandhian principle “Change begins with me” to

Einstein's theory for transformative change. The lesson can begin by aiming at simple problems, posing the issue through questions and potential answers given below:

Question: 'Why is she arrogant? Such a rude person.'

Root cause: She was taught or raised to be arrogant.

Looking to a solution: How might we help her change her behaviour to be better accepted by her peers, so they don't continue to moan about her behind her back?

The overall idea of the book is to sensitize and create a mindset that's inspired by the Gandhian values and principles which would cater to the needs of the changing dynamics of the world by strengthening the students who may emerge as accountable stakeholders of the times to come.

Dogra, Bharat. *Man Over Machine -A Path Towards Peace*. Vitasta Publishing Pvt Ltd, New Delhi, 2019.

Dogra's work addresses the relevance of Gandhian principles in the 21st century, primarily in the spheres of environment, politics, and society on a global and local level, as means to resolve the persistent 'survival crisis' of today. The guiding idea is to apply the thoughts, messages, ideas and perspectives as imparted by Gandhi on the contemporary conflicts and injustice in order to attain peace, equality, justice and an overall development of both the masses as well as the 'environmental space', particularly at this juncture where rapid urbanization and consumerism coupled with technological advancements continue to have an adverse effect worldwide.

The book highlights events and movements from history, with special emphasis to the pre-independence era such as the Swadeshi and later, the Chipko Movements in India, the non-violent freedom movement under the leadership of Badshah Khan in Pakistan with active involvement of the Pathan women, the Civil Rights Movement by Martin Luther King Jr. in America to demonstrate the power of practicing Gandhian philosophy. The book even incorporates Dogra's inputs as a journalist to present the readers with stories of individual and collective actions, inspired by Gandhi, which brought about fundamental changes in the public as well as the private domain. These include narratives on active participation of people over

concerns regarding the GHG emissions, promotion of renewable energy resources and sustainable production, improvement of health and livelihood, fight against poverty, hunger, alcoholism and drugs, spreading the message of religious tolerance and promoting Jai Jagat as a movement to spread Gandhian values. Dogra aims to generate an understanding that ensures the fulfillment of ‘basic needs of the populace over personal greed’. The text also provides an insight into few major Indian activists and scientists who devoted their lives for rural upliftment and ecological improvement in different parts of India and actively strove to bring ‘the change they wished to see’.

Gandhian ideals are being appreciated and followed even today, largely because Gandhi himself practiced what he preached. In order to reform the community, Gandhi first imposed the changes in his own home and lifestyle. Accordingly, Dogra, in the subsequent chapters, provides ways in which people today can adopt Gandhian principles on an individual level before carrying it further to an organizational level. The book thus appeals to the young minds of the 21st century to adopt peaceful methods and non-violent approaches to mediate the ongoing and upcoming challenges in varying economical, technological, ecological, societal and political fronts among others.

Mohan, Shaj, and Divya Dwivedi. *Gandhi and Philosophy: On Theological Anti-Politics*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018.

The guiding idea of this book is Gandhi’s liberating thoughts that questions all that the West has wanted to put into the word “humanism”. Yet what moved Gandhi was indeed the concern for a human life freed from its frenetic Western pace. The book deals with the words ‘man’ or ‘human’ and ‘humanist’ ideas encompass, after having worried about the ‘preterhuman’ perspectives of visions designated as totalitarian – since Gandhi’s time and deals with the contemporary notion of ‘transhumanist’. The book is philosophical study of Gandhi, his concepts, and their systematic unity; it’s a philosophical treatise of a non-philosophical object, as, for example, in the case of philosophy of art. Gandhi’s system is not metaphysical but hypophysical. Morals based on nature conceived as occult were termed ‘hypophysical’ by Kant in Groundwork. Gandhi’s system

measures value with respect to the scalar quantity – speed. The Gandhian scale, of speed, complicates the old schema where seeking perfections would cause an ascent in a ladder away from the Maker. The book is what the author calls a ‘criticalization’ or the development of a system to the point of its exteriority. The text also deals with the intrinsic relation between the proliferation of violence and the concept violence. The Gandhian theory of satyagraha posits non-violence as the state of nature and this enables him to work the idea of natural law in an astonishing way. This Gandhian distinction is philosophically investigated to find meaning of violence by staging an encounter between the Gandhian concept of nonviolence and the twentieth century philosophical thought on violence. It presents an unexplored, critical dimension to contemporary debates on truth and fidelity, and those on truth and secrecy, by analysing the relation between truth and will in Gandhi and his Western precedents and antecedents. As there is a hypophysical dimension to the contemporary discourse on resistance, violence and the activisms and theories of non-violence, which extends the line from Gandhi to his many progeny.

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List of Books at the Centre

The Gandhian Studies Centre has an extensive collection of books, encompassing short stories, novels, poems and academic research written on and by Gandhiji to make his life experiences, his philosophy and his message accessible to the readers and learners of today.

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