

Lessons in
Non-violent Civil Disobedience

From the life of M. K. Gandhi

And

His Legacy



By
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Preface

There are many armed conflicts going on all around the world everyday. Many countries have amassed so many nuclear weapons that they can destroy all life on earth many times over. Some nations have already used these weapons of mass destruction to kill hundreds of thousands of civilian children, women, and men. Too many nations are spending enormous amounts of money and other resources on developing, acquiring, and using their military might while hundreds of thousands of their citizens go hungry. The 'military industrial complex' and powerful media are manipulating and / or controlling major policies in many democratic and not so democratic governments to spend billions of dollars in acquiring arms and creating conflicts.

A lot of us would like to change the world for better but do not know 'how'. Life of Mohandās K. Gāndhi can be a good 'role model' to study and emulate. He was a very scared, shy, scrawny, ordinary child and a failure as a young lawyer. By his own admission he was:

"I claim to be no more than an average man with less than average ability."

How did he transform himself from a tongue-tied lawyer to a fearless leader of four hundred million people in their successful fight for independence from the brutal, well armed, and established British Empire? His transformation was so great, Albert Einstein said:

"For generations to come...people will scarcely believe that such a one as this, ever in flesh and blood walked upon this earth."

Who guided him? Who were his guru-s (teachers)? Can we learn from his life? He said:

"I have not the shadow of a doubt that any man or woman can achieve what I have, if he or she would make the same effort and cultivate the same hope and faith."

He did not have one single person who can be called his guru. A guru gives us knowledge and removes the darkness of ignorance. A lot of people, experiences, books, his own self-analysis, determination, and perseverance transformed an ordinary Mohan in to a Mahātmā (a great soul) and a bold leader of 400 million Indians. His ideas in the fields of politics, philosophy, economics, education, etc., more than half a century after his death, are still being taught in universities all over the world . Eknath Easwaran, a professor at University of California, Berkley has said that:

"Historians of the future, I believe, will look upon this century (20th) not as an atomic age, but as the age of Gāndhi".

World leaders like Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King, Jr., President Barak Obama have quoted from Gāndhi's writings and have tried to follow in his foot steps.

“Throughout my life, I have always looked to Mahātmā Gāndhi as an inspiration, because he embodies the kind of transformational change that can be made when ordinary people come together to do extraordinary things,”

President Barak Obama in an interview with ‘Outlook’ magazine.

When I was in school, I had seen Gandhiji only once, that too from a distance. Many adults in India, including some of my family members, had taken part in the struggle for India's independence. In 1948, I was 12 years old and in high school, when Gandhiji was assassinated. In school and all over the country, we had celebrated India's independence a few months before that. At that time I did not realize the sacrifices and contributions of so many Indians in this struggle or the reasons for it. Later I read his autobiography, other books about him, and saw ‘Gandhi’ movie by Sir Richard Attenborough. After retiring from work, I had the opportunity to volunteer with a committee that celebrated his birth day, ‘Gandhi Jayanti’, by inviting people who had distinguished themselves following the path of public service to improve the lives of less fortunate people. I came to learn more about Gandhiji, his work, and influence he was having in the world. I was impressed by his humble beginning and how he rose to such eminence, and decided to write about his evolution from quite an ordinary boy in to ‘man of the twentieth century’.

He wrote his autobiography to tell people about his life and called it “the story of my experiments with Truth”. It is actually a study in the ‘art of living’ for all of us. It is one of the most honest and truthful personal account written by anyone. He debated for a long time about whether to write his autobiography or not. The story of his earlier years when he had struggled to develop his own character and the methods he used to bring about changes in society — experiments in the spiritual field — were not well known. The main reason for his writing the autobiography was the hope that people will try some of the experiments in their own lives and live according to the highest values common to all mankind. Later part of his life had become an open book.

We all have a desire to improve ourselves at sometime in our life. The questions most of us face are ‘What to change’, ‘How to decide’, ‘How to go about improving ourselves’, etc. Lots of books, videos, seminars, and experts are available to guide us. Sometimes learning from the life of a real person who changed, evolved, metamorphosed himself may help. This book is about an ordinary boy with no unusual talents, who changed himself and in turn, improved lives of millions around the world. What can we, ordinary people learn from his life? This book is a study of the life of Gāndhi to find some ways to see ‘How he transformed himself’ and ‘see if we can learn from his methods’. It may help us transform our own lives and make this planet earth a better and safer place to live for all creatures. There may be some repetition of ideas and incidents in this book. I do not expect anyone to read this book from cover to cover in one day.

It would be preferable to read small portions, think and digest the idea or incident and try to see if that is something applicable to their life and change accordingly.

A brief history of India and biography of M. K. Gāndhi is followed by how he transformed himself from Mohan in to a Mahātmā. I have used Mohan, Gāndhi, Mahātmā Gāndhi, and Gāndhiji depending on his age and how people addressed him during that period. Modern day children are bombarded by TV, cell phone, rap music, Hollywood and Bollywood movies, video games, etc. They learn their values from these sources which create their fantasy world. Study of the life of Mahātmā Gāndhi may redirect their attention to other better and more important things in life.

Mohan's evolution is very much a part of the history of political struggles of Indians' in South Africa and India and hence both, history and biography, are considered simultaneously. Since this book does not report events as they took place in chronological order, a time line of Gāndhi's life and other relevant dates are included. There may be some repetition of events and quotes because of their relation to two different topics.

Author sincerely hopes that some of the readers will be inspired to learn more about the life and work of Gāndhiji, and fulfill one of his dreams for a non-violent, peaceful world.

Some words like Mahatma are spelled as Mahātmā to help with pronunciations - a is pronounced as in again and ā or Ā to be pronounced as in graft.

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Dedicated to:

Grandchildren Arjun, Anya & Ravi.

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Chapter I

Background History of India

The history of human civilization in India goes back to more than 8,000 years. There were well-planned cities with underground sewer system and public baths more than 5 to 6,000 years ago along the Sindhu (Indus) - Saraswati rivers. People had developed a very highly sophisticated language - Sanskrit. Epics like Rāmāyana and Mahābhārata, scriptures like Veda-s, Upanishad-s and Bhagavad Gitā were composed by saints and scholars. There were universities like Takshashilā and Nālanda where scholars from other countries used to come and study. The concept of zero and higher math, astronomy, practice of medicine, metallurgy, chemistry, etc., were far more advanced than in any other nation of that period. Recent archaeological, genetic, carbon dating, and other modern techniques have shown that there was no Aryan invasion from outside India. The so-called light skinned Aryans and dark skinned Dravidians are the same people that have lived in India for millennia and their culture has continued in to modern times. Analysis of position of stars as described in ancient Indian texts like Rāmāyana and Mahābhārata confirm the authenticity of the dates when these texts were composed.

Some Western scholars and historians have said:

“India was the motherland of our race, and Sanskrit the mother of Europe’s languages; she was the mother of our philosophy; and mother through the Arabs, of much of our mathematics; mother through the Buddha, of ideals embodied in Christianity; mother, through the village community, of self-government and democracy. Mother India is in many ways the mother of us all.”

Will Durant (1885-1981)

Pulitzer Prize winning American Historian

“India is the cradle of the human race, the birthplace of human speech, the mother of history, the grandmother of legend, and great grandmother of tradition. Our most instructive materials in the history of man are treasured up in India only”

Mark Twain (1835-1910), American author

“The ancient civilization of India differs from those of Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Greece, in that its traditions have been preserved without breakdown to present day.”

Arthur Basham (1914-1986), Australian Historian

There were many foreign invasions from North-West border of India. Alexander of Macedonia was one of the very early ones who invaded India in 326 BCE. Then from 11th century (CE) onwards came the Huns, Chinghiz Khan, Arabs, and Iranian invaders. Most of the foreign invaders’ aim was to plunder, destroy, and take slaves. Thousands of temples were destroyed, gold and jewels were looted, and millions of people were killed or taken as slaves. In one

hundred years (from 1000-1100 CE) nearly 20 million, one-tenth of the population of India, was decimated by Muslim invaders. Muslims ruled over India for many years and then the British took over.

With the help of some Indian sailors, Vasco da Gama discovered the sea route to India in 1498. The East India Company was created in 1600 to trade with India. Just like their predecessors from other parts of Asia, it was the wealth of India that had attracted the Europeans to go to India. The first British ship arrived at the port of Surat on Western coast of India in 1608. East India Company slowly established more trade depots in other ports and made huge profit by taking spices and other goods from India to England and Europe. The British slowly established their monopoly in trade with India by removing all competition from the French, Portuguese, and Spaniards.

The trading posts were slowly converted in to forts with cannons, guns and ammunition without the permission of local rulers. In 1756, the ruler of Bengal attacked the English fort in Kolkata (Calcutta) and destroyed the illegal fort. Next year, Robert Clive defeated the ruler and took over Bengal. The British administrators would take more than a million dollar bribe and make someone a king. After a few years that ruler would be replaced by someone else who gave more money.

“The British conquest of India was the invasion and destruction of a high civilization by a trading company utterly without scruple or principle, careless of art and greedy of gain, over-running with fire and sword a country temporarily disordered and helpless, bribing and murdering, annexing and stealing, and beginning their career of illegal and ‘legal’ plunder which has now gone on ruthlessly for one hundred and seventy three years...”

Will Durant, in “The Case for India”, p. 5. 1930

Thomas Babington Macaulay was a conservative member of the British Parliament and later Secretary of War. He also served on the Supreme Council of India from 1834 to 1838. He believed that Britain was the most civilized nation in the world and Africans and Asians were barbarians. He introduced the British education system in India that would create a class of Indians who would serve the British:

“I have travelled across the length and breadth of India and I have not seen one person who is a beggar, who is a thief. Such wealth I have seen in this country, such high moral values, people of such caliber, that I do not think we would ever conquer this country, unless we break the very backbone of this nation, which is her spiritual and cultural heritage, and, therefore, I propose that we replace her old and ancient education system, her culture, for if the Indians think that all that is foreign and English is good and greater than their own, they will lose their self-esteem, their native culture and they will become what we want them, a truly dominant nation.”

The British were able to achieve what they had planned. Not only while they ruled over India but even now (2015), sixty-five years after they left India, the same educational system, same laws as the British, and same policies of ‘divide and rule’ are being followed by successive governments of independent India.

The violent uprising called the ‘Sepoy Mutiny’ started in May 1857. Indian soldiers employed by the British to do all their dirty work were unhappy about many things. This was the first large scale attempt to fight for independence from the British. It was very brutally and forcefully put down by the British with the help of their loyal Indian troops and superior firepower. The Indian sepoys (soldiers) and other fighters were not united and did not have a coordinated strategy. Hundreds of thousands of Indian soldiers and citizens were killed. In reaction to this mutiny, the famous author, Charles Dickens, wrote that he would “strike that Oriental Race . . . to blot it out of mankind and raze it off the face of the Earth”. A favourite way to punish Indians was to blow them to bits from the mouth of cannon. The British Government took over control of India from East India Company after the 1857 mutiny, increased their oppression and exploitation of the people and resources of India. They built railways to take raw materials to ports for export and distribute expensive imports to sell all over India. This practice impoverished Indians and destroyed all local industries. Poverty, famines and starvation became common because of British policies of excessive taxation and export of grains. Between 1854 and 1901, 28 million Indians died through starvation because of poverty and famines.

The British Government took over the control of Indian territories from the East India Company and paid the company handsome sum for the assets and also paid off the debt. The government in turn charged the people of India and the Indian peasants and workers who had to pay highest taxes in the world. One by one, states of India were taken over by the British by war, bribery or government decree. The cost of wars and army were again recovered from Indians through taxation. Transportation of troops from England to India and their maintenance in India and even the expenses of the war of independence in 1857 was charged to the Indian tax-payer. The national debt of India rose from \$35 million in 1792 to \$3.5 trillion in 1929. Indians were forced to fight for the British in wars to enslave Burma and First and Second World wars, just to name a few.

Britain was undergoing industrial revolution in nineteenth century. Their manufactured goods needed market. In India, they found this opportunity. Queen Victoria’s rule became the golden age for Britain and India became a poor nation. A British Viceroy stationed in New Delhi governed whole of India. The country was divided in to provinces (states) and governed by provincial governments. Then there were small semi-independent states within the provinces with Indian princes as heads of the state. They had nominal power since real power was with the British representative of the Viceroy in each princely state.

Will Durant, a Pulitzer Prize winning American historian, visited India in 1930 when he was working on “The Story of Civilization”. He was so appalled by what he read and saw how the British were ruling over India, that he wrote:

“...The more I read the more I was filled with astonishment and indignation at the apparently conscious and deliberate bleeding of India by England throughout a hundred and fifty years. I began to feel that I had come upon the greatest crime in history.”

“I have seen a great people starving to death before my eyes, and I am convinced that this exhaustion and starvation are due not, as their beneficiaries claim, to over-population and superstition, but to the most sordid and criminal exploitation of one nation by another in all recorded history.”

Will Durant, in “The Case for India”, p. 1. 1930

He wrote a book on his experiences in India called “The Case for India” because as a decent human being, he could not keep quiet. This book was banned by the British and was nearly lost to the public. Just recently (2007) it was published in Mumbai. It is very well researched with references to statements and statistics from British sources.

Gāndhi had organized three great *Satyāgraha*-s in India to achieve independence from the British rule. The first one of non-cooperation was in 1920, then the ‘Dāndi march’ in 1930, and last one ‘Quit India’ movement in 1942. More about the fight for India’s independence will be dealt with later on in the book.

The British troops left India after her independence. There was no sign of animosity or bitterness against either Indians or against the British at that time. The troops were cheered and not jeered when they took off in ships. Arnold Toynbee, British historian wrote that:

“Gāndhi had not only liberated India, he had also liberated Great Britain” (from their sinful exploitation of colonies).

Chapter II

Biography of M. K. Gāndhi

First Twenty Years

Mohandās Karamchand Gāndhi was born on 2 October 1869, (twelve years after the rebellion by the Indian soldiers) in Porbandar, a small town on the Western coast of India. Mohan is one of the names of *Shri Krushna* (Krishna). Mohandās means servant (*dās*) of God (Mohan). He was the youngest son of Karamchand Gāndhi, prime minister of Porbandar, a small state in Gujarat, India.

Mohan's father, Karamchand, was an experienced and able administrator (*Diwan*). He was a courageous, dedicated, and skillful negotiator who did not hesitate to tell the king unpleasant truths. He had sympathy for the common people and was interested in bringing people of different faiths together.

His mother, Putlibai, was very religious, fasted frequently, visited temple every day and prepared vegetarian food for the family. Mohan was very fond of her and she was equally fond of Mohan.

Mohan was an unusually shy boy. He used to run back home as soon as the school was over because he did not want to talk to anyone and was afraid other boys will make fun of him. In school, he did not show any great intelligence, talent, or outstanding skill. All elementary school children in India were required to memorize the multiplication tables. Mohan had difficulty remembering these tables. Three books that he had read as a child influenced him a lot all throughout his life. One was a story of a young man named Shravana, who carried his sick parents to fulfill their last wish to go on a pilgrimage before they died. It taught him devotion to parents. Another story was about a king called Harishchandra who always told the truth. Instead of telling a lie, he preferred to be a slave to an evil man. Mohan learnt how important it is to always tell the truth. The epic of Rāmāyana is well known to all children in India. Prince Rām gladly went to live in forest for 14 years to fulfill the promise his father had given to his stepmother. When he came back, Rām established an ideal kingdom - Rām Rājya. This was the kind of government Gāndhiji wanted to establish in India after her independence, where everyone was respected, well taken care of, and their talents utilized for the good of all.

When Mohan was in high school, he and his friends could see how the British were controlling and ruling over Indians. They felt that the English were big and strong because they ate meat. One of his friends persuaded him to eat meat to become strong so that they can fight with the British rulers and gain independence for India. He could not sleep at night after eating goat

meat. He felt goats jumping around in his stomach. He had to give up this experiment in getting strong.

In his autobiography, he describes himself as a ‘coward’. He was afraid of ‘thieves, ghosts, and serpents’. This fear bothered him so much that after dark he had to have a light in his room. Shyness and fear were with him even when he started his practice of law in India. At one of the first trials, when he stood up in front of the judge to defend his client, he was tongue tied and could not utter a word.

When he was 13 years old he was married off to a 13 year old girl named Kastur . Mohan was passionately in love with her. This made him a very jealous husband. He would think about her during the school hours and at night, talk to her for hours. Mohan also thought of himself as her teacher and guardian. He expected Kastur to ask for his permission if she wanted to go out. She was equally headstrong and would deliberately go out without asking him. Such incidents would lead to angry arguments between them. A man was supposed to be strong and brave but it was Kastur who was not afraid of anyone or of going out in the dark. It was Kastur, who taught Mohan that he could not make her do anything against her wishes by force. Later in life, Mohan used this lesson in his fight against the British.

His father died in 1885 when Mohan was fifteen years old. He was an average student in high school. He went to college after finishing high school. He wanted to be a doctor and take care of sick people. Mohan had a lot of problems learning all the subjects in college and failed in all. He worked hard but could not make it. After five months, he had to give up college and go back home, as a failure. His dream of becoming a doctor was destroyed and now Mohan did not know what to do.

One of his uncles suggested that he should go to England and become a barrister. It would take only three years of study in London to get his degree and then with a British qualification his success in India would be guaranteed. A degree from London had great value in India during the British rule. This education would cost a lot of money for the Gāndhi family. His wife, Kastur, had to sell her jewelry to buy his ticket to London by boat. Selling all jewelry for a young, 18 year old wife in late nineteenth century India was a great sacrifice. Before he left for England, Mohan’s mother made him promise that he will not to eat meat, have any relationship outside of the marriage, and drink alcoholic beverages.

Student In England

Mohan was 18 years old when he set sail for London to get his law degree. He was still very shy and kept to his cabin during this trip. Young Mohan was afraid of talking to strangers and did not want to look like a fool with his knowledge of English. He missed his family, the meals cooked by his mother, and familiar home surroundings. Above all, he missed his wife, Kastur .

In London, his problems got worse. The clothes people wore, the food they ate, weather, customs, everything was different and foreign to young Mohan. It was quite a culture shock when he arrived in London. In the late nineteenth century, England had been ruling over India for 200 years and every Indian worth his salt wanted to dress and behave like an Englishman. Gāndhi did not know anyone to talk to or turn to for advice or support. He was desperately home sick and wanted to return home. He knew he would feel like a great fool if after spending all that of money, if he returned home without a degree. He had to stick it out in London. He had no choice.

Then Mohan came across an acquaintance who had been around in London for some time and knew how to survive. The British were looked up to by most Indians because of the political power they had in India. Whole education system in India was created to glorify the British and most Indians believed in what they learnt in schools and universities. Everything 'Indian' was inferior and everything 'British' was the best. Indian dress, culture, languages were being abandoned in favour of what was British or European. The friend told Mohan that his main goal should be to learn the 'British' way of life while he was in London. The way they dressed, carried themselves, their manners, their behaviour, etc. This advice appealed to young Mohan very much. He decided to move in with an English family instead of living in a hotel. This way he would get a first hand experience of how the English people lived. Then he could imitate them and become as smart as them. Mohan bought expensive English suit, top hat, hired tutors to learn French, ballroom dancing, violin, and how to eat with fork and knife.

These experiments in becoming an 'English gentleman' lasted a few months. This life style was very expensive and Mohan was not earning any money at that time. His elder brother in India was supporting him. Mohan also realized that he would never be accepted as a true 'English gentleman' however much he tried to change his external appearance and life style. He was born with the looks of an Indian and raised in India with Indian culture. He also realized that he was not living according to what he believed in. The difference between his convictions and his day to day living was widening. It was an artificial life style and he was not happy about it. He decided to be true to himself and simplify his life. Mohan gave up French and dancing lessons, sold his violin, adopted simple vegetarian diet and concentrated on his studies.

After getting his law degree from London in 1891, Mohan returned to India. His mother had passed away when he was studying in London. His relatives in India did not inform him about this news because he was very close to her and this news might interfere with his studies. He was very sad to hear the news about his mother. Mohan started his legal practice in Rajkot, India. He had no knowledge of the Indian law and had great difficulty arguing cases in court. Later he tried his luck in Mumbai (Bombay) but he was tongue tied and could not speak a word in defence of his client in front of the judge. He had to ask another lawyer to take care of his client. Other lawyers started making fun of him by calling him a 'brief-less barrister'.

Lawyer In South Africa

Mohan was becoming desperate. In 1893, a firm in South Africa, offered him a job and he took the offer. It was not a good job and he would have to leave his wife and two sons. He took the offer to run away from the miserable situation in India but there were more trials waiting for him in South Africa. There was a lot of discrimination on the basis of the colour of his skin. In late nineteenth century only whites were allowed to travel by first class in South African trains. Gāndhi was traveling by train to Pretoria. He had a first class ticket but when a white man saw him sitting in the first class compartment, he was thrown out of the train at Maritzberg station. He had never felt worst humiliation in his life. It was very cold and he was all alone at the station. He spent that night pacing up and down, and thinking. He felt like going back to India. On other occasions he was also asked to sit at the feet of a white man in a coach, refused hotel room, and kicked off a sidewalk (footpath) by a policeman. All Indians in South Africa were treated very badly by the Europeans.

All these failures and humiliations made him analyze his situation. He was always running away from difficult situations but that did not help. Every time he tried to run away, he ended up facing even more difficult challenges. Instead of running away to some other place, he decided to face his problems. He immersed himself in the job at hand and tried to find the best solution for the involved parties. In the end, he was able to avoid long and expensive court case, save money for his client, remove bitterness in clients' families, and satisfy his client and their opponents too.

Gāndhi's work was done and he decided to go back to India. His client decided to give a farewell party in appreciation of the work he had done. On the day of the party, Gāndhi read in the news paper that the Government was taking away the right of all Indians to vote for the Legislative Assembly. Everyone at the party requested him to stay and fight for the rights of all Indians in South Africa. This was the turning point in his life. He formed a committee, wrote petitions and letters to newspapers, and organized public meetings to fight this injustice. Natal Indian Congress was created in August 1894. This became a long crusade and Gāndhi spent 21 years in South Africa before permanently returning to India in 1915.

In India, Gāndhi's life became synonymous with the non-violent struggle for independence and will be covered in chapter on Civil Disobedience.

Chapter III

Personal Evolution

In this world, nothing remains the same. Everything - people, places, ideas, concepts, dress, governments, etc., changes over time. Evolution is a slow process of change. We are all changing all the time. 'Change' is the law. One of the attributes of 'God' is that He/She/It is 'changeless'. In other words, anything or anyone that is not God changes or transforms itself. Mohan gradually evolved in to a Mahātmā. He became a role model, not only for Indians, but for many world leaders who followed. Many tried his non-violent methods in their own countries and situations with the hope of improving the life of their people. Study of Gāndhi's life may help generations to come to overcome their fear and inhibition to demand change for the good of the people.

“Men often become what they believe themselves to be. If I believe I cannot do something, it makes me incapable of doing it. But when I believe I can, then I acquire the ability to do it even if I didn't have it in the beginning.”

M. K. Gāndhi

Since our ideas change and evolve as we mature, we cannot remain 'consistent' (same) throughout life. Politicians are often accused of 'flip-flopping' if they say something different from what they believed before. Gāndhiji was not afraid of telling the 'truth' as he thought of at that particular time. He would think about what he had read or experienced, analyze the ideas and situation for days or months or even years, accept them intellectually, and then find ways of putting them in practice. Intellectual progress and spiritual evolution involves continual vigilance, purposeful and positive thinking, and action according to the outcome of this process.

Weaknesses

Mohan had many weaknesses when he was growing up.

Fear

Rambhā was a maid in the Gāndhi household when Mohan was a child. After working in the same household for many years, servants become part of the family. She came to know that young Mohan was afraid of ghosts, snakes, and burglars. She told him that there were no ghosts but if he was afraid, he could repeat the name of 'Rāma', the eighth incarnation of Lord Vishnu. Rāma will protect him under any or all circumstances. As a child, he did repeat this mantra but stopped using it when he went to high school in another town. Later on in his life, he took up this practice of repeating the mantra again. Mohan found that repeating his mantra with faith worked wonders. He used it when he was depressed or afraid. It also helped him get over any temptation or weakness and develop self-discipline and purity of heart. As he got older, repeating the name of 'Rāma', became so ingrained that when he was shot at point blank range,

“Rāma, Rāma” were the last words he said before he fell. This required perseverance and constant practice.

Mohan’s wife Kastur, was a role model in overcoming fear. She was not afraid of going out in the dark, or of snakes or anyone. She would defy her husband’s orders of not leaving the house without his permission. In overcoming fear, Kastur was his another ‘Guru’.

Absolute faith in God, the all-pervading energy, is a prerequisite for developing fearlessness.

“A fear-stricken person can never know God and one who knows God will never fear a mortal person.”

M. K. Gāndhi

Slowly he developed unshakeable faith in God. This gave him courage to stand up to the British government, organize non-violent civil disobedience protests, and ultimately tell them to ‘Quit India’.

Later on in his life, he realized that he had to overcome the fear of public speaking and standing up for his rights. Fear and non-violence could not coexist. Often people who were afraid of the authority of tyrants resorted to violent activities like throwing a bomb or shooting and running away. These tactics had not worked in India before. Gāndhi realized that he had to shed all fear of the British if he wanted to change the British rulers.

Gāndhi was not a born leader. He had to work hard to develop qualities slowly and painfully. Public speaking made him freeze. Gāndhi realized that when we are afraid of someone or some other race or religion or nation then we try to either run away or destroy that entity. Bullies will not bully if they are fearless and bullies will not succeed if there is no fear in the hearts of the oppressed. He believed that love, non-violence, and fearlessness are the antidote in dealing with dictators and tormentors.

We worry about our own future and that of our immediate family. ‘What will happen if I run out of money or food?’ It is this fear that motivates us to accumulate wealth, food, and personal possessions. Some are known to have collected hundreds of shoes while others have stashed away money in Swiss bank accounts. Gāndhiji’s advice to all is:

“Do not worry in the least about yourself, leave all worry to God’, that appears to be the commandment in all religions.”

If we claim to be non-violent, do not do anything to correct the situation, and suffer atrocities out of fear or weakness, then it is not considered non-violence. Gāndhiji gave an example of mouse and cat. A mouse is not non-violent towards a cat because he knows he is afraid and will never be able to fight with a cat.

“If only our men and women welcome jails as health resorts, we will cease to worry about the dear ones put in jails which our countrymen in South Africa used to nickname ‘His Majesty’s Hotels’.”

M. K. Gāndhi

During school years, Mohan had tried to eat meat to be tall and strong like an Englishman. Later he wrote:

“Strength lies in absence of fear, not in the quantity of flesh and muscle we may have on our bodies.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Hind Swaraj”, 1909

Anger

Usually people who feel weak or inadequate or insecure resort to angry outbursts to show their strength. Anger clouds our judgement and we may overreact to an unpleasant situation. Later we may regret our inappropriate actions. Anger is especially bad for leaders. Some angry leaders have made bad decisions and led their countries to war with disastrous results.

“I have learnt through bitter experience the one supreme lesson to conserve my anger, and as heat conserved is transmuted into energy, even so our anger controlled can be transmuted into a power which can move the world.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Young India”, 15 September 1920

What you feel and how you react to something is always up to you. You can choose your own thoughts, reactions and emotions to pretty much everything. You don't have to freak out, overreact or even react in a negative way.

He not only controlled his own anger and angry reaction to the British atrocities, he asked and persuaded his followers to do the same. He firmly believed that negative feelings like anger, jealousy, revenge, etc., are a waste of energy.

Cheating

When Mohan was in school, his elder brother got in to debt. Mohan had a gold bracelet on his arm. He cut out a little piece to pay off the debt. His parents came to know about this and the brothers had to tell lies about the loss. Mohan could not bear this and wrote a letter to his dying father to forgive him for cheating and telling lies. His father read the letter, then tore it up without saying a word to Mohan and started crying. This incident affected Mohan so much that decided not to cheat or tell a lie again.

Later on in life, when Gāndhiji was organizing non-violent civil disobedience movement, he was very frank and open about the sacrifices that were required for the freedom of the country. He did not sugar coat his statements and cheat people in believing that it would be quick and easy. At the same time, he informed the British what he was planning to do. This strategy baffled everyone because no one was used to or expected this frankness from the ‘enemy of the empire’.

Lust

Mohan married at the age of thirteen and was very passionately in love with his wife. Few years later, his father was very sick and on his death bed. Mohan used to sit with his dying father and make him comfortable by massaging his feet. Once, late at night, he felt very strong desire to be with his young wife. He left his father and went to his room. After some time a servant came to his room to tell him that his father had passed away. This incident, when he was not with his father during his last moments, made him feel very guilty about his weakness. For many years he tried and failed on many occasions to overcome feelings of lust for his wife that he considered a weakness because it interfered with his goals.

Process of Evolution

We all go through one or more periods in our life when nothing works. We try different approaches — experiment with various ways to improve our lot. Mohan also had many failures in his life and a lot of challenges. The important lesson to learn from his life is ‘how’ he transformed himself. According to him everyone is capable of this self-analysis of their personal situation, try to find solutions, experiment with different approaches, learn from the results, change their attitude and approach, and persevere in their efforts. When he heard, read, saw, or experienced something, he would think about it and learn from that experience. If he thought that it was ‘good’ and in accordance with his principles, then he accepted it, worked hard to practice it and make it a part of his everyday life.

“It is wrong to call me an ascetic. The ideals that regulate my life are presented for acceptance by mankind in general. I have arrived at them by gradual evolution. Every step was thought out, well considered, and taken with greatest deliberation.

Both my continence and non-violence were derived from personal experience and became necessary in response to the calls of public duty. The isolated life I had to lead in South Africa, whether as a householder, legal practitioner, social reformer or politician, required for the due fulfillment of these duties the strictest regulation of sexual life and a rigid practice of non-violence and truth in human relations, whether with my own countrymen or with Europeans.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Harijan”, 3 October 1936

Many of us try to change the world around us to our way of thinking and standards but that usually does not work.

“You must be the change you wish to see in the world.”

M. K. Gāndhi

It is never easy to change our own ways. Gāndhiji has described the path as:

“I know the path. It is straight and narrow. It is like the edge of a sword. I rejoice to walk on it. I weep when I slip. God's word is: 'He who strives never perishes.' I have implicit faith in that promise. Though, therefore, from my weakness I fail a thousand times, I will not lose faith, but hope that I shall see the Light when the flesh has been brought under perfect subjection, as some day it must.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Young India”, 17 June 1926

Self Evaluation

The first step in the process of self-improvement is to realize that there is a problem or a deficiency in our feelings, thinking or actions. Most us can see faults or problems with other people very easily but not in ourselves. He wrote:

“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.”

M. K. Gāndhi

If we can realize our own shortcomings then we can try to find ways to ‘change’ or ‘improve’. There are many who go on making the same mistake over and over again.

“To err, even grievously, is human. But it is human only if there is determination to mend the error and not repeat it.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Harijan” , 6 Feb. 1937

Self-evaluation is a continuous process that goes on with evaluation and re-evaluation of events, experiences, discussions, and readings. To find out what we are doing right and where do we need to change our ways, constant self-evaluation of all thoughts, speech, and actions is absolutely necessary. He constantly evaluated his own basic values, goals, strategy, and tactics. In a discussion on European civilization, he wrote:

“We rarely find people arguing against themselves. Those who are intoxicated by modern civilization are not likely to write against it. Their care will be to find out facts and arguments in support of it, and this they do unconsciously believing it to

be true. A man whilst he is dreaming, believes in his dream. He is undeceived only when he is awakened from his sleep.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Hind Swaraj” , 1909

The next step consists of arguing against your own ideas and plans, evaluating all pros and cons. It is like walking through a fire to purify yourself. If carried out honestly and rigorously, this self-searching will help with personal development.

Many political, religious, and social leaders think that they have to be consistent all the time. Once they have expressed a view or decided on a path, they have to stick to it. If they change their views then they may be called ‘inconsistent’ or ‘flip-flopping’. They have very rigid, inflexible ideas and rules, and go on making the same mistake over and over. Whereas, Gāndhi thought that:

“Constant development is the law of life, and a man who always tries to maintain his dogmas in order to appear consistent drives himself into a false position.”

M. K. Gāndhi

Contemplation

Gāndhi developed a capacity for analyzing objectively (Contemplation - *Manan*) his own situation and come up with an action plan. Once we realize our shortcomings, we need clear thinking. If we are agitated, angry or depressed we cannot think clearly and are very likely to make wrong decision. Calm careful evaluation of the situation is very important.

Discriminative Intelligence

This capacity for self-analysis and discriminatory intelligence — distinguishing good from bad, moral from immoral, and ethical from unethical — is called *viveka buddhi* in *Sanskrit*.

“The only thing that separates us from the brute is the capacity to distinguish right from wrong.”

M. K. Gāndhi

The epic Mahābhārat tells the story of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ kings, queens, and princes. Anyone who reads it, can choose their ‘bad’ or the ‘good’ role models.

“The Mahabharata depicts for all time the eternal struggle that goes on daily between the forces of good and evil in the human breast and in which, though good is ever victorious, evil does put up a brave show and baffles even the keenest conscience.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Harijan”, 5 September 1936

Even scriptures can be and have been interpreted in many different ways. Religious and political leaders have quoted scriptures to justify telling lies and using violence but he never wavered from his basic principles of ‘truth’ and ‘non-violence’.

Gāndhiji used to receive a lot of letters asking questions about every topic under the sun. Someone asked him “Where do you find the seat of authority?” The questioner probably wanted to know about the final authority — a scripture or a person — that Gāndhiji relied on. He replied:

“It lies here (pointing to his breast). I exercise my judgment about every scripture, including the Gita. I cannot let the scriptural text supersede my reason.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Harijan”, 5 December 1936

In other words, even the words in scriptures should not be followed blindly but interpreted with properly.

There are a lot of people who read a book or listen to a person and begin to follow that doctrine without questioning or thinking and analyzing. On the other hand, Gāndhi would analyze each and every experience, see whether it was true to his basic principles of truth, non-violence, universal love, etc., and then accept or reject it. This critical thinking is called ‘*Viveka Buddhi*’ in Sanskrit or ‘discriminative intelligence’, is the highest intelligence that separates the moral from immoral or ethical from unethical actions. This was the final authority for Gāndhi.

“The only tyrant I accept in this world is the ‘still small voice’ within.”

M. K. Gāndhi

After analysis of his circumstances in South Africa and past experiences in India, he concluded that he could not change the world. The only person he could change was himself. He seriously started making changes in his thinking, speech, and behaviour.

“I have not the shadow of a doubt that any man or woman can achieve what I have, if he or she would make the same effort and cultivate the same hope and faith.”

M. K. Gāndhi

Gāndhi also realized that the root of all actions and speech was in the mind. A thought arises in the mind and if it is repeated enough number of times and accepted then it results in similar speech and action.

*“You are what your deep driving desire is.
As your desire is, so is your will.
As your will is, so is your deed.
As your deed is, so is your destiny.”*

Ekknath Easwaran
in “Upanishads” (*Bruhadāranyaka* IV.4.5)

In other words, we create our own destiny by our thoughts and actions. All of us can have some control over our thoughts and guide them in proper direction.

“No sinful act was ever done in this world without the prompting of a sinful thought. You have to exercise strict vigilance over every thought...”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Young India”, 27 October 1927

Gāndhiji did not believe in following any religion or book or person or prophet blindly. He put in to practice following teaching of Gautam Buddha:

*“Do not accept what I have said to you because it has been said in the past;
do not accept it because it has been handed down by tradition;
do not accept it thinking it may be so;
do not accept it because it is in the holy scriptures;
do not accept it because it can be proven by inference;
do not accept it thinking it is worldly wisdom;
do not accept it because it seems to be plausible;
do not accept it because it is said by a famous or holy monk;
but if you find that it appeals to your sense of discrimination and conscience as
being conducive to your benefit and happiness, then accept it and live up to it.”*

Gautam Buddha

He took the last piece of advice - “*conducive to your benefit and happiness*” - one step further to make it ‘conducive to the benefit and happiness of all’ not just for himself or his family.

Trial & Error - Experimentation

In high school, Mohan experimented with meat diet to become tall and strong like the British so that he could fight against them for India’s independence. Later in England, he tried to become an Englishman by dressing and behaving like them. He failed miserably in both these experiments . Mohan realized his failures and gave up meat diet and trying to be what he was not. He accepted his vegetarian, Indian heritage; focussed on his studies and returned to India as soon as possible. In England, he started cooking and enjoying simple vegetarian dishes. Mohan also started taking long walks to keep himself physically fit.

In South Africa, Gāndhi realized that running away from failure or difficult task did not work. Therefore, he decided to change his attitude, his outlook, and face the situation head-on. Gāndhi started experimentation with alternative ways. If he failed, he was not ashamed of confessing his mistake or failure and tried to find some other solution. His ideas about God, truth, etc.; were also evolving. He expressed whatever were his current thoughts without worrying about what he had said in the past.

“I am not at all concerned with appearing to be consistent. In my search after Truth I have discarded many ideas and learnt many new things. Old as I am in age, I have no feeling that I have ceased to grow inwardly or that my growth will stop at the dissolution of the flesh.”

M. K. Gāndhi

In South Africa, Gāndhi gradually got over his fear. Once he went to a barber’s shop to get his haircut. The white barber refused to cut a brown Indian’s hair. Gāndhi went home and cut his own hair. Next day in the court, everyone noticed his unevenly trimmed hair and started laughing. Without feeling sorry for himself or hiding the truth, he told everyone what had happened. He was not afraid of failure, experimenting with various alternatives, changing his ways, and admitting his failure in public.

“I have nothing new to teach the world. Truth and non-violence are as old as the hills. All I have done is to try experiments in both on as wide a scale as I could do. In doing so, I have sometimes erred and learnt by my errors. Life and its problems have thus become to me so many experiments in the practice of truth and non-violence.”

He expressed his process of evolution as follows:

“It is wrong to call me an ascetic. The ideals that regulate my life are presented for acceptance by mankind in general. I have arrived at them by gradual evolution. Every step was thought out, well considered, and taken with greatest deliberation.”

M. K. Gāndhi

Experimentation requires effort on the part of the individual. Mental and physical energy to put in to action and different plans are devised to overcome the deficiencies that were identified during contemplation. Sometimes our plans do not work out and then we need the energy to persevere. Great discipline and faith in a higher power are required to continue on with experimentation in spite of failures. Throughout life, Gāndhi experimented with different approaches to achieve his goals. His methods were based on his own experiences, observations of people and events, and books he read.

Sources of inspiration

Mohan was inspired and guided by many people, books, his observations, and experiences in his own life.

Parents

Mohan's parents were Hindus. His mother, Putalibai, visited temple regularly, carried out fasts on special days, and took care of the family diligently. He loved his mother very much. He would do anything to please her. She was his first teacher and role model. She was very religious. Later on in life Mohan adopted the practice of fasting for political reasons. When he left home to go to London to study law, he promised his mother that he will not eat meat, touch wine or other woman. He kept this promise because of his love for his mother. Mohan's father, Karamachand, was a very loyal minister in a small independent state in Gujarat, a province of India. He was well known for telling the truth, even if it was not 'politically correct' or pleasant to hear for his boss, the king.

Wife

Mohan married Kasturbai when they both were 13 years old. Initially they had a stormy relationship. Young Mohan wanted to be the 'boss' and teach Kastur to obey all his commands and wishes. Kasturbai was headstrong, did what she thought was right and was prepared to suffer the consequences silently. This was Mohan's first lesson in non-violent civil disobedience or 'Satyāgraha'. Later he started learning from Kasturbai instead of teaching her.

Discussions at Home

Mohan's father used to invite people from different faiths for discussions. These sessions were open and frank. Mohan used to sit, listen, and learn about other religions. He developed respect, tolerance, and understanding for all religions at an early age.

Children

During his visit to London for the Round Table Conference, Gāndhiji went to talk to children at the Montessori Training College. There he told Madame Montessori :

"I am impatient to realize the presence of my Maker who to me embodies Truth, and in the early part of my career I discovered that if I was to realize Truth I must obey, even at the cost of my life, the Law of Love. And having been blessed with children, I discovered that the Law of Love could be best understood and learned through little children. Were it not for us, their ignorant poor parents, our children would be perfectly innocent...If parents behave themselves while the child is growing, the child will instinctively obey the Law of Truth and the Law of Love...They have perhaps a finer sense of honour than you and I have. The

greatest lesson in life, if we would but stoop and humble ourselves, we would learn not from grown-up learned men but from so-called ignorant children.”

M. K. Gāndhi

Other People

Swami Vivekānanda

Swami Vivekānanda was born in 1863 as Narendranath Dutta, six years before Gāndhiji was born. He became a swami and travelled all over India encouraging people to live according to the teachings of the Veda-s. He addressed the Parliament of World Religions in Chicago (1893) and then travelled all over the USA talking about Vedic Hindu Dharma.

He observed that:

“Everything that can weaken us as a race we have had for last thousand years. It seems as if during that period the national life had this one end in view, viz. how to make us weaker and weaker, till we have become real earthworms, crawling at the feet of everyone who dares to set his foot on us.”

Swami Vivekānanda

Foreigners had invaded India for more than a thousand years and brutally tried to destroy the culture and will to fight.

His advice to the nation was:

“Stand up, be bold, be strong. Take the whole responsibility on your shoulders, and know that you are the creator of your own destiny. All the strength, succour you want is within yourselves. Therefore make your own future.”

Swami Vivekānanda

In “The Mission of Vedanta,” Swami Vivekananda said:

Let us proclaim to every soul: Arise, arise, awake! Awake from this hypnotism of weakness. None is really weak; the soul is infinite, omnipotent and omniscient. Stand up, assert yourself, proclaim the God within you, do not deny Him!”

Swami Vivekānanda

In a speech on “The Future of India” he told the nation:

“Why is it, that forty-million Englishmen rule over three hundred million of people here (Indians)? What is the psychological explanation? This forty-million put their minds together and that means infinite power, and that three hundred

million have a will, each separate from the other. Therefore, to make a great future India, the whole secret lies in organization, accumulation of power, coordination of wills...

And the more you go on fighting and quarrelling about all the trivialities such as 'Dravidian' and 'Aryan', and the question of Brahmins and non-Brahmins and all that, the further you are off from that accumulation of energy and power which is going to make India...

Each one of you has a glorious future if you dare believe me. Have a tremendous faith in yourselves...

There are greater works to be done than to become lawyers and picking quarrels and such things. A far greater work is this sacrifice of yourselves for the benefit of your race, for the welfare of humanity...

Life is short, but the soul is immortal and eternal, and one thing being certain, death, let us therefore take up a great ideal and give up our whole life to it."

Swami Vivekānanda, 14 February 1897

Vivekānanda's speeches and writings inspired a lot of Indians to unite and fight for independence.

Faith, Religion - Dharma

Our faith or religion plays a very important role in guiding us through our lives. However, many religious and political leaders all over the world have misinterpreted their own scriptures and teachings of their prophets. Correct interpretation of scriptures requires certain maturity and qualities of character. It also requires love and respect for life in general and broadmindedness.

All over the world children are told that if they do not have any money, life will be very difficult. We go to school, earn a degree, and find a job so that we can earn money and support a family. This was the goal for Mohan too. He tried to achieve this goal and did become a successful lawyer in South Africa. But ultimately decided to serve the poor and oppressed Indians in South Africa and India when realized that if he devoted all his time to earning money, then there would be no time left for public service. Like Narsinh Mehta, the poet who wrote Gāndhiji's favourite prayer 'Vaishnava jana to ...', he gave the responsibility of providing for his basic needs to God.

"If, therefore, we repose faith in His Providence, we should rest assured that He will give us every day our daily bread, meaning everything that we require...."

M. K. Gāndhi

Most of us, ordinary people, worry about what will happen if we do not have a job, income, food on the table, shelter over our head, etc. Our bodies have some basic needs to survive. A Sanyāsi gives up this fear because he/she has complete faith in God.

“From the standpoint of pure Truth, the body too is a possession. It has been truly said, that desire for enjoyments create bodies for the soul. When this desire vanishes, there remains no further need for the body, and man is free from the vicious circle of births and deaths.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Yeravda Mandir”, Chap. VI

In other words, giving up all desires for personal needs and pleasures, is the way to salvation from the cycle of births and deaths. Very few have the courage to give up a lucrative profession, life of luxury and adapt a very simple life devoted to welfare of all.

Prayer (Prārthanā)

Prārthanā or prayer means a request to God or Higher Authority. There is an eternal battle going on between the ‘good’ and the ‘evil’ in the hearts and minds of all people. A lot of times we need the courage to do the right thing. Later on we feel that may be if I had the courage I would have done the right thing. A sincere prayer is another practice (besides repetition of mantra) that helps us develop good habits and gives strength.

“As food is necessary for the body, prayer is necessary for the soul.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Young India”, 15 December 1927

To be effective in bringing about our personal evolution, a prayer has to be fully understood, sincere, and should be offered to the almighty without any doubts.

“heartfelt prayer is undoubtedly the most potent instrument that man possesses for overcoming cowardice and all other bad old habits. Prayer is an impossibility without a living faith in the presence of God within.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Young India”, 20 December 1928

“...offer incessant prayer to God to keep us free from evil thoughts.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Young India”, 27 October 1927

Personal prayer became communal when Gāndhi started communal living in South Africa. Later on in India he used to have one at 4:20 AM and another in the evening at 7:00 PM. The evening session included singing of Bhajans (hymns) and recitation from different scriptures after his public lecture. This brought him peace during life’s major trials and tribulations and strength to face all sorts of difficult situations.

“Even in darkest despair, where there seems no helper and no comfort in the wide wide world, His name inspires us with strength and puts all doubts and despair to flight...Let us pray that He may cleanse our hearts of pettiness, meannesses and deceit, and He will surely answer our prayers.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Harijan”, 1 June 1935

Many people pray, visit temple, or perform a ritual (*puja*) when they are in trouble and want something from God. There is a selfish reason behind this prayer and rituals. Gāndhiji believed that it is more important to serve a human being in need than any ritual for a selfish reason.

“To give service to a single heart by a single act is better than a thousand heads bowing in prayer.”

M. K. Gāndhi

Gāndhiji’s favourite evening prayer, ‘Vaishnav jan to’ was composed by a poet named Narasinh Mehta. This prayer describes the characteristics of an ideal man / woman. It became one of his guides in life. A rough translation of the poem is as follows:

An ideal devotee of God is one who feels the pain of others.
Does not become proud or arrogant when he helps others in need.
He respects everyone and does not criticize anyone.
One who has total control over his speech, desires, and mind.
Congratulations to his mother who raised such a person.
He treats everyone with love and respect and does not run after personal pleasures.
He respects all women like his own mother.
Never tells a lie and does not steal others’ wealth.
Worldly pleasures and wealth does not attract him and is established in a simple life.
He is always repeating the name of ‘Rāma’ and has an uplifting and inspiring effect like visiting a holy place, on everyone.
One who has given up greed, deceit, selfish desires, and anger.
Narsinh Mehta (the poet) bows down to such a person.

Scriptures - Bhagavad Gitā

Gāndhiji was a very spiritual person and lived according to the highest moral and ethical values suggested in Bhagavad Gitā and Rāmāyana . The original Bhagavad Gitā was composed in Sanskrit, the language of all Vedic scriptures and is part of the great epic - ‘Mahābhārata’. There are 700 shloka-s or couplets in the Gitā. It is a dialogue between a prince, who does not want to fight in a battle against his relatives even though they represent the forces of ‘evil’. It is also about the struggle going on in the minds of everyone about ‘what is the right path’ and ‘what is wrong’. How does one decide between what is good and bad, moral and immoral, ethical and unethical?

Mohan had a personal copy of Bhagavad Gitā when he was a student in school but had not studied it. When he was eighteen years old (1888), he left his town and the sheltered life with his family to go to England. In England Mohan was introduced to an English translation of

Bhagavad Gitā, “The Song Celestial”, written by Sir Edwin Arnold. It made a great impression on him and slowly he tried to live according to the values described in it. He considered Gita as a book that gave the basic knowledge required to live an ideal life. Later he read many different translations of Gita and also read it in the original Sanskrit language.

When he was a child, Mohan’s mother was his spiritual guide. He loved and respected his mother very much. He would do anything to please her. She was his first teacher and role model but he lost his mother when he was studying law in London. Bhagavad Gitā took the place of his mother and he became an obedient and devoted child of this adopted mother.

“I lost my earthly mother long ago; but this Eternal Mother has completely filled her place by my side ever since. She has never changed, she has never failed me. When I am in difficulty or distress, I seek refuge in her bosom.”

M. K. Gāndhi

“The Gitā had been a mother to me ever since I became acquainted with it 1889. I turn to it for guidance in every difficulty, and the desired guidance has always been forthcoming. But you must approach Mother Gitā in all reverence, if you would benefit by her ministrations. One who rests his head on her peace-giving lap never experiences disappointment but enjoys bliss in perfection. This spiritual mother gives her devotee fresh knowledge, hope, and power every moment of his life.”

M. K. Gāndhi

Gāndhi kept up the study of Bhagavad Gitā. Later in his life, while living in communal āshrams, Gāndhi introduced regular reading of Gitā everyday in the morning and during the evening prayers. He found solutions to difficult problems and spiritual comfort in these passages.

“the Gitā became an infallible guide of conduct... Just as I turned to the English dictionary for the meaning of English words that I did not understand, I turned to this dictionary of conduct for a ready solution of all my troubles and trials.”

M. K. Gāndhi

Gāndhi had a very turbulent life, many tragedies, and failures. It is not easy for ordinary people to face such great difficulties.

“When disappointment stares me in the face and all alone I see not one ray of light, I go back to the Bhagavad-Gitā...I immediately begin to smile in the midst of overwhelming tragedies and my life has been full of external tragedies. If they have left no visible, no indelible scar on me, I owe it all to the teachings of Bhagavad-Gitā.”

M. K. Gāndhi

Bhagavad Gitā does not dictate any do-s and don't-s but gives a well reasoned approach and choices to act.

“It is free from any form of dogma. In a short compass, it gives a complete reasoned moral code. It will satisfy both the intellect and the heart.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Young India”, 25 August 1927

It can satisfy the intellectual sceptic and also an emotional person. The most important teaching in Bhagavad Gitā according to Gāndhiji is:

“The Gitā inculcates upon them the duty of perseverance in the face of seeming failure. It teaches us that we have a right to actions only but not to the fruit thereof...It calls upon us to dedicate ourselves, body, mind, and soul to pure duty and not to...desires and undisciplined impulses.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Harijan”, 24 August 1934

The study and practice of Gitā prepares us for difficulties of life. According to Gitā the ultimate goal in life is:

“Self-realization and its means is the theme of the Gitā”

M. K. Gāndhi

Bhagavad Gitā gives choices in actions to be performed and explains the consequences of actions. There are no commandments. In the end Shri Krishna tells prince Arjuna:

“I have given you the knowledge that can be classified as the most important secret. Think about it and act as you think is appropriate.”

Bhagavad Gitā, Chap. XVIII.63

Bhagavad Gitā has been misinterpreted by many to justify violence and Gāndhiji knew that. But Gāndhiji disagreed with this interpretation. Gitā does not teach violence.

“the central teaching of the Gitā is not Himsa but Ahimsā...Himsa is impossible without anger, without attachment, without hatred,...”

M. K. Gandhi

It talks about the internal ‘duel between good and bad’ going on in the mind and recommends giving up all negative tendencies like anger, selfish desires, jealousy, revenge, telling lies, etc.

“The grim fact is that the terrorists have in absolute honesty, earnestness and with cogency used the Gitā, which some of them know by heart, in defence of their doctrine and policy.”

M. K. Gāndhi, 26 September 1936

“I do not believe that the Gitā teaches violence for doing good. It is preeminently a description of the duel that goes on in our own hearts...It inculcates performance of duty irrespective of consequences;”

M. K. Gāndhi in Young India, 23 February 1921

Interpretation of scriptures require certain maturity and knowledge about fundamental morals and ethics. Faith and devotion (*bhakti*) are also essential for understanding true meaning of Gita:

“A man, therefore, who would interpret the scriptures must have the spiritual discipline. He must practice the Yamas and Niyamas - the eternal guides of conduct...Those who are lacking in Bhakti (devotion), lacking in faith, are ill-qualified to interpret the scriptures...Only the experienced will arrive at the true interpretation of the scriptures.”

M. K. Gandhi

The Yama-s and Niyama-s are basic requirements for a spiritual life. They are recommended for all Hindu-s. Patanjali’s Yama-s are truth (Satya), non-violence (Ahimsa), control over all sensual pleasures (Brahmacharya), no stealing (Asteya), and no greed or collecting material objects (Aparigraha). Five Niyama-s are cleanliness (Soucha), contentment (Santosha), mental discipline (Tapa), study of scriptures (Svadhya), and total surrender to God.

“...the purity of heart and the devotional frame of mind are necessary for a proper understanding of religious books.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Young India”, 8 December 1927

Truth, non-violence, and control of all senses were the most important principles to him. Many recite the holy scriptures without understanding the meaning or making any effort to put the teachings in practice. If we want Bhagavad Gitā to guide us then we need to practice what she preaches everyday.

“...mere recitation (of Bhagavad Gitā) is not an end in itself. It should be an aid to the contemplation and assimilation of the meaning and message of Gitā.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Harijan”, 2 February 1934

Last 18 verses of second chapter of Bhagavad Gitā especially became favourite of Gāndhiji. He lived a life as suggested in Bhagavad Gitā, Chap. 18, verse 52:

“Who prefers solitude, who eats meagre food, who has under perfect control thought, speech, and action; who is intent on meditation, who is free always from attachments.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Bapu’s in Letters to Mira”, p. 245

So who is the final authority? Where do we turn when we get contradictory advice? The final authority for Gāndhiji was:

“That voice within tells me, “You have to stand against the whole world although you may have to stand alone. You have to stare in the face the whole world although the world may look at you with blood-shot eyes. Do not fear. Trust the little voice residing within your heart.” It says: “Forsake friends, wife and all; but testify to that for which you have lived and for which you have to die.”

M. K. Gāndhi

Other Books

Rāmāyan, the epic life story of Lord Rāma, by poet Tulsidas became his favourite spiritual literature. Later in life, Rāma ceased to be name of the historical king Rāma and became synonymous with the universal energy (God) that pervades every thing and everyone.

“as my knowledge and experience of Him grew, my Rama became immortal and omnipresent.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Harijan”, 22 September 1946

Other Indian epics and scriptures like Mahābhārata, and Upanishads also influenced him. Gāndhi had read Bible and the teachings of Jesus Christ . He particularly liked ‘Sermon on the Mount’ and found great similarities between it and Bhagavad Gitā. While studying in London, he also read “The Light of Asia”, a poem on the life of Buddha by Sir Edwin Arnold and “Key to Theosophy” by Madam Blavatsky .

Gāndhi was inspired and influenced by the writings of Henry David Thoreau, an American philosopher and Leo Tolstoy, Russian author. Thoreau had read Bhagavad Gitā, Bible, Theosophy , and Quran . He had preached that people should not obey laws that are unjust or evil. Gāndhi organized non-violent civil disobedience movement based on their writings, learnt from his own experiences and modified his tactics as he went along.

While in South Africa, Gāndhi read ‘Unto this Last’ by John Ruskin. The author talks about simple life close to nature and hard work. Gāndhi immediately put this in practice and established Phoenix Āshram near Durban. He also read The Bible, a translation of Quran, Hindu, and Jain scriptures. However, “Kingdom of God is Within You” by Leo Tolstoy, impressed him the most. He found thoughts of the author, and his ideas on truthfulness and morality were in alignment.

Goal in Life

After getting a law degree from London, Gāndhi's main goal was to become a successful lawyer, earn money, support family, and live a life of luxury. In South Africa, he almost reached this goal. But when he suffered the indignities from the Europeans and saw oppression of Indians, Chinese, and native South Africans, his focus changed from helping himself and his family to improving the life of Indians in South Africa. This change required giving up his lucrative practice of law and devote more and more time to community service without any remuneration or personal gain - selfless service. Giving up his personal and family's needs and aspirations to help the community was a great sacrifice (*Yagna*). Very few people can do this. When he changed this focus from himself to serving the community, he found the courage to stand up to the authority and speak up against injustice.

“Man’s ultimate aim is to realize God, and all his activities, social, political, religious, have to be guided by the ultimate aim of the vision of God. The immediate service of all human beings becomes a necessary part of the endeavour, simply because the only way to find God is to see Him in His creation and be one with it. This can only be done by service of all. I am a part and parcel of the whole and I cannot find Him apart from the rest of humanity.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Harijan”, 29 August 1936

In life, the ultimate goal of all Hindus' is yoga or permanent union with God – self realization.

“Self-realization and its means is the theme of the Gitā”

M. K. Gāndhi

This goal is never easy to achieve and may take several births, self-purification or getting rid of all impurities like hate, revenge, jealousy, etc. The final goal in life for Gāndhiji was the same:

“What I want to achieve, – what I have been striving and pining to achieve these thirty years, – is self-realization, to see God face to face, to attain Moksha.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Autobiography”, Introduction, p. viii

This he hoped to achieve by becoming a person:

“Who prefers solitude, who eats meager food, who has under perfect control thought, speech and action; who is intent on meditation, who is free always from attachments.”

M. K. Gāndhi's translation of Gitā's 18:52 verse
in “Bapu's Letters to Mira”, p. 245

This state may be described as ultimate and permanent peace or relief from the cycle of birth and death:

“Man is not at peace with himself till he has become like unto God. The endeavour to reach this state is the supreme, the only ambition worth having. And this is self-realization.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Young India”, 6 August 1931

The way to achieve this goal is through selfless service, work without any selfish interest in gaining something for self.

“One who does bodily labour out of a spirit of service, in all humility and for self-realization, gets self-realization. Such a one should never feel reluctant to work.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “To Āshram Sisters”

Sacrifice (Yagna)

Yagna in Sanskrit means sacrifice. It is a ritual performed in front of a holy fire in which clarified butter (ghee) is offered as a sacrifice. The fire purifies whatever is offered to it. Gāndhiji offered his entire life to the service of his country without expecting any wealth, position, or power. He had bare minimum of necessities, no bank account, house, car, or servants. He worked 7 days a week and fifteen to sixteen hours a day without ever taking a vacation to play golf. Only time he took off was when he was sick or fasting. A foreign reporter was intrigued by this and asked him if he ever felt like taking some days off for a vacation. Gāndhiji told the reporter that he was always on vacation. He was completely immersed in whatever he was doing and enjoyed every moment of his activity. There was no need to get away from ‘work’. Work creates tension when it is unpleasant or we are worried about the outcome. Even cleaning toilets in the Āshram in South Africa was not below his dignity. Cleanliness was very important duty for him.

“Yagna means an act directed to the welfare of others, done without desiring any return for it,... ‘Act’ here must be taken in its widest sense, and includes thought and word, as well as deed. ‘Others’ embraces not only humanity but all life.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Yeravda Mandir”, Chapter XIV

In South Africa Gāndhi had started making good money as a lawyer. He also saw that the Indian community had lot of issues with the government. He considered community service as God’s work and thought a lot about how he can do both - earn money and perform community service. He asked himself:

“was I to give up all I had and follow Him? Straight came the answer: I cannot follow Him unless I gave up all I had.”

M. K. Gāndhi

Yeravdā was a jail, near Pune, India; where Gāndhi spent a good number of years. He accepted his jail sentences willingly and made himself at home even under very harsh living conditions. He would wake up as usual at 3:00 AM and write letters, autobiography, newspaper articles, etc. Morning and evening prayers, which were public affairs outside of the jail, were conducted in private. Gāndhi even glorified his jail by calling it a temple - Yeravdā Mandir.

On 15 August 1947 India became independent. There were a lot of celebrations and pompous ceremonies in the capital New Delhi and other cities. All those who participated in the fight for independence were honoured and given central stage. Only person missing in all these was Gāndhiji. He was traveling all over the province of Bengal trying to bring peace between Hindus and Muslims who were killing each other. Very few leaders have sacrificed receiving honor at such an important event. He had worked tirelessly for India and Indians' welfare for more than fifty years and sacrificed his personal pleasures and those of his family too.

Gāndhiji's advise to the newly independent India was:

“A nation that is capable of limitless sacrifice is capable of rising to limitless heights. The purer the sacrifice, the quicker the rise.”

M. K. Gāndhi

This advice was followed by very few political leaders. The leaders of new India followed the Western model of education, industrialization, gross commercialization, and did not even bother to change the oppressive laws of the British. Quite a few have become very wealthy through corruption and misuse of authority. They are power hungry and do very little for the good of the common citizens. Quite a few politicians and leaders are just outright criminals.

Many Hindus have misunderstood the meaning of the word *Yagna* or sacrifice. They feel that by performing a ritual and sacrificing ghee (clarified butter) in fire they will purify themselves and achieve desired result. Gāndhiji had different view of 'sacrifice' – we offer all our weaknesses, bad habits, immoral thoughts, etc., to the fire to purify us.

“At one time, they sacrificed animals to propitiate angry gods. Their descendants, but our less remote ancestors, read a different meaning into the word sacrifice and they taught that sacrifice was meant to be of our baser self, to please not angry gods but the one living God within. I hold that the logical outcome of the teaching of Gitā is decidedly for peace at the price of life itself.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Harijan”, 3 October 1936

Selfless Service - Karma Yog

Sometimes, what we have read, heard, or seen in childhood creates a deep impression and becomes a guiding light throughout our lives. This is also the reason why we should teach great values to children when they are very young. There are many examples in modern times of children exposed and taught violence and hatred who then end up practicing the same later in life. Mohan read a poem by Shāmal Bhatt in one of the school textbooks. This made such a deep impression on the young mind that later he experimented with what he had learnt from this poem. A translation is as follows:

*“For a bowl of water give a goodly meal
For a kindly greeting bow down thou with zeal;
For a simple penny pay thou back with gold;
If thy life be rescued, life do not withhold.
Thus the words and actions of the wise regard;
Every little service tenfold they reward.
But the truly noble know all men as one,
And return with gladness good for evil done.”*

M. K. Gāndhi in “Autobiography”

Most of us perform service with the intention to get something in return. It could be money, influence, job, position of power, prestige, etc. When Gāndhi was invited to South Africa by a Muslim businessman to settle a dispute among the owner’s family, he put his heart in to his job and gave his best shot. In this situation he had the choice of either dragging on the fight among family members and taking the matter to court or settling the dispute amicably. First choice would make him rich, ruin the family business of his employer and create animosity within the family. Whereas, the second choice was in the best interest of his client and his opponents. Even though the second choice was not in Gandhi’s selfish interest, he chose that. Gāndhi worked very hard to learn the intricacies of the business accounting, explained the situation to both parties, and settled the dispute without going to the court. Everyone was happy. Gāndhi learnt what the honest practice of law was and that the useful function of the lawyer was to unite the two opposing parties. This was the lesson in selfless service. He began to look for opportunities for service in all difficult situations.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the British had instituted a system of ‘indentured labor’ to develop the colonies. It was a system of legalized slavery. Living conditions of indentured labourers from India was horrible. The employers would beat them up and punish them severely. Gāndhi started visiting their homes and trying to help them as best as he could. Later an epidemic of plague broke out among the poor Indian indentured labourers. The sick were isolated in a quarantined building with one English nurse taking care of them. Gāndhi started visiting them and taking care of the sick and the dying under very primitive conditions. He was at a great risk of getting infected and die from the disease. Gradually more and more of

his time was being spent on community service projects. During the Boer war he started volunteer Indian ambulance service with the British army. It was very hard work, at times walking forty miles a day carrying the wounded to safety and medical care. In India, he served the poor indigo farmers of Bihar without any remuneration and was at definite risk of going to jail. These acts of selfless service endeared him to common people and made him a unique leader. This was also the way for his spiritual awakening.

“The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.”

M. K. Gāndhi

The words ‘Karma’ and ‘Yoga’ are used commonly in Western newspapers and literature. These Sanskrit words have very deep meanings. Literal translation of Karma is action and Yoga is union. Karma Yoga is one of the four main paths to Self-realization or Moksha - the ultimate union with God. All our actions have a purpose or intent - a thought that precedes the action and a result that follows the action — sometimes called the fruit of action. The third factor is -how the action is performed. It is called the ‘means’ or method. The method or means employed to perform the action should be non-violent and not harm anyone. In Karma Yoga, we have to consider all these three aspects of any action. Gāndhiji explains Karma Yoga as follows:

“In regard to every action one must know the result expected to follow, the means there to, and the capacity for it. He who, being thus equipped, is without (selfish) desire for the result and is yet wholly engrossed in the due fulfillment of the task before him, is said to have renounced the fruits of his action.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Young India”, 6 August 1931

All actions start with a thought. An intention without any selfish interest for personal pleasure, prestige, profit, for gaining power or possessions is considered to be a pure. It becomes impure when a selfish desire enters in to consideration. An action performed with the intention of some personal gain is considered selfish. If I donate a lot of money to a charity with the hope that the newspaper will print my photo and help me win an election, then I have a selfish ulterior motive. When we have a selfish desire for gaining personal glory, wealth, or power; we get entangled in this physical world. This type of action takes us away from our goal of self-realization or experiencing peace and divinity:

“Action for one’s own self binds, action for the sake of others delivers from bondage.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Young India”, 1 September 1927

The most important condition for performing any service is that personal gain should not be the motive.

“That service is the noblest which is rendered for its own sake.”

M. K. Gāndhi

Selfless service is described as *Anāsakta Yoga* in Sanskrit.

“By desireless actions; by renouncing fruits of action; by dedicating all activities to God, i.e., by surrendering oneself to Him body and soul.”

M. K. Gāndhi

Sometimes we get paralyzed by the fear of failure and give up our project.

“By detachment I mean that one must not worry whether the desired result follows from your action or not, so long as your motive is pure, your means are correct. Really, it means that things will come right in the end if you take care of the means and leave the rest to Him. But renunciation of fruit in no way means indifference to the result.”

M. K. Gandhi

Work should to be performed with full concentration and effort, for the welfare of all, not for any personal gain and without worrying too much for a particular desired result. Then karma (action) becomes Karma Yoga.

“I do not want to foresee the future. I am concerned with taking care of the present. God has given me no control over the moment following.”

M. K. Gāndhi

Gāndhiji used to work for long hours, getting up at 3:00 AM and keep busy all day. He did not take any vacation or weekend off. Europeans were intrigued by this and a foreign reporter once asked Mahātmā Gāndhi, "Mr. Gāndhi, you've been working fifteen hours a day for fifty years. Don't you ever feel like taking a few weeks off and going for a vacation?" Gāndhiji was amused and said, "Why? I am always on vacation." When someone is doing what he likes and is enjoying that activity, then there is no stress. Work becomes a vacation or hobby.

By 1930s Mahātmā Gāndhi was very well known all over the world for his non-violent movement to gain independence from the British rulers. His courage, discipline, and ability to unite large population of India behind him in this struggle was admired by a lot of political leaders and common men. Even though he was nominated a number of times for Nobel Peace prize, he was never selected for it. The Nobel Committee had given many reasons for Gāndhi not being selected. The Nobel Peace Prize was given predominantly to Europeans in the first half of twentieth century. Gāndhi did not have fixed address, a home or even a bank account. It is possible that Nobel Committee did not want to annoy the British by recognizing their archenemy. Whatever the true reason, this deliberate neglect or snub did not bother Mahātmā Gāndhi and did not let it interfere with his work like a true '*Karma Yogi*'.

“No joy can compare with the joy of doing one’s duty quietly.”

M. K. Gāndhi

Kastur sold her jewelry to send her husband, Mohan, to London to study, stayed away from him for many years and had given up a lot of pleasures of life. When Gāndhi was beginning to make some money to enjoy comfortable life, she was not ready to sacrifice anymore. Indian community leaders had given some expensive jewelry to Kasturba (ba means mother - sign of respect) for all the community service Gāndhi had performed. Gāndhi was not prepared to keep this because it was a kind of payment for his public service. Kasturba was not prepared to part with these gifts and this resulted in a lot of heated arguments. Ultimately, Gāndhi won and made a trust of all the donations to be used for community development.

“Religions teach that we should remain passive about worldly pursuits and active about godly pursuits, that we should set a limit to our worldly ambition and that our religious ambition should be illimitable. Our activity should be directed into the latter channel.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Hind Swaraj”, 1909

Simple Life (Vairāgya)

The process to simplify his life started when he was 18 years old. Gāndhi was studying in London to become a barrister. The process of simplifying his life was a very long, slow, and well thought out process that continued for many decades. In the end when he died, he had a couple of plain white dhoti-s (made from cloth spun by him from raw cotton), a pair of open sandals, his glasses, a watch, a pen, and a copy of Bhagavad Gitā. He did not have a house, a fixed address, or a bank account. He firmly believed:

“If each retained possession only of what he needed, none would be in want and all would live in contentment.”

M. K. Gāndhi in Young India , 4 September 1930

In England, Mohan gave up the idea of becoming an English gentleman, stopped lessons in French and violin; sold his violin and moved to a small room. Since it was close to all the places he had to go, he could walk and save on bus fares.

“It is wrong to call me an ascetic. The ideals that regulate my life are presented for acceptance by mankind in general. I have arrived at them by gradual evolution. Every step was thought out, well considered, and taken with greatest deliberation.”

M. K. Gāndhi

No one can put a price tag on things that are important in life.

"Everything that can be counted does not necessarily count; everything that counts cannot necessarily be counted."

Albert Einstein

Later on in South Africa and India, Gāndhi established and lived in Āshram- s - an inter-dependent community where everyone performed some duty to serve the community. The aim was to get rid of unnecessary personal needs, pleasures, luxuries and activities, simplify life to find time so that everyone in the community could give their maximum attention and effort to public service.

"But desirelessness or renunciation does not come for the mere talking about it. It is not attained by an intellectual feat. It is attainable only by a constant heart-churn."

M. K. Gāndhi

He wanted to do more in life than just earn money and live a life of luxury.

"There is more to life than increasing its speed."

M. K. Gāndhi

Ravindranath Tāgore had started a residential school - Shantiniketan - to teach Indian music, dance, etc. Soon after his return from South Africa, Gāndhi visited Shantiniketan on 6 March 1915. Tāgore was a well known poet. The poet and the karmayogi (one who had adopted a life of selfless service) met for the first time. Gāndhi was not quite satisfied with the Shantiniketan system. He wanted the students to do their own jobs along with studies, he felt there was no need for servants, cooks, sweeper or water carriers. When Gāndhi's desire was communicated to Tāgore he agreed without any hesitation. He announced, come "sab kaje hat lagai mora". The new system started on 10 March 1915 which Tāgore declared as "Gāndhi Divas" (Gāndhi Day) in Tāgore's Āshram.

Gāndhiji believed that simple life was essential, not only for the survival of an individual but also for the whole humanity. Now in twenty-first century we are observing the effects of gross over indulgence and consumerism.

"The essence of what I have said is that man should rest content with what are his real needs and become self-sufficient. If he does not have this control he cannot save himself. After all the world is made up of individuals, just as it is the drops that constitute the ocean. This is a well known truth."

M. K. Gāndhi

We are all interdependent. Pollution in China and nuclear disaster in Fukushima, Japan can affect people in North America.

Diet

Mohan was born in a very strict vegetarian family. His mother was very religious, used to go to temple to worship every day and observe a lot of fasts on holy days. Mohan was very fond of his mother. In school, he had a Muslim friend named Mehtab. Both of them were very patriotic and talked about how oppressive British rule in India was. Like two young, idealistic, day dreamers, they would plan how to overthrow the British from India. They were also impressed by the tall, well built, physically strong British soldiers. Mehtab also was strong, well built, athletic, and ate meat. Mehtab convinced Mohan that if he wanted to fight the British, he will have to be physically strong and eat meat. Mehtab brought goat meat for Mohan to a secret meeting place. Mohan tried it without the knowledge of his parents and at night he had nightmares. He felt a goat was jumping in his tummy and could not sleep. This experiment of becoming physically strong did not last very long and he had to give up meat.

Before he left home to go to London, Mohan promised his mother that he will not eat meat. He always took his promises very seriously. During the late nineteenth century it was very hard to find tasty and nutritious vegetarian diet in London. Indian food was not available in London. For a vegetarian it was even harder to find suitable raw vegetables, pulses, or flour to cook. Mohan moved to an apartment and learnt to cook his own meals. At home he had never cooked. He joined a group of Englishmen who were vegetarians. After reading some books on vegetarian diet, Mohan started experiments with simple vegetarian dishes. Initially they were not tasty at all. Nevertheless, he persevered and once he conquered his sense of taste, he began to enjoy the natural flavours of vegetables in bland diet.

“Fasting of the body has to be accompanied by fasting of all the senses... Alpahar (Alpāhar), the meager food of the Gitā,...means just enough to sustain the body for the service for which it is made.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Bapu’s Letters to Mira”

The hardship he went through with his diet and keeping his promise to his mother, increased his mental strength. Honesty and integrity became an important part of his character. It also showed the love for his mother. In India, one of the religious customs is of taking a ‘Vrata’. It is vow not to eat certain foods, or fasting on certain days or during a season. This helps build a stronger character.

While serving a jail sentence, Gandhiji wrote about the purpose of eating food:

“Food has to be taken as we take medicine, that is, without thinking whether it is palatable or otherwise, and only in quantities limited to the needs of the body. Just as medicine taken in too small a dose does not take effect or the full effect and as too large a dose injures the system, so it is with food.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “From Yeravda Mandir”, Chap. V

We tend to eat to please our palate and when we have food to our liking, we tend to overeat:

“Eat only what you need, only when you are hungry, and only when you have done at least a little work for others.”

M. K. Gāndhi

Dress

In England Gāndhi tried to become an Englishman by dressing like the locals, taking lessons in ballroom dancing, violin, eating with fork and knife. Later he went to South Africa on an assignment. He had maintained his English clothes. One day an indentured labourer came to his office to seek help. The labourer was badly beaten by his master and was bleeding. In those days the Indian labourers wore a dhoti (plain white wrap around cloth) and a kurta (long shirt). After this incident, Gāndhi gave up his British clothes and started wearing a dhoti and kurta, to identify himself with the dress of an indentured labourer in South Africa.

Many years later, when he was visiting a village in India, he saw a woman wearing a dirty sāree. Gāndhi was very particular about cleanliness and inquired why she did not wash her sāree. She humbly said that she had only one sāree to wear. On another occasion, he was in South India. Couple of hundred peasants travelled over 200 miles to see the great saint. When Gāndhiji asked them about their dirty clothes they started crying and said the same thing. From then on, he decided to wear only one piece plain dhoti to cover his loin. He thought that if he really wanted to represent the people of India, he had to wear similar clothes. Sir Winston Churchill used to call him a ‘naked fakir’ (beggar) because of his dress.

Wealth

After many years of struggle, Gāndhi started earning good income from his law practice in South Africa. His professional work was interrupted by time in jail and volunteer work transporting injured during Boer war and Zulu rebellion. Finally, he had to decide between practicing law and public service. Gāndhi chose later. He could have made a lot of money, lived in a big comfortable home, sent his children for higher education and bought a lot of jewelry for his wife. However, he could not have carried on with making money and serving the poor Indians at the same time. This was not at all palatable to his wife in the beginning. Kasturba accepted it later but his eldest son never forgave him for he missed out on university education.

Gāndhi's views on accumulation and use of wealth gradually evolved. He interpreted Bhagavad Gitā's teaching as:

"I understood the Gita's teaching of non-possession to mean that those who desired salvation should act like a trustee, who though having control over great possessions, regards not an iota of them as his own."

M. K. Gāndhi in "Autobiography: My Experiments with Truth"

Everything belonged to the supreme authority - God. Following was Gāndhi's understanding of wealth and possessions from the point of view of a lawyer.

"We must regard ourselves not as owners but as trustees of our wealth, and use it for the service of society, taking for ourselves no more than a fair return for service rendered."

M. K. Gāndhi

Later he saw great poverty and starvation in India while the rich in big cities and the ruling class of foreigners had a lot of wealth.

"The rich have a superfluous store of things which they do not need and which are, therefore, neglected and wasted; while millions starve and are frozen to death for want of them. If each retained possession only of what he needed, none would be in want and all would live in contentment."

M. K. Gāndhi in "Young India", 4 September 1930

Just before his assassination, Gāndhiji wrote down 'seven deadly sins' and gave them to his grandson, Arun Gāndhi. One of them was:

"Wealth without work."

This concept also was taken from another shloka (verse) in Bhagavad Gitā, in which all who earn wealth without working are called 'thieves'.

Vows (Vrata)

Taking a vow like 'not eat salt' or 'eat only once a day' used to be common among women in India. This voluntarily 'giving up' something that one likes develops strength of character and discipline.

Gāndhiji used to observe 'maoun vrat' — a vow not to talk on Mondays. He did not speak at all. When he wanted to say something, he would write it down on a piece of paper. Silence was

observed for twenty-four hours to give rest to his vocal cords, conserve his energies and have time for contemplation. He was in communication with his inner voice or conscience and relied on it more than anyone, or even any holy book. Gāndhiji had many visitors coming to ask for advice on a wide variety of topics — from political to family problems. On Mondays, he would write brief notes to communicate with them.

Needs

We see children with cell phones and video games, adults with fancy sports cars and living in big mansions, politicians flying around in huge planes and going through cities with secret service agents protecting them, and ordinary people 'living it up,' drinking, dancing and having parties every weekend. Their justification for life-style is "We have only one life to live and we need to enjoy it to the fullest." This is a Western way of thinking that has now been adopted by most Indians.

"Restraint never ruins one's health. What ruins one's health is not restraint but outward suppression...The very first step in self-restraint is the restraint of thoughts."

M. K. Gāndhi in "Harijan", 28 October 1937

If Gāndhiji wanted, he could have had a life of luxury but he chose to reduce his 'needs' to bare minimum and devote his life to public service. If he had gone after an 'easy life' he would never have been able to achieve what he wanted to.

"One who would serve will not waste a thought upon his own comforts, which he leaves to be attended to or neglected by his Master on high. He will not therefore encumber himself with everything that comes his way; he will take what he strictly needs and leave the rest. He will be calm, free from anger and unruffled in mind even if he finds himself inconvenienced. His service like virtue, is its own reward, and he will rest content with it."

M. K. Gāndhi

By reducing personal needs; like fancy diet, expensive clothes, big home, a car, servants, etc.; gave Gāndhiji much more time for community service. In describing a public servant, he said:

"He will not, therefore, encumber himself with everything that comes his way; he will take only what he strictly needs and leave the rest."

M. K. Gāndhi

Gāndhiji also had a great sense of humour. This helped to lighten the load of all tragedies and turmoil associated with his life. In 1931, he was invited to attend Round Table Conference by the British Government to discuss independence for India. He went there on a ship and took with him plain white dhoti, shawl, and spinning wheel. In London, he was invited by the King of

Great Britain. Gāndhiji did not dress 'up' in English attire for the occasion and met the monarch in his dhoti. Later news reporters interviewed him about this meeting and tried to make fun of his meager clothes. He told the reporters "His majesty was wearing enough clothes for both of us."

Cleanliness

Scriptures emphasize external cleanliness of the body and of the environment to be as important as internal purity of thoughts. However, people who cleaned latrines and performed other 'unclean' jobs were considered lower, unclean, and untouchable by the educated and rich. Gāndhi was different in this respect from other Indian leaders. He attended a meeting of the Indian National Congress in 1901 and was appalled by the stench near latrines. Gāndhi picked up a broom and started cleaning. He did this type of work on many occasions later on. In the Āshram-s he established, he and all other members of the community were expected to clean the latrines. This practice not only improved the hygiene but also eliminated feeling of class difference between 'high' and 'low' (untouchable or dalit) castes. To Gāndhiji, external cleanliness was as important as internal cleanliness of mind and spirit.

Exercise

Mohan was sent to a private high school. He did not consider himself to be a very bright student. He was very shy and kept usually to himself. As soon as school was finished he would run home so that he would not have to talk to anyone.

The high school principal was a strict disciplinarian and believed that sports were an integral part of the high school curriculum. All students were expected to participate in gymnastics and cricket. Mohan did not agree with this at that time. He changed his views about sports and physical activities later on in life. Sports activities were after all the academic classes and by that time he wanted to be home. Another reason for avoiding gymnastics was that Mohan wanted to go home early and take care of his sick father. His father did write a note and Mohan was exempted from gymnastics.

While in high school, Mohan had read that walking was a good way to exercise. He developed the habit of long walks in fresh air which did not require any special equipment, or dependence on any other person. He could do it on his own. Later on, when he went to London to become a lawyer, he continued with long walks even though the weather did not always cooperate. He moved to a part of London so that he could walk to places he had to go. He kept up with this till his death at the age of 79.

Evolution of Key Concepts

Gandhi had slowly developed some key concepts about life from his personal observations, books he read, and people he came in contact with. However, the final authority for his decisions was:

“The only tyrant I accept in this world is the ‘still small voice’ within.”

M. K. Gāndhi

God

It is interesting to see how Mohan’s perception about God evolved over time. Mohan believed in one of the many deities of Hindu pantheon. He used to repeat the name ‘Rāma’ to overcome his fear of ghosts and robbers when he was young. He had faith in historical king Rāma as the ‘God’. His ideas matured as he grew up. He described ‘God’ as:

“There is an indefinable mysterious Power that pervades everything. I feel it though I do not see it. It is this unseen Power that makes itself felt and yet defies all proof, because it is so unlike all that I perceive through my senses.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Young India”, 11 October 1928

The concept of God is different in different religions and even among individuals following the same tradition. It is impossible for humans to describe ‘God’ because we cannot see, feel, hear, or touch ‘Him’.

“whilst everything around me is ever-changing, ever-dying, there is underlying all that change a Living Power that is changeless, that holds all together, that creates, dissolves, and re-creates. That informing Power or Spirit is God.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Young India”, 11 October 1928

‘God’ for Gāndhiji was everything that is ‘good’ and even more.

“To me God is Truth and Love; God is ethics and morality; God is fearlessness. God is the source of Light and Life and yet He is above and beyond all these. God is conscience.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Young India”, 5 March 1925

Love for all - not just for near and dear ones is also one of the important attributes of the Superior power:

“Where Love is, there God is also.”

M. K. Gandhi

Gāndhiji had a lot of time to think about ‘God’ and write while he was in jail. He explains the description of ‘God’ as ‘Truth, highest Knowledge, and Bliss’ (Sat, Chit, Ānanda) found in Hindu scriptures:

“Where there is no truth, there can be no true knowledge. That is why the word Chit or knowledge is associated with the name of God. And where there is true knowledge, there is always bliss (Ānanda). Sorrow has no place there. And even as Truth is eternal, so is bliss derived from it. Hence we know God as Sat-Chit-Ananda, one who combines in Himself Truth, Knowledge, and Bliss.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Yeravda Mandir”, 30 July 1931

Religion (Dharma)

Gāndhi was born in a Hindu family but was exposed to people of other religions during his childhood. His father was the prime minister of a small state in Western India and would invite Hindus, Muslims, Jains, Parsees, Christians and Sikhs to his home and discuss positive aspects of all faiths. Mohan used to listen to these discussions and different points of views when he was growing up. Gāndhiji did not believe in comparing different religions or saying 'my religion is better than yours' or 'my religion is the only way to salvation'. He believed in one and the same God for all. He wanted to bring all the people of India together to fight for her independence and he knew the British were doing their best to exploit the differences. Discussions about superiority of one religion over another usually ends up in animosity and bitterness.

“We have not realized religion in its perfection, even as we have not realized God. Religion of our conception, being thus imperfect, is always subject to evolution and re-interpretation. Progress towards Truth, towards God, is possible only because of such evolution. And if all faiths outlined by men are imperfect, the question of comparative merit does not arise.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Yeravda Mandir”

Gāndhi studied holy books of other religions like Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, etc., and defined his religion as:

“search after truth through non-violent means”

M. K. Gāndhi

“My religion is based on truth and non-violence. Truth is my God. Non-violence is the means of realizing Him.”

M. K. Gāndhi

He also wanted good ideas to be considered from all of different religions and backgrounds, but none to be followed blindly.

“I do not want my house to be walled in 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.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Young India”, 1 June 1921

Many people all around the world follow their own religion without thinking and understanding the reason or logic behind it. If Gāndhiji did not agree with teaching of Bhagavad Gitā or any other holy book, he would explain ‘why’ he would not follow that teaching.

“Every formula of every religion has, in this age of reason, to submit to the acid test of reason and universal justice if it is to ask for universal assent. Error can claim no exemption even if it can be supported by the scriptures of the world.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Young India”, 26 February 1925

Gāndhi’s views on religion were misunderstood by many Hindus, Muslims and Christians. He believed that there were lessons to be learnt from all holy books but the interpretations of these teachings were by imperfect human beings and therefore all of us had a duty to use our own intelligence for proper interpretation.

A life according to any particular religion should inspire one to sacrifice one’s comfort and needs for improving the whole society. One of the seven deadly sins he described later on was:

“Religion without sacrifice.”

M. K. Gāndhi

There are Hindus who did not want to teach Sanskrit Shloka-s to people of lower caste or women. Gāndhiji was against this exclusion of groups and discrimination against them. He believed that everyone should be taught according to their capacity and interest and should not be excluded on the basis of sex or caste.

“No culture can live, if it attempts to be exclusive.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Harijan”, 9 May 1936

Many books and articles written on Hinduism, especially by non-Hindus, include the system of caste as part of the religion. In answer to this Gāndhiji has said:

“Caste has nothing to do with religion. It is a custom...”

M. K. Gandhhi, “Harijan”, 18 July 1936

It has become a bad custom because some people are treated as ‘lower’ than others and are excluded from certain activities. The ‘lower’ castes were exploited by the ‘upper’ castes by paying less for their services and keeping them poor.

“The very first mention of Varna in Vedas likens the four Varnas to four main parts of the body.”

M. K. Gāndhi

Just as all parts of human body – head, arms, chest, abdomen, and legs – are important, so are all the four divisions in the society according to their abilities, capacity, training, background, etc. It does not suggest superiority or monetary worth in the society.

“The law of Varna is one of absolute equality among the creatures of God.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Harijan”, 28 September 1934

Religion & Politics

Religion plays a very important part in the lives of people of India. Religion can teach and transform people to live for the benefit of whole society or it can divide and destroy the whole world. Gāndhi was a staunch Hindu but not blind to the faults of Hindus. He was especially against the practice of ‘untouchability’ — considering some people as ‘unclean’ or ‘low’ human beings in the society. The original teaching ‘God is present in all living creatures’ was forgotten and some people were considered ‘high’ in the society and others ‘low’.

Gāndhiji believed in equal treatment and justice for all, without consideration of religion, gender, caste or language spoken. He knew very well how the British tried to ‘divide and rule’ over India and in all other British colonies. He was against division of India on the basis of religion because he anticipated the chaos and destruction of property and lives such an action would cause. Some Hindus, Muslims and Dalits (scheduled caste) did not see this and opposed him vigorously, even tried to kill him on multiple occasions. They did not believe that all these groups could live in peace and harmony whereas, Gāndhiji was of the opinion that religion can play a very important and positive role in the lives of everyone without interfering with the unity and progress of the society.

Gāndhi opposed the idea of dividing the country on basis of religion and creation of Pakistan. In the end he lost and Jinnah, Nehru and the British won, Pakistan was created, hundreds of thousands lost their lives and millions of people became refugees. The animosity created at the time of division has lasted more than seventy years, cost millions of dollars developing defence against each other, and legacy of permanent state of war between the two countries.

Gāndhi wanted a multi-religious, multi-cultural nation with equal rights and opportunities for all citizens. Even though he was a very religious man and lived his life – personal and public –

according to his faith, he did not want India to be divided on the basis of religions. He wanted all to live in cooperative, interdependent, community helping each other for peace and prosperity of all. He wanted a united India with equal rights and representation for all religious groups in the government of free India. He always preached and practiced the ideal of equality of all religions in all spheres of life - Sarva Dharma Sambhāva . He spoke against the Hindu practice of ‘untouchables’ and also told Christians to live like Christ and Muslims to abandon the idea of spreading their beliefs by the ‘sword’.

“My faith is that the progress of Islam does not depend on the use of the sword by its believers, but the result of the supreme sacrifice of Husain, the great saint.”

M. K. Gāndhi

Morality

Many believe that it is not necessary to follow morals and ethics in business or politics. However, Gāndhiji believed that morality is essential in all spheres of our life. These values are universal — there is no separate or distinct European, or Asian, or African or American morality. A life lived according to highest moral standards is the true ornament of the all human beings. Without morality, no civilization will survive. Morality was the centerpiece of Gāndhiji’s life.

“Mahātmā Gāndhi embodied in his life certain universal principles that are inherent in the moral structure of the universe, and these principles are as inescapable as the law of gravitation.”

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Gāndhiji did not believe in having different moral standards in personal life and another in political sphere. He applied and lived by the highest moral and ethical principles in all fields of activities.

“You cannot divide life, social, economic, political and purely religious, into watertight compartments.”

M. K. Gāndhi

Mental Self Control – Brahmacharya

Brahman is the universal energy or God. One who remains conscious of Brahman (God) and acts accordingly is the one who practices Brahmacharya. In the ancient Indian tradition, life was divided in to four parts. The first quarter (25 years) was devoted to acquiring knowledge. At the age of 8 or a little later, the boy or girl would leave their parents home to go to a boarding school – Gurukula. There they spent many years learning language, literature, scriptures, sciences, math, fine arts, etc. Life with the Guru was very simple with very few material needs and no

sensual pleasures. No individual rooms with fancy furniture, TV, or computers. Meals were prepared by the wife of the teacher. All students helped in doing the household chores and taking care of cows, etc. There was no time for boredom or entertainment. This stage was called *Brahmacharyāshram*. Complete mastery over all pleasures derived from our senses like touch, taste, sight, etc., is learnt during this stage of life. Main focus is on learning and everything else is secondary.

“Brahmacharya is not mere mechanical celibacy, it means complete control over all the senses and freedom from lust in thought, word and deed.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Young India”, 29 April 1926

The Western thinking tells us that self-restraint is not good for us. Eastern thinking is exactly opposite:

“Restraint never ruins one’s health. What ruins one’s health is not restraint but outward suppression. A really self-restrained person grows every day from strength to strength and from peace to more peace. The very first step in self-restraint is the restraint of thoughts.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Harijan”, 28 October 1937

Gāndhiji thought that for any one who dedicated his or her life to the service of the poor and the downtrodden should also follow the life of a *brahmachāri*. That was the only way to get enough time and energy. A simple life with minimal personal needs gives more time for spiritual evolution, work for society, and also prevents exploitation of natural resources. *Brahmacharya* is explained as:

“Brahmacharya...means not suppression of one or more senses but complete mastery over them all...Conquest means using them as my slaves.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Bapu’s Letters to Mira”

“Brahmacharya...is purity not merely of body but of both speech and thought also.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Harijan”, 29 February 1936

A simple life of few needs is not easy especially when we see everyone around us indulging in all kinds of pleasurable activities. Our feeling of pleasure resides in our mind. It takes a lot of effort and training to discipline our mind.

“the mind is a restless bird; the more it gets the more it wants, and still remains unsatisfied. The more we indulge our passions the more unbridled they become... happiness was largely a mental condition. A man is not necessarily happy because he is rich, or unhappy because he is poor.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Hind Swaraj”, 1909

It is very hard to discipline the mind. Gautam Buddha has said that:

“It is easier to win over thousand soldiers in thousand battles than to conquer your own self (control your own mind).”

The secret of calming the mind is to divert its attention from fulfilling its desires for happiness through pleasures of the senses to something higher and nobler – like selfless service of the society. We need to change our focus from (helping) ‘me’ to ‘him’ or ‘her’ or ‘them’. If we start thinking about ‘how to help someone else and remove ‘I’ or ‘me’ (self-interest - what’s in it for me) from the equation – then a *satyāgrahi* has won the battle. And self control in all spheres of life will strengthen our minds.

Love

Love is a very powerful force. But the word love has many meanings. It can arouse a lot of other feelings depending upon the type of ‘love’ we have. Our feeling and definition of ‘love’ also changes as we mature in life. Study of Mohan’s feelings of love can give us an idea about these different stages of life.

When we are very young, our parents’ ‘love’ for the helpless little baby is very important for our survival and growth. In school, we develop friendships. Some of these relationships last for a lifetime. We can forgive all faults of our school friends or of our brothers and sisters. Poets and authors have glorified ‘love’. Later, ‘love’ becomes physical attraction. The ‘love’ that Gāndhiji developed for all was very different from the usual meaning of ‘love’.

“Love never claims, it ever gives. Love ever suffers, never resents, never revenges itself.”

M. K. Gāndhi

Love for Parents

Mohan loved his mother and father very much. While in school he read the story of Shraavan. This young boy’s parents were blind and in poor health. They wanted to go for a pilgrimage to holy places before they died. Shraavan was a very loving young man and wanted to do everything possible to make his parents happy. He made a special contraption to carry them on his shoulders and walked to all their favourite places. One day they had stopped to rest. He left his parents under a tree and went in search of water to drink. At the same time a king was in the

same area hunting for deer. Shraavan had bent over to fill up a pot with water from a river. The king mistook him to be a deer and shot Shraavan with his arrow. When the king went over to look for the deer, he found a young man dying with an arrow stuck in his chest. Before he died, Shraavan told the king to look after his blind parents. The king was very upset about his mistake and went to apologize. When the parents heard what had happened to their son, they too died of grief. This story of Shraavan's devotion and service to his parents made a great impression on young Mohan and always wanted to serve his parents whenever he got an opportunity. When his father was terminally ill, Mohan would spend hours sitting with him, massaging his feet and doing his best to make him comfortable.

Wife's Love

Mohan got married to Kastur when they were both 13 years old. Mohan was a very insecure young teenager at that time. He also had many faults like fear, anger, lust, and jealousy. He wanted to control all aspects of Kastur's life. He thought it was his duty to teach his bride even though they both were of same age. Kastur was pretty and Mohan was '*passionately fond of her*'. This love for her and his own insecurities lead to jealousy. His friend in school made matters worse by telling false stories about Kastur that she was not faithful to him. Kastur was not allowed to go anywhere without his permission. She also had a mind of her own and a strong will. On top of all these she was not afraid of darkness, snakes, robbers, or any one and Mohan was scared of all of them. This led to a lot of arguments whenever he tried to force his views and decisions on her. After his return from England, Mohan tried to teach the Western ways of eating with fork and knife, wearing western clothes, etc., to the family. Kastur was reluctant to change but gave in to his demands. After some years, while in South Africa, Gāndhi decided to simplify his life and asked his family to give up the western ways. He asked Kastur to clean latrines in their home and later in the *āshram* (experiment in communal living). At first this was very humiliating for a young wife of a lawyer. But she did it and this love and suffering made a great impression on Gāndhi.

During teenage we begin to develop attraction for the opposite sex. This physical 'love' also has a function and time in life. If it persists or becomes uncontrollable then it can create a lot of problems as seen in the lives of some prominent and not so prominent people. Kastur's love for Mohan was the stabilizing force that remained constant throughout their turbulent, ever changing, and demanding life. There were many long periods of separation when Gāndhi went to England for studies, went to South Africa to work, and multiple times to British jails during the struggle for independence of India. He saw the unconditional love of Kastur for him in spite of all his faults and demands. She did not give lectures or made demands but taught about love by personal example. Later on in his life he realized that it was Kastur who was teaching him unconditional love, how to be fearless, and that it would be better to fulfill his responsibilities rather than exercise his rights.

“The ideal that marriage aims at is that of spiritual union through the physical. The human love that it incarnates is intended to serve as a stepping stone to divine or universal love.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Young India”, 21 May 1931

Nature has put tremendous power - energy - pleasure in the sex drive for the purpose of preservation of species. If this force or energy is redirected, it can become a great force for good. Mohan married at the age of thirteen. He had a lot of sex drive at that age. He was separated from his wife for long periods of time because of circumstances like going to London to study law and for a job in South Africa. He never had any extra-marital affair.

“Chastity is one of the greatest disciplines without which the mind cannot attain requisite firmness.”

M. K. Gāndhi

While he was trying to change his focus from earning money to improving living conditions of Indians in South Africa, he started to control his desire for sex. The time and energy gained from controlling all sensuous pleasures (of taste, touch, sight, hearing, and smell) and diverting them towards a higher goal of selfless service requires tremendous will power and persistence. The word ‘control’ has negative connotation in the Western way of thinking and we can see the effects of uncontrolled behaviour (greed, pleasure, etc.) all over the world now.

Love for the Country

Initially, like most British educated Indians, Gāndhi thought very highly of the British discipline, education, and the system of government. In South Africa during the Boer War and Zulu rebellion, and in India during the First World War; he tried to help the British war effort. He wanted India to remain within the British Empire and declared:

“Partnership in the Empire is our definite goal...If the Empire perishes, with it perish our cherished aspirations.”

M. K. Gāndhi

During these wars he saw how the British brutally treated the native Zulu people. The laws enacted by the British in South Africa were very unfair to all non-Europeans – Native people of South Africa, Indians and Chinese living there. Later in India he observed how they exploited poor farmers, forcibly collected exorbitant taxes, and ruined the economy of the country. All these events and observations changed Gāndhi to become more and more patriotic towards India and fight vigorously for the complete freedom from British rule.

Universal Love for everyone – Sambhāva

The Sanskrit word Sambhāva (*Sam* [pronounced as ‘sum’] = equal and *Bhāva* = feelings) means everyone is equal in the eyes of a person with this attribute. Everyone, that is people of different colour, religions, social status, ages, sexes, views, etc., are treated with love and respect under all circumstances. We all love ourselves more than anyone or anything in this world. Next we love our immediate family – wife, our children, parents and siblings. Then comes our love for our community and country. It is rare few who love everyone, even those who hate them or their sworn enemies. Gāndhiji went through this progression and reached a level where he loved everyone, treated friends and enemies alike, and hated none. In school he had learnt a poem which made a great impression on him.

“...the Gujarati poet, Shamal Bhatt, had taught me the principle of winning even the enemy with love, and that teaching had gone deep into me.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Autobiography”

Gāndhiji won everyone’s heart by his unconditional love. When he was in South Africa fighting for better treatment of Indians by the government, he was jailed by General Jan Smuts three times. Conditions in the jail were harsh. Instead of getting angry with the general, he spent free time making sandals for him. On his release from the jail he presented them to General Smuts. General Jan Smuts’ respect for Gāndhi increased tremendously by this gesture. General did not feel worthy of wearing sandals made by someone who was jailed for asking for fairness for his people.

“Differences of opinion should never mean hostility. If they did, my wife and I should be sworn enemies of one another. I do not know two persons in the world who had no difference of opinion, and as I am a follower of the Gitā, I have always attempted to regard those who differ from me with the same affection as I have for my nearest and dearest.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Young India”, 17 March 1927

Sir Winston Churchill was a very powerful and influential political leader when Gāndhiji was trying to improve lives of Indians in South Africa and India. Naturally, Churchill did not like anyone who was attempting to destroy the British Empire. At one time, he blamed Field Marshal Jan Smuts for releasing Gāndhi alive from South African jail. Smuts told Churchill how he could not let Gāndhi die in prison, even though Churchill would have preferred that Gāndhi died while in jail.

"It is easy enough to be friendly to one's friends. But to befriend the one who regards himself as your enemy is the quintessence of true religion."

M. K. Gāndhi

Many years later (1931) Gāndhiji met General Smuts in London. They had good time talking about old times in South Africa. The General told Gāndhiji “I did not give you such a bad time as you gave to me.” He genuinely wanted to help Gāndhiji in his efforts to gain independence for India and declared “Indian problem was most serious and needed immediate solution in a conciliatory manner”. This was a remarkable transformation in General Smuts’ thinking because of unconditional love that Gāndhiji had shown.

“A love that is based on the goodness of those whom you love is a mercenary affair, whereas true love is self-effacing and demands no consideration.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Young India, 6 August 1925

The British bureaucrats in England were so afraid of Gāndhi’s influence that all civil servants, before they left Britain for service in India, were told ‘not to meet Gāndhi’ while they were serving in India for fear of becoming sympathetic towards him and Indians. So much was the power of Gāndhiji’s love for all.

“...to me the Gitā became an infallible guide. It became my dictionary of daily reference...Words like aparigraha (non-possession) and samabhāva (treating everyone in same manner) gripped me...How was one to treat alike insulting, insolent, and corrupt officials, co-workers of yesterday raising meaningless opposition and men who had always been good to me?”

M. K. Gāndhi

The mill workers in Manchester were very angry with Gāndhi. They blamed him for teaching Indians not to buy cloth made in Britain resulting in closure of mills in Manchester, and unemployment among mill workers. Gāndhi went to Manchester to talk to these unemployed mill workers. He told them that living conditions of Indians was much worse than those of mill workers. Poverty and starvation in India was very common and that required Indians to stop buying British cloth and support local industries. This convinced the mill workers and all became friends of Gāndhi.

“I can never subscribe to the, statement that all Englishmen are bad. Many Englishmen desire Home Rule for India. That the English people are somewhat more selfish than others is true, but that does not prove that every Englishman is bad. We who seek justice will have to do justice to others.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Hind Swaraj”, 1909

Gāndhi believed that love was the most powerful force in the world, even stronger than all the weapons Europeans had and asked all Indians to “Hate the sin, not the sinner”. They were asked to practice love and respect even for the British who were armed and prepared to kill them.

“Love is the strongest force the world possesses and yet it is the humblest imaginable.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Young India”, 6 August 1925

“Not only that, but my religion and my patriotism derived from my religion embrace all life. I want to realize brotherhood or identity not merely with the beings called human, but I want to realize identity with all life, even with such things as crawl upon earth...because we claim descent from the same God, and that being so, all life in whatever form it appears must be essentially one.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Young India”, 4 April 1929

Even though he was a staunch Hindu, he respected the teachings of all other religions like Islam, Christianity, Jainism, Buddhism and Sikhism. Morning and evening prayers always included reading and prayers from other religions. Religion played a big role in his everyday life and in the political arena. He wanted a united India with equal rights and representation by all religious groups in the government of free India. He always preached and practiced the ideal of equality of all religions – *Sarva Dharma Sambhāva* – equal respect for all religions and equal treatment for all followers of different religions. Women were given equal importance in his struggle for India’s independence. They were in forefront of organizing boycotts against liquor stores and shops selling foreign clothes.

“To call a woman a weaker sex is libel; it is a man’s injustice to woman. If by strength is meant brute strength, then, indeed, is woman less brute than man. If by strength is meant moral power, then woman is immeasurably man’s superior. Has she not greater intuition, is she not more self-sacrificing, has she not greater powers of endurance, has she not greater courage? Without her, man could not be. If nonviolence is the law of our being, the future is with woman. Who can make a more effective appeal to the heart than woman?”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Young India”, 10 April 1930

If everyone on this planet followed this advice we can create heaven on this earth. Man is not the Lord of all creatures and does not have a right to kill other humans, animals, birds, or fish for his own pleasure or waste natural resources. This teaching is the basis for universal love – love and respect for living and non-living.

“I believe that if one man gains spiritually the whole world gains with him, and if one man falls, the whole world falls to that extent. I do not help opponents without at the same time helping myself and my coworkers.”

M. K. Gāndhi

Compassion

The first sentence of Gāndhiji's favourite prayer defines 'compassion' as a quality in a person who feels the pain of others. Following incidence is a good example of this quality. Once Gāndhiji was running to catch a train and lost one of his slippers. After getting in a train compartment, he went to the window and threw out his other slipper. A fellow traveller asked why he did that. His reply was that he had no use of one slipper but someone else may be able to use two slippers. He showed compassion for some unknown person who may be without slippers. To be able to think about welfare of someone who may have less than himself is compassion. He finished his journey in bare feet.

Will Power

Gāndhi had a tremendous will power. If he decided to do something, he would carry it through. He would recognize the mistakes he made and make every effort not to make it again. He carried on his non-violent fight for independence for decades while some other leaders would have given up all efforts.

“Strength does not come from physical capacity. It comes from an indomitable will.”

M. K. Gāndhi

Leadership

India is a large country with a very large and diverse population. People are divided along the lines of religions, caste, languages spoken, etc. For nearly a thousand years, no one was able to bring large number of Indians together to fight against foreigners who were ruling over India. The British had taken full advantage of these divisions. Gāndhiji was able to bring a very large number of people to sacrifice their jobs, income, homes, and families to fight against the British in non-violent ways. That was quite an achievement. It takes a team of dedicated, intelligent, highly disciplined, and talented people to carry out any *Satyāgraha* (civil disobedience). The leaders of any movement, government, or religion have to set a good example by their own high standards of behaviour like dedication to the cause without expecting anything in return and teaching the followers by living the life of simplicity, truth, and non-violence. Gāndhi was able to recruit a lot of very intelligent, educated, and dedicated followers to his cause. One prominent Indian leader observed:

“Gāndhi has in him the marvellous spiritual power to turn ordinary men around him in to heroes and martyrs.”

Gopāl Krishna Gokhale

His style of leadership was by personal example rather than just empty talk. He chose to live a simple life of a hermit himself, follow the highest moral and ethical principles of truth and non-violence, sacrificed his family, every comfort and pleasure, and people just followed his example.

"As human beings, our greatness lies not so much in being able to remake the world as in being able to remake ourselves."

M. K. Gāndhi

Gāndhiji's style of leadership can be described as 'servant leadership'. A servant leader does not order people around but performs his duties diligently, works hard, sacrifices his personal gain, comforts, prestige, etc. The first person he converted to his way of thinking was himself. Following quote can be found even on shopping bags in Vancouver, Canada:

"You must be the change you wish to see in the world"

M. K. Gāndhi

And expected other leaders in the movement to do the same.

"Those who believe in the simple truths I have laid down can propagate them only by living them."

M. K. Gāndhi

One day Gāndhiji received a request from a Dalit (untouchable) family to live in his āshrām. Gāndhiji knew there will be resistance from all quarters including his own wife, Kasturbā. It was the custom in the Āshram that everyone shared duties like cooking, cleaning dishes, latrines, etc. Kasturba proclaimed that she will not wash this family's dishes. Gāndhiji could have shouted and scolded her. Instead, he quietly said that in that case he himself will clean their dishes. This resolved the issue immediately and Kasturba started washing dishes for this new family without any argument. People learn by observing the leaders, imitate, and follow.

"Power is of two kinds. One obtained by the fear of punishments and the other by acts of love."

M. K. Gāndhi

Different people saw different qualities in Gāndhi. Some saw a very religious saint and some saw a very practical, down to earth man of action. Some thought he had the acumen of a brilliant lawyer. Everyone who came in contact with him, could not resist his love for all. In an argument, he never bullied or forced his views or humiliated the opponent.

There has to be absolute commitment by the leader to the cause. For a cause like independence of a country, the commitment has to be large – people involved, especially the leaders have to be prepared to give up their own life for the cause. Many attempts were made on Gāndhi's life. He

was badly beaten up by white South African Christians, by Muslims in South Africa and in India, and the last attempt was by a Hindu fanatic.

The secret of his success was described by a British Professor as follows:

“Be careful in dealing with a man who cares nothing for sensual pleasures, nothing for comfort or praise or promotion, but 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 over his soul.”

Prof. Gilbert Murray, Oxford University, 1914

We all make mistakes during our life. In any organization or movement, the leaders and followers will make mistakes. Gāndhiji would accept all his personal mistakes and shortcomings publicly, analyze successes and failures, find solutions, and move on. In February 1922 satyāgraha, a crowd got out of control, burnt a police station in Chauri Chaura, and 20 policemen died. Gāndhi was in jail at that time. He ordered everyone to immediately stop the satyāgraha. Everyone was surprised because if he had continued, he might have gained more from the British government.

A weak insecure leader is afraid of losing his/her position, or take responsibility for the mistake of his followers, afraid of change, innovation and improvement. A good leader is prepared to sacrifice everything, even his own reputation or a chance to win. He always has the ultimate goal in mind and tries to bring different factions to work together towards the goal. Gāndhi's definition of a good leader:

“A true Congressman is a true servant. He ever gives, never wants service. He is easily satisfied so long as his own comfort is concerned. He is always content to take a back seat. He is never communal or provincial. His country is his paramount consideration.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Young India”, 19 November 1925

Many leaders have a big ego. They may be five feet tall but have a fifty-five feet tall ego. Gāndhiji's advice to them was:

“There comes a time when an individual becomes irresistible and his action becomes all-pervasive in its effects. This comes when he reduces himself to zero.”

M. K. Gāndhi

He changed his dress, needs, and life style to come down to the same level as that of a poor peasant from a village of India. A lot of poor mill workers and farmers were prepared to give their life for a leader like Gāndhi.

There were many occasions in his life when people promised him something and then retracted. Gāndhiji gave them the benefit of the doubt and trusted even people who had betrayed him on more than one occasion.

“It is true that I have often been let down. Many have deceived me and many have been found wanting. But I do not repent of my association with them. For I know how to non-co-operate, as I know how to co-operate. The most practical, the most dignified way of going on in the world is to take people at their word, when you have no positive reason to the contrary.”

M. K. Gāndhi

There is a lot of debate about difference between being ‘religious’ and ‘spiritual’. Gāndhiji did not perform any Hindu rituals but always believed in a Higher Power or God. He considered living according to the highest moral and ethical standards as more important than performing rituals or visiting temples. Tāgore never hesitated to project Mahātmā Gāndhi as the spiritual soul of India. He wrote to China’s Marshal Chiang Kai-shek in 1938:

“At this desperate age of moral upset it is only natural for us to hope that the continent which has produced two greatest men, Buddha and Christ, in the whole course of human events must still fulfil its responsibility to maintain the purest expression of character in the teeth of the scientific effrontery of the evil genius of man. Has not that expectation already shown in its first luminous streak of fulfillment in the person of Gāndhi?”

Ravindranath Tāgore

Gāndhiji also expected all his followers to follow the same high standards. He did not hesitate to stop any strike or satyāgraha if there was any violence by his followers in any part of the country even at the risk of losing all the momentum.

“I believe that if one man gains spiritually the whole world gains with him and, if one man falls, the whole world falls to that extent. I do not help opponents without at the same time helping myself and my co-workers.”

M. K. Gāndhi

Gāndhiji had some very dedicated people who were prepared to give up everything and follow him. He himself took the high road of truth, non-violence, universal love for the benefit of all Indians and a lot of people willingly joined him in the effort.

“Somehow I am able to draw the noblest in mankind, and that is what enables me to maintain my faith in God and human nature.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Harijan”, 15 April 1939

He was an unusual leader. We see all the time that leaders – political and religious – blame everyone other their own group for all their problems. He asked all Indians to stop blaming the British for taking over the control of their lives and country. Taking responsibility is the first step in finding a solution.

“The English have not taken India; we have given it to them.”

M. K. Gandhi

Secret of Success

Gāndhiji never considered success in term of bank balance or titles or big mansion to live in. He did not like the title of ‘Mahātmā’ (a great saint). He considered himself to be a very ordinary person who had made a lot of mistakes and tried to learn and improve. He was nominated several times but the Nobel Committee did not give him the Nobel Peace Prize. We will never know the truth but many reasons for not giving him the prize are floating around like – Gāndhi did not have a bank account, an address, or he did not help anyone other than Indians, etc. Very few, if any, Nobel Peace Prizes were awarded to non-Europeans (non-whites) before 1960. It is possible that the committee did not want to upset the British by recognizing their archenemy. Again winning a prize or recognition was not his criterion for success.

What is success? Some define it as a sincere effort or the journey towards a goal as success. Whereas, others give importance to achieving the selected goal as ‘success’. A very well known verse from Gitā says:

We only have the right to perform our duty and we may not achieve the desired result.

Bhagavad Gitā, II.47

We only have a right or freedom to perform action, not to the fruits of our action. If we do not have any control over the fruits of action, the result should not determine success or failure of our action. We do have control over selecting what we want to do or how we want to perform our actions – whether we want to follow the path of truth, non-violence, and use moral and ethical means or not. According to Gāndhiji definition of success was:

“Full effort is full victory.”

M. K. Gāndhi

The secret of his success in getting millions of people to do something that was never done before and bring powerful enemy to his knees was his faith in himself, God, love for all, service to the poor without expecting anything in return, sacrifice everything, and live like poor.

Teaching by personal example

Some political and religious leaders tell their followers to do what they are asked to do, not imitate what leaders do. The leaders may follow a very luxurious life style, tell lies, have immoral ways but they want their followers to live a simple life, be truthful and live by highest morals and ethical principles.

Early in his life, Gāndhiji discovered that:

“in order to transform others; you have first to transform yourself.”

M. K. Gāndhi

Once a mother asked Gāndhiji to tell her son not to take a lot of sugar in his tea. Indian tea is very strong and sweet. At that time Gāndhiji himself used to take a lot of sugar in his tea. He told the mother to come back in a week's time. Mother was puzzled by this unusual request. Next week when she went back to see him, she asked him the reason for one week delay. Gāndhiji explained that since he was taking a lot of sugar in his tea, he could not possibly ask the child not to. He would not ask anyone to do what he was not doing. He first stopped adding sugar to his tea and then told others to do the same.

Chapter IV

Civil Disobedience - Satyāgraha

Gāndhiji's greatest contribution to the world was the successful demonstration of non-violent civil disobedience struggle to gain independence for India from a well armed and brutal rulers. This was achieved by practicing highest moral and ethical principles based on truth, non-violence, universal love and respect, even for the opponents. In the entire history of mankind, nothing like this was ever achieved by anyone before on such a large scale. Leo Tolstoy had commented on Gāndhi's Satyāgraha as *"the most important work now being done in the world"*.

Satyāgraha is a combination of two Sanskrit words – Satya and Āgraha – meaning truth and firm insistence. Gāndhi explained the word as:

"Truth (Satya) implies love, and Firmness (Āgraha) engenders and therefore serves as a synonym for force. I thus began to call the Indian movement 'Satyāgraha', that is to say the force which is born of truth and love or non-violence."

Mohan was planning for India's independence even while he was in school. His first attempt was to become big and strong like an Englishman by eating meat. In this he failed miserably. Later he got involved in activities related to earning money and supporting his family. Again he failed in establishing himself as a lawyer in Mumbai and Rajkot. Gāndhi went to South Africa to run away from the failures. In South Africa he experienced first hand discrimination and oppression because of his Indian origin. The Maritzberg train incident made him think about trying to find some solution. A revolution was started in his mind. Any change or revolution starts first in the mind. Thoughts are vocalized and then put in to action. As John Adams had observed about the American revolution:

"Revolution was effected before the war commenced...The revolution was in the minds and hearts of the people...This radical change in the principles, opinions, sentiments, and affections of the people was the real American Revolution."

John Adams, 1818

The answer to the question of how to fight for India's independence did not come to Gāndhi overnight or very easily. In the past people had resorted to violent methods involving assassinations of kings and dictators or fighting with swords and guns with invaders. These methods did not fit in with Gāndhi's core principles of 'truth' and 'non-violence'. He had to come up with something different. As his secretary later observed:

"...questions that arise in each age must be solved by the people of that age through their own efforts."

“The Diary of Mahadev Desai”, p.105

Gāndhi described his idea of non-violent civil disobedience movement (satyāgraha) in the book ‘Hind Swaraj’ (India’s Independence) as follows:

“Passive resistance is a method of securing rights by personal suffering, it is the reverse of resistance by arms... When I refuse to do a thing that is repugnant to my conscience, I use soul-force. For instance, the Government of the day has passed a law which is applicable to me. I do not like it. If by using violence I, force the Government to repeal the law, I am employing what may be termed body force. If I do not obey the law and accept the penalty for its breach, I use soul-force. It involves sacrifice of self...”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Hind Swaraj”, 1909

Gāndhi had firm conviction that in the long run, the non-violent satyāgraha will be effective in achieving independence of India. If majority of Indians decided to not obey the laws, pay taxes, wear locally made clothes, stop going to British schools, serve in the military or government, then the British will be defeated without firing a bullet.

“Passive resistance, that is, soul-force, is matchless. It is superior to the force of arms... a passive resister will say he will not obey a law that is against his conscience, even though he may be blown to pieces at the mouth of a cannon... even a man weak in body is capable of offering this resistance... Control over the mind is alone necessary, and when that is attained, man is free like the king of the forest and his very glance withers the enemy.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Hind Swaraj”, 1909

His advice to all contemplating any non-violent civil disobedience movement was:

“Select your purpose...selfless, without any thought of personal pleasure or personal profit and then use selfless means to attain your goal. Do not resort to violence even if it seems at first to promise success; it can only contradict your purpose. Use the means of love and respect even if the result seems far off or uncertain. Then throw yourself heart and soul into the campaign, counting no price too high for working for the welfare of those around you, and every reverse, every defeat will send you deeper into your own deepest resources.”

M. K. Gāndhi

He also said that just being truthful and honest is not enough. All participating in the movement and especially the leaders need:

"Mere goodness is not of much use. Goodness must be joined with knowledge, courage and conviction. One must cultivate the fine discriminating quality which goes with spiritual courage and character."

M. K. Gāndhi

Evolution of Non-violent Civil Disobedience

In South Africa

Gāndhi was thrown out of a first class compartment while traveling by train in South Africa because of the colour of his skin. It was a very humiliating and traumatic experience. He paced up and down Maritzburg station all night. Some of us would have run away back to India and others would have thought of taking revenge. Gāndhi had trouble explaining 'how someone can feel good by humiliating or physically hurting someone else'. He decided that night to 'never give in to force or use force (violence) to achieve an objective'.

Gāndhi's first assignment of solving the financial dispute in a family was resolved successfully and he decided to go back to India. On the day of the farewell party, Gāndhi read in a newspaper that the Government of South Africa was taking away the right of all Indians to vote for the Legislative Assembly. Everyone at the party requested him to stay and fight for the rights of all Indians in South Africa. He decided to stay, formed a committee, wrote petitions and letters to newspapers, and organized public meetings to fight this injustice. Natal Indian Congress was created in August 1894. This was the start of the first Satyāgraha, though that name was not yet coined at that time.

Gāndhi was inspired and influenced by the writings of Henry David Thoreau, an American philosopher and Leo Tolstoy, a Russian author. He organized non-violent civil disobedience movement based on their writings, learnt from his own experiences, and modified as he went along.

"If a thousand men were not to pay their tax bills this year, that would not be violent and bloody measure, as it would be to pay them and (thereby) enable the state to commit violence and shed innocent blood. This is, in fact, the definition of a peaceful revolution, if any such is possible."

Henry David Thoreau

Gāndhi expressed similar idea about dealing with a king or dictator:

"...fewer the subjects who cooperate with him, the less will be his authority."

M. K. Gāndhi in "Navajivan", 4 July 1920

In India, Nazi Germany, and many other places, people kept quiet and did not do anything to resist big bullies with swords and guns.

"In Germany they first came for the Communists, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Communist. Then they came for the Jews, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Jew. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a trade unionist. Then they came for the Catholics, and I didn't speak up because I was a Protestant. Then they came for me - and by that time no one was left to speak up."

Martin Niemöller

Later he coined the word 'Satyāgraha' meaning 'a force based on truth' or 'forceful insistence on truth'. *Satya* means truth. *Āgraha* is insistence or firm request with love. *Satyāgraha* is much more than 'civil disobedience' and 'nonviolent resistance' because there is always love and respect for the other party involved. It is practiced to transform the opposition's thinking by *satyāgrahi's* sacrifice and suffering. It is meant to change the enemy without any coercion, force, or violence. It happens from the heart and requires great amount of courage when you have to love your opponent even when he is using force. The methods used in *Satyāgraha* are as important as the result we are trying to obtain.

"When I despair, I remember that all through history the way of truth and love has always won. There have been tyrants and murderers and for a time they seem invincible, but in the end, they always fall — think of it, always. What difference does it make to the dead, the orphans, and the homeless, whether the mad destruction is wrought under the name of totalitarianism or the holy name of liberty and democracy?"

M. K. Gāndhi

Football (soccer in North America) was a popular game among the poor South Africans and Indians in South Africa. Gāndhi saw that the game brought people together and built team spirit. He helped organize three teams of 'Passive Resisters Soccer Club'. During half time and at the pitch side, he would talk about the non-violent resistance against the unfair laws promoting segregation and unequal treatment of Indians in South Africa. Gāndhi utilized the passion of ordinary people for the sport of soccer to bring them together, educate them about apartheid and generate passion to fight against the government to change the unjust laws. Some old photographs found in Court House Museum in Durban, South Africa shows Gāndhi talking with the players and giving speeches. This was the beginning of sports activities in South Africa without any consideration of racial background of the players.

A war broke out between the English and the Boers (Dutch settlers) in 1899. Gāndhi was practicing law in South Africa and was very loyal to the British Empire. He was against violence

so he organized volunteers from among the Indians in South Africa to treat the injured. About 7,000 Indians volunteered to help the British. Gāndhi himself would carry the wounded by stretcher for miles to safety and medical care. It was hoped that after the war, the British would ease their oppression of Indian community. But this did not materialize. Instead of concessions, Indians were asked to give their finger prints like common criminals and carry an identity card with them.

Gāndhi wanted to increase political awareness of Indians in South Africa. In 1903, when he was practicing law in Natal, he started publishing a newspaper 'Indian Opinion'. Later he moved this activity to Phoenix Āshram, a commune he and his friend had established.

An epidemic of Bubonic Plague hit Johannesburg in 1904. Gāndhi recruited volunteers from the Indian community to help the afflicted. By personal example and sacrifice he inspired ordinary people and professionals of various groups to work together for a common cause and serve the community. Poor laborers appreciated this gesture of sacrifice and putting his own life in danger to help the community. They became his loyal followers and participated in Gāndhi's future satyāgraha-s.

The first great war of twentieth century was the Russo-Japanese war from 8 February 1904 to 5 September 1905. The Japanese won this war and showed that an Asian country can win against a European nation. This was a boost for Indian morale in their fight for independence.

The Transvaal Government imposed Asiatic Law Amendment Ordinance for Indians and the Chinese in 1906. People of these two communities were required to give their fingerprints and carry an identification card with them all the time. Gāndhi talked to members of both communities to come together and oppose this ordinance by non-violent means.

"If man will only realize that, it is unmanly to obey laws that are unjust, no man's tyranny will enslave him. This is the key to self-rule or home-rule."

M. K. Gāndhi

On 11 September 1906 (first 9/11), Gāndhi asked all Indians not to obey this law. Under his leadership, Indians were not afraid of breaking an unjust law and going to jail. He was arrested and sent to prison. Gen. Jan Smuts was the Colonial Secretary for Transvaal. He called Gāndhi to his office to make a deal. General would repeal the law if the Indian and Chinese communities registered voluntarily. Gāndhi believed him and agreed to register. Some in the Indian community did not like this and severely beat Gāndhi on his release from jail.

Initially in South Africa, Gāndhi, like a good lawyer, relied on ‘reasoning’ to bring about change in the government. This approach did not work. He wrote:

“...things of fundamental importance to the people are not secured by reason alone but have to be purchased with their suffering. Suffering is the law of human beings; war is the law of the jungle. But suffering is infinitely more powerful than the law of the jungle for converting the opponent and opening his ears, which are otherwise shut, to the voice of reason.”

This approach led to jail sentences, loss of personal possessions, injury or even death of satyāgrahi-s.

“Our triumph consists in thousands being led to prisons like lambs to slaughter-house...Our triumph consists again in being imprisoned for no wrong whatsoever.”

M. K Gāndhi

The purpose of satyāgraha is to remove the underlying cause of conflict and make the adversary understand opposite party’s complaints and find a mutually beneficial solution. It:

“...is a force that may be used by individuals as well as communities. It may be used as well in political as in domestic affairs. Its universal applicability is a demonstration of its permanence and invincibility. It can be used alike by men, women, and children.”

M. K. Gāndhi

Even General Smuts, Head of Transvaal Government, admired Gāndhi’s stubborn quality of ‘sticking it out till the end’ without retaliation. During his 21 years stay in South Africa, Gandhi organized three satyāgraha-s and was ultimately successful in persuading the Government to give in to the demands of Indians. Gāndhi frustrated even hard nosed General Smuts who said:

“You cannot put twenty-thousand Indians in jail.”

“Satyāgraha is a priceless weapon and those who wield it are strangers to disappointment or defeat”

M. K. Gandhi

Civil Disobedience in India

In 1915 when Gāndhi returned to India, he was still evolving and had not yet reached the status of a ‘Mahātmā’ (a great soul). He was quite well known in the educated and political circles of India for his work and achievements in South Africa. But he did not have the first hand

experience of vast majority of people living in villages and their problems. 80% of the total population of India lived in villages. Soon after his arrival in Mumbai, Gāndhi met important political leaders of the period. He went to meet with Gopāl Krishna Gokhale, who became his mentor. Gokhale advised him to tour the country, meet with people and refrain from active involvement in politics for one year. He followed that advice and learnt first hand the poverty of ordinary people living in villages, the exploitation by the British and their cunning, brutal ways of ruling over India. Indians were divided along the lines of caste, religions, and provincial languages. The British took full advantage of these divisions, emphasized the differences, supported minorities to turn against Hindu majority and implemented their well known policy of 'divide and rule', pitching one group against another. Gāndhi decided to work on issues related to colonialism, 'divide and rule' policy of the British, caste system, oppression of women and untouchables, and exploitation of the poor by educated and rich Indians and the British. The poor were extremely poor and ignorant and the rich had a very luxurious life style. He established an āshram near the city of Amdāvād, Gujarat. All the families living in the ashram had to promise to live a simple life, abide by principles of truth and ahimsa, and serve their country.

It is important to understand how a few thousand British were able to rule over 300 million Indians and why independence from the British was crucial for the people of India.

How were the English able to rule over India?

There were many among the Indian community who tried to discourage or stop Gāndhi from doing anything against the British saying the British had brought stability, peace, order, education, progress to Indians in India. These Indians had received British education and were convinced that the British education, governance, discipline, etc., were good for India and Indians. They talked about how the British railways, British organization, English language, manners etc., had 'civilized' the Indian nation. They believed everything written or made by the British was the best. They became incapable of thinking independently and question the history books written by the English. These British subjects were very loyal and submissive and were given good paying government jobs. They did all the dirty work of exploiting other Indians for the British. The rich and educated Indians were afraid of losing their status or well paying job and did not want to make an effort out of sheer self-interest, apathy, and fear to bring about any change in status quo. Gāndhi did not agree with these people. While in South Africa, he had written:

“The present peace is only nominal, for by it we have become emasculated and cowardly.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Hind Swaraj”, 1909

The educated, rich, and the privileged class wanted status quo because they were afraid of losing what power and wealth they had. Most of them were quite ignorant of the condition of the poor

– the farmers and millworkers. The rich had become rich at the expense of the poor starving masses. Benjamin Franklin had expressed similar idea some time before Gāndhi:

“A people who seek to exchange liberty for security deserve neither.”

Gāndhi found fault with both – Indians and the British, for the situation in India:

“The English have not taken India, we have given it to them. They are not in India because of their strength, but because we keep them...Who assisted the Company's officers'? Who was tempted at the sight of their silver? Who bought their goods?... He is a true physician who probes the cause of disease, and if you pose as a physician for the disease of India, you will have to find out its true cause.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Hind Swaraj”, 1909

Young Gāndhi wanted to be a physician before he went on to study law. Like an astute physician he tried to find the real cause behind the malaise afflicting India. His diagnosis was:

“...the English merchants were able to get a footing in India because we encouraged them. When our Princes fought among themselves, they sought the assistance of Company Bahadur. That corporation was versed alike in commerce and war. It was unhampered by questions of morality. Its object was to increase its commerce and to make money. It accepted our assistance, and increased the number of its warehouses. To protect the latter it employed an army which was utilized by us also. Is it not then useless to blame the English for what we did at that time? The Hindus and the Mohammedans were at daggers drawn. This, too, gave the Company its opportunity and thus we created the circumstances that gave the Company its control over India. Hence it is truer to say that we gave India to the English than that India was lost.

M. K. Gāndhi in “Hind Swaraj”, 1909

Will Durant, a very well respected, Pulitzer Prize winning, American historian wrote a book “The Case for India” in 1930. He quoted facts, figures, and statements made by the British about their intentions and how they ruled over India. The British banned his book because it showed that the British ruled over India without any morals or ethics and with brutal force of superior firepower, treachery, bribery, deceit, torture and cold-blooded murders. They imposed exorbitant tax on the farmers and weavers, cut off hands of weavers and artisans, destroyed existing educational system, created divisions among castes, religions, regional languages, and ruled over the country simply to drain the wealth of the ‘Crown Jewel’ that was India.

To really appreciate the effect of British rule in India, we need to examine the condition of India before the British rule. In a speech to British Parliament (2 February 1835), Lord Macaulay, the architect of British education in India, said that:

“I have traveled across the length and breadth of India and I have not seen one person who is a beggar, who is a thief. Such wealth I have seen in this country, such high moral values, people of such caliber, that I do not think we would ever conquer this country, unless we break the very backbone of this nation, which is her spiritual and cultural heritage, and, therefore, I propose that we replace her old and ancient education system, her culture, for if the Indians think that all that is foreign and English is good and greater than their own, they will lose their self-esteem, their native culture and they will become what we want them, a truly dominant nation.”

Macaulay was not alone in his admiration for the Indian culture and society.

“If I were to look over the whole world to find out the country most endowed with all the wealth, power, and beauty that nature can bestow – in some parts a very paradise on earth – I should point to India. If I were asked under what sky the human mind has most fully developed some of its choicest gifts, has most deeply pondered on the greatest problems of life, and has found solutions of some of them which well deserve the attention even of those who have studied Plato and Kant – I should point to India. And if I were to ask myself from what literature we, here in Europe, we who have been nurtured almost exclusively on the thoughts of Greeks and Romans, and of one Semitic race, the Jewish, may draw that corrective which is most wanted in order to make our inner life more perfect, more comprehensive, more universal, in fact more truly human, a life, not for this life only, but a transfigured and eternal life – again I should point to India.”

F. Max Muller, KM, “India, what can it teach us?”, p. 6

“Whatever sphere of the human mind you may select for your special study, whether it be language, or religion, or mythology, or philosophy, whether it be laws or customs, primitive art or primitive science, everywhere, you have to go to India, whether you like it or not, because some of the most instructive materials in the history of man are treasured up in India, and in India only”.

F. Max Muller, KM, “India, what can it teach us?”, p. 15

It is important to read quotes from other sources because misinformation about India is deeply entrenched in the history books and minds of most Western educated people. They are:

“The civilization was not perfunctory, but universal and all-pervading – furnishing the country not only with political systems, but with social and domestic institutions of the most ramified description. The beneficent nature of these institutions as a whole may be judged from their effects on the character of

the Hindu race. Perhaps there are no other people in the whole world who show so much in their character the advantageous effects of their own civilization. They are shrewd in business, acute in reasoning, thrifty, religious, sober, charitable, obedient to parents, reverential to old age, amiable, law-abiding, compassionate towards the helpless and patient under suffering.”

J. Seymore Keay, M.P., Banker in India and India Agent, 1883.

“If a good system of agriculture, unrivaled manufacturing skill, a capacity to produce whatever can contribute to convenience or luxury; schools established in every village, for teaching, reading, writing and arithmetic; the general practice of hospitality and charity among each other; and above all, a treatment of the female sex, full of confidence, respect and delicacy, are among the signs which denote a civilized people...”

Colonel Thomas Munro who served in India for 32 years

“The Indian village has thus for centuries remained a bulwark against political disorder and the home of the simple domestic and social virtues. No wonder, therefore, that philosophers and the historians have always dwelt lovingly on this ancient institution which is the natural social unit and the best type of rural life; self-contained, industrious, peace-loving, conservative in the best sense of the word.”

Sir William Wedderburn, Bart.

Positive reports about India or Indians never saw the day light because all media and school text books were written by the biased British or their loyal Indian henchmen.

Divide and Rule Policy

In India the British had a policy of ‘Divide and Rule’ to drive a wedge between different religious groups, the upper class and the untouchables, those working for the British and others, and people speaking different languages, etc. Religious minorities and Indians who worked for the British were given special privileges. This would antagonize Hindus, who were more than 80% of the population against the minorities. The idea was to create an atmosphere in which no one group can work with others to fight against the real enemy of the nation – the British.

Before Mr. Ramsay MacDonald became Prime Minister of Britain, he wrote:

“...Mohammedan leaders have been and are inspired by certain British officials ...sow discord between the Mohammedan and Hindu communities.”

in Will Durant, ‘The Case for India’, p. 137

The British encouraged the formation of Muslim League in 1906. Later, the Muslim League under the leadership of Muhammad Ali Jinnah put forward the demand for a separate nation for the Muslims. The British also emphasized different castes and sub-castes to further divide and weaken the society.

Will Durant described the caste system of India as follows:

“The present caste system in India consists of four classes: the real Brahmans - i.e., the British bureaucracy; the real Kshatriyas - i.e., the British army; the real Vaishyas - i.e., the British traders; and the real Shudras and Untouchables - i.e., the Hindu people.”

In “The Case for India”, p. 12, 1930

When he was a private citizen, Ramsay MacDonald wrote two books - ‘The Awakening of India’ and ‘The Government of India’. In these books, he exposed some of the tactics used by the British to create discord between Hindus and Muslims in India. The partition of Bengal in 1905 was carried out for this purpose. Complaints by Muslims were given due attention while any complaint from Hindus were totally ignored by the authorities. The police and administrative officers went out of their way to support Muslims in Barisal Hindu Muslim riots in spring 1906. There was blatant discrimination in income tax rate, government pension, and fee for becoming a magistrate. When Mr. MacDonald became the Prime Minister of Britain, he changed and followed the same ‘divide and rule’ policies of the Tories.

Creation of Sham Government

When there was a lot of pressure on the British, they created sham legislative governments made up Indians who had no power to do anything. They were always overruled by government’s appointees. Even if the Provincial Legislature passed any reform, the final authority was with the British Governor of the province and Governor General of India.

Why Independent India? (Swarāj)

Why did Mahātmā Gāndhi and hundreds of thousands of Indians sacrificed their lives to fight for India’s independence from the British? If we read history books written by British authors and Indians educated in English schools, they will say that British rule was a boon for India, it was the greatest thing that brought India out of the dark ages. The British wanted to glorify their behaviour and policy. The Indian authors did not want to think objectively, observe the effects of British rule, or compare what India was before the British and what she was then. They blindly copied what the British wrote. They all tried to convince everyone that India was better off under the British rule and there was no need to fight for freedom or self-rule.

There was a very good system of education in India until eighteenth century. The British systematically destroyed this system in India in nineteenth century. In “The Beautiful Tree”, by Dharampal, Published by Biblia Impex, Delhi, 1983, the author collected material from British records from eighteenth and nineteenth century about education in India. Before the British rule, there was at least one school in every village, some had more than one. A high percentage of students were from so-called lower castes. Girls were also well represented in the classrooms. The quality of teachers and curriculum was excellent. Some schools were attached to temples and Mosques and others were supported by the state and wealthy members of the community. The quality of education was similar all over the country.

Then the British education system was created to produce clerks who would then work for the British to implement their policies all over India.

“It is impossible for us, with our limited means, to attempt to educate the body of the people. We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect. To that class we may leave it to refine the vernacular dialects of the country, to enrich those dialects with terms of science borrowed from the Western nomenclature, and to render them by degrees fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population.”

Lord Thomas Babington Macaulay,
Minutes on Indian Education, delivered in 1835

Sixty five years later, Swami Vivekananda declared the deleterious effects of British education on young Indian minds in a speech on “The Future of India” (14 February 1897):

“We must have a hold on the spiritual and secular education of the nation... You must dream it, you must talk it, you must think it, and you must work it out. Till then, there is no salvation for the race. The education that you are getting now has some good points, but has tremendous disadvantage, which is so great that the good things are all weighed down. In the first place it is not a man-making education, it is merely and entirely a negative education. A negative education or any training based on negation is worse than death. The child is taken to (an English-run) school, and the first thing he learns is that his father is a fool, the second thing that his grandfather is a lunatic, the third thing that his teachers are hypocrites, the fourth that all the sacred books are lies! By the time he is sixteen he is a mass of negation, lifeless and boneless. And the result is that fifty (now 250) years of such education has not produced one original man (with original ideas in India)...

We must have life-building, man-making, assimilation of ideas.”

Swami Vivekānanda

(As reported in 'Hinduism Today', Jan/Feb/March, 2013 issue, p. 45.)

These village schools, medical care, food for pilgrims and the poor was supported through local funding. All these services slowly disintegrated when the British introduced a system of centralized tax collection and distribution. They also started giving more recognition to English based education in government jobs. This created a feeling among Indians that their indigenous system was inferior and began to prefer sending their sons and daughters to schools providing 'English' education. Education became a necessary tool for earning money. The educated started leaving villages and farms and moved to cities. The ancient Indian traditional goal for true education to train the mind to think independently, rationally, and creatively to help live a life according to the highest moral and ethical principles in service of the society and country was destroyed.

There were more and better schools in India before the British took over than in early twentieth century. The British systematically destroyed this system of Indian schools and pride in anything 'Indian'. The British had developed a system of schools and curriculum to produce graduates who then will support the British government in India. It was a system of indoctrination or 'brain-washing'. Everything that was Indian – culture, art, language or religion – was considered bad. Everything that was British or European was good.

In October 1931, in London, when Gāndhiji said:

“Today India is more illiterate than it was fifty or a hundred years ago, and so is Burma, because the British administrators, when they came to India, instead of taking hold of things as they were, began to root them out. They scratched the soil and left the root exposed and the beautiful tree perished”.

M. K. Gandhi

This statement created quite an uproar in the British press. Vast majority of educated Indians also were of the opinion that the British education system was the one to follow. Unfortunately, 65 years after her independence, Indians in power have still maintained the same British system with disastrous decline in morals and ethics in the country.

The British systematically destroyed industries like textiles. Indians were not allowed to spin cotton into yarn and weave yarn in to cloth. Some artisans who made finest cloth in the world, had their hands amputated. Other products manufactured in India were heavily taxed. This policy helped British goods to be exported to India at great profit for the British and some Indian businessmen. As a result of these policies India became very poor and England became very rich. Farmers and people in the villages starved and were driven to commit suicide under the weight of debt to landlords.

“I fear we shall have to admit that moneyed men support British rule; their interest is bound up with its stability. Money renders a man helpless.”

India had a flourishing ship building industry and trade with other countries along the Arabian Sea, Bay of Bengal, and Far East Asia before the British rule. Building ships and owning ships was prohibited under the British rule. The system of community supported schools was destroyed by the East India Company. Gokhale and Patel tried to introduce bills in legislature to initiate universal primary education. These bills were defeated by the government appointed representatives. Before the British, Indians did not indulge in alcoholic drinks. East India Company opened saloons to promote imported alcoholic drinks. People started drinking to drown their miseries. Poor women had to work to supplement family income to buy food. Little children had to be left alone at home. The British had set up opium shops where opium grown by the government was sold. Women started buying opium to give to children while they were at work. This increased income for the government and created a generation people addicted to opium. Poverty, starvation, malnourishment, disease, and addiction to alcohol and opium created hell on earth for Indians. Destruction of industries like weaving, shipbuilding, salt production, etc., and taxation up to 50% of their income ruined farmers and led to famines and deaths of millions of Indians. Even Gāndhi who had a soft corner for the British initially changed his views:

“I came reluctantly to the conclusion that the British connection had made India more helpless than she ever was before, politically or economically...The Government established by law in British India is carried on for this exploitation of the masses...I have no doubt whatsoever that both England and the town-dwellers of India will have to answer, if there is a God above, for this crime against humanity which is perhaps unequalled in history.”

M. K. Gāndhi

Before Britain started trading with India, Britain’s GDP (Gross Domestic Product) was 1.8% of the world GDP and India’s GDP was 22.5%. Around the time Mohandās Gāndhi was born in 1869, Britain’s GDP had increased to 9.1% of total world production and India had become an impoverished nation with widespread poverty and starvation. The railway system was put together to facilitate export of food grains and spices from ports to Europe and China, and to transport troops from one end of India to another and keep the population under control. The strength of the British was in its well equipped and disciplined army, policy of deceit and coercion, and pitting one group of Indians against the other. Gāndhi adopted completely opposite strategy of open, truthful, and non-violent satyāgraha based on highest moral and ethical principles of Hindu tradition.

In answer to the question “Why India should be independent?” Gāndhi had written:

“But I must frankly confess that I am not so much concerned about the stability of the Empire as I am about that of the ancient civilisation of India, which, in my

opinion, represents the best that the world has ever seen. The British Government in India constitutes a struggle between the Modern Civilisation, which is the Kingdom of Satan, and the Ancient Civilisation, which is the Kingdom of God. The one is the God of War, the other is the God of Love.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Hind Swaraj”, 1909

Through their educational system and news media, the British created and perpetuated myths to make all Indians feel inferior to Europeans and facilitate their rule. Gāndhi realized that the British historians wrote scholarly articles and books to show how great and benevolent they were towards people in their colonies. He wrote while in South Africa:

“They have habit of writing history; they pretend to study the manners and customs of all peoples... They write about their own researches in most laudatory terms and hypnotize us into believing them. We in our ignorance then fall at their feet.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Hind Swaraj”, 1909

Some of the myths created by the British were:

Myth # 1. The British created a system of railways to facilitate Indians to travel within the country and help commerce.

Actually the railways were built to facilitate transport and export of grains and other raw materials to UK and Europe by East India Company, This allowed the company to make huge profit. Export of grains without any consideration of local needs lead to famines, starvation and deaths of millions in India, especially during World Wars I & II. The other reason for railways was to transport British Troops to different parts of India to forcefully take over kingdoms, oppress people, and maintain their grip on power.

“Railways, lawyers and doctors have impoverished the country so much so that, if we do not wake up in time, we shall be ruined.”

M. K. Gāndhi, “Hind Swaraj”, 1909

Myth # 2. India was never one nation, the British brought all kingdoms together.

There were more than 300 large and small states in India in the late Nineteenth century. A British political agent (chief administrative officer) would be in charge of all major decisions and collectors would collect taxes for the British. The myth that India was always made up of small states was created, nurtured, and included in all text books as part of the British policy of ‘divide and rule’. The sanitized history books written by British Historians and British educated Indians taught that India was never one nation but a group of little kingdoms and it was the British who brought them all together in to one nation. For centuries, India was united by the same culture. Her languages developed from Sanskrit and had many similarities. Holy books like Bhagavad Gitā, Rāmāyana and Mahābhārat are studied with reverence all over India.

“The English have taught us that we were not one nation before and that it will require centuries before we become one nation. This is without foundation. We were one nation before they came to India. One thought inspired us. Our mode of life was the same. It was because we were one nation that they were able to establish one kingdom. Subsequently they divided us.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Hind Swaraj”, 1909

The tradition of ‘yātrā’, pilgrimage, is very ancient. It was started long before the British arrival in India. There were holy shrines like Gangotri in the North, Kanyākumāri in the South, Dwārkā in the West, and Jagannāth in the East. There are regional differences in diet, languages, dress, etc., but the basic beliefs are the same all over India.

“What do you think could have been the intention of those farseeing ancestors of ours who established Setubandha (Rāmaeshwar) in the South, Jagannath in the East and Hardwar in the North as the places of pilgrimage? You will admit they were no fools.....they saw that India was one undivided land so made by the nature. They, therefore, argued that it must be one nation. Arguing thus, they established holy places in various parts of India, and fired the people with an idea of nationality in a manner unknown in other parts of the world.”

M. K. Gāndhi

Myth # 3. Different religious groups like Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, etc., cannot live together in peace and harmony.

This was another ploy to divide the country on the basis of religion and keep them weak and fighting so that the British could exploit the country with impunity. Violent riots between Hindus and Muslims was said to be another reason for the British to stay in India. However, there was greater peace and unity within these communities in the princely states than in British controlled areas.

Bengal is one of the provinces in North Eastern India. The British East India Company took over Bengal from its Muslim ruler in 1757. In 1905, Lord Curzon divided Bengal in to two provinces on the basis of religion, a region with Hindu majority in the West and one with Muslim majority in the East. Bengali speaking people were outraged by this division of their province. They were very proud and united by their literature and music. This British arrogance was a wake-up call for the whole nation. Gāndhi was in South Africa at that time. Many petitions were sent to the British government without any change. Gāndhi concluded from this that sending petitions will not bring about change and must be backed-up by non-violent action and that people involved must be prepared to sacrifice and suffer for their cause. He instead of criticizing Lord Curzon, ‘thanked’ him for educating and raising awareness of Indians about the British policy of ‘divide and rule’ and arrogant, uncaring attitude. Unfortunately this division

created a lot of animosity between Bengali Hindus and Muslims, which is still present today (2019).

There are people in India who follow different religions. How can they all live in peace together? Most of the countries in the world now have people who follow different religions. If these people want to prosper, they will have to learn to live in peace. All through the history, there have been violent fights between Catholics and Protestants, Shia-s and Sunni-s but when they come together, they have found prosperity. Mahātmā Gāndhi also believed that the differences between Hindus and Muslims were of no consequence and could live together in peace. He tried to convince everyone that the divisions encouraged by the British based on religions was false:

“Should we not remember that many Hindus and Mahomedans own the same ancestors and the same blood runs through their veins? Do people become enemies because they change their religion? Is the God of the Mohamedan different from the God of the Hindu? Religions are different roads converging to the same point. What does it matter that we take different roads so long as we reach the same goal? Wherein is the cause or quarreling?... The followers of Shiva and those of Vishnu disagree but still they belong to the same nation. The Vedic religion is different from Jainism but they do not belong to two different nations... Those who do not wish to misunderstand things may read up the Koran, and they will find therein hundreds of passages acceptable to the Hindus; and the BhagavadGītā contains passages to which not a Mahomedan can take objection.”

M. K. Gāndhi

Myth # 4. Aryan Invasion from Caucasus region brought with them language and culture to India.

The Europeans also tried to divide the people in to light skinned Aryans and dark skinned Dravidians. They invented the myth of ‘Aryan invasion’ saying that these light colored people came from Caucasus mountains. These nomads brought with them a very highly developed language - Sanskrit - and literature like Veda-s, Rāmāyana, and Mahābhārata to India. This convinced a lot of Indian scholars in to believing that the superior ‘white’ races brought culture to barbaric ‘black’ Dravidians and by inference Indians were not capable of governing themselves. This argument would justify the rule of white British in India for indefinite period. Recent research in genetics and archaeology has shown conclusively that there was no ‘Aryan’ invasion from Europe and the people of North and South India are Indians from the same genetic pool.

Myth # 5. The British were civilized gentlemen and ruled by compassion and for the welfare of Indians. They did not use brute strength and were very just.

Nothing can be far from truth. One well known example of British brutality out of many others, is the massacre in Amritsar, Punjab. On 13 April 1919, more than 10,000 unarmed women, children and men had gathered to celebrate spring festival. It was an open area surrounded by a wall with a narrow entrance. A British officer named General Dwyer, brought his soldiers with guns, sealed off the entrance and shot indiscriminately in the crowd. It is estimated that more than 1,200 unarmed women, children and men were killed and 3,600 were wounded. No one was allowed to go and help the wounded for twenty-four hours.

Gāndhi particularly inspired and encouraged the people to be ready to carry out non-violent, non-cooperation movement against the oppressive government to win justice, freedom and equality. He called for readiness to compromise always, but without surrendering self-respect. A good general always selects his battlefield suited to his background and experience rather than falling in the trap of adapting foreign principles and methods. This was a unique experiment on such a large scale and against such a formidable empire. Millions gave up their jobs, comfort of home and family life, and spent time in jails when asked by Gāndhi. The British often tried to please the new revolutionaries with insignificant and insufficient reforms and take advantage of their weaknesses.

World War I

The First World War started in Europe on 28 July 1914. UK, France and Russia were fighting against Germany, Austria, and Hungary. Indian leaders supported the British during the War by supporting recruitment for the army among Indians hoping to gain some concessions from the British in return. 1.3 million Indian soldiers were conscripted for the war effort. They fought very bravely but were not granted any commissioned positions or their bravery recognized until 2013. Without Indian soldiers, Britain or France would never have won the war against Germans. Indian tax payers, without their knowledge gave more than one billion dollars to fund the war. Tens of thousands of Indian soldiers lost their lives and many more were injured. Instead of concessions, the British tightened their grip on India by even more exploitation and oppression. They came up with a constitution that gave absolute powers to the Governors of Provinces and the Viceroy of India. Voters were segregated on basis of their race, religion and caste and could vote only for their own kind to further divide the society. Indian leaders were bitterly disappointed after the war because the British continued their policy of exploitation.

Five months after declaration of first World War, Gāndhi returned to India in January 1915, after 21 years of absence. He was already quite well known to people in the cities and political circles of India because of his work in South Africa. Soon after his arrival in India, he met the most prominent Indian leader, Gokhale, and was asked by him not make any political statement for one year. Before getting involved in politics, he toured India to familiarize himself with people and their problems. Gāndhi found that there was lot of poverty, especially in villages and small towns. Indians were not clean in their habits. The rich had a lot of money and showed off by their lavish life style and ornaments. There were small groups of anarchists who believed in

fighting for independence from the British by violence. In May 1915 he established a 'Satyāgraha Āshram' near Amdāvad in Gujarat.

Indian National Congress

Allan Octavian Hume, a retired British civil servant, founded the Indian National Congress in 1885. It was an organization created to promote, glorify and perpetuate British rule in India. Its elite members had British education, got together, had intellectual discussions, passed resolutions, and wrote toothless petitions to the British Government to improve living conditions of the Indians. There was no or very little planning and follow-up action. The British totally ignored these petitions and made no changes. They had total control over the police, law courts, army, and trade. Those Indians who were seriously interested in an independent India, ignored the Congress.

After Gāndhi's return to India in 1915, he challenged the leaders and people of India to a different kind of struggle for independence:

“Select your purpose, selfless, without any thought of personal pleasure or personal profit, and then use selfless means to attain your goal. Do not resort to violence even if it seems at first to promise success;...Use the means of love and respect even if the result seems far off or uncertain. Then throw yourself heart and soul into the campaign, counting no price too high for working for the welfare of those around you, and every reverse, every defeat will send you deeper into your own deepest resources. Violence can never bring an end to violence; all it can do is provoke more violence.”

M. K. Gāndhi

Gāndhi persuaded the Indian National Congress to change its tactics from intellectual discussions on constitution and governance to direct non-violent, action-oriented movement (satyāgraha) of non-cooperation with the British. He brought Indians of different parts of the country and belonging to different religions and castes together and started talking about the rights of Indians in ruling over India. The Congress party was active only in the cities and its business was conducted mainly in English. Gāndhi encouraged the party leaders to communicate in regional languages. The party administration was then reorganized on the basis of regional languages. Indian politicians who had received British education, had nothing to do with the farmers, villagers, and the poor. Gāndhi was able to attract many more people from the villages by his work with the farmers of Champāran, Bihar. He included issues that affected the untouchable Dalits and farmers in the agenda for these meetings. Before Gāndhi, women were not active in the ‘freedom movement’. Under his guidance, women started getting more important roles. Slowly it became the main organization for leaders from all over India, from cities and villages, belonging to all different religions and castes interested in the struggle for freedom from the British. Gāndhi changed that by taking up the fight for the farmers of Champāran, Bihar. He told the Maharajas and the wealthy merchants, doctors and lawyers to get rid of their jewelry and pompous life style and devote it to the service of the poor and the country.

Champāran

In December 1916, the Indian National Congress had their annual meeting in Lucknow, Bihar Province in North India. Champāran, is a town not too far from Lucknow. East India Company had gained rights to collect revenues from the landlords who owned the land. The Indian landlords had poor management skills and extravagant life style. Financially strapped landlords borrowed money from European indigo planters. The farmers wanted to plant food crops but the planters forced them to grow indigo – a dye to colour Navy uniforms blue. In 1897, the Germans discovered a way to commercially produce synthetic indigo. After this discovery, the need for cultivating indigo declined. Then the landlords and their European bosses wanted poor farmers to compensate them and give money for not growing indigo. The farmers could not afford this unfair taxation.

Mr. Shukla, one of the well wishers of the farmers, persuaded Gāndhi to visit Champāran district, study the condition of farmers, and help them. Gāndhi agreed to study the situation. In early 1900s, all Indian lawyers who had their education in England, traveled in trains by first class, wore suit, tie, and shoes. Gāndhi went to Champāran with Mr. Shukla by third class, wearing a dhoti, kurta, and sandals. He carried his own luggage on his head, walked a few kilometers and went to one of the lawyer's house. The farmers and other villagers immediately felt that Gāndhi was one of them and accepted him as a leader.

Gāndhi with the help of a lot of lawyers and community leaders studied the situation, and started a campaign to change the social conditions of the poor villagers. Since he was taking care of the people like a father figure, sacrificing his own comforts and self interests, and willing to go to jail for them; people started calling him 'Bapu' (father).

The Collector (British administrative officer for the district) asked Gāndhi to leave his district or attend the court to explain what he was doing there. Gāndhi went to the court and truthfully told the Magistrate that he wanted to talk to the farmers and learn about their working conditions and remuneration for their labour. After some deliberation and consultation with his superiors, the Magistrate allowed Gāndhi to travel in the district and gather information. A CID (detective or secret service agent) accompanied Gāndhi to report about his activities. Gāndhi was very courteous and open with the CID officer. Farmers were overjoyed to see someone stand up to the British and who would also listen to their complaints. Gāndhi had no money of his own for this project but was able to complete it with donations of less than Rs. 3,000.

Gāndhi and his party of volunteers traveled to villages and interviewed farmers. Hindus and Muslims lived in these villages but had no interaction between them. There was a lot of discrimination against untouchables and ill feelings between religious groups. Gāndhi insisted on having all meals with everyone eating together. Muslims and people of all different castes prepared, served, and ate meals together. The cook for the group was a Muslim by the name of Batak Mian. He prepared vegetarian food for the party.

Many years later, people came to know that a European planter named Erwin had tried to bribe and coerce Batak Mian to poison Gāndhi and his party. Batak Mian refused even though he himself was very poor, and Gāndhi and his party were saved. The planters also tried to foment communal unrest between Hindus and Muslims by intimidation and bribes but again they failed. They however, succeeded in burning down Shukla's residence. Gāndhi went back to Shukla's village and stayed with his family to give him moral support. This in turn gave courage to the villagers to fight for their rights.

Gāndhi was arrested and brought in front of a magistrate. He read a statement to the court saying that initially he was a very loyal and law abiding citizen of the British Empire and wanted to cooperate with the British. But, as time went by, he found that the British had made India very weak and poor. There were famines and people starved to death as a result of British policies. The hard working villagers used to weave their own cloth to supplement their income. These cottage industries were systematically destroyed by large-scale production of cloth in British factories by machines. The law enforcement and courts had convicted innocent people in large numbers. He also told the court:

“In my opinion the administration of the law is thus prostituted consciously or unconsciously for the benefit of the exploiter.”

And

“a subtle but effective system of terrorism and an organized display of force on the one hand, and the deprivation of all powers of retaliation or self-defense on the other, have emasculated the people and induced in them the habit of simulation.”

And

“India is less manly under the British rule than she ever was before.”

And in the end:

“In my humble opinion, non-cooperation with evil is as much a duty as is cooperation with good. But in the past, non-cooperation has been deliberately expressed in violence to the evildoer. I am endeavouring to show to my countrymen that violent non-cooperation only multiplies evil and that as evil can only be sustained by violence, withdrawal of support for evil requires complete abstention from violence. Non-violence implies voluntary submission to the penalty of non-cooperation with evil. I am here, therefore, to invite and submit cheerfully to the highest penalty that can be inflicted upon me for what in law is a deliberate crime and what appears to me to be the highest duty of a citizen. The

only course open to you, the judge, is either to resign your post, and thus dissociate yourself from evil if you feel that the law you are called upon to administer is an evil and that in reality I am innocent, or to inflict upon me the severest penalty if you believe that the system and the law you are assisting to administer are good for the people of this country and that my activity is therefore injurious to the public.”

M. K. Gāndhi

The British put Gāndhi in jail on charges of instigating the public against the government. Thousands of people marched to protest against the British government. The British had to give in to the public demand and release Gāndhi from jail. This was the first success for Gāndhi in India. He realized that when he gave up his self interest like earning money or fame for himself, he gained some special strength and his chances of success increased. Gāndhi was released after the magistrate, prosecutor, and the Governor of the province discussed his case. The farmers called him ‘Bapu’ a respectful term for father. Many used this term to address him from then on. Gāndhi went around and talked to the landlords to give back what belonged to the farmers. They did what was asked and everything ended peacefully. Gāndhi also taught the villagers cleanliness and basic hygiene. Kasturbai spent her time teaching women and children basic reading and writing skills. After finishing his work, Gāndhi moved back to his āshram along Sābarmati river near Amdāvād.

There were a lot of cotton mills in Amdāvād. The workers received pretty low pay for their work. In 1917 Gāndhi took up the fight for better wages for mill workers of Amdāvād and organized a strike. The workers stopped going to work. However, after two weeks the workers lost their nerve and were scared of the consequences. Gāndhi decided to go on fast. The mill owners did not want Gāndhi’s death on their conscience and gave in to negotiate a pay increase. Gāndhi was successful in bringing both parties together.

Kheda Satyāgraha

There was draught all over India in 1918. Farmers were not in any position to pay taxes to the government. Gāndhi with the help of Vallabhbbhai Patel, organized a non-violent civil disobedience movement among the farmers of Kheda district of Gujarat who were unable to pay taxes. They advised the farmers of Kheda district not to pay taxes to the government. The price for not paying taxes was severe, the government took away farmers’ land, cattle, crop, and their livelihood. The government tried punishing the farmers. This satyāgraha was so widespread and successful that the government had to give in and made the tax voluntary – those who could afford it paid the tax.

Rowlatt Act

During the First World War, the British ruled over India with an iron fist. After the war, Indians expected to see more freedom in return for their support of the war effort. Instead, on 18 March

1919, they woke up to the Rowlatt Act which was very repressive. The British decided to control news papers and passed a law to make it a criminal offence to print and distribute any literature that was considered to be against the government. The police were given powers to search for literature and arrest people involved. Gāndhi had started publishing a newspaper to inform people about the social and political issues in India and his plans. Gāndhi asked all businesses to shut down all over the country. This was the first nation wide satyāgraha in India. People of all religions and social strata participated. Two prominent leaders were arrested and banished from the province of Punjab.

Jallianwala Bagh

On 13 April 1919, about 10,000 people had gathered to celebrate spring festival of Vaishakhi in Jallianwala Bagh, Amritsar, Punjab. Unarmed men, women, and children had come together in a confined place surrounded by a wall with only one exit. It was a peaceful gathering. General Dwyer posted his men with machine gun at the exit and opened fire without any provocation from the public. After the shooting was over, no one was allowed to go in and help the injured for twenty-four hours. Out of 10,000 men, women and children attending this meeting, more than 1,200 died and 3,600 injured as a result of this massacre. The official figures were very different. The General later stated that he did it for “producing a sufficient moral effect” on the people of Punjab. There was complete blackout of the news about Jallianwala Bagh. Gāndhi was not allowed to enter Punjab province. Many more atrocities were committed by the General later. General Dwyer, on his return to England, received a gift of \$150,000 and a sword embedded with jewels for his brutality.

India and the world slowly came to know about it six months later. Ravindranth Tāgore, Gāndhi and many others returned all the titles and medals they had received from the British. Gāndhi returned two medals he had received in South Africa for his volunteer work during the Boer War and Zulu rebellion. Ravindranath Tāgore wrote to the Viceroy of India:

“The disproportionate severity of punishments inflicted upon the unfortunate people, and the methods of carrying them out, we are convinced, are without parallel in the history of civilized Governments, barring some conspicuous exceptions recent and remote.”

In 1919, Gāndhi started two newspapers – Young India and Navajivan – to communicate with all Indians about the devastating effects of British rule. He had started ‘Indian Opinion’ with the same purpose in mind as he had done in South Africa in 1903. Gāndhi was elected President of All India Home Rule League in 1920.

In December 1920, the Indian National Congress decided to start a non-cooperation movement against the British. Gāndhi toured all over India asking everyone to give up British jobs, leave British schools, stop buying all British goods, and return all British honours. At meetings, he would ask all present to remove all foreign made objects, pile them up, and burn them as a

protest. In 1921, Gāndhi started spinning cotton for four hours every day and asked every Indian to spin cotton, weave cloth (*Khādi*) from it and wear only clothes made from home spun cotton to support cottage industries. People all over India stopped buying foreign manufactured cloth and wear 'swadeshi' (made in India). He persuaded Indian National Congress to pass a resolution to do the same. This movement provided work, extra income and improved living conditions for a lot of people in villages and small towns. It was so successful that quite a few mills in England had to shut down and many workers lost their jobs. It also reduced income of British government in India and some of the provincial governments had to borrow money to meet their expenses. This idea is similar to the recent movement of '100 mile diet' — eating fruits, vegetables, etc., grown within the radius of 100 miles. It supports local farmers, people get fresh fruits and vegetables to eat and save expense of transporting food from far away places. Later, unemployment among mill workers and loss of income for the British government in India and UK from taxation forced them to call a Round Table Conference in London.

On 1st February 1922, Gāndhi wrote to the Viceroy of India that he was going to start a satyāgraha in a small town of Bārdoli, Gujarat. On 5th February 1922, three days in to this satyāgraha, Gāndhi had to stop it because of violence in Chauri Chaurā, some 800 miles away. Police shot and killed some protestors participating in a peaceful procession. The crowd turned violent, and killed 22 policemen. This was a great blow to Gāndhi personally. He went against the wishes and advice of everyone, advised immediate 'stop' to the violence and Satyāgraha, and became very unpopular. The principle of non-violence was so important to Gāndhi that he was prepared to sacrifice his personal reputation and any success he had achieved in his fight against the British. He stopped eating and fasted for three weeks till all violence stopped. This brought an end to this satyāgraha. Gāndhi was prepared to give his life for non-violence.

“...Gāndhi, in the face of bitter criticism from his followers, withdrew the whole movement on the ground that it was degenerating into mob rule. Seldom in history has a man shown more courage in acting on principle in contempt of passing expediency and popularity. The nation was astonished at his decision; it had supported itself near to success; and it did not agree with Gāndhi that the method was as important as the end. The reputation of Mahātmā sank to the lowest ebb.”

Will Durant in 'The Case for India', p. 56

Later, a British Judge and Police officer went in the middle of night to arrest Gāndhi. They were afraid that if they arrested him during the day light, they might have to face a large number of people. He was tried in a court in Amdāvād. There he explained why he had changed from a supporter of the British Empire to a 'non-co-operator'. His speech in the court was hailed 'as one of the most important ever delivered by a liberator of humankind' by editors of New York Call (28 April 1922). Gāndhi was not afraid of telling the truth about British Raj, he did not ask for mercy, and did not minimize his 'crime in the eyes of British law'. Even the British presiding judge described Gāndhi as "a man of high ideals and of noble and saintly life". Gāndhi asked all Indians not to indulge in violence against the government. Gāndhi, other leaders, and more than

30,000 Indians were jailed. He was sentenced to six years in jail. In the jail, he spent his time writing his autobiography. He was released from jail early because of acute appendicitis.

Gāndhi found that Indians were not ready for prolonged non-violent movement and the sacrifices that it required. Students had gone back to universities, government employees resumed their job, and lawyers were in British courts. He stopped all political activities and wrote

“My belief is that the instant India is purified India becomes free...”

One of his top priorities towards this end was Hindu - Muslim unity. He wrote and talked extensively on this topic but was not able to convince Mr. Jinnah, leader of Muslim League party. Without a united front, he knew that it would be impossible to gain independence. Muslims in India were originally Hindus who converted to Islam. He was not asking people to convert to other religion but to respect each other and live in peace. The British knew that if these two communities lived in peace, it would be very difficult to rule over India. They did their best to give special privileges to all minority religions and keep all religious groups fighting amongst each other. There were Hindu-Muslim riots in September 1924 in Lucknow. In response, Gāndhiji wrote:

“The recent events have proved unbearable for me. My helplessness is still more unbearable...Nothing evidently that I say or write can bring the two communities together. I am therefore imposing on myself a fast of twenty one days...”

Throughout this fast, he stayed at a Muslim leader’s home. Hindu and Muslim leaders came to him and promised to keep peace.

Gāndhiji’s other project was to promote home spun cloth – ‘khādi’. This would support cottage industry in villages, give jobs to the poor, and eliminate the need to buy foreign cloth. He asked all to live a simple life of few needs. Indian women traditionally wore a lot of jewelry, spending all spare money on buying more and more. He asked the rich women to donate their ornaments to support projects to eliminate ‘untouchability’ and poverty. He would tell people that poverty lead to starvation and moral degradation, and excessive wealth also had similar effect. He was also against industrial revolution that made a few people very wealthy and brought poverty and misery to millions. Instead of adopting Western innovations blindly, Gāndhi wanted only those machines that helped all humans and avoid those that harm even a few.

Boycott of British goods was hurting the British government in India and economy of UK. A commission was appointed by the British Government to visit India, assess the situation and come up with recommendations. Sir John Simon was the chairperson of the commission. There were no Indians on this commission and almost all Indians refused to cooperate with the commission. Their report recommended that about 10% of the population can vote for Provincial and Federal Legislature. The right to vote was based on race, religion, ownership of

property, and education. Only people of same religion could vote for their own kind. The Governor of the Province and Viceroy had the over-riding veto power to guarantee the interests of the British. These recommendations would further divide the country along religious, class, and caste lines. Sham governments without any power were created to keep educated Indians happy and also promote divisions in the society on the basis of religion and caste.

There were some who did not believe that non-violent satyāgraha will succeed in achieving independence from the British. Leaders like Subhāsh Chandra Bose had declared:

“Give me blood and I promise you freedom.”

Bhagat Singh bombed the Legislative Assembly in New Delhi on 8 April 1928. The process of non-violent civil disobedience was too slow for Jawāharlal Nehru and Subhāsh Chandra Bose. They wanted action and quick results, even if it involved violence and killing. In spite of this pressure, Gāndhiji remained firm.

The Indian National Congress had their annual meeting in Calcutta (Kolkata) in December 1928 where they passed a resolution that India should be granted Dominion status within next twelve months otherwise the Congress will declare complete independence from the British. In October 1929 Lord Irwin, Viceroy of India, tried to make an ambiguous statement in relation to the Dominion status but no changes were made. At the annual meeting of Indian National Congress in December 1929 it was decided to demand complete freedom from the British and all Indians were requested to leave government jobs and not pay any taxes. At the end of the year, during the Christmas week of December 1929, Indian National Congress in Lahore (now in Pakistan) declared:

“We believe that it is the inalienable right of the Indian people, as of any other people, to have freedom and to enjoy the fruits of their toil and have the necessities of life so that they may have full opportunities for growth...The British Government in India has not only deprived the Indian people of their freedom but has based itself on the exploitation of the masses, and has ruined India economically, politically, culturally, and spiritually. We believe, therefore, that India must sever the British connection and attain Purna Swarāj or complete independence.”

The declaration went on to describe how India became impoverished because of very expensive administration and military, lost her industries, culture, educational system and even spirituality because of the British rule. This declaration recommended reducing the land revenue by 50%, abolition of salt tax, total prohibition on alcohol, reduction of salaries of high ranking government officials by 50%, etc.

The Indian National Congress proclaimed:

“We will therefore, prepare ourselves by withdrawing, so far as we can, all voluntary association from the British government, and will prepare for civil disobedience, including non-payment of taxes.”

India’s Independence Day was going to be 26 January 1930. All Indians were requested to engage themselves in civil disobedience or any constructive work that would facilitate the independence movement.

Salt Satyāgraha

Salt is a very important and essential part of diet in a tropical country like India. There was abundant salt available along thousands of miles of Indian sea shore. It was made locally along the coast for thousands of years. The British in India had enacted a Salt Act in 1882. This gave the government sole right to manufacture and distribute salt. Harvesting of salt by ordinary citizens was made a criminal offense and the government collected tax on manufactured salt. People had to buy salt made in factories controlled by the British at an exorbitant price. This was very unfair exploitation of the poor by the British.

On 26 January 1930, the Indian National Congress raised a new flag for India and demanded complete independence. Gāndhiji decided to protest the unfair salt laws and tax. On 2 March 1930, Gāndhiji wrote a letter to the Viceroy and Governor General of India, Lord Irwin, what he planned to do. He wrote that the British rule over India had been a curse but he did not hate the British or threaten to take any violent action to remove India from the clutches of Britain. The First Round Table Conference in London had failed to change anything in India. He pointed out that the system of British taxation in India was very unfair and lead to misery, poverty, and starvation. Gāndhiji compared the salary of Viceroy of India (Rs. 21,000 per month) to that of income of an Indian farmer (Rs. 4 per month) and salary of British Prime Minister in UK at Rs. 5,400 per month. This type of extravagant salaries for the administrators and soldiers was killing the country and could not be allowed to continue. He wanted to convert the British people through non-violence and love to understand the plight of Indians and stop all exploitation. Gāndhiji also wrote about his plan to march to Dāndi, a coastal town in Gujarat, to protest the unfair salt laws. This was not meant to be a threat but he did not want to hide anything from the government and wanted to tell the truth. The Viceroy did not respond to his letter.

On 12 March 1930, Gāndhiji and 78 other followers left Sābarmati Āshram, Amdāvad and started walking towards Dāndi, Gujarat, a seaside village 241 miles away. They would stop at every village and town on the way and Gāndhiji would talk to people about spinning cotton and wear clothes made locally. He held prayers and informed them about 'why he was marching and protesting'. The news about this march spread all over the country. Thousands of people joined

the march. After reaching Dāndi, Gāndhiji went to the beach and lifted a clump of salt and declared:

"with this I am shaking the foundations of the British Empire"

He asked the whole nation to do the same. Millions of Indians in towns and villages along sea shores all over India started collecting salt and defying the British laws. Indians were not afraid of the British anymore. More than sixty-thousand Indians were arrested and jailed. Vithalbai Patel resigned from the Federal Legislative Assembly and asked other Indians to do the same. Thousands were beaten by the police but there was no violent reaction. Ravindranath Tāgore wrote that:

"Europe had lost her moral prestige and authority and that Indians were quite capable of achieving independence from the British".

Gāndhi was not arrested in April 1930. He wrote another letter to the Viceroy about his next satyāgraha in front of a government salt plant in a town called Dhārāsānā, Gujarat. The British government had to act now. They unceremoniously arrested Gāndhiji in the middle of the night because they were afraid of creating wide spread disturbances.

On 21 May 1930, another Satyāgraha was organized in front of a salt processing plant in Dhārāsānā. American journalist, Webb Miller reported the whole event. He was amazed at the discipline of the protestors. One by one, they approached the police at the front gates of the plant. The police beat them up on their bare heads with clubs and still none of them would even raise their arms to protect their heads. They fell to the ground unconscious and were picked by their friends and colleagues and taken to a first aid station.

"In eighteen years of reporting in twenty two countries, during which I have witnessed innumerable civil disturbances, riots, street-fights and rebellions, I have never witnessed such harrowing scenes as at Dharasana...One surprising feature was the discipline of the volunteers. It seemed they were completely imbued with Gāndhi's non-violence creed"

Webb Miller, American Reporter (in Durant)

The news of this march was reported in over 1,000 newspapers all over the world. The New York Times said, 'Britain had lost America on tea, it was losing India on salt!'

"It is widely believed that the Salt Campaign turned the tide in India. All the violence was committed by the British and their Indian soldiers. The legitimacy of the Raj was never re-established for the majority of Indians and an ever increasing number of British subjects."

Professor Richard Johnson

Madeline Slade (Miraben), daughter of an Admiral in British Navy, described the aftermath of a peaceful, non-violent protest in Dhārāsānā, Gujarat:

“The beatings and torturing has been merciless...Literally I felt my skin creep and hair stand on end as I saw those brave men, who few hours previously had gone forth absolutely unarmed, vowed to non-violence, now lying here before me battered and broken from head to foot...Here was a young man with his shoulders and buttocks so beaten that he could not lie on his back...There was another gasping for breath with his chest badly battered,...a young man writhing in agony...had a deadly blow to his abdomen...vomiting blood...Everyone that I talked gave the same description of fiendish beating, torturing, thrusting and dragging, and one and all spoke with burning horror of the foul abuse...which the police and their Indian and English superiors had poured upon them...Thrusts with lathis (sticks) in private parts and abdominal regions...Tearing off loin cloths and thrusting of sticks into anus...Pressing and squeezing of testicles till a man became unconscious...”

in ‘Young India’, 12 June 1930

The British government of Ramsay MacDonald in UK and Lord Irwin, Viceroy of India were embarrassed throughout the world. British police and magistrate went in the dark of the night to the place where Gāndhiji was sleeping, arrested him and sent him to Yeravdā Prison in Pune.

“Under an unjust government the only respectable place for a self-respecting person to live in is the prison-house.”

M. K. Gāndhi

In India, every year the British government was earning (US \$ equivalent) \$20 million on the sale of salt, \$85 million from sale of alcoholic drinks, and \$200 million for foreign cloth. These huge sums were draining all the wealth from India and making the British very rich. After the call to stop buying foreign cloth and picketing by volunteers at shops selling alcohol, the government revenues fell by 50 to 75% of previous year. In Gujarat province (state) village councils decided to stop paying taxes till India achieved her independence. The officials working for the government resigned. This satyāgraha spread to other parts of the country. Some provincial governments had to borrow money to pay for their expenses.

The tribal people – mostly Muslims, in the Frontier Province next to Afghanistan under the leadership of Khan Abdul Gafar Khan (Frontier Gāndhi) started a similar non-violent civil disobedience movement. The British soldiers killed hundreds and injured thousands with their bullets. The ‘Army of God’, as they called themselves, faced the bullets bravely without any retaliation.

The British Government in India and the people of UK were hurting because revenues from exorbitant taxation on liquor, salt, and cloth had dried up. In desperation, they arranged the first Round Table Conference in London from 12 November 1930 to 19 January 1931 without any representative from the Indian National Congress. It was to show the world how sincere the British were. Some hand picked Indians with extreme views and interests were asked to attend. They included some Maharajas, communalist Muslims, and other Indians who were 'British at heart'. The real representative organization, Indian National Congress, was excluded. It was soon apparent to Gāndhiji and other Indians that the Round Table Conference was a big show. The British Government had picked people with very divergent interests from the religious extremists and other minority groups who could never agree. They did not represent the views of the majority of people of India or even the group they were supposed to represent. This arrangement would show to the world that Indians can never work together and justify the British ruling over them. Mr. Churchill had already called Gāndhi as a representative of 'loincloth civilization'.

Round Table Conference

The First Round Table Conference did not achieve anything and satyāgraha continued in India. The British government in London asked Lord Irwin, Viceroy of India, to negotiate with Indian leaders. Gāndhiji was invited for 'tea' with Lord Irwin. Gāndhiji took out a little packet that he had brought with him, opened it and added a few grains of salt to his tea and said with a mischievous smile "I will put a little of this salt in my tea to remind us of the famous Boston tea party." Winston Churchill was furious when he heard that the Viceroy of India invited Gāndhiji to negotiate, and called Gāndhiji a 'seditious half-naked fakir (beggar)'. The negotiations went on from 26 January to 4 March 1931. Lord Irwin and Gāndhiji signed a 'Delhi Pact of Truce' on 5 March 1931. This agreement called for release of all political prisoners; restore confiscated property of farmers, repeal salt tax, and right of people to picket liquor, opium, and foreign cloth shops. Gāndhiji and Congress were required to stop the civil disobedience movement and participate in next Round Table Conference.

The British government arranged second 'Round Table Conference' to discuss the future of India. Gāndhiji received his invitation in Yeravdā jail. In London, he was the guest of the government and could have stayed in an expensive hotel. He, however, decided to stay in the slums of East London. He also made it a point to visit Manchester, the textile capital of UK. In India, he had successfully convinced many to stop buying cloth made in England. This campaign was so successful that demand for English cloth fell and they had to close textile mills. This led to unemployment of thousands of workers and Gāndhi was blamed for their misery. Gāndhiji talked to the mill workers and explained to them how poor people in India were forced to live and go without food. The mill workers in Manchester understood his point of view and cheered him heartily when he finished talking.

Gāndhiji had a very busy schedule in England. He worked tirelessly and slept only two to three hours a day. As was his practice, he would get up at 4:00 AM, go for an early morning walk, and was ready for work by 9:00 AM. There were interviews with journalists, artists, political, religious, and social leaders. In between he would attend the Round Table Conference at St. James. On weekends, he would travel to other towns and meet with more people to tell them about conditions in India and ‘why he was fighting for India’s independence’. Gāndhiji was able to convince a lot of British people that what they read in newspapers and heard on radio from the British politicians and media was not true.

The British and Indian media controlled by the British were completely silent about Gāndhiji’s activities and speeches. This created an impression in Britain and in India that he was not prepared and did not say anything to further the cause of independence struggle. They only reported some negative aspects about India and Indians. (For Gāndhiji’s speeches please refer to ‘Gāndhi versus the Empire’ by H. T. Muzumdar.) The British press gave great importance to a speech by Aga Khan who presented a Muslim extremist’s negative point of view about India.

Gāndhiji addressed the Round Table Conference at St. James’ Palace on 15 September 1931. He told them that he was representing the largest organization of India - the Indian National Congress. Its members included people of all regions, religions, castes, city, and village dwellers. They had given him the mandate to negotiate independence of India. He did not represent any particular religion, caste, community, or special interest. Indian National Congress (Karachi, March 1931) had resolved that “This Congress...desires to make it clear that the Congress goal of Purna Swarāj (complete independence), remains intact.” Then Gāndhi went on to say:

“Time was when I prided myself on being and being called a British subject. I would far rather be called a rebel than a subject.”

Gāndhiji wanted freedom for India, not with the idea of dominating or exploiting other nations or people:

“If I want freedom for my country...I do not want that freedom in order that I, belonging to a nation that counts one-fifth human race, may exploit any other race upon earth or any single individual.”

On 17 September 1931, Gāndhiji addressed the Federal Structure Committee. He questioned the basis on which the nominees chosen by the British Government. The nominees were not representing the majority of ordinary folks but some special and very narrow interest groups with conflicting ideology. He also told everyone that the proceedings of the conference had degenerated in to a ‘debating society’ suggesting that they were not going to achieve anything worthwhile.

The third speech was at the Minorities Committee on 8 October 1931. The nationalist Indian Muslims, the majority of Muslims who wanted to live in peace with Hindus were not invited to this conference. A minority of Indian Muslims with extremist views were called 'delegates' to create division and discord. Mr. J. Ramsay MacDonald, when he was a private citizen, exposed some of the tactics used by the British to create discord between Hindus and Muslims in India in two books, 'The Awakening of India' and 'The Government of India'. However, as the Prime Minister of Britain he followed the same 'divide and rule' policies of the Tories.

"Moreover, the partition (of Bengal) was accompanied by a series of administrative and judicial acts which definitely ranged the government against the Hindu and taught him that our administration declined to do justice to him. Mohammedans proclaiming strife from the housetops were hardly cautioned; Hindus whispering their grievances were treated like criminals. In the Barisal riots in the spring of 1906 the (British) authorities were as much implicated as...the (tsarist) government of Russia in recent pogroms."

J. Ramsay MacDonaldd, 'The Awakening of India'. P. 199
From 'Gāndhi versus the Empire' by H. T. Muzumdar

"The Mohammedans received representation far in excess of their numbers, and they were granted a franchise far more liberal than that given to Hindus...(In East Bengal) A Hindu must pay 5,000 rupees as revenue, a Mohammedan 750 rupees only...as a qualification for a vote for zemindari election...the former (pays) 1,250 rupees, latter 188 rupees."

J. Ramsay MacDonaldd, 'The Awakening of India'. P. 283-4
From 'Gāndhi versus the Empire' by H. T. Muzumdar

Similar discrimination favoured Muslims in income tax, for the post of Honorary Magistrate and government pension.

"Citizen MacDonald had condemned the British Government of India for its policy of divide and rule, Premier MacDonald, intoxicated with power, assumed the role of a teacher and lectured Gāndhi for having dared to blame the British government for communal tangle."

H. T. Muzumdar, 'Gāndhi versus the Empire'.

There were meetings with the Members of British Parliament. Gāndhiji informed them that a British Prime Minister's salary was 90 times that of average salary of British citizen whereas the Viceroy in India earned 5,000 times more than an average Indian. Actually, the Viceroy's salary and perks were much more than that of a British Prime Minister. Most of them believed that Indians wanted the British to rule over them but Gāndhiji said:

"The Truth is that they are anxious to throw the British yoke simply because they do not want to starve."

The British Government was not interested in solving any problems of Indians or sincere in giving freedom to India. They selected people to attend this meeting and the topics to be discussed so as to exaggerate the differences and create discord amongst different groups rather than work towards a constitution for independent India. There were rulers of small kingdoms and persons from all different minorities with extreme points of view and not necessarily the view of the majority of that religious or minority group. Another point Gāndhiji brought up was that, at that juncture there was no need to form a committee to deal with the very divisive issue of 'minorities'. This was a deliberate ploy by the British government to show that Indians cannot work together and independent India will not take care of their minorities. The British were trying their best to create separate electorate for all minorities which would guarantee failure to govern vast country like India. Gāndhiji did not sign on any agreement because the British intent was to create more problems rather than solve any.

The Americans, on the other hand, were very much interested in learning about Gāndhiji and India's non-violent fight for freedom. The American press and radio covered Gāndhiji's speeches and other activities in great detail. Columbia Broadcasting Company of America arranged a radio address by Gāndhiji on 13 September 1931. The text of this speech was printed in many newspapers of the US. The Chicago Tribune (15 September 1931) had the banner headline 'Gāndhi's Speech Awes the British' and New York Herald 'Gāndhi Voices Demand for Complete Freedom for India'. Gāndhiji told Americans that India had the most ancient civilization and her traditions and culture were based on very high moral and ethical principles. The British are trying to destroy this civilization and India needed to be free to preserve her excellent traditions. He was fighting for this goal in the most unusual manner – following the path of 'Truth, Universal Love, and Non-violence'. Gāndhiji talked about the problems created by the British and how he was trying to find solutions. He appealed to the conscience of the world and especially Americans to help India achieve her independence.

On many other occasions the media, political leaders and ordinary people tried to make him feel ashamed but Gāndhiji kept on going. At the Round Table Conference Gāndhiji wanted a partnership with the British on equal terms. The British were not sincere and wanted to maintain status quo. On his return to Bombay (Mumbai) in December 1931, Gāndhiji declared that he had come back empty handed. Soon Gāndhiji and many others were in jail again.

The British government in India declared Martial Law, first in Bengal and then all over India. It was enforced with brutal ferocity. The magistrates and police could do anything and the public had no recourse to the justice system. All political leaders and many others were in jail. Gāndhiji was arrested in the early morning hours of 4th January 1932 without trial. Funds of Congress party and all supporters were impounded. No one was allowed to say 'Buy Indian' or 'Don't Drink alcohol'. Hundreds of non-violent Muslim protesters of Pathan tribes in North West Frontier Provinces were killed by the British. Large number Indian Muslims also joined in non-violent protests all over the country. The press in Britain and India did not print any news

related to British atrocities. The British censorship of the news isolated Indians from each other and from the rest of the world.

Gāndhiji called his jail ‘Yeravdā Mandir’, a temple. He started thinking and writing about ‘God’ and characteristics of an ‘Ideal Human Being’. The Indian society was divided in to many groups on the basis of languages, religions, and castes. These divisions were exploited by the British by giving special privileges to some and accentuating the differences. It was essential that all groups work together to fight the British to gain independence. Gāndhiji saw that at that particular time in the history of India, it was essential to bring all Indians to fight against the British as one powerful force. Muslims in India were given a separate electorate in 1909, when Gāndhiji was in South Africa. In political elections, a Muslim had to vote only for a Muslim candidate and Hindu for a Hindu candidate. In 1931, the British offered the same privilege to the ‘untouchables’. This would further divide the freedom movement and Gāndhiji was against this. It would be as if a Catholic could vote only for a Catholic candidate in the UK or USA.

Dr. Ambedkar was a well educated lawyer from the ‘depressed class’ or untouchables. He very much wanted this special privilege for the untouchables or Dalits and was invited to the Round Table conference with Gāndhiji. This was a ploy to increase the gulf between Hindus and the ‘depressed classes’. Gāndhiji decided to go on ‘fast unto death’ to stop the government from granting special electoral privileges to Dalits and further dividing and weakening Indians. Ravindranath Tāgore wrote to Gāndhiji:

“It is worth sacrificing precious life for the sake of India’s unity and her social integrity.”

Ambedkar visited Gāndhiji in the prison when he was fasting and very weak, and bargained hard. He got more than he was bargaining for and got many reserved seats in Legislatures for the ‘untouchables’. As a result of this fast and accompanying publicity, many temples opened their doors to ‘untouchables’. Gāndhiji was later released from jail.

In 1933, he gave his Sābarmati Āshram near Amdāvād to a group of untouchables and established another one near Wardhā, Central India. It was named ‘Sevagram’ (seva = service and gram = village, village dedicated to service). Gāndhiji spent next few years on improving social conditions of untouchables, child widows, and issues like increasing population of India, cleanliness, etc. He also worked on promoting spinning, making home spun cloth – khādi, basic education, Hindi as a national language, simple diet, etc.

In the āshram, Gāndhiji was accessible to everyone – young, old, rich, poor, Indians, foreigners, influential politicians and poor villagers. The whole world was his family. Whenever possible, Kasturbā was by his side. During all these years of public service, he had neglected his four sons. His oldest son, Harilal, could not take this, became an alcoholic and died young. Some

politicians and rich want their children to continue their work and leave their legacy through them. But Gāndhiji did not believe in this notion.

Life in Āshram

After Gāndhiji's failure to gain anything at the Round Table Conference in London, the leaders of Indian National Congress were not willing to go along with his ideals of truth and non-violence. In 1934, he resigned from the Congress and retreated to his ashram in Wardhā, Central India. There he concentrated his efforts at improving the life of villagers by reviving the useful crafts like spinning, weaving, improving agriculture, cleanliness in villages, dairy products, pottery, bee-keeping, removing untouchability, and religious harmony.

In the āshram, Gāndhiji would get up before 4:00 AM. He would start answering all the letters he had received in his own handwriting. Then there were morning prayers and breakfast of fruits and nuts. The prayers were selected from scriptures of all religions – Hindu, Muslim, Christian, etc. He always declared that he was a Christian and a Hindu and a Muslim and a Jew. He belonged to all religions and not exclusively to any one religion. He was very much against converting anyone from his/her own religion. Similar prayer session was repeated in the evening after a speech. There was always a string of visitors all throughout the day to discuss all kinds of issues – personal, political, social, religious, etc. During these discussions, he would find time to spin cotton in to yarn. He would go for a very fast, vigorous walk for about five miles a day in the evening. Gāndhiji slept in the open when it was not raining.

Gāndhiji wanted to teach a life-style to others by personal example. This was a simple life with bare necessities and hard work. It was based on the principles of Truth, Ahimsā, and love for all. Only things made in India were used. Everyone living in the āshram spent hours spinning cotton and weaving, including Gāndhiji, and wore clothes made from this home spun cotton. If everyone in India followed this example, every year \$200 million of Indian money would remain in the country and provide employment to millions of villagers who had no income for half of the year. The diet was very basic vegetarian meals cooked in the āshram's kitchen. When he was in South Africa, he used to make bread at Phoenix Ashram for everyone. People from all walks of life and religions criticised almost everything Gāndhiji said or did from non-violent civil disobedience to Hindu-Muslim unity but he persevered.

The goals of ashram life were to teach simple life of bare necessities, universal love, physical labor, and self-reliance. All living in the ashram had to practice truth, non-violence, control over all sensual pleasures, use locally produced food and all necessities of life, remove fear from the mind, and treat everyone with love and respect.

Muhammad Ali Jinnah was born in 1876, seven years after Gāndhi, to Gujarati parents. He was, like Gāndhi, a Barrister qualified in London. Unlike Gāndhi, Jinnah was a very skilled lawyer.

He was a member of Indian National Congress and was in favour of moderate reforms from the British. In 1913 Jinnah and Gokhale went to England as representatives of Indian National Congress. Initially he advocated Hindu-Muslim unity in their fight against the British. He helped work out Lucknow Pact in 1916 between Indian National Congress and Muslim League. He resigned from the Congress party when delegates overwhelmingly approved Gāndhi's non-violent civil disobedience movement to achieve independence. Jinnah was against Satyāgraha – non-cooperation based on truth and non-violence. He thought it would lead to anarchy. He lost support in Muslim League and retreated to England in 1930 to practice law. In 1934 some British politicians persuaded Jinnah to return to India to fight for the rights of Indian Muslims. There were elections in 1937 according to a new constitution. Only Muslims could vote for Muslim candidates and Hindus for Hindu candidate. In spite of separate electorate for Muslims, Muslim League was not able to form government in a single province, even in Muslim majority provinces. If India was independent, Jinnah would not have been able to form a government. He feared he would completely lose control. Jinnah became desperate and changed his tactics after this defeat and became much more radical. He started demanding a separate Islamic State of Pakistan carved out of India and started a campaign of fear mongering among Indian Muslims.

World War II

In South Africa and later in India, Mahātmā Gāndhi had supported the British during their wars with the Boers, Zulus, and Germans (WWI). After the wars were over, the British reneged on their promises to improve living conditions of Indians and rewarded them with more oppressive laws. He had soft corner and respect for the British people and was against the Germans. He wanted the British to win and maintain their freedom and traditions. The Second World War started in 1939. The British Governor General of India, Lord Linlithgow, without consultation with Indian leaders, decided unilaterally to enlist India in the war effort. Later the Japanese army conquered a large part of East Asia and was fast approaching Eastern India. After considering their past experiences with the British, Gāndhiji and Indian National Congress launched 'Quit India' movement on 14 July 1942, asking for immediate and total independence. Professionals, factory workers, peasants, tribal people, men and women took part in this Satyāgraha. Non-cooperation at all levels with the government lead to brutal reprisals with thousands lost their lives and more than 100,000 Indians and their leaders were arrested and jailed. Many were killed by the police and military. All news papers were banned. People carried on with various methods of protests without anyone in central command. Some Indians working for the government also started supporting the protestors. Nehru and some others in Congress party were of the opinion to help the British in their war effort only if the British gave independence to India. But they went along with Gāndhiji rather reluctantly. Subhāsh Chandra Bose created an Indian National Army and with the help of the Japanese and the Germans was fighting against the British. Muslim League under Muhammad Ali Jinnah was against 'Quit India' movement and the British later rewarded the Muslims for their loyalty by dividing India and creating Pakistan.

Winston Churchill became the Prime Minister of Britain in November 1942. He was dead against giving any concession or freedom to Indians. He did not want to be blamed later for 'liquidation of the British Empire'. He always maintained that he was elected to preserve the empire. Sir Stafford Cripps was sent to India and he offered to give independence to all princely states of India and divide her in to several independent states. Indian leaders refused this offer because it was another attempt to divide India in to tiny fragments. This would ensure that India never becomes a great nation.

The Japanese army was advancing quickly in South-East Asia. That brought British and American troops to India. Many school buildings and public spaces were taken over for the troops. Foreign troops started misbehaving with Indian women. Food grains were diverted for use by the troops and millions of Indians died because of starvation. The famine in Bengal in 1943 killed more than 3 million people in that province.

Kasturbā passed away on 22 Feb 1944. Six weeks later Gāndhiji developed very high temperature due to an attack of Malaria. The British Government did not want him to die in prison and released him on 6 May 1944. After recovering from Malaria, he plunged himself in to politics again.

The World War II ended in 1945. Britain and allies won but at a great loss of lives and financial ruin. Britain was drained financially and militarily by the war effort and in early 1946 started preparations for leaving her crown jewel and giving independence to India. Britain had sucked the blood of Indians and nothing more was left for them. The British government in India had lost support among the Indian government workers and even the Indians in Indian Army and Navy were turning against their British masters. There was a mutiny by Indians in the Royal Indian Navy in 1946. It was mainly because they were treated very badly by the British officers and the food and other facilities given to them. British finally realised that they were losing control over India.

Division of India

The British were trying their best to undermine the efforts of freedom fighters by creating animosity between the Indian National Congress Party and Muslim League, headed by Mohammad Ali Jinnah . Gāndhiji wrote many letters and met with Jinnah many times to work together for every Indian's freedom without any success. Jinnah wanted nothing less than an independent and separate country for Muslims – Pakistan. Gāndhiji knew in his heart that it would be a disaster and greatest tragedy if India was divided on the basis of religion. Muslims lived all across India, just as Hindus, Christians, Sikhs, Jains, and Buddhists. Muslims living in Hindu majority provinces were more educated and prosperous while those living in Muslim majority areas were poor and less educated. Jinnah was able to raise the passions of Muslims by constantly talking about a 'Hindu Empire' replacing the 'British Raj' and Hindus taking revenge for all the atrocities committed by the Mughal emperors.

A British Cabinet Mission arrived in India in March 1946 to formulate recommendations for independence of India. Their advice to the British Government was not to divide the country on basis of religion and have one federal parliament. Mohammad Ali Jinnah was not happy with this. Negotiations broke down between the Congress Party and Muslim League. On 16 August 1946, Jinnah declared direct action day and violent riots broke out with thousands dying all over the country. Mr. Attlee, Prime Minister of Britain called Nehru, Jinnah and others to London for final decision. Winston Churchill predicted a civil war between Hindus and Muslims if the country was not divided. Mr. Jinnah encouraged by this support from the World War II hero, declared “Pakistan or civil war” in London. Gāndhiji’s efforts to calm the population worked only in areas where he was but failed in other areas. Hundreds of thousands of people died and millions were displaced.

Gāndhiji went to meet with Jinnah some twenty times to plead with him not to break up the nation. Jinnah would have nothing less than a Muslim State. Gāndhiji had no hesitation at all in refuting the idea of dividing India on the basis of religion. He spoke and wrote again and again. Following quotations from Mohandās K. Gāndhi on his views on carving out a Muslim State from India were compiled by R. K. Prabhu and U. R. Rao:

“I am firmly convinced that the Pakistan demand as put forth by the Muslim League is un-Islamic and I have not hesitated to call it sinful...Islam stands for the unity and brotherhood of mankind, not for disrupting the oneness of the human family. Those who want to divide India into possibly warring groups are enemies alike of India and Islam.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Harijan”, 6 October 1946, p. 339

“The 'two-nations' theory is an untruth. The vast majority of Muslims of India are converts to Islam or descendants of converts. They did not become a separate nation as soon as they became converts.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Harijan”, 6 April 1940, p. 76

“I have always held that there is no distinction between the two [Hindus and Muslims]. Even though their observances differ, these do not separate them. They undoubtedly profess different religions, but they, like others, come from the same root.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Harijan”, 9 November 1947, p. 400

Lord Mountbatten was appointed Viceroy of India and arrived in New Delhi on 22 March 1947. He tried to reason with Jinnah to keep India an undivided nation but he too failed. Gāndhiji was willing to support Jinnah to be the first Prime Minister of India, but Nehru wanted this position very badly. Mr. Attlee, Prime minister of UK wanted the British to leave India in a hurry and Lord Mountbatten rushed to proclaim an arbitrary date of 15 August 1947 as the day of independence. Under these conditions everyone agreed to creation of Pakistan to avoid blood bath re-

sulting from Hindu-Muslim riots. Instead of preventing disaster, this division of India created blood bath and mass migration predicted by Gāndhiji.

All Gāndhiji's work for a united, independent India came to an "inglorious end". Gāndhiji was against this plan but was frustrated. He was heart broken. As a final act of Britain's divide and rule policy, Pakistan was carved out of India and the nation was divided based on religion. This created animosity between the newly independent countries that has continued to fight against each other, and have not prospered. On 15 August 1947, Pakistan was created as a separate Muslim majority country and India was declared as an independent nation. The freedom came at a great cost. India was divided in to two nations. There were great celebrations all over the country but Gāndhiji was absent from all of them. After independence and division of India, there was violence all over India and Pakistan. On his 78th birthday he said:

"With every breath I pray God to give me strength to quench the flames or remove me from this earth. I, who staked my life to gain India's independence, do not wish to be a living witness to its destruction."

M. K. Gāndhi, 2 October 1947

Gāndhiji was in Bengal trying to prevent violence and bloodshed between Hindus and Muslims. Hundreds of thousands were killed and more than 15 million people left their homes and became penniless refugees fleeing indescribable violence. Some groups marching towards the border were more than 50 miles long, walking away from danger towards unknown destination and future. The army and police could not stop this violence. Even though Gāndhiji was 78 years old and in frail health, he started touring most affected areas, going from village to village, giving speeches, praying, and comforting people. He was able to calm tempers down more effectively than the army and the police.

Horace Alexander, a journalist reported following incident. One evening Gāndhiji was at a prayer meeting. A distraught Muslim attacked him and tried to strangle him. Gāndhiji started reciting Quran and the Muslim immediately released his grip on his throat and asked what he could do. Gāndhiji told him not to tell anyone what he had tried to do otherwise there will be more riots and more blood shed. In October 1947, within two months of creation of Pakistan, her army and their recruited terrorists attacked Kashmir State in North India. They targeted Hindus and Sikhs, killed thousands, and forced others to leave Kashmir. This war is still going on in 2019.

Gāndhiji had supported Jawāharlal Nehru as the prime minister of Independent India against the wishes of all in Congress Working Committee. Nehru was very ambitious and wanted to become the first leader of independent India. Gāndhiji was invited to a meeting of Congress Working Committee but no one was prepared to listen to him. Within an hour, he left the meeting, very sad and dejected. He had seen violent break up of the nation with rivers of blood flowing all over and this humiliation from his own people was too much to endure. Later he said:

"There is nothing but anguish in my heart. Today mine is a lone voice. I have been told that I have no place in the New Order... I have no desire to live".

M. K. Gāndhi

In the end he said:

"No one listens to me anymore. I am a small man. True there was a time when mine was a big voice. Then everyone obeyed what I said; now neither the Congress nor the Hindus nor the Muslims listen to me. I am crying in the wilderness".

M. K. Gāndhi

On 13 January 1948, Gāndhiji began his fast unto death for peace. Few days later, he asked the newly formed Government of India to pay \$125 million to the new Government of Pakistan as assets left from the British Government of India. Some Hindus were against this and were frustrated by millions of Hindus being driven out of East Bengal and West Pakistan. On 30 January 1948, Nathuram Godse, a 35 year old editor of a Hindu newspaper, fired three shots from his revolver at point blank range and Mahātmā Gāndhi succumbed. His last words were "Hè (O) Rāma", his favourite mantra that he had learnt from his maidservant in childhood.

During his life, Gāndhiji was beaten up very badly by a mob of white Christian South Africans, by Muslims in South Africa and by a Muslim later on in Bengal. Finally it was in India that a Hindu fanatic who killed him on 30 January 1948. In the past, he had always stopped the police from taking any action against his assailants. However, after Gāndhiji was gone, Nathurām Godse, his final assailant, was tried in a court of law and hanged for his crime.

Essential Elements of Satyāgraha

Gāndhiji was not prepared to compromise on two elements – truth and non-violence. It is important to understand what he meant by 'truth' and 'non-violence'. His understanding of the word 'truth' was especially different from the common, every day meaning and 'non-violence' meant a lot more to him than most other people.

Truth (Satya)

Gāndhiji's concept of the word 'Truth' evolved over many years. It is important to understand the meaning of 'truth' as understood by him, and how and why 'Truth' was so important to him. Truth was one of the most important principle on which all his actions – political, social, personal – were based upon. The dictionary meaning of 'Truth' is 'what is real'.

Mohan's mother Putalibai had taken a vow to eat her breakfast only after she heard the cooing of Indian cuckoo bird. If the bird did not oblige her then she would not eat her breakfast. On the

days when she did not hear the bird, little Mohan would feel very sorry for his mother since she had to forgo her breakfast. He would wait outside to listen for the cuckoo bird and run in to tell his mother as soon as he heard one. One day he waited for quite sometime and got tired of waiting any longer. He went in his house and told a lie to his mother that he heard the cuckoo bird. His mother, like any mother, knew right away that Mohan was not telling the truth. She told him never to tell a lie again. This lesson went straight to his heart and he decided to always speak the truth. He loved his mother too much to hurt her feelings.

In India, traveling troupes visit and perform various Indian classical stories in the form of drama or dance. As a young boy, Mohan heard the story of King Harishchandra. It is a story of a king who lost his kingdom and family because he insisted on telling the truth. This story again reinforced his ideal of always telling the truth. As he matured, his concept of ‘truth’ evolved and the importance of practicing this virtue in all spheres of life became ingrained.

The root word for *Satya* in *Sanskrit* is *sat* — meaning ‘that which exists’. The second meaning of truth is when we speak and do what we are thinking. According to this truth, all three — thought, speech, and action — are the same, i.e., we do what we have thought and talked about. Gāndhiji, in his adult life, always followed this truth. Even as a lawyer and politician he always spoke and did what he thinking.

"Happiness is when what you think, what you say, and what you do are in harmony."

M. K. Gāndhi

Life becomes simple and straightforward when we do not have to make up stories and tell lies. When we tell a lie, we have remember, what we said to whom at what time so that we do not contradict our own words and actions.

One is truthful when his actions and speech are the same as his thoughts. A lot of politicians and even ordinary people do not follow this principle. It is hard to depend on the word or action of people who do not practice this principle. Even political opponents of Gāndhiji admired this quality in him.

"Proneness to exaggerate, to suppress, or modify the truth, wittingly or unwittingly, is a natural weakness of man and silence is necessary to surmount it. A man of few words will rarely be thoughtless in his speech, he will measure every word. We find so many people impatient to talk. All this talking can hardly be of any benefit to the world. It is so much waste of time."

M. K. Gāndhi

We all tend to modify our words and actions according the circumstances and people present. Most of us behave differently at home, at a party or at work. There are politicians, businessmen,

and others who say that it is all right to tell a lie or cheat in their own field but will not accept such behaviour in personal or social life. Gāndhiji's response to them was:

"The whole gamut of man's activities...constitutes an indivisible whole. You cannot divide life, social, economic, political and purely religious, into separate watertight compartments."

M. K. Gāndhi

Gāndhiji believed that God exists everywhere and pervades the whole universe. Since He knows all our actions, speech and even thoughts it is futile to tell a lie or cheat. If he made a mistake, he would tell someone. This would make his conscience clean and help him not to make the same mistake again.

"If we realized the presence of God as a witness to all we say and do we would not have anything to conceal from anybody on earth. For we would not think unclean thoughts before our Maker, much less speak them. It is uncleanness that seeks secrecy and darkness."

M. K. Gāndhi in "Young India", 22 December 1922

According to ancient Indian seers, the third concept of truth is 'that which existed yesterday, or a 100 years ago or a billion years ago; that which exists today, will be present tomorrow and even a billion years from now'. In other words something that which is not born, or dies and does not change over any time period. This is the description of God. He is not born, will not die, and has always existed. The God 'principle' is impossible to describe because It cannot be experienced by any of our senses. To Gāndhiji, God was Truth and Truth was God. It was also the little voice within that guided him in very difficult times. It is the consciousness or the force that keeps us all alive.

"For me truth is the sovereign principle, which includes numerous other principles. This truth is not only truthfulness in word, but truthfulness in thought also, and not only the relative truth of our conception, but the Absolute Truth, the Eternal Principle, that is God"

M. K. Gāndhi

Gāndhiji also believed in one and the same God for all. However, to reach Him different people follow different pathways. There was no distinct Hindu Truth, Muslim Truth, or a Christian Truth. This idea of truth does not depend on person's religious beliefs.

"...what may appear as truth to one person will often appear as untruth to another person. But, that need not worry the seeker. Where there is honest effort, it will be realized that what appear to be different truths are like the countless and apparently different leaves of the same tree."

M. K. Gāndhi

Even the definition of ‘Truth’ is different for different people and under different circumstances. It is not always easy or clear in everyone’s mind ‘what is the truth’ and ‘what isn’t’. Each individual determines what his or her own ‘Truth’ is.

“Truth is the right designation of God. Hence, there is nothing wrong in every man following Truth according to his lights. Indeed, it is his duty to do so. Then if there is mistake on the part of anyone so following the Truth, it will be automatically set right.”

And

“Truth resides in every human heart.”

M. K. Gāndhi

All of us are capable of sitting quietly and listening to our ‘inner voice’, which is our own ‘Truth’ residing in our heart. On this path Gāndhiji also made mistakes and then changed his course. As he matured and evolved, his own concept of truth kept on changing:

“My aim is not to be consistent with my previous statements on a given question, but to be consistent with truth as it may present itself to me at a given moment. The result has been that I have grown from truth to truth.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Harijan”, 30 September 1939

Gāndhiji’s ultimate goal in life was to experience God, to see Him. God was the ‘Truth’ he was chasing and all activities he undertook were with that aim. His life consisted of experiments in achieving that goal. The first essential step in that direction was the feeling of equal love for all:

“To see the universal and all-pervading Spirit of Truth face to face one must be able to love the meanest creation as oneself.”

M. K. Gāndhi

The path to reach his final goal was very hard indeed. He had to give up many other pursuits and live according to highest moral and ethical principles. This may explain why Gāndhiji carried out his fight against the British in the most unusual fashion, by always telling the truth.

“Renunciation of the flesh is essential for realizing the Truth...Realization of Truth is impossible without Non-violence. Brahmacharya (celibacy), Asteya (non-stealing), Aparigraha (non-possession), are means to achieve Ahimsā (not harming anyone). Ahimsā is the soul of Truth.”

M. K. Gāndhi

This will explain ‘how’ and ‘why’ he adopted non-violence as his most cherished weapon in his fight for liberation.

Non-violence (Ahimsā)

Ahimsā or non-violence has been declared as the supreme or the most important principle in ancient Indian traditions - ‘*Ahimsā paramodharma*’ - not harming anyone is the supreme *Dharma*. It is essential for peace, prosperity and progress of any community or nation. It is also important for maintaining the cultural fabric and integrity. Throughout history, vast majority of people have believed that if someone wants to change a regime or gain independence from an oppressive government or king, then they will have to resort to violence. Initially Gāndhi had trouble persuading fellow Indians to follow the path of non-violence. He stubbornly insisted and persisted in applying non-violent methods of protests. Some say that Gāndhi succeeded because the British were ‘gentlemen’. However, American Historian, Will Durant in his book “The Case for India” (which the British had banned) tells us how cruel and ruthless they were in maintaining their grip over the ‘crown jewel’ of British Empire.

Truth and non-violence were the two most important principles on which all his decisions were made and he did not want to compromise these two principles for anything, even his life or success of his mission or his reputation.

“I will not sacrifice Truth and Ahimsa even for the deliverance of my country or religion”

M. K. Gāndhi

Gāndhi’s goal in life was to experience ‘God’ in life and to him:

“My religion is based on truth and non-violence. Truth is my God. Non-violence is the means of realizing Him.”

M. K. Gāndhi

For Gāndhiji ‘Truth’ and ‘non-violence’ were inseparable and absolutely essential in life. If one gives up truth then he is also committing violence.

“Ahimsā and Truth are so intertwined that it is practically impossible to disentangle and separate them.”

M. K. Gāndhi

Gāndhiji’s definition of ahimsā was very broad:

“Ahimsā means avoiding injury to anything on earth, in thought, word and deed.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Harijan”, 7 September 1935

The Sanskrit words - Satyāgraha and Ahimsā – are very difficult to translate because English language has no equivalent word to adequately describe the exact meaning. A rough translation of the word Satyāgraha is insistence on truth. Ahimsā means not harming or damaging or misusing plants, animals and even inanimate objects like mother earth and environment. Destruction of ‘culture’ (language, religion, way of life, customs, etc.) of a group of people or forcible conversion to others’ beliefs is also a form of violence (himsā). Gāndhiji was against any and all of these different kinds of violence.

Gāndhi was thrown out of a first class compartment while traveling by train in South Africa. It was a very humiliating and traumatic experience. He paced up and down Maritzburg station all night. Some of us would have run away back to India and others would have thought of taking revenge. Gāndhi had trouble explaining ‘how someone can feel good by humiliating or physically hurting someone else’. He decided that night to ‘never give in to force or use force (violence) to achieve an objective’.

The practice of non-violence requires constant vigilance over one’s thoughts, words, and actions in all walks of life.

“The principle of ahimsā is hurt by every evil thought, by undue haste, by lying, by hatred, by wishing ill to anybody. It is also violated by our holding on to what the world needs.”

M. K. Gāndhi

Gāndhiji was also against using words to incite violence and committing violent acts against a criminal or unjust government. He always maintained that he hated the system of British government and its policy of exploitation of Indians but did not hate the ‘Englishman’. He always tried to help the British whenever they were in trouble. He initiated Indian volunteer ambulance service during Boer war in South Africa to help carry the wounded to hospital. He learnt first hand the pain and suffering inflicted on so many by the violence of war and futility of war in general. He showed love even for the people who were tyrants towards the Indians. This required tremendous discipline and determination. Later he wanted all his followers to develop same qualities of universal love and compassion. Non-violent methods do not try to humiliate, insult, or diminish the stature of one’s enemy. Violence against an enemy will unite them to fight more vigorously.

Non-violence is quite often equated with cowardice, a way out, or cope out. It was none of these for Gāndhi.

“My creed of non-violence is an extremely active force. It has no room for cowardice or even weakness. There is hope for a violent man to be someday non-violent, but there is none for a coward. I have, therefore, said more than once...that if we do not know how to defend ourselves, our women and our places

of worship by the force of sufferings, i.e., non-violence, we must, if we are men, be at least able to defend all these by fighting.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Young India”, 16 June 1927

Why Non-violence

The principle of non-violence was put forth by ancient Indian holy men (*Rishi*-s) thousands of years ago. They had realized through their observations that violence may help achieve some results but was not good in the long term.

“The rishis, who discovered the law of non-violence in the midst of violence, were greater geniuses than Newton. They were themselves greater warriors than Wellington. Having themselves known the use of arms, they realized their uselessness, and taught a weary world that its salvation lay not through violence but through non-violence.”

M. K. Gāndhi

After his return to India from South Africa in 1915, Gāndhiji tried to persuade Indian leaders to organize non-violent satyāgraha to gain independence from the British. At that time it was widely believed that violent methods were absolutely necessary to gain independence from the British. Non-violence was considered cowardly and was for the timid. However, Gāndhi argued that:

“Non-violence in its dynamic condition means conscious suffering. It does not mean meek submission of the will of the evildoer, but it means putting of one's whole soul against the will of the tyrant. Working under this law of our being, it is possible for a single individual to defy the whole might of an unjust empire to save his honour, his religion, his soul, and lay the foundation for that empire's fall or its regeneration.”

M. K. Gāndhi

Achārya Kripalani was a scholar and one of the Indian leaders interested in freedom for India. Once he told Gāndhiji that at no time in history any country had won its independence by non-violent means. Gāndhiji's answer to Achārya Kripalāni's comment was:

“The first thing you have to learn about history is that because something has not taken place in the past, that does not mean it cannot take place in the future.”

And

“To believe that what has not occurred in history will not occur at all is to argue disbelief in the dignity of man.”

M. K. Gāndhi

Gāndhi also noted that historians ignore the peaceful periods in the history of any country and only record the wars as significant events:

“The force of love is the same as the force of the soul or truth... History, as we know it, is a record of the wars of the world, and so there is a proverb among Englishmen that a nation which has no history, that is, no wars, is a happy nation... Hundreds of nations live in peace. History does not and cannot take note of this fact... Soul-force, being natural is not noted in history...”

The British were well armed and organized to rule over India. They had employed Indians to carry out their orders to imprison, torture, and kill other Indians, and help rule over whole of India. Indians employed by the British became very dependent on the income they earned for their dirty work.

“Formerly, men were made slaves under physical compulsion. Now they are enslaved by temptation of money and of the luxuries that money can buy.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Hind Swaraj”, 1909

Indians were not allowed to carry arms. The violent 1857 uprising by the Indian soldiers against their British employers had failed miserably. Gāndhi had seen the violence committed against the South African Zulus and other native tribes.

“The British want us to put the struggle on the plane of machine-guns. They have these weapons, we have not. Our only assurance of beating them is to keep it on the plane where we have the weapons and they have not...The way of the sword is not open to India...History teaches one that those who have...ousted the greedy by brute force against them, have in their turn become the prey to the disease of the conquered.”

M. K. Gāndhi

Even when violent struggles for independence were successful, they were followed by chaos and did not bring peace and prosperity to the country.

“Violence can never bring an end to violence; all it can do is provoke more violence. But if we can adhere to nonviolence in thought, word, and deed, India’s freedom is assured.”

M. K. Gāndhi

Violent methods try to destroy the opponent physically, psychologically, and spiritually whereas non-violence preserves the dignity of all. Violence unifies the enemy and generates a more violent response for retaliation and revenge. It is never a permanent solution of any problem. The main disadvantage of non-violent methods are that they are not easy to practice and requires

tremendous patience, discipline, and will power. People often wonder ‘how can non-violence work against well armed kings and dictators’. But Gāndhi felt that if the weak and the oppressed refuse to obey the orders of the kings and the dictators, and are prepared to suffer the consequences the oppressors will eventually give in. Many Indian leaders would argue with him that his insistence on ‘truth’ and ‘non-violence’ will not work with the British and India will never achieve independence and he would always say that:

“They say, ‘means are after all means’. I would say, ‘means are after all everything’. As the means so the end. Violent means will give violent Swarāj. That would be menace to the world and to India herself.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Young India”, 17 July 1924

Gen. Douglas MacArthur, World War II hero, and a professional soldier in the US army, surprised everyone with his statement that:

“In the evolution of civilization, if it is to survive, all men cannot fail eventually to adopt Gāndhi’s belief that the process of mass application of force to resolve contentious issues is fundamentally not only wrong but contains within itself the germs of self destruction.”

In South Africa, Gāndhi had organized an Indian volunteer group to take the wounded and the dead to first aid station or hospital during the ‘Zulu Rebellion’. It was more like a massacre of the Zulu tribesmen. Gross violence by the British convinced Gāndhi that:

“However much I sympathize with and admire worthy motives, I am an uncompromising opponent of violent methods even to serve the noblest of causes... Experience convinces me that permanent good can never be the outcome of untruth and violence.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Young India”, 11 December 1924

People who are very angry or full of hatred resort to violence to achieve their objective. These are considered negative feelings and usually lead to poor decisions in life. All negative feelings like anger, arrogance, feeling of superiority, hatred, jealousy, greed, attachment to people and objects, revenge may ultimately lead to violent behaviour.

“Violence is impossible without anger, without attachment, without hatred”

M. K. Gāndhi

History books always talk about wars, conquerors, and violence. Some even glorify these activities. Historians do not mention the devastating effects of all the wars. Gāndhiji had a very different view:

“Civil disobedience is never followed by anarchy. Criminal obedience can lead to it...to put down civil disobedience is to attempt to imprison the conscience.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Young India”, 5 January 1922

Many people are involved in protests based on non-violent civil disobedience. But when a large number of them get together in a public place, some may try to resort to violence like throwing stones or bombs. Gāndhiji and his followers tried their best to see that the crowd does not resort to violence and deteriorate into ‘mobocracy’. The non-violent civil disobedience movement of Gāndhiji had many failures and set backs in South Africa and later in India. It took him 21 years of satyāgraha to get some concessions for Indians from the government of South Africa. Very few have patience and discipline for such prolonged struggle. He observed:

“When I despair, I remember that all through history the ways of truth and love have always won. There have been tyrants, and murderers, and for a time they can seem invincible, but in the end they always fall. Think of it always”.

M. K. Gāndhi

Gāndhi had great faith in non-violent civil disobedience movement when it was carried out properly. He said:

“Non-violence is the greatest force at the disposal of mankind. It is mightier than the mightiest weapon of destruction devised by the ingenuity of man”.

M. K. Gāndhi

The methods employed to achieve any result are very important. Unethical and immoral means like telling lies, violence, cheating, etc., come back to haunt us in future.

“The means may be likened to a seed, and the end results of the actions to a tree; and there is an inviolable connection between the means and the end as there is between the seed and the tree. ...We reap exactly what we sow.”

M. K. Gāndhi

He also said that those who take the sword shall perish by the sword. We all know how the bloody revolutions have failed to create a new society. He further justified non-violent civil disobedience by:

“Non-violence is the law of our species as violence is the law of the brute. The spirit lies dormant in the brute and he knows no law but that of physical might. The dignity of man requires obedience to a higher law - to the strength of the spirit.”

M. K. Gāndhi

Even seasoned soldiers of great reputation and experience have talked in favour of non-violence:

“We have too many men of science, too few men of God. We have grasped the mystery of the atom and rejected the Sermon on the Mount. Gāndhi was an unclear infant and an ethical giant. He knew nothing about killing and much about living in the twentieth century.”

General Omar Bradley

This was a challenge for all humanity to evolve from its brutal past, adopt non-violence, and become civilized to deserve the title of ‘human being’. The consequences of remaining a ‘brute’ may be annihilation of the human race from the face of the earth. Now so many nations have nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction that are capable of destroying all life on this earth many times over. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., said:

“The choice today is no longer between violence and nonviolence. It is either nonviolence or nonexistence.”

Chenoweth and Stephan studied 323 struggles for independence in twentieth century and found that non-violent movements were likely to succeed twice as more often than violent struggle. Non-violent movements were more likely to succeed faster and result in democracy than violent struggles but this requires great discipline, united front, leadership, and good planning.

End result of violent conflicts

There have been many major and minor wars throughout the history of mankind. In twentieth century, Germany and Japan initiated World Wars with loss of millions lives. There was large-scale destruction of cities, roads, and bridges. No one can put the cost of human misery in any numerical figure. After those ‘wars to end all wars’ there were more violent conflicts in Vietnam, Korea, Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Syria and many other places.

“They say, ‘means are after all means’. I would say, ‘means are after all everything’. As the means so the end. There is no wall of separation between the means and the end. Violent means will give violent Swarāj. That would be menace to the world and to India herself.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Young India”, 17 July 1924

This statement has become a reality almost 90 years later. Pakistan’s leaders and British generals controlling the Pakistan army invaded Kashmir as soon as Pakistan became a reality. Main aim of both these groups was destruction of India by violent means. Over the years, both India and Pakistan have spent a lot of money and young soldiers’ blood in many mini and major skirmishes. Neither India nor Pakistan has gained anything from this violence. Only people who

have become wealthy because of this violence are the weapons manufacturers in the US, UK and Europe.

Analysis of the end results of recent (first 15 years of twenty-first century) conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq will again justify the use of non-violent methods in establishing a civil society. Politicians and people in power always justify going to war by saying everyone will be better off because of the war. They had promised that the First World War will bring peace and end all wars. Later we had World War II and many other minor conflicts in Korea, Viet Nam, etc. It has been 10 years now (in 2014) after the invasion of Iraq by the US, UK and other countries. It was alleged that Saddam Hussein, a dictator in Iraq, had 'weapons of mass destruction'. None were found at the end of war. Over 6,600 US soldiers lost their lives in Iraq war. No one has accounted for the future costs of taking care of the Veterans of these wars or rebuilding of Iraq. Every year around 6,000 US veterans commit suicide as a result of psychological trauma of war and social pressures. A very large percentage of homeless people in the US are war veterans. In 2012, the US Department of Veterans Affairs had approved disability claims for 750,000 but still had up to two years of backlog to process disability claims in 2013. Nearly one-third of veterans returning home to US from the Wars in the middle East have complained about symptoms related to many different systems of the body. Recent studies with MRI and other tests have shown changes in the brains of these veterans. These complaints have been variously attributed to stress, exposure to nerve agents, herbicides, spent plutonium in ammunition, etc. It has dawned slowly in the minds of doctors that there are subtle changes in the brain and other systems of the veterans bodies to account for their symptoms.

"An eye for an eye will make the whole world blind."

M. K. Gāndhi

Linda Bilmes and Joseph Stiglitz concluded in their book that the wars started after 9/11 will cost the United States of America at least \$4 trillion (as reported by Liedke). The economic downturn, even before the wars ended, is still being felt in 2013. The cost in human lives lost and maimed, and misery caused to civilians by these wars could run in to hundreds of thousands if not millions of people. The US has \$17 trillion debt, a high unemployment and a near financial collapse requiring billions of dollars in bailout of major financial institutions and industries. Some states and municipalities of many cities are unable to support public education and there are drastic cuts in health services and police protection. There is constant bickering in the US Congress and Senate for financing the government. On the positive side, some oil corporations, defence contractors and related engineering firms got some very profitable contracts. It is difficult to estimate the profit these companies made as a result of invasion of Iraq.

It is estimated that some 300,000 to 600,000 Iraqis lost their lives and many more were injured. Use of depleted uranium in ammunition has resulted in increase of cancer rates in Iraq from 40 per 100,000 population to 1,600 per 100,000. Large segment of population is unemployed and shortages of basic necessities has led to tremendous inflation of prices. The infrastructure of

water & electricity supply, roads, hospitals, schools, government, etc., have been destroyed. Violent crime has increased. The Shia Muslims who took over the government of Iraq from Sunni dictator Saddam Hussein has antagonized the Sunnis. Thousands of Iraqis have died as a result of sectarian violence and a civil war between Shias & Sunnis is a possibility. Many more Iraqis will continue to die because of breakdown in health services, food and water scarcity, and pollution caused by the war. We do not know how many Iraqis were injured or disabled. 7.4 million Iraqis are displaced from their homes by this war. Innumerable suspects have been tortured for information or some other reason. There is no dollar figure for pain and suffering of the families of the dead and the injured soldiers and civilians. In Iraq, even though 12% of the population is employed in local and national militias, the population does not feel safe, especially women. This was a small regional war in comparison to the World Wars of twentieth century.

"I object to violence because when it appears to do good, the good is only temporary; the evil it does is permanent."

M. K. Gāndhi

Following estimated figures are but statistics that may not convince anyone to give up violence. In World War I, 9 million soldiers died and an estimated total of 65 million others lost their lives due to starvation, bombs, exposure to weather, etc. Similar figure for World War II is 60 to 85 million lives lost. In India alone 3 million died of starvation in one province of Bengal because food grains were diverted to Europe as part of the 'war effort'. Up to 60 million deaths are attributed to Josef Stalin from 1917 to 1953 and similar figure for Mao Zedong's reign are estimated to be between 50 to 80 million from 1949 to 1976. The highest estimate of deaths in North and South Americas due to European colonization between 1492 to 1900 may be up to 100 million! There are no reliable figures available for lives lost, number of people taken as slaves, forcefully converted to foreign religion as a result of multiple invasions of India by very violent barbarians over a period of one thousand years. A Muslim historian, Muhammad Qasim Shah (Firishta, CE 1560 to 1620) wrote *Tarikh-i Firishta* and *Gulshan-i Ibrahim*. In these books he describes the carnage of multiple Muslim invasions of India which was much worse and on larger scale than the 21st century cruelties of Islamic State in Middle-East. More than 400 million Hindus were slaughtered and millions were taken as slaves.

"The Mohammedan conquest of India is probably the bloodiest story in history. The Islamic historians and scholars have recorded with great glee and pride the slaughters of Hindus, forced conversions, abduction of Hindu women and children to slave markets and the destruction of temples carried out by the warriors of Islam during 800 AD to 1700 AD. Millions of Hindus were converted to Islam by sword during this period."

Will Durant
in "The Story of Civilisation: Our Oriental Heritage" (page 459)1935.

As Stalin had said:

“A single death is a tragedy, a million deaths is a statistic.”

Josef Stalin

Three ‘Nine Elevens’

In his essay “Three 9/11s: Satyāgraha or Terrorism”, Richard L. Johnson brings out interesting historical comparison between three events that occurred on 11 September in 1906, 1973, and 2001. Gāndhi initiated a non-violent *Satyāgraha* on 11 September 1906 to remove the unjust anti-Indian laws in South Africa. This protest was based on “truth” and “non-violence”. On 9 September 1973, General Augusto Pinochet staged an attack against Chilean President Salvador Allende. General Pinochet's reign of terror continued for 15 years which left thousands of people dead throughout the region by the end of the 1980s. The 9/11 of 2001 attack by Al Qaeda destroyed Twin Towers in New York which left thousands dead and injured. It led to the invasion of Iraq by the United States and United Kingdom, and destroyed Iraq's government and infrastructure, death of hundreds of thousands and injured many more. The Chilean and US responses were the exactly opposite of what Gāndhi did in South Africa. The violence unleashed after that attack in 2001 is still going on (in 2014) after thousands of death, hundreds of thousands maimed, and trillions of dollars spent on war and rebuilding efforts. The author (Richard Johnson) concludes that Gāndhi was correct in saying that responding to terror with terror leads to escalating violence, more terror and insecurity, and we need to explore alternative non-violent approaches.

Even a military strategist has said:

“To win one hundred victories in one hundred battles is not the acme of skill. To subdue the enemy without fighting is the acme of skill.”

Sun Tzu, Chinese General and military strategist

There were some exceptions to the principle of non-violence. During satyāgraha movement in South Africa, Gāndhi agreed to a compromise with General Smuts and asked all to voluntarily register for an identification card. General Smuts was going to rescind and remove the law for all Indians to register. However, after Indians did their part, the general did not keep his part of the promise. Gāndhi was beaten up by Muslims and could have died of the injuries in 1908. Gāndhi's son asked him about his duty as a son when Gāndhi was being beaten up. Should his son have fought with Gāndhi's attackers or run away? Under these circumstances, Gāndhi said that it was a son's duty to protect his father even if he had to resort to violence. All circumstances have to be considered and decisions made after due consideration. In general, people are more important than principles. Welfare of the people comes first.

Qualities Necessary for Non-violent Struggle

Satyāgraha, a non-violent protest is not easy to organize, carryout, or lead. For most of us, practicing non-violence under ordinary circumstances is hard but in the presence of brutal violence it is very, very difficult indeed. Someone with great self-control may be able to do it. Training and expecting others to do the same on a massive, country wide scale requires superhuman talent and effort. It is very easy to teach ‘eye for an eye’ but to expect restraint from hundreds of thousands of people is quite different. The population of India in early 1900s was around 300 million. Most of them were uneducated and there was no good system of communication within the country. We all can learn from the life of Mahātmā Gāndhi how he developed the qualities that turned a Mohan in to Mahātmā. (This is described in chapter on Personal Evolution pages 18 to 66).

While in England Mohan started simplifying his life to reach his goal of becoming a lawyer. He gave up violin lessons, started cooking simple vegetarian meals, walking instead of taking a bus, and left London the day he passed his exams. Later in South Africa, he was able to establish himself as a successful lawyer with lucrative practice. When the Indian community asked him to lead a movement to remove the discriminatory laws against Indians, he simplified his life again by establishing communal living (Āshram), walking 40 miles to the court to fight legal cases, helping the wounded in local wars, and Indians afflicted by plague. Gāndhi was prepared to go to jail for gaining rights for the Indian indentured labourers. This capacity to sacrifice his personal comforts and even that of his family showed a very strong desire for community service.

Strong Desire

A lofty goal like independence of a country cannot be achieved in a short period of time, especially when there is uncontrolled violence from one side and opponents decide to follow the high path of truth and non-violence. There has to be a very strong desire to achieve the goal. It takes a long time and patience to convince the large number of people with different ideas and ideologies in a large country like India. It also requires very firm self-control based on personal moral, political, and religious convictions. Ordinary people had to be convinced of the purpose, that it was a noble cause and the goal worthwhile achieving and sacrificing life for.

“A small body of determined spirits, fired by an unquenchable faith in their mission can alter the course of history”.

M. K. Gāndhi

Disciplined Effort (*Tapa*)

The body needs to be trained to do hard work under difficult conditions. In South Africa, Gāndhi was jailed and forced to do hard labor. Living in a small cell, surviving on unpalatable food, and breaking stones all day for a lawyer must have been tough, but Gāndhi managed it. Because of him, others made through the ordeal too.

“...the quest for Truth involves tapas - self-suffering, sometimes even unto death. There can be no place in it for even a trace of self-interest. In such selfless search for Truth nobody can lose his bearings for long.”

M. K. Gāndhi

The effort has to become selfless, removing all self-interest in everything we do. Some involved in politics have an ultimate goal of becoming a prime-minister or gaining something out of all the work and sacrifices. These desires have to be removed first. All personal needs, desires, ambitions, ego - all have to go. That is reducing our ego to zero.

Bhagavad Gita was always his guide and mother.

“The Gitā inculcates upon them the duty of perseverance in the face of seeming failure. It teaches us that we have a right to actions only but not to the fruit thereof, ...It calls upon us to dedicate ourselves, body, mind, and soul, to pure duty, and not to become mental voluptuaries (one whose life is devoted to sensual pleasures) at the mercy of all chance desires and undisciplined impulses.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Harijan”, 24 August 1934

Detachment (*tyāga*) from results

When we do something, we want immediate and positive results. If we cannot get what we want immediately, we get frustrated. Non-violent civil disobedience does not work that fast and may not give us the results we want. Gāndhi wanted some concessions for the Indian and Chinese indentured laborers. He organized a volunteer corp to help the British in their wars against the Boers and Zulus. After the wars were over, instead of concessions, Indians got more severe regulations. After the First World War, Gandhi experienced similar outcome.

“In regard to every action one must know the result that is expected to follow, the means thereto, and the capacity for it. He who, being thus equipped is without desire for the result, and is yet wholly engrossed in the due fulfillment of the task before him, is said to have renounced the fruits of his action.....Renunciation means absence of hankering after fruit.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Young India”, 6 August 1931

We do not always get the results we want or when we want them but instead of getting frustrated, angry, and giving up the project, we need to pursue any worthwhile project.

There are three components of any action:

1. The intention behind the action.
2. The means or the methods used to perform any action.

And

3. The result of the action.

If we worry too much about the results, then we will not be able to perform well. Some people get frozen because of stage fright or fear of failure.

“By detachment I mean you must not worry whether the desired result follows from your action or not, so long as your motive is pure, your means are correct. Really it means that things will come right in the end if you take care of the means and leave the rest to Him.”

M. K. Gāndhi

Another advice by Gāndhiji was to keep on working towards the goal in spite of failures, not give up the idea of independence for the country but try again.

“He who gives up action falls. He who gives up only the reward rises. But renunciation of fruit in no way means indifference to the result. In regard to every action one must know the result that is expected to follow, the means there to, and the capacity for it. He, who, being thus equipped, is without desire for the result, and is yet wholly engrossed in the due fulfillment of the task before him, is said to have renounced the fruits of action.”

It is not easy to put this advice in to practice but still it is very important for success to keep on trying.

“The detachment prescribed by the Gītā is the hardest thing to achieve, and yet it is so absolutely necessary for perfect peace and for the vision of the little self and the greatest Self.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Harijan”, 6 February 1937

Replace Hate with Love

General Smuts was the Colonial Secretary of Transvaal and was responsible for sending Gāndhi to jail for disobeying the laws and inciting peaceful revolution to change oppressive and unjust laws. Condition for Indians in these jails were very harsh and they were made to perform hard labour. Gāndhi could have shown anger and revenge towards General Smuts but he decided to

make sandals for him instead. On his release from the jail, Gāndhi gave the hand made sandals to the general and the general never forgot this gesture.

In India, he told people that Indians were as much responsible for the British ruling over them as the British. Instead of hating the British, Indians should transfer their anger and hatred from the British rulers to their system of governance or civilization:

“We brought the English, and we keep them. Why, do you forget that our adoption of their civilization makes their presence in India at all possible? Your hatred against them ought to be transferred to their civilization.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Hind Swaraj”, 1909

Love and Goodwill for All

The second step – love and goodwill for all – is even harder than the first. Without these feelings of goodwill, the response to violence will be more severe violence. Love and goodwill are also necessary for building a humane society after the struggle is over. This love will lead to service of the unfortunate, poor, and the hungry without expectation of any rewards. Ultimately, all these steps may lead to change of heart of the terrorist and the oppressor.

“Those who have at all followed my humble career even superficially cannot have failed to observe that not a single act of my life has been done to the injury of any individual or nation. . . I claim no infallibility. I am conscious of having made Himalayan blunders, but I am not conscious of having made them intentionally or having even harboured enmity towards any person or nation, or any life, human or sub-human.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “The Epic Fast” by Pyrelal Desai

Gāndhiji believed in changing hearts and minds of his oppressors and tormentors by his love and suffering. The suffering like going to jail was always bourn cheerfully. This would show that their tactics were not effective in intimidating or suppressing the spirit.

When Gāndhi was charged for breaking a law, he would agree voluntarily that he did it and then explain why that law was not a just or fair law. He would tell the judge to give him whatever punishment the judge saw fit for his crime. Love for all does not mean that we have to tolerate exploitation by the rulers.

“Passive resistance is a method of securing rights by personal suffering; it is reverse of resistance by arms. When I refuse to do a thing that is repugnant to my conscience, I use soul-force....If I do not obey the law and accept the penalty for its breach, I use soul-force. It involves sacrifice of self.”

Strength, Courage, Fearlessness

A thousand years of foreign invasions and a century of Western education had weakened the minds of Indians. The educated and rich Indians believed that everything that was European was good and Indian scriptures, education, way of life, culture, etc., were either myths or not helpful in progress of the country. The system of early marriage and becoming a parent when the parents themselves are children, was not helping to improve the situation either.

Indians in India and in South Africa were afraid of Europeans and did not fight for their rights. Some who did fight, adopted violent methods of Europeans and did not succeed. Gāndhi not only overcame his own fears, but he expected the same fearlessness from all his followers. Fear and self-interest prevent most of us from acting against brutal kings and dictators.

"All that is necessary for the forces of evil to win in the world is for enough good men to do nothing."

Edmund Burke

Gāndhi, while in South Africa had written about how the nation can develop character of people who can carry out non-violent civil disobedience. The poor and uneducated people needed guidance, participation, and support of the rich and the educated but the rich were busy making money or working for the British.

Even in high school Mohan knew that he had to be physically strong. He tried eating meat to become strong like the British and his Muslim friend. However, this experiment failed. In London he formed the habit of walking everywhere. In South Africa he walked from his āshram to the city court 40 miles away. Again during Zulu rebellion, he walked a lot of miles carrying the wounded. He kept up his habit of walking after his return to India. He remained physically strong till he died at the age of 78.

"It is difficult to become a passive resister unless the body is trained. As a rule the mind, residing in a body, that has become weakened by pampering, is also weak, and where there is no strength of mind there can be no strength of soul. We shall have to improve our physique by getting rid of infant marriages and luxurious living."

M. K. Gāndhi in "Hind Swaraj", 1909

A lot depends on people's thinking and their minds. One can develop mental strength by giving up pleasures of the senses like taste, touch, sight, etc. A satyāgrahi has to be prepared to give up luxuries of life, accept poverty, and live by highest morals. If they were not prepared then they like most Indians, would have to live as slaves of the British. He outlined main qualities of a satyāgrahi as follows:

“After a great deal of experience it seems to me that those who want to become passive resisters for the service of the country have to observe perfect chastity, adopt poverty, follow truth, and cultivate fearlessness.”

M. K. Gandhi

Gāndhi thought about the source of power that any authoritarian government had on their subjects. These governments used their police and military to punish those who disobeyed the governments’ orders. But ultimately, it was the people, the subjects, the slaves who had to do what the government had asked them to do. What if - he thought - these people became fearless, did not care for the consequences, and did not obey the orders of the governors and the police? In the end, it was these people, who gave the power to the oppressive regimes. If the people were not afraid of losing their wealth, their homes, their jobs, or going to jail or even losing their lives - what could the government do?

“The strength of the warrior is not measured by reference to his weapons but by his firmness of mind.”

M. K. Gāndhi, 2 Sept. 1917

Acts of terrorism instill fear. The victims then surrender and obey the terrorist – whether it is the British in Jallianwala Bag or the Nazis killing millions of Jews and Gypsies or Al Qaeda. Removing the fear factor is the first step in war against any oppressor. It is sometimes argued that non-violent resistance worked against the British in India because they were mild and “gentlemanly”. This, however, is not true because the British in India and all over the world did not behave like ‘gentlemen’ or in civilized manner nor kept their promises.

Many tried to tell Gāndhi that he was afraid of fighting the British with guns. A Satyāgrahi cannot face an opponent if he / she is fearful, especially if the opponent has guns and a large army. A person who is afraid will either run away or resort to violence.

“When asked what attribute he most admired in human nature, Mahātmā Gāndhi replied, simply and immediately, ‘Courage.’ ‘Nonviolence,’ he said, ‘is not to be used ever as the shield of the coward. It is the weapon of the brave.’”

Richard Attenborough

Gāndhiji expressed the same idea as follows:

“Nonviolence is not a weapon of the weak. It is a weapon of the strongest and the bravest.”

M. K. Gāndhi

Many Indians were afraid of losing their income, homes, or get hurt fighting for India’s freedom.

“Fearlessness:

Those alone can follow the path of passive resistance who are free from fear, whether as to their possessions, false honour, their relatives, the government, bodily injuries or death.”

M. K. Gāndhi in Hind Swaraj, 1909

The first thing Gāndhi demonstrated in South Africa is how to be fearless. He gave up his lucrative law practice, adopted a simple life of communal living, and very hard physical labor. He was not afraid of the uncertain future - without a house, income, possible starvation for him and his family.

“Just as there is necessity for chastity, so is there for poverty, pecuniary (monetary) ambition and passive resistance cannot well go together.”

M. K. Gāndhi

Absolute Faith (*Shraddhā*) in God

Gāndhi had to remove all fear from himself, become fearless and then teach others by example to get over their fear of the tyrants. People need to have implicit faith in God or a power greater than that of men to be fearless i.e. not afraid of humans with guns and swords. Absolute faith in God helped him become fearless.

“A man who has realized his manhood, who fears only God, will fear no one else... We are sunk so low that we fancy that it is our duty and our religion to do what the law lays down. If man will only realize that it is unmanly to obey laws that are unjust, no man's tyranny will enslave him. This is the key to self-rule or home-rule.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Hind Swaraj”, 1909

Since it required a very strong will, high moral standards, and rock solid determination, the *Satyāgrahi* (volunteer participant in *Satyāgraha*) had to have a very firm belief in God who as the source of his power and his protection. The participant had to be prepared to lose everything - wealth, comfort, family, home, and even his life. Gāndhi gave up all these before he asked anyone else to follow. This was not easy path but eventually hundreds of thousands joined Gāndhi.

“It is faith that steers us through stormy seas, faith that moves mountains, and faith that jumps across the oceans. That faith is nothing but living, wide-awake consciousness of god within. He who has achieved that faith wants nothing. Bodily diseased, he is spiritually healthy, physically poor, he rolls in spiritual wealth.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Young India”, 24 September 1925

There is no equivalent word for *Shraddhā* in English but faith is probably the closest. Gāndhiji had great faith in God. He believed that everything happens according to His wish. He was physically beaten up a few times in his life but refused police protection till his last day. On 30 January 1948, he was going for his evening prayer and lecture session. A man came close to him and bowed down with folded hands. Then he took out a handgun and shot him at point blank range. He fell repeating his favourite mantra “Rāma”. He did not say “Why me?” or “Save me”.

In the epic ‘*Rāmāyana*’ Hanumān serves King Rāma to bring his wife back from the evil King Rāvan. Hanumān had great unquestionable faith in Rāma and would do anything he was asked to do, even move mountains or jump over the sea to Sri Lanka. Gāndhiji developed this kind of faith in God. His implicit faith in God made him fearless. He knew deep in his heart that God will protect him, guide him, and nothing happens without His consent.

“A fear-stricken person can never know God and one who knows God will never fear a mortal person.”

M. K. Gāndhi

Gāndhiji also had great faith in himself and in humanity in general. There were a lot of times when nothing worked for him. Troubles and misfortunes seemed impossible to surmount.

“You must not lose faith in humanity. Humanity is an ocean; if a few drops of the ocean are dirty, the ocean does not become dirty.”

M. K. Gāndhi

Then he would fall back on prayer, scriptures, and positive aspects of history which are usually ignored by historians.

“ When I despair, I remember that all through history the way of truth and love has always won. There have been tyrants and murderers and for a time they seem invincible, but in the end, they always fall — think of it, always. What difference does it make to the dead, the orphans, and the homeless, whether the mad destruction is wrought under the name of totalitarianism or the holy name of liberty and democracy?”

M. K. Gāndhi

Success did not come easily to him. He had to struggle against great odds in his goal to achieve freedom for India. It took decades. Whenever things got tough he would rely on his mother, Bhagavad Gitā, prayers and meditation for support, encouragement, and strength.

“God is the hardest task master I have known on this earth, and He tries you through and through. And when you find that your faith is failing or your body is

failing you, and you are sinking, He comes to your assistance somehow or other and proves to you that you must not lose your faith and that He is always at your beck and call , but on His terms, not on your terms. So I have found. I cannot recall a single instance when at the eleventh hour, He has forsaken me.”

In “Speeches & Writings of Mahātmā Gāndhi”, p. 1069

Non-violent *Satyāgraha* does not use brute force to conquer and destroy but tries to transform the opponent by love, patience, and suffering. A satyāgrahi does not cut off relationship with the opponent but tries to create a bond of love and friendship. A satyāgrahi needs to develop patience, sympathy, and willingness to suffer without retaliating. A true satyāgrahi also has to control all his negative emotions like anger, revenge, hate, jealousy, etc. They were expected not to retaliate in anger, insult or harm the British or the Indian police. Everyone is treated with respect and at the same time not indulge in flattery to please anyone.

Gāndhiji expected that the character developed during the satyāgraha will help when India becomes independent. Unfortunately leaders who took power from the British, blindly followed the British model of governance, did not change any of the British laws, siphoned off trillions of dollars to foreign banks, practiced divide and rule policy and have ruined the country (2014).

Forgiveness

Most of us have trouble forgiving others who may have hurt us in the past. This festering feeling of anger makes us to lash out at our opponent and lose an argument or destroy a relationship. Forgiving our opponent, friend, or a colleague is very important for all of us.

“It's important to keep in mind that everyone is just a human being no matter who they are. It's important to remember that we are all human and prone to make mistakes. Be able to see with clarity where you went wrong and what you can learn from your mistake.”

M. K. Gāndhi

This is especially important for someone in public life. Fighting evil with evil won't help anyone. Forgiving and letting go of the past will be beneficial everyone. If we don't forgive then we let the past and some other person control how we feel. By forgiving we release ourselves from those bonds. And then we can focus totally on the next challenge. People in public life cannot afford to make too many enemies.

“Whenever I see an erring man, I say to myself I have also erred; when I see a lustful man, I say to myself so was I once; and in this way, I feel kinship with every one in the world and feel that I cannot be happy without the humblest of us being happy”.

M. K. Gāndhi in “Young India”, 10 February 1927

By forgiving colleagues their mistakes and utilizing their talents will eventually bring success to the leader and the project.

"I look only to the good qualities of men. Not being faultless myself, I won't presume to probe into the faults of others."

M. K. Gāndhi

When Mohan was in school, he sold a little piece of his golden arm bracelet to help pay for his brother's debt. Later his parents came to know about this. His father was on his death bed at that time. Mohan felt very bad about telling a lie to his parents and wrote a letter asking for forgiveness. His father started crying after reading the letter, tore it up in front of Mohan and never said a word. Mohan never forgot this lesson in forgiveness.

Gāndhiji had a good advice for all about forgiveness. He knew very well what the British had done to Indians and told every one to hate the sin, (what British were doing to Indians) not the sinner (the Englishman).

"...I can and do hate evil wherever it exists. I hate the system of government that the British people have set up in India. I hate the ruthless exploitation of India even as I hate from the bottom of my heart the hideous system of untouchability for which millions of Hindus have made themselves responsible. But I do not hate the domineering Englishmen as I refuse to hate the domineering Hindus. I seek to reform them in all the loving ways that are open to me. My non-cooperation has roots not in hatred, but in love."

M. K. Gāndhi

Fighting evil with evil won't help anyone. Most people want to hang on to the feeling of hatred out of fear that they will be considered weak if they forgive. But one cannot forgive out of weakness. Gāndhiji gave an example of cat and mouse. If a mouse out of his weakness says that I forgive the cat for killing my brother then it is not 'forgiveness'.

"The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong."

M. K. Gāndhi

Humility with Confidence

Gāndhiji was given the title of 'Mahātmā' (a great soul) by Ravindranath Tāgore. It was very widely used by majority of people in India.

"He (Gāndhiji) stopped at the threshold of huts of thousand of dispossessed, like one of their own. He spoke in their own language. Here was the living truth at last, not quotations from book. For this Mahātmā the name given to him by the people of India is his real name".

Ravindranath Tāgore

In the introduction to his autobiography Gāndhiji writes that this 'title has deeply pained me' because:

“I claim to be no more than an average man with less than average ability.”

M. K. Gāndhi

Gāndhiji was not comfortable about the title of 'Mahātmā' given to him. He never considered himself to be anyone greater than the lowest of the low even though he had millions of followers. Humility, a feeling of being less than a speck of dust and without any arrogance, is an essential virtue for all who want to serve the poor and the down trodden.

“Often the title has deeply pained me; and there is not a moment I can recall when it may be said to have tickled me.”

M. K. Gāndhi in Author's Introduction, "Autobiography"

He gave credit for all that he had achieved in political arena to his helpers who worked tirelessly without getting fame or fortune.

“The world knows so little of how much my so-called greatness depends upon the incessant toil and drudgery of silent, devoted, able and pure workers, men as well as women.”

M. K. Gāndhi in "Young India", 26 April 1928

The Indian railways had three categories or classes. The cheapest and one with wooden benches was the third class. Gāndhiji always travelled by third class in trains all over India. He did not have any bodyguards or a large entourage traveling with him. During one of these journeys, a man was sleeping on the bench and occupying most of the space leaving just enough for Gāndhiji to sit erect. The man sleeping on the bench seat had never met Gāndhiji and was traveling to meet him at the next station. Hundreds of people had gathered there to have a glimpse of Gāndhiji. When he got down from the train, everyone shouted "Mahātmā Gāndhi ki jai" (victory to Mahātmā Gāndhi). The man who was sleeping on the same bench realized what he had done and he felt like crawling under the railway carriage. He bowed down to Gāndhiji and apologized. All through this journey, Gāndhiji did not brag about who he was or asked for special privileges for himself. He blessed the man and told him to be nice to everyone in future.

Gāndhiji always believed that all that he was able to achieve could be achieved by any ordinary person. He did not have any special gift or talent.

“I have not the shadow of a doubt that any man or woman can achieve what I have, if he or she would make the same effort and cultivate the same hope and faith.”

M. K. Gāndhi

Quite a few of our political and religious leaders think of themselves as special and want everyone to treat them like 'God's gift to the world'. His advice to young people of India was:

"...we have to strive so as to rarefy ourselves that all the ego in us perishes..."

M. K. Gāndhi in "Young India", 12 January 1928

It is the ego that interferes with our work and relationships. If we can reduce ourselves to the size of a speck of dust in this universe, together we will be achieve a lot. We all make mistakes but very few have the courage or honesty to acknowledge and accept responsibility publicly for our mistakes.

"I claim to be a simple individual liable to err like any other fellow mortal. I own, however, that I have humility enough to confess my errors and to retrace my steps."

And

"It is unwise to be too sure of one's own wisdom. It is healthy to be reminded that the strongest might weaken and the wisest might err."

M. K. Gāndhi

Perseverance

In South Africa, it took Gāndhi and his associates nearly 20 years of satyāgraha to get a few concessions from the European rulers. Thousands of Indians sacrificed their jobs, earnings, comforts and family life for more than one-third of their life. That is a great sacrifice and requires patience and perseverance. He described perseverance in the fight of satyāgraha in a concise and humorous way as:

"First they ignore you, then they laugh at you, then they fight you, then you win."

M. K. Gāndhi

Gāndhi's persevered, worked tirelessly, sacrificed everything from 1915 to 1946, more than thirty years, for struggle to get India's independence:

"I know the path. It is straight and narrow. It is like the edge of a sword. I rejoice to walk on it. I weep when I slip. God's word is: 'He who strives never perishes.' I have implicit faith in that promise. Though, therefore, from my weakness I fail a

thousand times, I will not lose faith, but hope that I shall see the Light when the flesh has been brought under perfect subjection, as some day it must.

M. K. Gāndhi in “Young India”, 17 June 1926

Trust

Gāndhiji put his trust in everyone and when the results of his satyāgraha were not favorable, he was labeled gullible or too trusting. This happened in South Africa when he believed in promises given by General Smuts and when the general could not deliver them, Gāndhi was beaten up and could have easily died. But he did not give up trusting people.

“It is true that I have often been let down. Many have deceived me and many have been found wanting. But I do not repent of my association with them. For I know how to non-co-operate, as I know how to co-operate. The most practical, the most dignified way of going on in the world is to take people at their word, when you have no positive reason to the contrary.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Young India”, 26 December 1924

Equanimity

Equanimity is very important in the life of all and especially in the life of a political or religious leader. Many leaders have lost their life’s work by angry and irresponsible statement that they regret later on. To Gāndhi this was a very important quality. Gāndhi and his close followers did not retaliate against the British under most difficult circumstances. This quality is described as *Sthitapragna* in Sanskrit, a person who is always calm, makes at right decisions even under difficult conditions and is established in the highest knowledge that preaches truth, non-violence and peace. They behave in the same way when they are happy or unhappy, in victory or defeat, under pleasant or painful circumstances, in jail or in a palace, after praise or criticism. They are always focused on their mission and engrossed in achieving it.

Tactics

There have been some civil disobedience movements in the first decade of twenty-first century in Egypt, Libya, Greece, Ukraine, etc. Most of them have ended in violence from both sides. Some like the sit-ins in Wall Street, New York and other US cities fizzled out without achieving much. Some of the important characteristics of satyāgraha-s mentioned above have been absent from the movements.

Will Durant, American Historian, wrote in the foreword to “Gāndhi versus The Empire” by H. T. Muzumdar (1932), about Gāndhi’s satyāgraha:

“profound revolutionary philosophy of life. No other leader in the world today seems so sane and humane... this attempt to accomplish the unprecedented lifts

us up, more than anything else has been able to do, out of cynicism and pessimism which poison the spirit of our time; and that this strange revolution by prayer and suffering does more than anything else around us to give some significance and nobility to our day.”

Will Durant, American Historian

How can one organize a civil disobedience movement? What can we learn from Mahātmā Gāndhī's experiences?

Decide on Core Principles

Core principles cannot be sacrificed under any circumstances. If they are not followed by anyone in the movement, then it is time to withdraw as Gāndhiji did when some policemen were killed in Chauri Chaura, Bihar. His core principles were truth and non-violence.

Select a cause

The cause has to be noble, for the good of all, and not a selfish one like grabbing power for the leader or his prestige. Gāndhiji's goal in South Africa was to remove legislations against Indians' liberty and well being. In India he fought for political independence, equality for all, simple sustainable life style, etc.

Define the goal

Goals of a movement or project must be very clearly defined. Then steps (objectives) to achieve these goals are worked out. The goals and objectives need to be evaluated all the time and modified according to outcomes. When the goal is not well defined, as happened in 'Occupy Wall Street', the movement does not succeed. The goal can evolve or change as circumstances change. Gāndhiji first aimed at changing the British system of government to improve the rights and financial status of people. When that did not work out, he asked for dominion status for India. Even that did not work out, so finally he asked for complete independence from the British.

“We must have a proper picture of what we want, before we can have something approaching it.”

M. K. Gandhi

A movement on the scale of independence for India required many volunteers. Each and every one of us have different talents, limitations, aptitude, and style of working. All these characteristics need to be properly utilized in organizing a satyāgraha.

The leader of any civil disobedience movement has to choose very carefully which laws need to be broken. There should not be any deception, lies, fraud, or intimidation in methods used.

Gāndhiji believed that the British behaved badly with the Indians out of ignorance about morals and ethics, and the solution was to educate them and all other Indians. Taking violent revenge to overthrow of the government was not the solution as it would lead to more violence later on and chaos.

“An out and out civil resister, simply ignores the authority of the state.”

M. K. Gāndhi

Spread the word

With the advent of internet, informing large number of people has become easier. Gāndhi had used journalism, talking to groups of people, lectures, and evening prayer meetings to spread the word. In South Africa, the game of soccer was popular amongst Indians and Africans. Gāndhi used to talk at this games to increase political awareness among people.

In South Africa, Gāndhi started publishing a newspaper ‘Indian Opinion’ as part of Transvaal passive resistance struggle. Through this newspaper, Gāndhi wanted to inform, educate, and unite the Indians in South Africa, learn of their concerns, and find solutions. The original was written in Gujarati. This newspaper was banned by the British in India. Later it was translated in to English. Main goals for the newspaper were:

1. To understand popular feelings.
2. Give expression to these feelings.
3. Fearlessly expose society and government’s shortcomings.
4. To discuss openly changes needed in the society and
5. How to bring about positive changes.

“I have taken up journalism not for its sake but merely as an aid to what I have conceived to be my mission in life. My mission is to teach by example and precept under severe restraint the use of the matchless weapon of Satyāgraha which is a direct corollary of non-violence and truth. ... To be true to my faith, therefore, I may not write in anger or malice. I may not write idly. I may not write merely to excite passion.”

M. K. Gāndhi

Newspaper was a very important part of the British culture and British educated Indians. The honesty and integrity of the newspapers was questioned by Gāndhi:

“To the English voters their newspaper is their Bible. They take their cue from their newspapers which are often dishonest. The same fact is differently interpreted by different newspapers, according to the party in whose interests they are edited...What must be the condition of the people whose newspapers are of this type?”

M. K. Gāndhi

Recent events (2012) and exposure of unethical practices at the news empire of Rupert Murdoch has shown how true Gāndhiji's observations about newspapers were a century ago. Later in India, he started Navajivan, Harijan, and Young India.

Gāndhi's non-violent techniques would be more effective now because of technological advances like cell phones with camera, internet communication, FaceBook, Twitter, etc. Many oppressive governments of the world are finding it difficult to suppress news and popular protests because of these innovations.

Serve the Community

There have been many political leaders whose main interest was to gain power and control the public or get rich through political connections. Gāndhi gave up his own self interest and even welfare of his family for the sake of Indians' welfare in South Africa and later in India. People could trust his integrity. In India, he first served the poor farmers of Champāran, Bihar and was prepared to go to jail for them. He did the same for mill workers in Amdāvad and farmers of Kheda District in Gujarat. After these selfless acts of service, thousands of Indians were ready to sacrifice their own lives for him.

Methods used in Satyāgraha

Methods of protesting varied with the situation. Satyāgraha in South Africa involved publicly burning the registration (identity) card that every Indian was expected to carry and endure jail sentences. Later they marched in large numbers to enter territory that was banned for Indians. In India the mill workers went on strike and refused to work for very low pay. Later farmers of Khedā district were asked not to pay taxes to the government and risk losing their homes and cattle. Prominent Indians were asked to give up their titles given to them by the British. Most of the government work was done by Indians and they gave up their lucrative jobs. They also stopped participating in government social and official functions. Instead of sending children to government schools, they established their own schools run by the community. Indians stopped buying government bonds, set up community based arbitration tribunals and stopped going to government run courts for legal disputes. All the low positions in the police and military were filled by Indians. They were requested not to join British military and police forces. All these activities were carried out adhering to the principles of non-violence (ahimsā) and truth (satya).

“Passive resistance has been described in the course of our discussion as truth-force. Truth, therefore, has necessarily to be followed and that at any cost.”

M. K. Gāndhi

There were some exceptions. If a satyāgrahi was employed in sanitary services or hospital, they were asked to perform their duties because Gāndhi did not want an epidemic of diseases among the general population. He had developed tremendous patience in dealing with people, sympathy

for the suffering of others, trust in the opponents' sense of justice and fair play, and complete disregard for his own loss or suffering.

“Satyāgraha is gentle, it never wounds. It must not be the result of anger or malice...It is the direct opposite of compulsion. It was conceived as a complete opposite of violence.”

M. K. Gāndhi

Community Living

Immediately after his return to India from South Africa, Gāndhi established an āshram in Kocharab, Gujarat, on 25 May 1915. Later he moved to Sābarmati (river) Āshram on 17 June 1917. His goal was to simplify life, include physical labor as part of everyday living, teach social changes like cleanliness and eliminate class distinctions, demonstrate how to lead a life devoted to public service, and raise a cadre of satyāgrahi-s. The people living in the Āshram were expected to work hard, sacrifice their own comfort and pleasure, and provide noble service to the community. These āshram (community) living would also build relationships based on interdependence, love and respect for all. This was the first step to making the whole world as one family (*Vasudhaiva kutumbakam*). Hard discipline and sacrifice would prepare people for a prolonged non-violent struggle (satyāgraha) against the British rule.

Role of Women

Initially women were not involved in Indian National Congress or in activities related to independence movement. After his return from South Africa, Gāndhi slowly got women to participate in the movement. Kasturba accepted her simple life in the āshram without fancy clothes and jewelry. It was hard work - waking up early in the morning, sleeping out in open, cleaning latrines, spinning cotton, cooking, etc. There were other women living in the commune too.

“In this non-violent warfare, their contribution should be greater than men's. To call women the weaker sex is a libel; it is a man's injustice to woman...If non-violence is the law of our being, the future is with woman.”

M. K. Gāndhi

The British had encouraged drinking of alcohol all over the nation. In early nineteenth century, the government was making \$85 million/year in taxes on liquor. Inebriated men would beat their women, gamble, not go to work and ruin the family. Gāndhi asked women to organize pickets in front of liquor shops to stop this practice. Boycott of foreign cloth was also included in this assignment for the women. 100,000 women joined Charkha Sangha - All India Spinners Association. Their spinning activity provided extra income for the family and discouraged people from buying foreign cloth.

After Gāndhiji's famous march to Dāndi, Gujarat; he organized a conference of women. Many were very eager to take active role in struggle for freedom. Small committees were formed to map out a plan of action and rules for the volunteers. Hindu and Muslim women who were hiding behind their veils and *purdāh*'s, came out in the open. Women marched to protest the British government and bravely and cheerfully faced the blows of British police's *lathi*-s (batons). This gave them moral strength and courage to take leadership role. In England, Gandhiji told women:

“They (the Indian women) are perhaps in many ways superior to you. You had to go through untold suffering to win your suffrage. In India women got it for asking. No hinderances have been placed in the way of their entering public life; the Congress has had not only women for its Presidents but has today Mrs. Naidu as member of its cabinet (the Congress Working Committee... Last year our women came out of their homes in one mass and showed an awakening which was miraculous. They took part in processions, defied the law, and bore the lathi (police sticks & batons) without raising a little finger, without swearing at the police, and used their power of persuasion to win the drunkard from drink and the sellers and purchasers of foreign cloth from it.”

M. K. Gāndhi, at Morley College Hall, London, November 1931

Rules for Satyāgrahi-s

“Nothing gives one person so much advantage over another as to remain cool and unruffled under all circumstances.”

Thomas Jefferson

Gāndhiji came up with following rules for all non-violent civil resisters (*satyāgrahi*). A great emphasis was placed on 'Truth' under any and all circumstances, and there were no secrets - even from the opponent (enemy). There has to be no violence - in action, speech or thoughts (*Ahimsā*). The civil resister (*satyāgrahi*) does not resist arrest or violence from the opposite side, even if he has to lose his life or property. The opponent is not cursed or threatened. The *satyāgrahi* was not allowed to speak or act in anger. They were told specifically not to encourage arguments or fights between religious groups. The British officials, English or Indian, and the British flag were to be treated with respect. If the civil resister sees someone attacking an official, he was supposed to protect the official.

“Disobedience to be civil must be sincere, respectful, restrained, never defiant, must be based upon some well-understood principle, must not be capricious, and above all, must have no ill will or hatred behind it.”

M. K. Gāndhi

In the prison, they were expected to be courteous and follow rules that did not humiliate or insult the prisoner. They may refuse to eat if the food is served in dirty utensil or in an insulting manner. He may ask for his basic physical or spiritual needs but not for any special privileges.

There was no financial or other reward for this voluntary service. A satyāgrahi had to be prepared to lose his income and may not get any support for his family. There were many who lost everything. These conditions were very harsh but there were people who were willing to sacrifice everything they had for the country's freedom.

Chapter V

Legacy

Gāndhiji's life and his writings are affecting lives of many all over the world. He was a prolific writer and the British jails gave him ample time and opportunity to think, digest, and write. There are a lot of struggles going on now in the world that could learn from his methods and teachings. Today we have a lot of millionaires in the world who buy expensive cars, travel by private jet planes, have secret bank accounts in tax heavens (hoarding), and at the other extreme we have poverty, malnourishment, starvation, homelessness, illiteracy, and unemployment. Millions have been forced to leave their homes and become refugees because of violence, persecution, or in search of basic necessities of life like water, food, work or shelter. Citizens who participate in non-violent and violent street protests are shot at and killed. There is environmental degradation, pollution, and multi-national corporations evading taxes, paying their executives millions of dollars for doing their dirty job, and making huge profits. Then there are defense contractors paying politicians to win elections and then controlling governments and promoting wars. Politicians and religious leaders living in palaces, traveling in private jets and yachts, and living a life of luxury. The population of the world is increasing at an unsustainable rate of 1 BILLION every 12 years. This will eventually lead to violent wars, refugees, and deaths of millions of people. There are millions who have fled the war in Iraq and Syria and hundreds of thousands from North African countries risk their lives to go to Europe for work, food and water to drink.

Many politicians and business people think they cannot do their job if they adhere to moral and ethical principles. Truth, non-violence, universal love, etc., were taught by religious leaders and philosophers but practiced by a very few. They were absolutely out of the realm of kings and politicians. Gāndhiji not only talked about these principles but put them in practice in his fight against a mighty, well armed, and brutal regime. People who read and believe history books written by loyal and biased British historians and politicians think that it was not the efforts of Gāndhiji that brought freedom to India but because the British were just and generous gentlemen. The truth is far from this belief. The Round Table Conferences were convened because the non-cooperation movement made a significant dent in the British economy. His success gave hope and strength to many leaders all over the world from the United States of America, South Africa, Myanmar, Poland, to California and beyond. Gāndhiji's example of patience and perseverance are also worth emulating for those who want peaceful revolution.

How has Mohandās Karamchand Gāndhi's life affected us in twenty-first century? Even Anne Frank hiding in the attic from the Germans during World War II had heard about Gāndhiji. Are our political, religious, and business leaders listening to his message? There are a some who talk openly about him and give him some credit but very a few who put his principles in practice.

Seven Deadly Sins

Gāndhiji was always observing and analyzing. He was trying to find the root causes of violence in the world and came up with ‘seven deadly sins’ that he shared with his grandson, Arun Gāndhi, just before his death. It was his firm belief that these social sins were the root cause of physical violence in the world:

1. Wealth without work
2. Pleasure without conscience
3. Knowledge without character
4. Commerce without morality
5. Science without humanity
6. Worship without sacrifice
7. Politics without principle

To this list his grandson, Arun Gāndhi, added eighth one:

8. Rights without Responsibilities

And Allen Roland added a ninth one:

9. Power without Benevolence

These circumstances may lead to feelings of frustration, anger, hatred, and revenge in the people who are taken advantage of. The weak and the exploited may resort to violence when people in power (political, wealth, knowledge, birth in higher-class, physical strength, etc.) misuse their power to take undue advantage of the weak.

1. Wealth without work – There are lots of rich people, farmers, landlords, CEOs of large multi-national corporations, politicians and kings who enjoy a life of luxury without giving back anything to the society. Some Chief Executives get millions of dollars in bonuses even when their companies are going bankrupt. Bhagavad Gitā has called such people ‘thieves’.
2. “Pleasure without conscience” – when people think that everyone and everything is created for their pleasure and they can exploit/use them as they please. Hunting or killing animals, birds, or fish for pleasure or as a sport would come under this category. There are some of us who use natural resources for their pleasure without thinking about consequences.
3. Knowledge without character – schools and universities imparting knowledge without teaching how that knowledge should be used to improve the lives of all and when educated use this knowledge only for their own selfish gains.
4. Commerce without morality – seventeenth century onwards European countries conquered a lot of countries in Asia, Africa and the Americas to rob these countries of

their natural resources. The powerless became poor and starving nations of the world labelled as ‘third world countries’. There are some giant multi-national corporations that drill for oil or mine for rare metals and pollute the land. Giant factory ships that deplete the oceans of fish or fishermen who remove one fin of a shark and throw away rest of the fish in to ocean to die of starvation belong to this category.

5. Science without humanity – scientific discoveries and know how are used to make atomic bombs and other weapons of mass destruction.
6. Worship without sacrifice – large, fancy temples, churches & mosques are built to satisfy the ego of some religious leaders while selfless work to benefit the poor or needy is neglected. There are religious leaders who mislead their followers and ask them to commit violence.
7. Politics without principle – During President Obama’s first term (2008 - 2012), the Republicans in Congress blocked all measures to improve conditions for common people in the US just so that he does not win a second term. Politicians accepting contributions from large corporations or professional groups or weapons’ manufacturers and favoring these companies or groups after the election shows failure of the system of democratic governments.

Arun Gāndhi, Mahātmā’s grandson, added:

8. Rights without Responsibilities - Some trade unions have gained tremendous power and have used these to demand more and more rights for their workers without thinking about the consequences of their actions on the society.

Allen L. Roland added:

9. Power without Benevolence - Some presidents or kings have started very destructive wars just because they had large armed forces and a lot of fire power. They unleash these for frivolous reasons and cause great damage and destruction.

Scope of Gāndhi’s Legacy

During his life time, Gāndhiji tried to change, reform, and remove colonialism of the British in India, the oppressive aspect of caste system, discord among different religious groups, improve living conditions of the poor, untouchables, and women; promote simple living, and an outline of how to create a ‘true democracy - a government of the people, by the people and for the people. He wanted these changes to be brought about without force, bribery, and false promises. Gāndhiji raised the level of awareness of all Indians making them conscious of ‘what they had become under the British rule and give up their idea that Indians were inferior in every way. He wanted them to feel that they had talent, courage, and were capable of governing themselves.

“The bond of the slave is snapped the moment he considers himself to be a free being.”

M. K. Gāndhi

Albert Einstein, the great scientist, and Gāndhiji had exchanged letters and ideas. Einstein wrote:

“You have shown by all you have done that we can achieve the ideal even without resorting to violence. We can conquer those votaries of violence by the non-violence method. Your example will inspire humanity to put an end to a conflict based on violence with international help and cooperation, guaranteeing peace of the world. With this expression of my devotion and admiration I hope to be able to meet you face to face.”

Albert Einstein, 27 September 1931

Later, on Gāndhiji's 70th birthday (Oct. 2, 1939) he sent a special message as follows:

“Mahātmā Gāndhi's life's work is unique in political history. He has devised a quite a new and humane method for fostering the struggle for liberation of his suppressed people and has implemented it with greatest energy and devotion. The enormous influence which it has exerted on the consciously thinking people of the entire civilized world might be far more lasting than may appear in our time of overestimation of brutal method of force. For only the work of such statement is lasting who by example and education action awaken and establish the moral forces of their people.”

Albert Einstein, 2 October 1939

Some people with narrow tunnel vision have judged Gāndhiji harshly, criticizing him for almost everything he did. Hindus found fault with the way he tried to work with Muslim leaders. Muslims found fault with him because he was a staunch Hindu, was against dividing India and creation of Pakistan. Dalits (untouchables) did not like him because he was against giving them more privileges than everyone else in India - a quota system for jobs and admission to higher education, even when there were more qualified people. They proved the proverbial saying, "Some can't see the forest for the trees" to be correct. There are even academics who have focused on details and neglected to see the big picture. The British, like Sir Winston Churchill, who wanted to exploit the whole world, hated him for very obvious reasons.

Gāndhiji used to receive many of letters from people all over the world. Some people would criticize him very severely. After reading one such critical letter, he removed a paper clip from that letter and threw the letter in waste paper basket. His secretary asked if he was going to reply to that letter. Gāndhiji said, “I have kept the useful part of that letter.” He compared people who criticized a lot without good reason to ‘sanitary inspector’ - someone who is always looking for ‘dirt’ or ‘garbage’.

Spheres of Influence

Truth and Non-violence

The greatest contribution to the humanity at large was his insistence on truth and non-violence in fighting against the rulers who had used violence, brute force, treachery, deceit and all the negative, immoral, and unethical tactics described in any history book or spy novel. There were many forces working against him but he persevered and stuck to his principles. The future leaders of various countries of the world will follow suite or not will determine the future of the future of human race. This has been discussed in detail in previous chapter on 'Civil Disobedience'.

Politics

Gāndhiji was a good observer of the all different kinds of governments that were prevalent in his time and before that. He saw the drawbacks of the method of governance by British Parliamentary system. The members of the parliament had to vote according to party lines and not what was right for the country or was ethical. The Western model of democracy takes care of the wealthy and the powerful people more than the weak and the poor. The politicians need money (donations) from the wealthy to get elected. After the election, they need to pay back the donors by doing them favors. The theocratic, socialist and military dictatorships have too much power in the hands of a few who exploit the whole population.

Throughout history he had seen the problems of kings and dictators. Lately we have seen the political gridlock in the US as arguments heat up between Republicans and Democrats. Then there are the religious zealots who have carried out pogroms (ethnic cleansing) in Pakistan, Bangladesh, and many other countries. Our civilization has not yet found an ideal system of government.

Most of the politicians and even general public feels that there is no place for truth, honesty, or openness in politics. Politicians cannot survive if he or she followed the high ground of morals and ethics. Gāndhiji had exactly opposite views. He informed the rulers about his plans and even asked all his followers to adhere to the path of truth and non-violence.

Political decision making

In many so called democratic governments policy decisions are usually made that help those in power to win the next election or support the rich donors who contributed money to the winning candidates. Most political leaders think about how to win the next election or how to get a nice picture in the newspaper. Quite a few leaders' main goal is to increase their personal power, prestige, prosperity or place in history books. Under a dictatorship the decisions are made according to the whims of the dictator or party's philosophy. Gāndhiji's basis for making

decisions were based on whether it would help the most deprived or needy person. His advise to the politicians, people in power, businessmen, and decision makers was to:

“Recall the face of the poorest and the most helpless man whom you may have seen and ask yourself if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him. Will he be able to gain anything by it? Will it restore him to a control over his own life and destiny?...Then you will find your doubts and yourself melting away.”

M. K. Gāndhi

This was the yardstick recommended by Gāndhiji to measure and judge all political, business, and economic decisions.

Speaking the truth all the time is very difficult for a politician. It requires making all decisions and action plans in the ‘open’ with total transparency. Very few politicians have the courage to follow this path even in a democratic country. In this day and age of ‘so called’ democracy, politicians are always thinking of ‘how to win the next election’. They are busy trying to please wealthy business leaders to donate money for their next election campaign. At the same time, they do not wish general public to know their true colors. Gāndhiji practiced and recommended complete truthfulness in politics and every other sphere of life.

“Nothing should be done secretly. This is an open rebellion. In this struggle secrecy is a sin.”

M. K. Gāndhi, 8 August 1942
in All India Congress Committee meeting.

Gāndhiji’s principle of non-violence would not let anyone inflict any harm to even a single person. On the other extreme, some leaders would not hesitate to endanger lives of millions for their own or their country’s benefit.

Gāndhi went around India, visited towns and villages, talked to people of all religions and social strata to find out firsthand ‘what was happening’. He discussed with all, rich and poor, educated and uneducated, high caste and low caste; about various solutions. Then he came up with plans for Satyāgraha in India. He won the hearts of people by first serving them. It was not easy convincing everyone to join him at first but slowly and steadily millions followed him.

Ideal Government

Swa means my and *rāj* means to rule. Literal translation of *swarāj* would mean independence. *Swarāj* means self-rule and it is much more than democracy. The power is not centralized in the hands of a few. Everyone is expected to be knowledgeable, disciplined, and live by the highest moral and ethical principles. Everyone participates in the local governance and decisions are

made based on ‘what is good for all’. Social transformation is brought about with full knowledge and participation of all involved and not through coercion or bribery. Gāndhi’s idea of *swarāj* had two components, one spiritual and other physical or political. The spiritual *swarāj* was won by transformation of each individual by removal of all negative tendencies like greed, fear, hate, jealousy, etc., and developing universal love. The liberated person would live according to the highest values described in *Bhagavad Gītā* without cravings for any material things and at peace with himself and his environment.

Democracy or freedom in the West means free elections, freedom of making tons of money, own a big house, a fancy car, equal right to education, jobs, etc. These are external freedoms. Gāndhiji’s freedom meant freedom from desire, anger, violence, jealousy, bad habits, etc. The Western model of society with its uncontrolled desires to own and exploit cannot be sustained and will eventually lead to disaster.

“Democracy must in essence mean the art and science of mobilizing the entire physical, economic, and spiritual resources of all the various sections of the people in the service of the common good of all.”

M. Gāndhi in “Harijan”, 27 May 1939

If each person lived according to the highest moral and ethical principles, for the common good of all, then there is no need for government. This is the ideal but at present we are far from achieving it.

Gāndhi wrote a book describing what he envisioned India as an ideal independent nation in ‘Hind Swaraj’ (1909). It was to Indians like the ‘Declaration of Independence’ was for the Americans. It was first published in ‘Indian Opinion’ as an interview with a reporter. In this book he described the Parliamentary democracy in England as follows:

*“That which you consider to be the Mother of Parliaments is like a sterile woman and a prostitute. Both these are harsh terms, but exactly fit the case. That Parliament has not yet, of its own accord done a single good thing. Hence, I have compared it to a sterile woman. The natural condition of that Parliament is such that, without outside pressure, it can do nothing. It is like a prostitute because it is under the control of ministers who change from time to time...
...it is generally acknowledged that the members are hypocritical and selfish. Each thinks of his own little interest. It is fear that is the guiding motive...*

When the greatest questions are debated its members have been seen to stretch themselves and to doze...

Carlyle has called it the "talking shop of the world"...

Members vote for their party without a thought...

“The Prime Minister is more concerned about his power than about the welfare of Parliament. His energy is concentrated upon securing the success of his party. His care is not always that Parliament shall do right...

they cannot be considered really patriotic...

I do not hesitate to say that they have neither real honesty nor a living Conscience...”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Hind Swaraj”, 1909

Present day democracies (Early twenty-first century) are not very different from this description given by Gāndhi in early 1900s. The politicians are paid much better than most. They get ‘donations’ from the wealthy so that they can win the next election and take care of the ‘needs’ of the few wealthy donors who helped them.

“Democracy cannot be worked by twenty men sitting at the centre. For it has to be worked from below by the people from every village.”

M. K. Gāndhi

Most people believe what they read in the newspapers, school text books, and see on TV. Recent inquiry in Rupert Murdoch’s news empire has shown how true Gāndhi’s observations were a hundred years ago. Stephen Kinzer in his books have written about how the successive democratic governments of United States of America and United Kingdom have overthrown democratically elected government in Iran and many other countries to support interests of their multi-national giants. It is alleged that they have used their money and media to influence the outcome in elections in the largest democracy - India in 2014. Their historians, media and politicians always portray themselves as virtuous saints who promote truth, justice, democracy, etc.

“To the English voters their newspaper is their Bible. They take their cue from their newspapers which are often dishonest...”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Hind Swaraj”, 1909

In Hind Swaraj, Gāndhi tried to show the drawbacks of modern civilization. It is true that Europeans and North Americans have modern houses, a variety of clothes, and gadgets to make life more comfortable. They have fast transportation, modern farming and other types of machines to reduce pain of physical labour. Their schools and universities give a lot of information, train them in various professions that enable them to earn a lot of money and have a very comfortable life. These are the signs of an advanced ‘civilization’. Other nations who do

not have these are considered ‘third world’ countries. Everyone wants to be as rich and comfortable as the Europeans and North Americans.

“Formerly, men were made slaves under physical compulsion. Now they are enslaved by temptation of money and of the luxuries that money can buy.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Hind Swaraj”, 1909

One hundred years later, we know that this life style has created an epidemic of obesity and secondary diseases like diabetes, fast food, expensive - almost unaffordable medicine, frivolous law suits, exploitation of poor in ‘third world’ countries, environmental degradation, pollution and a myriad of other problems. Unfortunately, our Nobel Prize winning economists and Oxford and Harvard educated politicians still talk only about increasing the gross domestic product. There has been a lot of scientific research, increased food production, and creation of jobs due to industrialization. Even with all this progress there are more people in the world going hungry and thirsty now than at any time in the history of man. The industries have created pollution, which is now causing so many diseases. They talk about Mahātmā Gāndhi on every October 2nd but fail to put anything in practice.

In 1917, the Bolshevik revolution replaced the rule of Czars (kings) by communists in Russia. Gāndhi liked the idea of the state owning all properties and industries for the good of the people but abhorred the violent methods employed by the revolutionaries. The communist dictators who replaced the king were no better ‘servants of the society’.

The engine of ‘capitalism’ is driven by greed – more profits, bigger salaries for the executives, without concern for long-term consequences to the environment or quality of life for ordinary people. Gāndhi did not think that this model was sustainable or good for the common people. The British system of governing India and other colonies was based on brute force of guns and soldiers, laws that exploited the meek and the poor, exorbitant profits to satisfy the greed of a few, and centralized power within a small circle of powerful few. Even today, in most of the democratic countries power is concentrated within a small number of people. The media – newspapers, TV, etc., – are also owned and controlled by select few. The rich and the influential force the elected officials to make decisions that favor them. Those in power (democratic, autocratic, or theocratic) become the masters and take advantage of their position.

“The rulers should depend on the will of those who are under their heels, thus they have to be servants of the people ready to do their will.”

M. K. Gāndhi

In Gāndhi’s vision, the power would be decentralized and decisions would be made that benefit the poor and the weak. He was of the opinion that to exploit the poor is also violence of a kind. He wanted the governments to be non-violent and not harm anyone.

“Non-violence is not merely a personal virtue. It is also a social virtue...”

M. K. Gāndhi

Gāndhi was in favor of democracy and freedom of the individual.

“...if individual liberty goes, then surely all is lost, for, if the individual ceases to count, what is left of society? Individual freedom also can make a man voluntarily surrender himself completely to the service of society. If it is wrested from him, he becomes automation and society is ruined. No society can possibly be built on denial of individual freedom...”

M. K. Gāndhi

Gāndhi’s idea of political freedom and democracy were different from those prevailing at that time. He wanted every citizen to benefit and prosper. It was better than democracy or rule of the majority. He wanted a country where people were respectful of the rights of others and mutually helpful and interdependent. Even the poorest or the weakest did not feel that his/her rights were trampled upon. Everyone had equal rights and access to the rulers. No one was discriminated on the basis of race, religion, caste, or gender. Everyone had access to education and jobs according to their aptitudes and capability.

“My notion of democracy is that under it the weakest should have the same opportunity as the strongest. That can never happen except through non-violence.”

M. K. Gāndhi

Everyone had the opportunity to contribute to the society according to his capacity and ability, felt fulfilled, and live a dignified life. There would be freedom of religion and no one would be forced or bribed to convert to another religion. The politicians make decisions that would benefit the poorest of the poor. The leaders would lead by example and follow the principles of ‘Truth and non-violence’. The government takes in to consideration what will benefit the society more than the will of a well organized and vocal minority which tries to dominate over the majority or a majority that takes away rights of minority.

“Democracy must be in essence... the art and science of mobilizing the entire physical, economic and spiritual resources of all the various sections of people in the service of common good of all.”

M. K. Gāndhi

When all the citizens of a republic are well educated and behave in a responsible way for the benefit of all, the government will not have much to govern.

“That government is the best which governs the least.”

Henry David Thoreau

In the first half of second decade of twenty-first century, we are witnessing ‘mobocracy’ in a lot of countries. The mob takes over the government by burning cars and buildings and killing people. Gāndhiji considered this type of government more dangerous and harmful than dictatorship.

“They (mob) have no mind, no premeditation. They act in frenzy.”

M. K. Gāndhi

A mob gets out of control very easily. It just needs one person to start overturning a car and burning it or throw a Molotov cocktail bomb.

On his return to India from South Africa in 1915, Gāndhi toured the country to learn first hand the deleterious effects of the British Rāj. He saw the grinding poverty of the farmers and laborers. The landowners and tax collectors working for the British left nothing for the farmers. Gāndhi traveled extensively all over India and observed the living conditions of the poor villagers. Eighty percent of the population of India lived in small villages, worked hard from early to morning to evening and were still very poor. The farmers who grew the crop did not have enough for their own children. Some were so desperate under the burden of debt that they committed suicide making things worse for wife and children. This hurt him a lot.

Gāndhi wrote and spoke a lot about his vision of India after independence from Britain. Villages would play a very important role in independent India. Villagers would decide who to elect in ‘Grāma (village) Panchāyat (five decision makers). This five member committee would then decide on how to utilize the land, what kind of crops to grow, village industries to develop in their village, etc. Cooperative societies of villagers for different functions and projects would then take care of the everyday workings. Modern machines and industrialization had caused a lot of unemployment and poverty in villages. Effective Grāma Panchāyat and cooperatives run by villagers would improve employment in villages and stop villagers from moving to cities for employment. In his model of independence, the farmers would decide their future by local ‘self-government’ made up of villagers – independence at village level – ‘Grāma (village) Swarāj (independence)’.

“If India copies England, it is my firm conviction that she will be ruined...the condition is due to modern civilization. It is a civilization only in name. Under it the nations of Europe are becoming degraded and ruined day by day.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Hind Swaraj”, 1909

Everything in this universe belongs to the Creator. The land would be used for the benefit of all villagers in the best possible manner as decided by the five elders (*Grāma Panchāyat*) of the

village. Everyone was expected to do manual labour to support the village. It could be tilling the land, growing crops, processing the crop, spinning the cotton, etc.

“Independence must begin at the bottom, thus every village will be a republic or panchayat having full powers. It follows, therefore, that every village has to be self-sustained and capable of managing its affairs even to the extent of defending itself against the whole world. This society must naturally be based on truth and non-violence.”

M. K. Gāndhi

Gāndhiji had a different vision for the villagers. He wanted real democracy to come to the villages by giving the villagers power to decide ‘what was good for them’ and ‘how to manage resources at village level’ not someone living in New Delhi living in the lap of luxury. The ancient Indian system of five village leaders (*Panchāyat*) would be the power to rule over the village. He wanted to develop cottage industries producing everything locally to support all without destroying the environment and local economy.

In a letter to Jawaharlal Nehru, Gāndhiji wrote about his vision of free India:

“ I am convinced that if India is to attain true freedom and through India the world also, then sooner or later the fact must be recognised that people will have to live in villages not in towns, in huts, not in palaces. Crores of people will never be able to live at peace with each other in towns and palaces... I hold that without truth and non-violence there can be nothing but destruction for humanity...”

“...man should rest content with what are his real needs and become self-sufficient.”

M. K. Gāndhi, 5 August 1945

Nehru did not agree with this, ignored Gāndhiji’s advice, and followed the European socialist model of governance and democracy. He wrote back on 9 October 1945:

“a village, normally speaking, is backward intellectually and culturally and no progress can be made from a backward environment. Narrow-minded people are much more likely to be untruthful and violent.”

Jawaharlal Nehru

Nehru’s remark shows his ignorance about the villagers and farmers and arrogance of his education. Most of the leaders of post-independent India wanted to become ‘successful’ like the US and Britain. Gāndhi was one of the few who could see the pitfalls of European and North American model of ‘success’.

“Western nations today are groaning under the heel of the monster-god of materialism. Their moral growth has become stunted. They measure their progress in pounds and dollars. American wealth has become the standard. She is the envy of the other nations. I have heard many of our countrymen say that we will gain American wealth but avoid its methods. I venture to suggest that such an attempt if it were made is foredoomed to failure.”

M. K. Gāndhi

Leaders like Nehru and Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar misunderstood and misinterpreted Gāndhiji’s views and expressed:

“Gāndhism with its call of back to the nature, means back to nakedness, back to squalor, back to poverty and back to ignorance for the vast mass of the people...The slogan of a democratic society must be machinery and more machinery, civilisation and more civilisation.”

Dr. B. Ambedkar, PhD

Nehru and Ambedkar equated simplicity with poverty and backwardness. Gāndhiji’s vision of independent India was very different from that of political leaders of independent India. He was against poverty and starvation as much as everyone else was.

“the vision of new India in which pauperism, starvation and idleness will be unknown.”

M. K. Gāndhi

New leaders wanted to keep the English system of governance whereas Gāndhiji wanted a completely different system based on ideals and teachings of ancient India and lessons learnt through history of all nations of the world.

“...we want English rule without the Englishman. You want the tiger's nature, but not the tiger; that is to say, you would make India English. And when it becomes English, it will be called not Hindustan but Englishtan. This is not the Swarāj I want.”

M. K. Gāndhi

Independent India ignored the wishes of Mahātmā Gāndhi and adopted the Western style and philosophy of government. Successive governments of independent India have followed the Western model with disastrous results. More people have more food to eat now, luxury items like TV and computers, comfortable homes, etc., than ever before in the history of this planet. At the same time, a great number of people, even in the US and UK, do not have basic necessities of life like food, water, shelter, etc. Those who have a lot of luxury items are not necessarily happier than people in the past. This is especially true in India – the country of birth of Mahātmā Gāndhi. Farmers who work so hard and feed people living in the cities do not have enough for

their own families. They have no access to education and are exploited by land-lords. Their situation is so terrible that the burden of debt forces thousands of them to commit suicide every year. This was predicted by him in 1926 and 1927:

“India’s destiny lies not along the bloody way of the West...but along the bloodless way of peace that comes from a simple and godly life. India is in danger of losing her soul. She cannot lose it and live. She must not therefore lazily and helplessly say: ‘I cannot escape the onrush from the West.’ She must be strong enough to resist it for her own sake and that of the world.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Young India”, 7 October 1926

Now, almost a century after this statement was made, we see the developed (rich) and developing nations mired in economic recession, street protests by thousands of people, terrorism and violent conflicts all over the world.

Ideal Society

When people talk about democracy, they usually consider the rights of the people and not about responsibility of the citizens. To Gāndhiji responsibility of people was more important than the rights. The eighth sin added to the list by one of Gāndhiji’s grandson, Arun Gāndhi, was “Freedom without responsibility”.

“The modern civilisation emphasises the freedom of man (human rights) but not the obligations of man to society. It makes him an automaton that has no time for reflection. He wants to satisfy his wants, not needs. In pursuit of his desires, he forgets values of life. Man is born free but finds himself in chains – of wants and desires.”

M. K. Gāndhi

We see this trend in modern society where individuals use recreational drugs for their pleasure and then want the society or government to pay for their medical care.

“The highest form of freedom carries with it the greatest measure of discipline and humility. Freedom that comes from discipline and humility cannot be denied; unbridled license is a sign of vulgarity, injurious alike to self and one’s neighbours.”

M. K. Gāndhi

A simple life of few needs can free-up a lot of resources to improve the quality of life for all.

“Our civilization, our culture, our Swarāj (independence) depend not upon multiplying our wants - self-indulgence, but upon restricting our wants - self-denial.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Young India”, 6 October 1921

A truly democratic government, or ‘*Rāmārajya*’ (system of governance under King Rāma) also requires that everyone has basic education, know their rights and responsibilities, have necessary moral and ethical values to make decisions in the best interest of all.

"Civilization is the encouragement of differences. Civilization thus becomes a synonym of democracy. Force, violence, pressure, or compulsion with a view to conformity, is both uncivilized and undemocratic."

M. K. Gāndhi

Sarvodaya (*Sarvodaya* – *Sarva* = all and *Uday* = welfare, progress) takes care of all – not just human beings – but all animals and natural resources too. We are all interdependent. If one part of the eco-system suffers, eventually everyone will suffer. This was his ideal. It is similar to ‘love all’ and ‘equality for all’ principles, everyone’s interest welfare has to be considered before any major policy decision or action is taken. Keeping everyone’s – even the poorest of the poor and weakest individual’s – interest in mind endeared him to the masses.

It is not just a ‘rule by the majority’ but a country where even the weakest can have the same opportunity to progress as the strongest and live his/her life feeling secure and respected. This will require a great deal of discipline on the part of everyone to see the greater good of the whole society or even the whole world before selfish gains. Present day humans are not there yet. The general public needs to be well informed, educated, involved, and have highest moral and ethical standards for a great democracy to work. In an ideal society, if everyone knew their responsibilities and performed their duties diligently, there would be hardly any need to govern them or a government to rule over them. There would be excellent organization, efficiency, and peace. People would live in harmony taking care of each other. People will have discipline and help each other when needed. There would be no need to fear anyone or resort to violence and terror.

"If national life becomes so perfect as to become self-regulated, no representation becomes necessary."

M. K. Gāndhi

If a central government has immense, unregulated power; then it could lead to misuse of power by ‘a few’. The Western model of democracy has led to legalized corruption at the highest levels. The politicians focus mainly on how to win the next election and how to please the big donors to his/her campaign. In Gāndhian *Swarāj* (democracy) every citizen is expected to live according to the highest moral and ethical principles, can have a say in running his community and country, is an active and positive contributor to the society according to his/her capability. The nation and the world becomes a border-less circles of bottom-up, grassroots based government. It was not a pyramid style hierarchy but a flat self-sufficient, self-reliant, interdependent community. The individual citizen is at the center.

“It is a superstition and an ungodly thing to believe that an act of a majority binds a minority.”

M. K. Gāndhi

When a group of ministers of newly formed Government of West Bengal (1947) came to seek his advice, he had following to say:

“Today, you have worn on your heads a crown of thorns. The seat of power is a nasty thing. You have to remain ever wakeful on that seat. You have to be more truthful, more non-violent, more humble and more forbearing. You had been put to test during the British regime. But in a way it was no test at all. But now there will be no end to your being tested. Do not fall a prey to the lure of wealth. May God help you! You are there to serve the villages and the poor.”

M. K. Gāndhi, in “The Miracle of Calcutta”, by Manu Gāndhi

Gāndhiji had a very inclusive vision of what he wanted to achieve through his non-violent satyāgraha:

“Through the deliverance of India, I seek to deliver the so called weaker races from the crushing heels of Western exploitation...”

M. K. Gāndhi

His methods were adopted by, to site a few examples, Norway in dealing with Nazis, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., in the US civil rights movement, Nelson Mandela in South Africa, and Polish solidarity movement in 1980s. Mr. Mandela said “Gāndhi’s spirit...might be the key for human survival in twenty-first century”.

World leaders influenced by Gāndhi

In India, the birth place of Mahātmā Gāndhi, the celebration of Gāndhi Jayanti, birth anniversary of Mahātmā Gāndhi, has become a ritual, a holiday, with empty speeches by politicians without any effort to put anything that he believed in or did in to their everyday life. This applies to most political leaders and even ordinary people. The idea of service and sacrifice for the poor and the less fortunate exists in the life of a few dedicated people. Emerging and established world leaders in other countries also remember, quote, and try to follow his non-violent methods in a very superficial way.

The influential and powerful leaders of independent India rejected all the ideas and ideals of Gāndhiji and have ruled just as the British did and have ruined the country (2013). Improving the life of villagers and the poor was his first priority but the farmers are committing suicides and those who toil from morning to night are starving. Corruption is rampant and nearly a third of the members of Indian parliament have been charged for serious crimes. Trillions of dollars

worth of money is siphoned off to foreign banks and total number of people starving in India is increasing.

Many leaders have claimed to have read and revered Mahātmā Gāndhi but no one has come close to practicing his ideals of truth, non-violence, simple and dedicated life. If we look around in second decade of twenty-first century, we find quite a few politicians who are millionaires and some billionaires.

Quit India movement started in 1942 showed to the world that no country or race can rule over others by brutal force and against the wishes of the people. About 120 colonies of the Europeans in Asia and Africa achieved independence between end of war in 1945 and 1960. Thoreau had preached that people should not obey laws that are unjust or evil. Gāndhi followed this advise and later Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr, Nelson Mandela, Desmond Tutu, Aung San Suu Kyi, Joan Baez , the Czech human rights activist, Cesar Chavez, the social activist in California, Thich Nhat Kanh, the Vietnamese Buddhist leader, Mubarak Awad, the non-violent Palestine leader and many others have been inspired by Gāndhi' ideology and actions in their fight for justice and freedom for their people.

Krishnalal Shridharani wrote a book 'War without Violence' describing Gāndhi's thoughts and non-violent methods to achieve change. This became a guidebook for a lot of African-American leaders, including Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., and helped them formulate plans for their own struggle. Shridharani was one of the followers of Gāndhi who marched from Amdāvad to Dāndi in 1930 to protest against the British law prohibiting Indians from making their own salt. Gāndhiji had also written extensively in newspaper articles about his ideas and opinions. This literature gradually spread all over the world and started a chain reaction of revolutions more powerful than the atomic bomb.

“Like most people, I had heard of Gāndhi, but I had never studied him seriously. As I read I became deeply fascinated by his campaigns of nonviolent resistance. I was particularly moved by his Salt March to the Sea and his numerous fasts. The whole concept of Satyāgraha was profoundly significant to me”

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Slavery was abolished in the United States of America but African Americans had not achieved equal status yet in early 1900s. They read about Gāndhi and his non-violent civil disobedience movement in South Africa and later in India. Starting from 1930s their leaders went to India to learn first hand how they can implement Gāndhi's methods in the US to achieve equal rights for themselves. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., also went to India in 1958, a decade after the assassination of Mahātmā Gāndhi to meet people who had worked with him, and learn. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., had great respect for Gāndhiji and because of Gāndhiji he respected India. On landing in India, he said:

“To other countries I go as a tourist, but to India I come as a pilgrim,”

Martin Luther King, Jr., on arrival in India in 1958

Mr. Nelson Mandela fought against a similar brutal regime in South Africa based on non-violence. Unfortunately, the white South African regime became more oppressive, the freedom fighters lost patience and resorted to violence. Non-violent struggles were carried out for freedom and justice in Latin America, East Germany, Philippines against President Marcos, against General Pinochet in Chile, old Soviet Union, Burma, Tibet, Communist China, etc. Now the Arab world is trying non-violent protests to become free from dictatorships. With the advent of internet, communication and coordination with large number of population, these movements have better chances of success. However, a lot of them lack the leadership of the calibre of Mahātmā Gāndhi.

Mr. Nelson Mandela spent 27 years in prison. His cell in the jail had a lot of books by Gāndhi.

“The intellectual and moral satisfaction that I failed to gain from Bentham and Mill, Marx and Lenin, Hobbes, Rousseau, Nietzsche, I found in the non-violent resistance philosophy of Gāndhi.”

Mr. Nelson Mandela

Mr. Mandela, who became the first President of post-apartheid South Africa, led his country in its historic transition to multi-racial democracy in 1994. He gave up all bitter feelings against his oppressors and asked his country-men to do the same. Truth and Reconciliation Commission was established in South Africa after her independence to bring the ‘white and black’ communities together after years of violence, oppression, and bitter feelings. This process was based on acknowledging that violence committed against human beings by human beings and forgiving everyone concerned. This was the ideal Gāndhi practiced and wanted everyone to follow. Mr. Mandela said:

“We in South Africa owe much to the presence of Gāndhi in our midst for 21 years. His influence was felt in our freedom struggles throughout the African continent for a good part of the 20th century....His philosophy contributed in no small measure to bringing about a peaceful transformation in South Africa and in healing the destructive human divisions that had been spawned by the abhorrent practice of apartheid...I called him the “sacred warrior” because of the manner in which he combined ethics and morality with a steely resolve that refused to compromise with the oppressor.”

Mr. Nelson Mandela

Gāndhi’s principles of universal love and non-violence even affected the thinking and behaviour of General Jan Smuts and South African President De Klerk.

The Chinese communist army invaded Tibet and Tibetans’ leader, Dalai Lama, had to leave his country. He has lived in India as an exiled leader of Tibet. He has said:

“I have the greatest admiration and respect for Mahātmā Gāndhi. He was a great human being with a deep understanding of human nature. He made every effort to encourage the full development of the positive aspects of the human potential and to reduce or restrain the negative. His life has inspired me ever since I was a small boy.”

H. H. Dalai Lama

As a Buddhist (follower of Gautam Buddha) he observed that:

“Many ancient Indian masters have preached Ahimsā, non violence as a philosophy. That was mere philosophical understanding. But Mahātmā Gāndhi, in this twentieth century, produced a very sophisticated approach because he implemented that very noble philosophy of Ahimsā in modern politics, and he succeeded. That is a very great thing.”

H. H. Dalai Lama

Universal appeal of Mahātmā Gāndhi was described by Nobel Peace Prize recipient, human rights, activist and former President of Poland Lech Walesa emphatically as:

“Please do not appropriate Mahātmā Gāndhi and limit him to South Africa and India alone. His impact is felt throughout the world.”

Some, like Aung San Suu Kyi of Myanmar and Rigoberta Menchu of Guatemala, who have followed this path of Satyāgraha have been recognized and awarded Nobel Prize for Peace.

A non-violent ‘people power’ movement in Philippines removed a dictator, Ferdinand Marcos from power in four days. Similar less known non-violent movements were carried out by Thich Nhat Han in Vietnam, Maha Ghosananda in Cambodia, Sulak Sivaraksa in Thailand, and in Madagascar, and Liberia. In East Germany it started as prayer meetings and on Gorbachev’s call for ‘perestroika’ the Berlin wall came down peacefully.

Dr. Kenneth Kaunda was the freedom fighter and first President of Zambia. He said

“That visit to India, was to all intents and purposes, enriching and instructive... I returned home greatly inspired and determined to continue relentlessly with our freedom struggle... I adopted the Gāndhian way in our struggle for independence”.

When Caesar Chavez (1927 – 1993) was in school, he saw a newsreel showing how Gāndhi won independence for India without firing a shot. He was born in a family of migrant farm worker. Later on as an adult Chavez saw farm workers in California lived in poverty and were treated badly by their employers. Inspired by Mahātmā Gāndhi he decided to change their living and working conditions through non-violent protests, civil disobedience and fasting.

The US President Obama is one of the American political leaders who had a portrait of Mahātmā in his office and talks about how he considers him as his inspiration. Obama's memoirs, 'Dreams From a Father: A Story of Race and Inheritance' refers to Gāndhi's crusade and philosophy. Gāndhi's principles of truth, non-violence and justice were Obama's inspiration as a young man. He was particularly moved by Gāndhi's ability to stand up against injustice and for an equal social order, in which no race or creed would be looked down upon.

A school student asked President Obama who was a person - dead or alive – the President would like to have dinner with. He replied immediately “Gāndhi - he's somebody I find a lot of inspiration in. He inspired Dr. King with his message of nonviolence. He ended up doing so much and changed the world just by the power of his ethics”.

"Gāndhi's significance is universal. Countless people around the world have been touched by his spirit and example. His victory in turn inspired a generation of young Americans to peacefully wipe out a system of overt oppression that had endured for a century. And more recently led to velvet revolutions in Eastern Europe and extinguished apartheid in South Africa,"

And

"In my life, I have always looked to Mahātmā Gāndhi as an inspiration, because he embodied the kind of transformational change that can be made when ordinary people come together to do extraordinary things,"

Barack Obama, President, USA

World Events Inspired by Gāndhi

Recently millions of Iranians have protested and demanded peacefully for greater democracy and the government reacted by killing some of the protestors. It is very difficult to expect all the protestors to be non-violent when they are treated with violence by the government. However, the opposition leader, Mir Hossein Mousavi, asked them to give up violence – throwing rocks and shouting ‘death’ to government leaders and be peaceful and non-violent in Gāndhian way.

Palestinians have traditionally used violent methods like suicide bombings in their fight against Israelis. Shifa al-Qudsi was trained as a suicide bomber, given an explosive vest, had prepared a will, but was arrested by Israelis before she could blow herself up. She spent six years in Israeli jail. Her little daughter would visit her and plead her to come home. After her release, Shifa decided to follow the path of Mahātmā Gāndhi and continue her struggle for independence for Palestinians in non-violent manner. She has joined a group of Israeli and Palestinians called ‘Combatants for Peace’.

In the Israeli Palestinian conflict, there have been a few attempts to resolve issues in non-violent manner. In Middle-East non-violent methods are considered ‘not manly’ enough or a sign of weakness. In June 2010, a large number of Israelis and Palestinians marched together peacefully to protest against proposed demolition of Arab homes in East Jerusalem. There have been other different non-violent attempts. Hopefully, someday a Palestinian or Israeli ‘Gāndhi’ will bring sense to the troubled world.

Nobel Laureate economist, Muhammad Yunus from Bangladesh, believes that Gāndhiji’s philosophy of non-violence, compassion, and peaceful co-existence are very important in these troubled times if we want a better world for our grandchildren and great grandchildren. Daisaku Ikeda, recipient of United Nation’s Peace Award, also advocates Gāndhiji’s way of life based on truth, non-violence, dignity for all human beings to avoid conflicts.

In April 2006, French government passed a law that any worker younger than 26 can be fired from their work without any good reason. People in large numbers all over France marched in the cities to protest this law. The government had to give in and withdraw the law. In the same year, thousands of Thai people protested against corruption. The prime minister of Thailand was forced to resign.

Nations of the world were tiered of extreme violence during the II World War. They formed United Nations to prevent wars and spread a culture of peace. In 2007 the United Nations declared 2 October – the birth day of Mahātmā Gāndhi – as the International Day of Non-violence to increase awareness of people about non-violence and spreading a message of peace, tolerance, and understanding.

The European Parliament based its ‘Global Human Rights 2007’ report on Gāndhian principles of non-violence. They recommend the European Union to give priority to implementation of policy for ‘human rights and democracy’ all around the world based on this report. 2010 was designated as the ‘European Year of Non-Violence’.

The people involved in Arab Spring starting in the year 2011 have shown great restraint in removing dictators from power. Historically most countries have resolved their political and religious disputes by violence. They have not been able to restrain violence to the extent Gāndhiji would have liked but they are trying. Events in Syria since 2011, in particular have been a great failure from this point of view. Gāndhi’s non-violent techniques can be more easily implemented now because of technological advances like cell phones with camera, internet communication, etc.

Six US Congressmen introduced a resolution (No. 603) to commemorate the 140th birth anniversary of Mahātmā Gāndhi on 26 June 2009 because his name symbolizes freedom and justice all over the world. He was recognized as a great political leader who spear headed India’s national movement for independence based on the highest moral and ethical principles of non-violence and truth. US is the oldest and India is the largest democratic country in the world.

Social

During his life, Gāndhiji worked on many different social issues that affected ordinary people in India and South Africa. He started experimenting with communal living in South Africa. These were attempts at simplifying life and living as close to nature as possible. Everyone learnt how to help each other, be compassionate and kind, and work towards improving the society in general. In between major political satyāgraha movements, he would work on social issues like taking care of patients with plague, hygiene, etc. Later in India, he worked on the issue of untouchability, religious tolerance, unity of India, cleanliness, education, etc.

Human Rights

In India, over the years, caste distinctions had become very rigid and discriminatory. People involved in the most menial jobs like disposal of human waste, disposal of dead animals and tanning of hide to make shoes, etc., were considered as belonging to the lowest caste of ‘untouchables’. They were very poor and lived in segregated area in villages and towns, denied entrance to temples, education, and better jobs. Brahmins were considered the top of the caste system. They were the teachers and priests. Gāndhiji believed in equality for everyone - no one was high and no one low.

“If a Brahmin has knowledge, those who are without it will respect him...But if he is puffed up by the respect thus shown to him and imagines himself to belong to a high class, he directly ceases to be a Brahmin (because this reflects his arrogance and ignorance).”

M. K. Gāndhi

His views on Brahmins alienated him from the high caste. In between major satyāgraha-s, Gāndhiji would devote time to social projects like improving the status of untouchables. He would preach in his evening prayers and write articles in newspapers about equality of all humans and respect for all. He refused to enter any temple that did not allow Dalits (untouchables) to enter. His goal was to remove the social, political, economic, and religious exile imposed upon Dalits. He also admitted dalit families to come and stay within his ashram. Everyone living in the ashram was expected to clean latrines, not just dalits. Gāndhi called the untouchables ‘Harijan’ which means ‘man of God’ (Hari = God and jan = human being). He would deliberately stay with Harijans in their very humble hut in poor part of the town rather than with the rich people. Whenever he had opportunity, he would raise funds to serve Harijans. He even named his newspaper ‘Harijan’.

Gāndhiji’s solution to this problem was:

“Let all of us consider that we are Shudra-s (untouchables). Then there will be no feeling of high and low left.”

M. K. Gāndhi

Gāndhiji's work for the untouchables made him unpopular, especially among the Brahmins. Dr. Ambedkar, himself a Dalit, wanted special privileges like quota for the Dalits in admission to schools, colleges, legislature, government jobs, etc. This was a ploy by the British to further divide the society and weaken the independence movement. The quota system would prevent qualified candidates from getting admission to education and jobs and cause resentment against the Dalits. It would support poor quality professionals and government servants. Since Gāndhiji was against this 'quota' system and this created friction between him and Dr. Ambedkar.

“The most effective and quickest and the most unobtrusive way to destroy caste is for reformers to begin the practice with themselves and where necessary take the consequences of social boycott. The reform will not come from reviling the orthodox.”

M. K. Gāndhi

On 20 May 1932, While Gāndhiji was in Yeravda Jail, he went on a fast protesting against separate electoral representation for backward Hindus. Tāgore sent a telegram to Gāndhiji saying:

“it is well worth sacrificing precious life for the sake of India's unity and her social integrity. Though we cannot anticipate what effect it may have upon rulers who may not understand its immense importance for our people, we feel certain that the supreme appeal of such self offering to the conscience of our own countrymen will not be in vain. I fervently hope that we will not callously allow such national tragedy to reach its extreme length. Our sorrowing hearts will follow your sublime penance with reverence and love.”

Gāndhiji always spoke up against the caste system as was practiced in India. Whenever possible he would go and live in a poor untouchable's hut or accept them with open arms in his Āshrams. Any change that he proposed began with a change in his own behaviour.

“Castes are numerous. They are man-made. They undergo constant change.”

M. K. Gāndhi, 28 Nov. 1935

Gāndhiji had antagonized a lot of high caste Brahmins by saying:

“...one does not become a Brahmin by calling oneself Brahmin. Not until a man reveals in his life the attributes of a Brahmin can he deserve that name.”

M. K. Gāndhi

Village Poverty

When he was 20 years old (in 1916) Vinoba Bhave, joined Gāndhi's movement for independence for India. After Gāndhi's death, Vinobaji worked on helping poor villagers in India. A lot of land was owned by landowners. They would let poor farm workers till the land at an exorbitant price. After working very hard, the farmers would end up poor and starving - just the same way they were under the British Raj. Communists had started a violent guerrilla movement against the government in Telangana. In this fight poor farmers were caught in the middle. Vinobaji would go around the countryside and ask the landlords to donate part of their land (Bhoodan) to poor farmers. He would walk from one village to the next and repeat his request. Eventually he was able to donate millions of acres of land to poor farmers.

“If all laboured for their bread and no more, then there would be enough food and enough leisure for all.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Harijan”, 29 June 1935

Women's Issues

Self employed women had hard time earning proper remuneration for their efforts or open a bank account to get a loan. Ela Bhatt, a follower of Gāndhi, started a union for poor self employed women to fight for their rights and called it ‘Self Employed Women's Association’. She was instrumental in starting a bank that would give loans to women so that they can become independent small business entrepreneurs. This union was so successful that its membership grew to be more than a million. Her efforts improved the life of hundreds of thousands of women and their families.

Corruption

Anna Hazare was a soldier in the Indian army. He was influenced by the writings of Swami Vivekananda, Vinoba Bhave, and Mahātmā Gāndhi. He grew up in a village where poverty, illiteracy, financial debt, illicit alcohol manufacture, and environmental degradation was prevalent. After he retired from the army, he decided to follow the path of Gāndhiji, went back to his village started working on the issues affecting his people. He lived in a small room in village temple. Later he started a movement to remove corruption from Indian bureaucracy.

Rehabilitation of Prisoners

An experimental project to rehabilitate prisoners was started in Nashik Central Jail, Mahārāshtra, India. The inmates were given Mahātmā Gāndhi's autobiography and other literature related to his life and work to read. Personal study by inmates were supplemented by lectures on non-violence and truth. The inmates had to take an examination – Gāndhi Peace Examination – at the end and those who did well in the exams were given prizes and certificates. This project was

supported by Bombay Sarvodaya Mandal. Many inmates pledged to change their life style after their release from the jail.

Environment

We all are very concerned with the pollution and deteriorating quality of air we breathe, water we drink, and food we eat. Climate change is affecting all countries causing havoc by drought, floods, wild fires, and snow storms. There have been extreme drought in California and lots of snow storms along the East coast of the US in 2013 - 14. The sea levels are rising and a large number of coastal areas and small islands will be under water in a few years. We are using non-renewable resources at an unsustainable rate.

Very fast industrialization of China, India, and many other countries have produced a nightmare of pollution related problems. Industrialization has given a lot of pleasure in material goods and at the same time created a lot of other problems. Quality of air and river waters have deteriorated significantly. It is estimated that air pollution kills about 7 million people worldwide every year, with more than half of the fatalities due to fumes from indoor stoves, according to a report from the World Health Organization. Nearly 90% of these deaths occur in developing countries. The agency said air pollution is the cause of about one in eight deaths and has now become the single biggest environmental health risk. We all have to breathe to survive and this makes air pollution very hard to avoid. One of the main risks of pollution is that tiny particles can get deep into the lungs, causing irritation. Scientists also suspect air pollution may be to blame for inflammation in the heart, leading to chronic problems or a heart attack.

Every human being has a 'carbon foot print'. Rich people have a large foot print and poor have smaller but every one contributes to the pollution level in the world. The world population is 7 billion and is increasing at a rate of 1 billion humans every 12 years (in 2014).

Industrialization causes pollution of air, land, rivers, and aquifers from new industries. Bittu Sahgal is an environmentalist in India who is trying to protect the rivers, forests, wild life, and natural resources. Gāndhiji has been her guide and inspiration. Whenever she faced insurmountable difficulties in her more than thirty years of mission to protect the environment in India, she would turn to his biography for strength and renew her determination to pursue her objectives.

“Like the North Star, I use Mohandās Karamachand Gāndhi’s life and lessons to find direction... whenever there is a fork in my life, whenever self-doubt arises and whenever cynicism tries to deprive my life of meaning, I turn to Gāndhiji and somehow the answers emerge, the light shines...”

Bittu Sahgal

There are many others all over the world who quote Gāndhiji and try to follow his teachings of reducing our needs and lead a simple life.

"Earth provides enough to satisfy every man's need, but not every man's greed."

M. K. Gāndhi

Prince Charles, Prince of Wales, has spoken out in favor of the environment, climate change, wild life protection, etc. Increasing human population requires burning and cutting down of forests, reducing living space for the wild animals. He has also expressed his views against excessive buying of material goods, toys for children, etc. The Prince referred to Gāndhi and said that acquiring more things does not bring happiness or satisfaction. It leads to depression when we don't get things we want or to pollution when we get too much. There are more important things in life than just buying 'stuff'. The Prince is also advocating protection for endangered species.

"I hold that, the more helpless a creature, the more entitled it is to protection from the cruelty of man."

M. K. Gāndhi

Scientists in rich countries are looking at exotic and expensive ways to reduce the CO₂ levels by extracting, freezing and storing it under ground. They are ignoring simple methods like reducing our consumption and controlling the population of the world. Gāndhiji practiced and preached the first one - reduce - your needs as the most important principle more than a hundred years ago. He also encouraged using everything made locally - within the same village. This would save a lot of money in transporting raw materials to cities or foreign countries and transporting finished goods back to the villagers at great cost and environmental degradation.

Education

The British had developed a system of schools and curriculum to produce graduates who then will support the British government in India. It was a system of indoctrination or 'brain-washing'. Everything that was Indian – culture, art, language, or religion was bad. Everything that was British or European was good.

Gāndhiji called Western education as 'false' education concentrating on the goal of earning money. 'True' education teaches morals, ethics, control of senses, life of service for a higher cause, as was done in ancient India. His advice was 'we must not make a fetish' of going after Western education.

"To give millions a knowledge of English is to enslave them. The foundation that Macaulay laid of education has enslaved us."

M. K. Gāndhi in "Hind Swaraj", 1909

Education influences thinking and behaviour of individuals. It has been utilized to develop compassion in children and also used to create life long hatred and jihadists. Some societies have used the young minds to be brain-washed in school, fill with hatred, and use them as soldiers to carry out acts of violence against other groups. Unfortunately, the elected governments of independent India have blindly followed the same British system of education, curriculum, and even laws that were enacted by the British.

“Carried away by the flood of western thought we came to the conclusion, without weighing pros and cons, that we should give this kind of education to the people.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Hind Swaraj”, 1909

Gāndhiji believed in starting this man-making education at an early age.

“If we are to teach real peace in this world, and if we are to carry on a real war against war, we shall have to begin with the children.”

M. K. Gāndhi

Gāndhiji’s solution was to have a system of schools that were not dependent on government grants or support. There were more schools in India before the British took over than in early twentieth century. The British systematically destroyed the old system of Indian schools and pride in everything ‘Indian’. Gāndhiji wanted the schools, teachers, and the curriculum to be independent of the state. The schools would generate their own financial support. The teacher will decide which textbooks to use. The community had the responsibility to come up with finances. He did not want the materialistic teachings of the European culture.

“By education I mean an all-round drawing out of the best in child and man-body, mind and spirit. Literacy is not the end of education or even the beginning.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Harijan”, 31 July 1937

All children need to learn how to make good decisions in life by their ability to distinguish between moral and immoral or ethical and unethical.

“An education which does not teach us to discriminate between good and bad, to assimilate one and eschew the other, is a misnomer.”

M. K. Gāndhi

Children who receive higher university education are reluctant to do manual labour, especially in India. Gāndhiji was not shy about cleaning the latrines or washing dishes after meals and strongly believed that everyone should perform some manual labour everyday. Gāndhiji himself set aside time for manual labour as a reminder that he was not above the rest of humanity.

“The introduction of manual training will serve a double purpose in a poor country like ours. It will pay for the education of our children and teach them an occupation...Such a system will make our children self-reliant. Nothing will demoralize the nation so much as that we should learn to despise labor.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Young India”, 1 September 1926

In modern day, education has become important only as a tool for making money. Gāndhiji wanted education to make a ‘man’ out of a child through education. A man who will then lead a virtuous life for the benefit of the whole world in the true Vedic tradition of making an Aryan - ideal citizen of the world.

Religious Education

Gāndhiji had a very broad view about what a child’s education should be. An all round education should encompass physical, intellectual, and spiritual fields and prepare a child to be able to lead a life which is dedicated to the service of the society according to highest moral and ethical principles based on ‘Truth’ and ‘Non-violence’. A child should become a responsible citizen of the world. Gāndhiji was against the Western culture of exploitation of poor by big centralized government, big business enterprises, and big powerful military. Education is also a life-long process since we are capable of learning and improving all through the life. The ultimate goal of education for an individual is to achieve ‘Moksha’ (permanent bliss) or liberation from the cycle of birth and death. An ideal education can bring peace and spiritual prosperity to whole world. In answer to question of ideal education in India, he said:

“Religious, that is ethical, education will occupy the first place. Every cultured Indian will know in addition to his own provincial language, if a Hindu, Sanskrit; if a Mohammedan, Arabic; if a Parsee, Persian.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Hind Swaraj”, 1909

Learning these languages will help them read about their own religions in their authentic form. If teachers would teach their students the basics of their own religions and not infuse their young minds with prejudices, this world would be a much nicer place.

“If everyone will try to understand the core of his own religion and adhere to it, and will not allow false teachers to dictate to him, there will be no room left for quarreling.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Hind Swaraj”, 1909

Gāndhiji’s handwriting was not very good. When he was in school, he had a notion that good handwriting was not essential part of education. He neglected to improve it when he was young and when he realized his mistake, it was too late to change. Later on whenever he came across anyone with good penmanship he would regret the mistake he had made. He acknowledged that

good handwriting was part of education of a child and even recommended that children should be taught how to draw before teaching them how to write.

Teaching by Example

Gāndhiji believed in teaching important principles by actually living rather than preaching. He put in practice all the principles of selfless service, truth, ahimsā, etc. The best way to teach general public was for Gāndhiji to show by doing it himself.

“You must be the change you wish to see in the world.”

M. K. Gāndhi

When leaders talk about honesty and truthfulness and they themselves are being dishonest, ordinary people are not going to practice honesty.

“An ounce of practice is worth more than tons of preaching.”

M. K. Gāndhi

At one time Gāndhiji was traveling by train. He used to observe ‘*maun vrat*’ or silence on Mondays. He did not speak for twenty-four hours. A lot of people were waiting at every stop on the way just to see him (*darshan*). He would open the door and stand with his hands folded in ‘*namaste*’. On one station a foreign reporter asked Gāndhiji if he had a message for the world. He quickly grabbed a piece of paper and scribbled:

“My life is my message.”

M. K. Gāndhi

He wanted everyone to learn from his life, his actions rather than his words.

University Courses & Departments

In October 1920 Gāndhi started Gujarat Vidyāpith (Educational Institute, University) based on his ideas about what was good for India and Indians and not blindly follow what British were teaching. The Vidyāpith developed curriculum from nursery school to Doctorate level courses. Emphasis was on developing an ideal citizen of India and the world who would have culture, highest morals and ethics, live a simple life; and dedicate his/her life to regenerate ideal circumstances for everyone’s progress (*Sarvodaya*) in India. The graduates of the institute will practice truth and non-violence, respect all religions & castes, have a sense of dignity for physical labor; and improve living standards of the poor and the villagers. Gāndhi encouraged teachers to teach various courses in local and regional Indian languages.

A program, ‘Live like Gāndhi for a while’, was started by the Gujarat Vidyapith (University) for tourists to experience the life in Mahātmā Gāndhi’s first ashram. All visitors have to follow

eleven rules that were practiced by all living in the ashram when he started it in 1915 - non-violence in thoughts, words and deeds; always tell the truth, no stealing, no personal possessions, manual labor, simple healthy diet, fearlessness, treat followers of all religions the same, use locally made clothes and other items, spin cotton, accept people of all castes, etc. This experience will hopefully change the perception of all participants towards personal life, society, and environment; and may find peace and tranquility in their own lives.

Now many universities and colleges offer peace studies and conflict resolution courses. These courses were started after the end of World War II. There are a number of research institutes that carry out research in this field. Quite a few of these 'peace studies' courses are taught at educational institutions supported by religious groups or churches. Unfortunately, religion is often the reason for conflict. It is important to teach the common principles underlying all religions, encourage communication between various groups, and teach mediation skills. It is important to teach inter-dependence and inter-connectedness of all the peoples of the world that Mahātmā Gāndhi taught and practiced.

In 1965 Punjab University started a Department of Gāndhian Studies. Interest in the courses and degree offered in this department has increased considerably. The department offers courses in conflict management, foreign policy, peace studies, environment, international studies, freedom movement, etc. These subjects help students to become managers and administrators. The University Grants Commission in India is supporting many universities to establish courses that teach principles and practices developed by Gāndhiji.

Professors of universities from many countries visit India to learn about the legacy Gāndhi has left. They visit prisons to learn about rehabilitation of prisoners, talk to human rights activists, visit farms and factories, universities, learn about environmental issues, legal ramifications, etc.

In the last couple of decades, more than 50 universities and colleges in the US have started courses based on Gāndhi's philosophy of non-violence and peace. Even the prestigious Harvard School of Business Management considers Gāndhi as a role model for CEOs.

Stanford University has a course on 'Gāndhi, King and Non-violence'. The students learn about Gāndhi's life and the legacy he has left. They visit places in India where Gāndhi lived and carried on his fight against the British regime, rigid and oppressive caste system, unhygienic practices, etc.

Gāndhiji's Advice to Professionals:

Gāndhi himself was a qualified lawyer but he did not like the way lawyers practiced their trade. His observations on the profession showed how the British trained lawyers had adversely affected the nation. His advice to the lawyers was:

“My firm opinion is that the lawyers have enslaved India, have accentuated Hindu-Mohammedan dissensions and have confirmed English authority... Lawyers are also men, and there is something good in every man. Whenever instances of lawyers having done good can be brought forward, it will be found that the good is due to them as men rather than as lawyers. All I am concerned with is to show you that the profession teaches immorality; it is exposed to temptation from which few are saved... men take up that profession, not in order to help others out of their miseries, but to enrich themselves. It is one of the avenues of becoming wealthy and their interest exists in multiplying disputes... But the greatest injury they have done to the country is that they have tightened the English grip. Do you think that it would be possible for the English to carry on their Government without law courts?... If pleaders were to abandon and consider it just as degrading as prostitution, English rule would break up in a day... What I have said with reference to the pleaders necessarily applies to the judges,...”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Hind Swaraj”, 1909

In a similar fashion his thoughts on the medical profession were:

“One writer has linked the whole modern system to the Upas tree. Its branches are represented by parasitical professions, including those, of law and medicine,... Immorality is the root of the tree.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Hind Swaraj”, 1909

It is immoral behaviour that is learnt in these higher university education system that bothered Gāndhi. The focus of the graduates had shifted from helping more unfortunate members of their community to earning a lot of money and that was Gāndhiji’s main concern.

Business

Alan Axelrod, author of “Gāndhi CEO”, talks about Gāndhi’s principles and how they could very well be applied by Chief Operating Officers (CEOs) of corporations in their business life. Gāndhi believed in truth and complete transparency in all his dealings with people, media, and even his opponents like the British Government. In public meetings if someone disagreed with him he would have a discussion and try to convince his opponents. The means of achieving a goal were as important to him as the goal and he never sacrificed his principle of truth and non-violence to achieve any important goal. He always practiced what he preached.

All humans and even some animals and insects have this tendency to acquire, store, and protect food and other ‘stuff’. Some of us have developed this habit in to a passion. Some politicians and businessmen have collected billions of dollars in foreign banks. They will never need all these money or use them during their life. This habit eventually leads to misery for others as well as for the hoarders.

"Earth provides enough to satisfy every man's need, but not every man's greed."

M. K. Gāndhi

We read about exorbitant compensation packages for chief executive officers of companies and politicians with huge unreported deposits in foreign banks. Greed is not only accepted as a norm but also promoted as a virtue by successful business and political leaders. Some executives who have driven corporations to bankruptcy are rewarded by a huge 'golden parachute' as an incentive to retire. Gāndhi did not have a bank account or own even a hut when he died. His advice was to become a trustee of all our wealth:

"The man who takes for himself only enough to satisfy the needs customary in his society and spends the rest for social service becomes a trustee."

M. K. Gāndhi, 6 May 1939

People in business often think that morals and ethics do not have anything to do with the bottom line of making profit. Gāndhi believed that morals and ethics are very important in all aspects of life, including politics and business. A mill owner or a landlord is as much dependent on a mill worker or a farmer as the workers are on their bosses. In the long term interest of all it would be best if everyone works together in a spirit of cooperation.

"The capitalist is as much a neighbour of the labourer as the latter is a neighbour of the former, and one has to seek and win the willing cooperation of the other."

M. K. Gāndhi

Economics

Prosperity of many European countries depended on cheap labour and natural resources of their colonies. In the later half of twentieth century, almost all colonies became independent. Trade agreements with the US and Europeans still favored the rich and technologically advanced countries. This practice was considered immoral by Gāndhi. Morals and ethics were more important than making a lot of money.

"Economics that hurt the moral well-being of an individual or a nation are immoral and therefore sinful. Thus, the economics that permit one country to prey upon another are immoral."

M. K. Gāndhi in "Young India", 13 October 1921

This status is changing gradually. The rich continued to spend more than they could afford and got in to a lot of debt. Now in 2013, some countries cannot pay for the interest on their debt and are facing recession. The Western life-style with emphasis on increased consumption of 'things', increased gross domestic (national) product (GDP), exploitation of natural resources, increasing profit at any cost, etc., is not sustainable. Following quote explains the Western philosophy (now blindly followed by China, India and many other countries):

“Formerly, men were made slaves under physical compulsion. Now they are enslaved by temptation of money and the luxuries that money can buy.”

M. K. Gāndhi

Independent India did not follow Gāndhiji’s vision of village republics but adopted the western model, not merely in the political system but also in the economic system. Today, after more than 65 years of Independence, at least 300 million people out of about 1.2 billion (25% of total population of India) are living below the poverty line; half of the population in the cities live in slums and shanties. Water is scarce, both in villages and cities, though India gets one of highest rainfalls in the world and has many perennial rivers. Only 40 per cent of the land is irrigated while 60 per cent of the population depends on agriculture and contributes just 20 per cent to the GDP. In their blind pursuit of industrialization, laborers in agriculture have been neglected.

“If all laboured for their bread and no more, then there would be enough food and enough leisure for all.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Harijan”, 29 June 1935

Everyone wants to be happy. By buying and hoarding more and more ‘things’ we hope to be happy. Gandhiji had different ideas about finding happiness :

“Man’s happiness really lies in contentment. He who is discontented with however much he possesses, becomes a slave to his desires. And what is true of the individual is true of the society.”

M. K. Gandhi

Gāndhi’s philosophy was quite different from the popular trend of earning more, spending more, and buying ‘stuff’ that may not be essential. He wanted everyone to:

“Live simply so that others may simply live.”

M. K. Gāndhi

Eminent economists such as J. C. Kumarappa prepared a blue-print for the revival of villages. Later in 1973, another economist E. F. Schumacher, offered a similar scheme in his book, “Small is Beautiful – Economics As If People Mattered”. He also highlighted dehumanizing effect of single-minded pursuit of gross domestic product. He advocated ‘sustainable development’ and ‘appropriate technology’ which are in tune with the Gāndhian philosophy. The latest to join the Gāndhian view is Joseph Stiglitz, Nobel-prize winning economist, who headed the panel of economists appointed by Nicolas Sarkozy, the French President, to measure the well-being of people since the GDP (Gross Domestic Product) does not represent the true well-being. “Man does not live by GDP alone,” says the Economist of London. Sustainability of economy, happiness, and sensible utilization of natural resources are to be included in the measurement of progress.

“...the test of orderliness in a country is not the number of millionaires it owns, but the absence of starvation among its masses.”

M. K. Gandhi

In the first decade of twenty-first century, Japan had been experiencing economic downturn. Mr. Yukio Hatoyama, (2009-2010) Prime Minister, Japan; was keen on finding solutions for all economic problems of Japan. In his speech to Japanese Parliament (Diet) he talked about his visit to Gāndhiji’s memorial at Raj Ghat in New Delhi and reading the seven social sins. Two that he would like to consider in present situation were “Commerce without morality” and “Wealth without work”. Then he suggested changing the educational system, politics, society and commerce so that people of Japan can be ‘happy’ in the true sense of the word and not just ‘wealthy’ as measured by money and material goods.

Arms Industry and Global Violence

It is estimated that the world wide trade in ‘arms’ is a \$70 billion industry. The US, Russia, and Germany are biggest exporters of arms in this lucrative field of violence. The US spends about \$700 billion a year, China \$120 billion and UK \$60 billion a year on defense related expenses. The middle Eastern countries - mainly Saudi Arabia spends about \$111 billion on defense. In 2011, India became the biggest arms importer. Under these circumstances, the United Nations discussed and passed a ‘Global Arms Treaty’ prohibiting nations from exporting weapons that could be used for genocide, terrorism, or crimes against humanity. The top exporter nations of arms; US, Russia, and China, have consistently opposed similar attempts in the past. In the beginning of 2013, the Syrian conflict was in full swing. The Syrian government forces were bombing and killing their own people. Russia and Iran were the main suppliers of arms to the Government of Syria. It is the profit motive and control over other governments by the arms manufacturers that is promoting mass murders of humans by humans. A ‘Transparency International’ study has estimated that the world arms trade accounted for almost 40 percent of corruption in all global trade. This means a huge windfall illegal income for politicians and defense top brass all over the world. Imagine how many good projects can be supported by these billions of dollars!

Ethics in business and everyday life means knowing what is right and what is wrong. We need to have conscience to decide these questions. Making and selling weapons of mass destruction, toys with high amounts of lead, and adding poison to milk powder for babies to enhance personal profit shows a complete lack of ethics and morality.

Machines

Gāndhiji was very selective in using machines. One of the machines he liked and approved of was the sewing machine. But he was against big mills that weave cloth. He did not approve of any machine that created unemployment or ruined the environment. Many machines and

business practices increase man's needs and wants, and make him more dependent or lazy. Every machine should be evaluated for its effect on the society.

When Gāndhi returned to India from South Africa in 1915, he toured the country to see the condition of people before he plunged in to the fight for India's freedom. He found extreme poverty among the laborers and especially among farmers in villages. Eighty percent of the population of India lived in small villages at that time. They worked very hard and long hours but did not earn enough to feed their own families. People in cities had more money and comforts. In nineteenth and twentieth centuries most machines were made in European countries and were imported at a very high cost. Industrialization of Europe had led to poverty and misery in India. A few workers in a mill could produce cloth and replace thousands of workers from their jobs and livelihood. In 1936 he wrote that:

“A factory employs a few hundreds and renders thousands unemployed. I may produce tons of oil from an oil mill, but I also drive thousands of oilmen out of employment. I call this destructive energy, whereas production by the labour of millions of hands is constructive and conducive to the common good. Mass production through power-driven machinery, even when state-owned, will be of no avail.”

M. K. Gāndhi

Gāndhi wanted a level playing field for the rich and the poor, capitalist and labourer, man and woman, higher and lower class, Europeans and Indians. To Gāndhiji welfare of every single human being was more important than machines that replaced men and women. His comments on machines:

“What I object is the craze for machinery and not machinery as such. The craze is for what they call labour-saving machinery. Men go on ‘saving labour’ till thousands are without work and thrown on the open streets to die of starvation. I want to save time and labour, not for a fraction of mankind, but for all. I want the concentration of wealth, not in the hands of the few, but in the hands of all. Today machinery merely helps a few to ride on the backs of millions. The impetus behind it all is not the philanthropy to save labour, but greed.”

M. K. Gāndhi

Gāndhi was against machines that brought poverty and unemployment to anyone. He wanted to use technology wisely for the benefit of all humans and even benefit mother earth.

“When I read Mr. Dutt's Economic History of India, I wept; as I think of it again my heart sickens. It is machinery that has impoverished India.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Hind Swaraj”, 1909

Many machines are used to produce a lot of things that human hands would take much longer to produce. The owners of the machines make a lot of money and become wealthy. This wealth and prosperity is not passed on to the workers. A lot of unemployment is created by machines replacing human workers.

“Machinery to be well used has to help and ease human effort. The present use of machinery tends more and more to concentrate wealth in the hands of a few in total disregard of millions of men and women whose bread is snatched by it out of their mouths.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Harijan”, 14 September 1935

Women employed in the factories had to leave their children at home. Quite a few had to be left alone and unsupervised. These mothers had to resort to giving morphine to their children so that they will sleep and not miss them. By the time these children grew up they had become addicted to morphine.

“Machinery is the chief symbol of modern civilization; it represents a great sin. The workers in the mills of Bombay have become slaves. The condition of the women working in the mills is shocking. When there were no mills, these women were not starving. If the machinery craze grows in our country, it will become an unhappy land.”

M. K. Gandhi

Civilization

Are we, the human race, civilized? What are the characteristics of a civilized race? How will we develop in future? What would be the ideal way that we all of should strive for? Are we going in the right direction? A modern city has a lot of conveniences - comfortable homes with lots of appliances, ease of transportation, TV, telephone, computers, variety of foods, etc. Generally people who wear Western clothes, live in large houses with modern conveniences, go to work in car, are considered civilized. Those who live in huts, cook by a wood fire, and have very simple clothes are considered uncivilized. Nations with big, powerful armies with weapons that kill thousands in seconds are worshiped. Does that make them civilized?

Gāndhi described the Western civilization of eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as one that has concentrated on happiness derived from taking care of bodily comforts, developing weapons of mass destruction, and using them on helpless people to exploit them. Western authors, historians, and teachers have glorified their dress, languages, literature, machines they invented, and the wealth they have amassed. All other cultures, religions, languages, way of life, etc., are painted in negative fashion.

“The distinguishing characteristic of modern civilization is an indefinite multiplicity of human wants. The characteristic of ancient civilization is an imperative restriction upon and strict regulating of these wants...The modern or Western insatiableness arises really from want of a living faith in a future state and therefore also in Divinity.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Young India”, 2 June 1927

The absence of moral and ethical behaviour among some political, religious, and business leaders and other professionals is prevalent all over the world. Common people usually follow their leaders in these fields. The leaders talk of increasing comforts and rights and do not mention duties and responsibilities.

“Civilization is that mode of conduct which points out to man the path of duty. Performance of duty and observance of morality are convertible terms.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Hind Swaraj”, 1909

Gāndhi’s dire prediction for the Western civilization was:

“This civilization is such that one has only to be patient and it will be self-destroyed... Civilization is not an incurable disease, but it should never be forgotten that the English are at present afflicted by it.”

M. K. Gāndhi in “Hind Swaraj”, 1909

A prerequisite condition for peace and freedom for all countries of the world is absence of exploitation:

“If I want freedom for my country, believe me, I do not want that freedom in order that I, belonging to a nation which counts one-fifth of the human-race, may exploit any other race upon earth, or any single individual. If I want that freedom for any country, I would not be deserving of that freedom if I did not cherish and treasure the equal right of every race, weak or strong, to the same freedom.”

M. K. Gāndhi

In a civilized world, no country or religious group will use its superiority to bully over others and force their way of life. However, his advice has fallen on deaf ears even in India.

Future of Humanity

There is a lot of concern about the future of humanity and even about survival of all living things on this planet earth because of accumulation of nuclear weapons, pollution, increasing population, scarcity of water and food, and violent conflicts. There are nations with weapons of mass destruction and large armed forces under control of immature and irresponsible leaders.

Some nations are already on the verge of civil war while others are talking openly about attacking neighbors. Some are slowly grabbing territories of other nations.

“In this age of wonders no one will say that a thing or idea is worthless because it is new. To say it is impossible because it is difficult is again not in consonance with the spirit of the age. We are constantly being astonished these days by the amazing discoveries in the field of violence. But I maintain that far more undreamt of and seemingly impossible discoveries will be made in the field of nonviolence.”

M. K. Gāndhi

A few wise men have been talking about Gāndhi and non-violence. Romain Rolland, the French philosopher said that Gāndhi’s ideals were:

“the perfect manifestation of the principle of life which will lead a new humanity on to a new path.”

Even military leaders have realized through their bitter experiences of violence and wars that:

“In the evolution of civilization, if it is to survive, all men cannot fail eventually to adopt Gāndhi’s belief that the process of mass application of force to resolve contentious issues is fundamentally not only wrong but contains within itself the germs of self destruction.”

Gen. Douglas MacArthur

But their voices are drowned by fiery words and violent actions of many others. Gāndhiji’s ideas and philosophy are very relevant to finding solutions for violence, wars, materialism, corporate and individual’s greed, exploitation, religious hatred, concentration of power in the hands of a few, dehumanization of individual, weapons of mass destruction, environmental degradation, etc., of twenty-first century.

“Mahātmā Gāndhi has done more than any other person of history to reveal that social problems can be solved without resorting to primitive methods of violence. In this sense he is more than a saint of India. He belongs - as they said of Abraham Lincoln - to the ages.”

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Gandhiji was more hopeful about the human civilization surviving the violence he had seen during World War II. If one by one people decide to adopt non-violence as a way of life, he said the world will change:

“Perhaps never before has there been so much speculation about the future as there is today. Will our world always be one of violence? Will there always be

*poverty, starvation, misery? Will we have a firmer and wide belief in religion, or will the world be godless? If there is to be a great change in society, how will that change be wrought? By war, or revolution? Or will it come peacefully? Different men give different answers to these questions, each man drawing the plan of tomorrow's world as he hopes and wishes it to be. I answer not only out of belief but out of conviction. The world of tomorrow will be, must be, a society based on non-violence. That is the first law; out of it all other blessings will flow. It may seem a distant goal, an impractical **Utopia**. But it is not in the least unobtainable, since it can be worked for here and now. An individual can adopt the way of life of the future - the non-violent way - without having to wait for others to do so. And if an individual can do it, cannot whole groups of individuals? Whole nations? Men often hesitate to make a beginning because they feel that the objective cannot be achieved in its entirety. This attitude of mind is precisely our greatest obstacle to progress - an obstacle that each man, if he only will it, can clear away."*

M. K. Gāndhi, 1946

Books, films, and Stamps

Gāndhi was a very prolific writer and has more than 100 volumes to his credit. He utilized his time in jail by writing on various topics. He had started news papers like Indian Opinion in South Africa, Young India, and Harijan in India to communicate with the population. Some of these are mentioned in the appendix 'Further Reading'.

Films

Sir Richard Attenborough made a film 'Gāndhi', a portrayal of Gāndhi's life. This film became very popular and won some eight Oscars and 26 other film awards, including BAFTA, Grammy, Golden Globe and Golden Guild awards. Sir Richard had made great personal sacrifices to produce this film. Attenborough was a well-established actor when he decided to make this movie. He had a mansion to live in, expensive cars and paintings in his possession. He risked all these to make a movie on Gāndhi. There were lot of set backs and disappointments but like Gāndhiji he persevered, his film won nine Academy Awards, and the film 'Gāndhi' became a classic. He spent nearly 20 years working on it – meeting people in power, getting financial support and permissions from Indian bureaucracy, selecting an actor who can do justice to the character of Gāndhi, working on the script, etc. His perseverance paid off in the end.

Why would an Englishman, brought up in the United Kingdom make a film to glorify someone who spent his whole life to take away a prized possession of the British Empire? Sir Winston Churchill had called Gāndhi a 'half naked fakir' (beggar) for his outspoken criticism of the British. In 1931, Gāndhi went to London to speak to the British Parliament and the King to grant independence to India. Eight-year-old Richard and his father, an admirer of Gāndhi, went to see Gāndhi. The main reason for Richard to a make a film on Gāndhi was to impress and please his

father. Thirty years later, Attenborough was reading autobiography of Gāndhi. He read the incident in which Gāndhi makes a profound statement about how people feel good when they bully or harass someone. Around that time, a man named Motilal Kothary approached Attenborough and asked him to make a film on Gāndhi and he took up the challenge. Richard Attenborough was the director, John Briley was the author of the script, and Ben Kingsley played the part of Gāndhi in this 1982 film titled simply “Gāndhi”.

Some of the other films about Gāndhi:

“Gāndhi, My Father”, director: Feroz Abbas Khan, writer: Feroz Abbas Khan, Gāndhi played by: Darshan Jariwala. This film shows Gāndhi’s failure as a father.

“The Making of the Mahātmā”, Director: Shyam Benegal, Writer: Fatima Meer.
Gāndhi Played By: Rajat Kapur.

“Maine Gāndhi Ko Nahin Mara” (I did not kill Gāndhi), Director: Jahnu Barua, Writers: Jahnu Barua and Sanjay Chauhan.

“Hey Rāma”, Director: Kamal Hassan, Writer: Kamal Hassan, Gāndhi Played By: Naseeruddin Shah.

“Nine Hours to Rāma”, Director: Mark Robson, Writer: Nelson Gidding. Nine hours to Rāma depicts the life of Nathurāma Godse, Mahātmā Gāndhi’s assassin. It is based on a book by the Stanley Wolpert. The film is in the category of "historical fiction".

“Lage Raho Munnabhai” (Keep on Going Munnabhai), Director: Rajkumar Hirani
Writer: Rajkumar Hirani, Vidhu Vinod Chopra (Screenplay). An underworld don sees the spirit of Mahātmā Gāndhi and resolves to apply the techniques of Satyāgraha, non-violence, and truth (*Gāndhigiri*) to help ordinary people solve their problems. These teachings had a strong impact in India and some people started practicing Gāndhi style protests to achieve social change.

“A Road to Gāndhi” by Director Christian Troberg is a short film about Herbert Fischer, a 22 year old German who fled fascist Germany in 1936 to be with Gāndhi. He did not have money to travel, so he embarked on the journey by land and spent rest of his life at Gāndhi’s Āshram in Wardhā, central India.

Stamps

More than 150 countries have selected to put a picture of Mahātmā Gāndhi on their stamps. It was a special tribute to the work and achievements of Gāndhiji when Britain, the country against whom he had carried out non-violent fight for independence, decided to issue a stamp in his honor. Gāndhiji was considered their arch enemy at one time because he successfully dismantled this great empire without firing a single bullet. The Government of Britain had always issued

stamps with Royal figures on them. It was the first time in the history Britain to include a non-Royal family member on a postage stamp.

Time Line

Events are not mentioned in chronological order in this book and a time line might help some readers.

Bhagavad Gitā	BCE 3100
Gautam Buddha	BCE 563 to 483
Mahavir Swami (Jain)	BCE 540 to 468
British land in India	CE 1608
Introduction of British Education in India	1835
Sepoy Mutiny	1857
Queen Victoria takes over control of India	1858
Birth of Mohandās K. Gāndhi	2 October 1869
Starts elementary school	1876
Family moves to Rajkot	1881.
Marrige to Kastur	1883 – age 13
Father Karamachand Gāndhi dies	1885
Joins Samaldas College, Bhavnagar, Gujarat	1887
Sails to London, UK for Law studies	1888 – age 18
Called to Bar	1891
Returns to India, starts Law practice	1892
Sailed for Durban, South Africa	1893
First Satyāgraha in South Africa	1894
Returned to Durban, South Africa with family	1896
Medical Volunteer in Boer War	1899
Starts Indian News Paper in South Africa	1903
Phoenix Āshram in South Africa	1904
Partition of Bengal by Lord Curzon	1905
Medical Volunteer in Zulu Rebellion	1906
Satyāgraha in SA against Transvaal Asiatic Registration Act	1906 September 11
Jailed in Johannesburg, South Africa	1908
Bonfire of Registration Certificates	1908 August
Writes ‘Hind Swaraj’ manifesto for independence of India	1909
Establishes Tolstoy Farm near Johannesburg	1910
Jailed again for crossing Transvaal border	1913
Gen. Smuts agrees to Indian Relief Act	1914
World War I starts	1914
Returns to India	1915 January
Established Satyāgraha Āshram, Kochrab, Gujarat	1915 May
India	1915
Fights for Indigo farmers’ rights in Champāran, Bihar	1917 April
Successful fight for textile workers and farmers, Gujarat	1918

Jallianwala Baugh massacre, Amritsar, Punjab	1919 April 13
Editor of 'Young India' & 'Navajivan'	1919
Nation wide Satyāgraha against Rowlatt Act	1919
Elected President of All India Home Rule League	1920
Launched non-co-operation movement	1920
Khadi – promotes home spun cloth	1921
Mass civil disobedience movement	1921
Police Station burned in Chauri Chaura	1922 February 5
Satyāgraha suspended	1922
Jailed for six years	1922
Writes 'Autobiography' and 'Satyāgraha in South Africa' in jail	1923
Nagpur Flag Satyāgraha	1923
Borsad Satyāgraha	1924
Vaikom Satyāgraha initiated under the leadership of T. K. Madhavan	1924-25
Bardoli (Gujarat), Satyāgraha launched by Sardar Patel	1927
'Purna Swarāj' total Independence from Britain declared on	1930 January 26
Starts march against law prohibiting salt production in India	1930 March 12
Reaches the sea shore in Dāndi after walking 230 miles	1930 April 6
Gāndhi-Irwin Pact signed	1931
Sailed to England for IInd Round Table Conference	1931 August
Jailed again	1932 May
Fast protesting against British divide & rule policy for 'untouchables'	1932
British retract and sign 'Yerwada jail pact'	1932
Nationwide campaign against the practice of 'untouchability'	1933
Starts weekly paper 'Harijan'	1933
Starts All India Village Industries Association	1934
Starts 'Sewagrama Āshram' near Wardhā, ? Maharashtra	1936
Tours North West Frontier Province, near Afghanistan	1938
Rajkot Satyāgraha by Gāndhi & Sardar Patel	1938-39
World War II starts	1939 September
Japan joined WW II	1941 December
Failure of Cripps mission	1942
'Quit India' Movement	1942 August 8
Jailed in Pune	1942
Kasturba dies	1944 February 22
World War II ends	1945 September
Visits places of communal violence to bring peace	1946 - '47
Opposes partition of India	1947 May
India becomes independent nation in British Commonwealth	1947 August 15
Gāndhiji does not attend celebrations – busy with peace mission	
Five day's fast for communal unity in India	1948 January 13
Failed attempt at assassination in Prayer Meeting, New Delhi	1948 January 20
Assassinated at Prayer Grounds, New Delhi	1948 Jan. 30 (age 78)

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www.Gandhi.ca/

Site by Mahātmā Gāndhi Canadian Foundation for World Peace, it contains multimedia files on Gāndhi, online books and reviews by readers and more.

<https://www.Gandhiheritageportal.org/>

Gāndhi Heritage Portal: Books, photos, news paper articles, etc., by M. K. Gāndhi and many other authors.

<http://www.Gandhiinstitute.org/>

The site is on MK Gāndhi Institute of non violence of Arun Gāndhi, Mahātmā Gāndhi's grandson. It has different sections on Gāndhi such as biography, articles by Arun Gāndhi, a chronology of Mahātmā's life, his fasts, quotations, photo library, articles on nonviolence and also list of books, CDs and other items from the institute.

<http://www.Gāndhimuseum.org/>

National Gāndhi Museum (Gāndhi Memorial Museum), Rajghat, New Delhi - 110002, INDIA. A complete site about the biggest Gāndhi museum at Rajghat, New Delhi. Its library which houses a vast collection of books numbering 27,000 and has a Gāndhi photo exhibition with 600 photographs.

www.Gandhiserve.org

It is a site for information about books on and by Gāndhi in an online Mahātmā Gāndhi Book Store, which also has an online sale of bags, T-shirts, CD-ROMs, statues and more, all pertaining to Gāndhi, along with information about Gāndhi serve foundation. There is also links to topics on education, Human Rights, MK Gāndhi, non violence and peace.

www.Mahātmā.org.in/

This is the official Mahātmā Gāndhi e-archive and reference library. It includes an online Gāndhi shop for new arrivals on books, calendars, busts of Gāndhi and Kasturba and more. The site includes the family tree of Gāndhi and a collection of stamps from various countries commemorating Gāndhi. There is also a provision to read Gāndhi books online including his Autobiography and more.

www.mahatma.com

A beautiful site about Gāndhi, his views, a photo gallery, quotations and consists of a section, 'poems' where one can send poems on Gāndhi and more.

www.mkGandhi.org/

A Place to learn about Gāndhi, his life, work & philosophy. This comprehensive site is regularly updated & maintained by non-profit Gāndhian Organization in India & has a wealth of information & material for researchers, students, activists & anyone interested in Gāndhi.

<http://www.mkGandhi-sarvodaya.org/momGandhi/momindex.htm>

A large collection of links to get more information on Gāndhi, Non-Violence, Peace and Conflict Resolution.

www.Gandhismriti.gov.in

This site is about Gāndhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti, a memorial of Gāndhi, which functions under Department of culture, ministry of culture, Government of India. It includes articles like Gāndhi's life and work in brief, Gāndhian philosophy, with a list of publications of Samiti, audio cassettes, a photo gallery with a good collection of photographs of Gāndhi and the Samiti. The International Centre of Gāndhian Studies & Research offers research and guidance facilities.

www.gujaratvidyapith.org/

Gujarat Vidyapith was founded by Mahātmā Gāndhi on 18 October 1920. It has been deemed university since 1963. The Institute imparts education from the Nursery school to the university doctorate level. The main objective is to prepare people of character, ability, culture and dedication for the regeneration of country in accordance with the ideals of Mahātmā Gāndhi.

Life of Gāndhi Movie: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rfHUvW7L5-k>

Review

Mahatma Gandhi once said, “My life is a message”. He himself had experimented his life occasions at many times, learned and perfected his mistakes. He had a strong belief in the natural living of human species that is prone to err and willing to learn from it.

This book by Shri. Arun J. Mehta brings the message of discovering the true aspects of an ideal and completeness of one life with the life of Mahatma Gandhi from his childhood until after his death. It is for an ordinary man to learn lessons from such an extraordinary person who lived in the 20th century, changing the world and people in pursuit of searching the truth through his nonviolent endeavors which ultimately have proved that the mankind had an inherent quality of being a supreme species on this planet.

The author has aptly brought out the various attributes and qualities what had made a shy, fearful Mohan to the great soul (Mahatma). The book is structured in a way that how this transformation happened in his life, narrating the incidents in some places along with the words of wisdom spoken and written by Gandhi. It takes the reader to various aspects of Gandhi and his reflections from the beginning to end:

In the chapter “M.K.Gandhi”, the author has illustrated events in his life from the perception of characterization and evolution of becoming a Mahatma on a personal note.

The chapter “Civil Disobedience-Satyagraha” epitomizes the Gandhi in a more complete form what the world knows. It describes how his philosophy of nonviolence and tactical moves that brought independence to India elucidating the true power of Satyagraha that spearheaded the national movement for decades with its distinct colour and character. The section “Legacy” points out his influence in socio-political, business and public environment. The author has not failed to mention the need for Gandhian model to contain the spreading danger of arms, war and global violence what the world fears nowadays. As the world sees Gandhi in various forms, reader can find a crispy and simple scope of his legacy of Gandhi that still has won millions of hearts in the world.

In a nutshell, this book is one of its kinds that speak of the greatness of Mahatma with a vivid representation of the exceptional traits what he borne while he was living and moral lessons what we could learn from his living. As we read through pages, this greatness heightens, never ceases to diminish and the legacy is born once again while we become part of it when we finish reading it.

Balamurali Balaji

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Co-Administrator: www.GandhiTopia.org

Moderator: TechnoGandhianForum@Googlegroups.com

Review on the new book by Arun J Mehta

[Free Download]

Mahatma Gandhi once said, “My life is a message”. He himself had experimented his life occasions at many times, learned and perfected his mistakes. He had a strong belief in the natural living of human species that is prone to err and willing to learn from it. This book Lessons in Nonviolent Civil Disobedience from the life of M K Gandhi and his Legacy by Shri. Arun J. Mehta brings the message of discovering the true aspects of an ideal and completeness of one life with the life of Mahatma Gandhi from his childhood until his death. It is for an ordinary man to learn lessons from such an extraordinary person who lived in the 20th century, changing the world and people in pursuit of searching the truth through his nonviolent endeavors which ultimately have proved that the mankind had an inherent quality of being a supreme species on this planet. The author has aptly brought out the various attributes and qualities what had made a shy, fearful Mohan to the great soul (Mahatma). The book is structured in a way that how this transformation happened in his life, narrating the incidents in some places along with the words of wisdom spoken and written by Gandhi. It takes the reader to various aspects of Gandhi and his reflections from the beginning to end:

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