

BAPU: LEADER OF LEADERS

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Abstract

When we talk of a good leader only a few names/pictures do appear before us and we can say that because of certain qualities/ideologies or of certain decisions we start following someone and give respect to him/her with regard to these things but Mohan Das Karamchand Gandhi better known as M. K. Gandhi/Mahatma/Gandhi is beyond imagination. Because of his strong willpower and control over himself in all situations separate him from rest of the line of the leaders. The present paper is an attempt to see how he worked out in different situations and how he resolved the conflicts among the masses and the kind of knowledge and mastery over everything has made him the leader of the masses and of the generations. The other focus of the paper would be to see the means and ends adopted by him at various levels.

Keywords: Satyagraha, Nonviolence, Truth, Brahmacharya, National Movement

Introduction

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (M. K. Gandhi) is widely recognized as one of the 20th Century's greatest Political, Spiritual and leader of masses (<https://www.youthforhumanrights.org/voices-for-human-rights/champions/mahatma-gandhi.html>). Honored in India as the 'Father of the Nation' as 'Bapu' and also known as 'Mahatma', pioneered and practiced the principle of Satyagraha—resistance to tyranny through mass nonviolent civil disobedience.

While leading nationwide campaigns to ease poverty, expand women's rights, build religious and ethnic harmony and eliminate the injustices of the caste system, Gandhi supremely applied the principles of nonviolent civil disobedience, playing a key role in freeing India from foreign domination. He was often imprisoned for his actions, sometimes for years, but he accomplished his aim in 1947, when India gained its independence from Britain.

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As mentioned above that due to his stature, he is also referred to as Mahatma, meaning “great soul.” World civil rights leaders—from Martin Luther King, Jr. to Nelson Mandela, from Mother Teresa to former President of USA Mr. Barack Obama — have credited Gandhi as a source of inspiration in their struggles to achieve equal rights for their people.

When we see the process of making of Gandhi from a simple layman to a Mahatma, there are so many factors which contributed in his making whether we talk of his family, friends, education, spiritual books, experiences with the Western thinkers/philosophers, moving to London for getting higher education, South African experiences or after finally coming to India in 1915, participation in the local Satyagrahas or in the freedom movement, he developed himself with the facing of different situations, circumstances and emerged as a winner from enormous difficult and tense situations. In all the above mentioned situations/events, he never thought of using wrong means or any shortcut methods, rather adopted himself according to the situation and tried to improvise it in such a manner that his success rate was above 100% always. While considering his different approaches and also visiting the places where he laid down his footsteps/rather the practical fields where he offered his satyagraha, the two railway stations i.e., one in South Africa by the name of Pieter Marti burg, his life changed and also in overcoming his fear for further embracement, so he changed his thought and started his fight against racial Discrimination. Whereas from the second railway station, his life changed from a simple person to Mahatma and Leader of Masses, that when millions of people were there to receive him at the railway station so that he can help them to overcome the problem of Tin Kathia system, where local farmers were forced to grow natural Indigo where as the cheaper synthetic Indigo was easily available in the market. It was not only the matter of cultivation of Indigo but it was the question of the farmers who were dying without any fault or reason. So, when Gandhi see the plight of the poor farmers, there he took the pledge that in case if he has to give 1 year or 2 years just for this cause, he is ready to do so and will try to help the farmers to get back their dues and freedom from the British governments wrong polices in relation to the cultivation of the crops.

On the other hand, It is interesting to recall that four years earlier before he finally active in Congress party's working, when he attended the Lucknow session of the Congress, he was more an observer than a participant and had seemed to Jawaharlal Nehru “very distant and different and apolitical” (<http://mehaksethi1986.blogspot.com>). But, in 1920, he dominated the political scene. In fact, he re-

created the Congress and turned talking politicians into active revolutions and anglicized leaders of society into servants of the people who henceforth wore white home-spun. He bridged the gulf between the intelligentsia and the masses and widened the concept of Swaraj to include almost every aspect of social and moral regeneration. From now on, the story of life is the story of how Congress fought for and won India's freedom.

Like a magician, Gandhi roused a storm of enthusiasm in the country with his call to non-cooperate. He began the campaign by returning to the Viceroy the medals and decorations he had received from the Government for his war-services and humanitarian work. "I can retain", he wrote to wrong to defend its immorality." Many Indians renounced their titles and honours, lawyers gave up their practices, students left colleges and schools, and thousand of the city-bred went into the villages to spread the message of non-violent, non-cooperation with the "satanic" government and to prepare the masses of defy the law. The somnolent people woke up in a frenzy of courage and self-sacrifice. Bonfires of foreign cloth lit the sky everywhere and the hum of the spinning wheel rose like a sacrificial chant in thousands of homes. Women, secluded for centuries, marched in the streets with men and incidentally freed themselves from age-old shackles. In speech after speech, article after article in his two weeklies, Young India and Navjivan, Gandhi poured forth his passionate utterances which electrified the people. Thousands of people were put in prison and many more thousands were preparing to court arrest. The anti-climax came suddenly in February 1922. An outbreak of mob violence in Chauri Chaura so shocked and pained Gandhi that he refused to continue the campaign and undertook a fast for five days to atone for a crime committed by others in a state of mob hysteria. Many of his colleagues protested and though Gandhi admitted that "the drastic reversal of practically the whole of the aggressive programme may be politically unsound and unwise", he maintained that "there is no doubt that it is religiously sound". He felt that "it is a million times better to appear untrue before the world than to be untrue to ourselves". Where Gandhi's conscience was concerned he was always ready to stand alone (<http://mehaksethi1986.blogspot.com>).

Gandhi successes in remarkably short period from 1919 to 1922 informing mass movement "for real freedom or power that was entirely unprecedented in India. His dramatic political achievement at this time was transformation of Indian national congress into political organization with mass base. Gandhi said that highly educated men to carry out all stages of co-operation and his hope is more with masses.

His faith in people is boundless. There is an amazing responsive nature. Gandhi requested let not leaders disrupt them (<http://gandhiseries.blogspot.com>).

Gandhi saw non-cooperation as a way of involving whole spectrum of Indian society in political movement. This worked through three dissent levels or tiers of followers: the western -educated elite, the “the power brokers” or middle level political operators in law, business and agriculture and finally “dumb millions” as Gandhi call them or silent majority of people without property. Gandhi influence on this last group particularly the vast poor peasantry was substantial. By 1921 his message of Swaraj as personnel as well as social and political revolution had dug deeply into the popular consciousness (<http://gandhiseries.blogspot.com>).

Self purification along with social reform merged into the constructive program that congress promoted through its pervasive organization. Swaraj was introspected as demanding changes in personal behavior that extended family planning and diet. Yet he transformed himself as people call him “Mahatma”. Charisma came from Gandhi skill as communicator and especially his ability to use symbols and images in a language for and Indian people. Like a poet, Gandhi treated his past with affection, drawing from Indian classics old words - ahimsa, karma yoga, Ramraj, Tapasya- moksha and charging them with fresh meaning until they become symbols of both past and future. Gandhi drew from Hinduism the core ideas that gave his taught continuity and coherence, yet he repeatedly reexamined that tradition for purpose of social reform. Gandhi said his sacred wisdom is the Bhagawat Gita. The following are Gandhi’s opinion on Gita. “What, however, I have done is to put a new but natural and logical interpretation upon whole teachings of Gita and spirit of Hinduism. Gita itself an instance in point. It has giving new meaning to karma, sanyasa, yajna etc. it has breathed new life into Hinduism. According to Gandhi, the Gita is an aphoristic work, it is a great religious poem. The deeper you drive into the rich meanings you get. It is being meant for the people at large, there is pleasing repetitions. With every age the importance of words will carry new and expanding meanings. As a matter of fact, Gandhian terms were infused with rich traditional Indian symbolism than two key concepts of his thought, Swarajya and Satyagraha and no one remained more sensitive to their meaning. Gandhi liked word Swarajya because it had traditional roots, and he seldom missed an opportunity to evoke the religion symbolism explicit in the idea of both Swarajya and Satyagraha” (Gandhi M. , December 1990). It is sometimes assumed that since Gandhi for

noble causes such as abolition of untouchability and developed a worldwide reputation as saint he stood above criticism.

Thirty five years later, near the end of Gandhi long public carrier, Jawaharlal Nehru soon to become independent India's first prime minister, reflected back turning point, of nationalist movement. With unparalleled eloquence that deserves to be quoted as length, Nehru wrote what remains as perhaps the most moving assessment of what Gandhi achieved, (<https://hssenglishnotes.wordpress.com>) "And then Gandhi came. He was like a powerful current of fresh air that made us stretch ourselves and take deep breath like beam of light that pierced the darkness and removed the scares from our eyes, like a whirlwind that upset many things but most of all the working peoples minds. He did not descend from top , he seemed to emerge from millions of India , speaking their language and incessantly drawing attention to them and their appalling condition. Get off the backs of these peasants and workers, he told us all you who live by their exploitation, get rid of the system that produces this poverty and misery" (<https://hssenglishnotes.wordpress.com>).

"Political freedom took new shape then and acquired a new content. Much that he said we only partially accepted or some times did not accept at all. But all this was secondary. The essence of Gandhi's teaching was fearless and truth and action allied to these always keeping the welfare of masses in view. The greatest government for an individual nation or so we had been told in ancient books was abhaya, fearlessness, not merely body courage but the absence fear from our mind. But dominant impulse in India under British rule was that of fear, pervasive , oppressing , strangling fear of the army, the police, the wide spread secret service, fear of official class, fear of laws meant for suppress, and of unemployment and starvation, which were always on there sold. It was against this all pervading fear that Gandhi quiet and determined voice was raised. Be not afraid.

In fact, Gandhi had millions of people with him when he was fighting with British for getting freedom to our country. His contribution to our country is enormous and marvelous and that is the reason he fondly called father of nation. He is one of great world leaders among 19th Century leaders'.

The emergence of Gandhi played a pivotal role in the history of Indian Nationalism. The development of Indian Nationalism occurred in three separate phases. It was the third phase of Indian Nationalism that

witnessed the rise of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, as the man who took the country by storm with his novel political ideologies centered on the cardinal principles of ahimsa and Satyagraha.

Armed with these ideological tools Gandhi shouldered critical responsibilities in the momentous events that finally led India to the path of freedom. The emergence of Gandhi, on the Indian political scenario was not the mere instance of another emerging new leader, but it was the rise of a whole new philosophy that permeated into every sphere of the Indian psyche. Gandhi's political ideals were merely an extension of his spiritual tenets, which were rooted in deep humanitarian values. Gandhi's greatness lies not only within pioneering a unique fervor in Indian politics and the rise of the masses, but in the way he revolutionized the entire way of looking at politics as an extension of mankind's inherent greatness, enriched with an innate belief in and commitment to truth. No wonder, he is revered as the Mahatma and has been immortalized as The Father of the Nation” (<https://www.mapsofindia.com>).

Emergence of Gandhi: Formation of his Political Ideologies

The first twenty years that Gandhi spent in South Africa, had a decisive influence on his later life. His political ideologies, his greatest contribution to Indian politics, took shape in South Africa. The concept of non co-operation, found in the works of John Ruskin, Leo Tolstoy and Henry David Thoreau influenced him significantly. These three illustrious writers advocated non co-operation as an effective tool in the hands of the civilians against a tyrannical and oppressive government. It was Gandhi, however, who gave action to these valuable words through his Satyagraha agitations first in South Africa and later in India, in its struggle for freedom. At this juncture, it is important to understand the meaning of Satyagraha, as projected by Gandhi. Passive resistance, adherence to truth, civil disobedience, non-cooperation and pacifism, perhaps capture the essence of Satyagraha as enunciated by Gandhi.

Another critical concept that finds expression in Gandhian philosophy is that of ahimsa. Gandhi had adopted this central philosophical tenet from Jainism and Vaishnavism that exercised a strong influence in Gujarat. For Gandhi, ahimsa was not a mere moral value but a political weapon par se, embodying virtues like chastity, self control, the strength to lead a simple life and the notion of swaraj. For Gandhi, swaraj entailed an internal self rule along with freedom from the rule of the colonial government. Using these invincible ideological tools, Gandhi launched a massive satyagraha movement in South Africa

against the hegemony of the British colonial rule and succeeded in uniting all major sections of the Indian community in South Africa, irrespective of their religious affiliations. Christians, Parsis, Muslims, Hindus, South Indians, upper class merchants and the poor laborers coalesced under the inspiring ideals of the Mahatma. Hinduism and Christianity also had considerable influence on the formation of his ideologies.

Emergence of Gandhi: As a Leader of Indian National Movement

As mentioned before that, in the year 1915, Gandhi returned to India, during his initial days, he spent his time at the Sabarmati Ashram in Ahmedabad, quite unknown to the masses. In this context it is pertinent to mention that Gandhi sought guidance from Gopal Krishna Gokhale in assuming his political stance. It was Gokhale's advice to Gandhi that he should first study in details the socio-political scenario prevalent in the country and then act accordingly. However, Gandhi soon emerged on to the political scenario through his able leadership in certain local conflicts.

Gandhi gave voice to the cause of the oppressed cultivators in Champaran district of Bihar who were suffering under tyranny of the European indigo-planters. Threatened by the outbreak of large scale Satyagraha struggle, the government finally succumbed to the pressure by passing a law allowing concessions to the peasants in 1917. In the following year, Gandhi resumed leadership to fight for the cause of plague and famine affected peasants of Kheda district in Gujarat. Some concessions were also granted to these cultivators by the government. The weapon of Satyagraha which was emerged and practiced in South Africa, was employed by Gandhi, yet another time in an industrial dispute between the workers and owners of a cotton mill in Ahmedabad. The consequence was a wage hike for the workers. Gandhi's leadership infused coherence in the isolated mass movements, which so far was the characteristic feature of the Indian freedom movement. In all his struggles, the weapon of passive resistance reigned supreme and the political consciousness of Indians across class boundaries received an impetus.

Emergence of Gandhi as the Father of the Nation

During the freedom struggle movement for Gandhi, prison was more a luxury than a punishment. He could devote more time to prayer, study and spinning than he could outside. In January 1924, when he

fell seriously ill with acute appendicitis, he was removed to a hospital in Poona where a British surgeon performed the operation. While he was convalescing he was released by the Government.

What he saw of India as a free man greatly pained him. At the time of his arrest he had left his people on the wave of a great moral upsurge which had united Hindus and Muslims as never before. But in the meanwhile the Khilafat issue had been killed by Kamal Ataturk. The Muslims no longer needed Hindu support; the two communities had drifted apart. There were communal riots in several places. Not knowing how to stem this tide of frustration, he undertook a fast of twenty-one days to reunite the Hindus and Muslims and to atone once again for the sins of his people. "It seems as if God has been dethroned," he said, announcing the fast. "Let us reinstate Him in our hearts." The fast caused considerable heart-searching, and long before it was over, pledges of amity poured in upon him from men of various communities (<https://www.mkgandhi.org>).

For the next five years Gandhi seemingly retired from active agitational politics and devoted himself to the propagation of what he regarded as the basic national needs, namely, Hindu-Muslim unity, removal of untouchability, equality of women, popularization of hand-spinning and the reconstruction of village economy in general. "I am not interested". He wrote in June 1923, "freeing India merely from the English yoke. I am bent upon freeing and social and economic freedom must go together.

There was also the fact that Gandhi, on his release from prison, had found the Congress divided. By 1929, however, the various groups had once more rallied under his leadership, and when on the last day of that year he himself alongwith Pt. Nehru, moved the Resolution in the Congress session declaring complete Independence as the goal of Congress policy, it was obvious that he was again ready to lead the nation in an open challenge which was taken by millions throughout the country on January 26, 1930.

Emergence as Nationalist Leader

In continuation of previous passage, by the autumn of 1920, Gandhi was the dominant figure on the political stage, commanding an influence never before attained by any political leader in India or perhaps in any other country. He refashioned the 35-year-old Indian National Congress (Congress Party) into an effective political instrument of Indian nationalism: from a three-day Christmas-week picnic of

the upper middle class in one of the principal cities of India, it became a mass organization with its roots in small towns and villages. Gandhi's message was simple: it was not British guns but imperfections of Indians themselves that kept their country in bondage. His program, the nonviolent and noncooperation movement against the British government, included boycotts not only of British manufactures but of institutions operated or aided by the British in India: legislatures, courts, offices, schools. The campaign electrified the country, broke the spell of fear of foreign rule, and led to the arrests of thousands of *satyagrahis*, who defied laws and cheerfully lined up for prison.

During the mid-1920s Gandhi took little interest in active politics and was considered a spent force. In 1927, however, the British government appointed a constitutional reform commission under Sir John Simon, a prominent English lawyer and politician that did not contain a single Indian. When the Congress and other parties boycotted the commission, the political tempo rose. At the Congress session (meeting) at Calcutta in December 1928, Gandhi put forth the crucial resolution demanding dominion status from the British government within a year under threat of a nationwide nonviolent campaign for complete independence. Henceforth, Gandhi was back as the leading voice of the Congress Party. In March 1930 he launched the Salt March, a Satyagraha against the British-imposed tax on salt, which affected the poorest section of the community. One of the most spectacular and successful campaigns in Gandhi's nonviolent war against the British Raj, it resulted in the imprisonment of more than 60,000 people. A year later, after talks with the viceroy, Lord Irwin (later Lord Halifax), Gandhi accepted a truce (the Gandhi-Irwin Pact), called off civil disobedience, and agreed to attend the Round Table Conference in London as the sole representative of the Indian National Congress.

The conference, which concentrated on the problem of the Indian minorities rather than on the transfer of power from the British, was a great disappointment to the Indian nationalists. Moreover, when Gandhi returned to India in December 1931, he found his party facing an all-out offensive from Lord Irwin's successor as viceroy, Lord Willingdon, who unleashed the sternest repression in the history of the nationalist movement. Gandhi was once more imprisoned, and the government tried to insulate him from the outside world and to destroy his influence. That was not an easy task. Gandhi soon regained the initiative. In September 1932, while still a prisoner, he embarked on a fast to protest against the British government's decision to segregate the so-called untouchables (the lowest level of the Indian

caste system) by allotting them separate electorates in the new constitution. The fast produced an emotional upheaval in the country, and an alternative electoral arrangement was jointly and speedily devised by the leaders of the Hindu community and the untouchables and endorsed by the British government. The fast became the starting point of a vigorous campaign for the removal of the disabilities of the untouchables, whom Gandhi referred to as Harijans, or “Children of God.” (That term has fallen out of favour, replaced by Dalit; Scheduled Castes is the official designation.)

In 1934 Gandhi resigned not only as the leader but also as a member of the Congress Party. He had come to believe that its leading members had adopted nonviolence as a political expedient and not as the fundamental creed it was for him. In place of political activity he then concentrated on his “constructive programme” of building the nation “from the bottom up”—educating rural India, which accounted for 85 percent of the population; continuing his fight against untouchability; promoting hand spinning, weaving, and other cottage industries to supplement the earnings of the underemployed peasantry; and evolving a system of education best suited to the needs of the people. Gandhi himself went to live at Sevagram, a village in central India, which became the centre of his program of social and economic uplift.

The Last Phase

With the outbreak of World War II, the nationalist struggle in India entered its last crucial phase. Gandhi hated fascism and all it stood for, but he also hated war. The Indian National Congress, on the other hand, was not committed to pacifism and was prepared to support the British war effort if Indian self-government was assured. Once more Gandhi became politically active. The failure of the mission of Sir Stafford Cripps, a British cabinet minister who went to India in March 1942 with an offer that Gandhi found unacceptable, the British equivocation on the transfer of power to Indian hands, and the encouragement given by high British officials to conservative and communal forces promoting discord between Muslims and Hindus impelled Gandhi to demand in the summer of 1942 an immediate British withdrawal from India—what became known as the Quit India Movement.

In mid-1942 the war against the Axis Powers, particularly Japan, was in a critical phase, and the British reacted sharply to the campaign. They imprisoned the entire Congress leadership and set out to crush the party once and for all. There were violent outbreaks that were sternly suppressed, and the gulf between

Britain and India became wider than ever before. Gandhi, his wife, and several other top party leaders (including Nehru) were confined in the Aga Khan Palace (now the Gandhi National Memorial) in Poona (now Pune). Kasturba died there in early 1944, shortly before Gandhi and the others were released.

A new chapter in Indo-British relations opened with the victory of the Labour Party in Britain 1945. During the next two years, there were prolonged triangular negotiations between leaders of the Congress, the Muslim League under Mohammad Ali Jinnah, and the British government, culminating in the Mountbatten Plan of June 3, 1947, and the formation of the two new dominions of India and Pakistan in mid-August 1947.

It was one of the greatest disappointments of Gandhi's life that Indian freedom was realized without Indian unity. Muslim separatism had received a great boost while Gandhi and his colleagues were in jail, and in 1946–47, as the final constitutional arrangements were being negotiated, the outbreak of communal riots between Hindus and Muslims unhappily created a climate in which Gandhi's appeals to reason and justice, tolerance and trust had little chance. When partition of the subcontinent was accepted—against his advice—he threw himself heart and soul into the task of healing the scars of the communal conflict, toured the riot-torn areas in Bengal and Bihar, admonished the bigots, consoled the victims, and tried to rehabilitate the refugees. In the atmosphere of that period, surcharged with suspicion and hatred, that was a difficult and heartbreaking task. Gandhi was blamed by partisans of both the communities. When persuasion failed, he went on a fast. He won at least two spectacular triumphs: in September 1947 his fasting stopped the rioting in Calcutta, and in January 1948 he shamed the city of Delhi into a communal truce. A few days later, on January 30, while he was on his way to his evening prayer meeting in Delhi, he was shot down by Nathuram Godse, a young Hindu fanatic.

Place in History

The British attitude toward Gandhi was one of mingled admiration, amusement, bewilderment, suspicion, and resentment. Except for a tiny minority of Christian missionaries and radical socialists, the British tended to see him at best as a utopian visionary and at worst as a cunning hypocrite whose professions of friendship for the British race were a mask for subversion of the British Raj. Gandhi was conscious of the existence of that wall of prejudice, and it was part of the strategy of Satyagraha to penetrate it.

His three major campaigns in 1920–22, 1930–34, and 1940–42 were well designed to engender that process of self-doubt and questioning that was to undermine the moral defenses of his adversaries and to contribute, together with the objective realities of the postwar world, to producing the grant of dominion status in 1947. The British abdication in India was the first step in the liquidation of the British Empire on the continents of Asia and Africa. Gandhi's image as a rebel and enemy died hard, but, as it had done to the memory of George Washington, Britain, in 1969, the centenary year of Gandhi's birth, erected a statue to his memory.

Gandhi had critics in his own country and indeed in his own party. The liberal leaders protested that he was going too fast; the young radicals complained that he was not going fast enough; left-wing politicians alleged that he was not serious about evicting the British or liquidating such vested Indian interests as princes and landlords; the leaders of the untouchables doubted his good faith as a social reformer; and Muslim leaders accused him of partiality to his own community.

Research in the second half of the 20th century established Gandhi's role as a great mediator and reconciler. His talents in that direction were applied to conflicts between the older moderate politicians and the young radicals, the political terrorists and the parliamentarians, the urban intelligentsia and the rural masses, the traditionalists and the modernists, the caste Hindus and the untouchables, the Hindus and the Muslims, and the Indians and the British.

It was inevitable that Gandhi's role as a political leader should loom larger in the public imagination, but the mainspring of his life lay in religion, not in politics. And religion for him did not mean formalism, dogma, ritual, or sectarianism. "What I have been striving and pining to achieve these thirty years," he wrote in his autobiography, "is to see God face to face" (Gandhi M. K., 1990, p. X). His deepest strivings were spiritual, but unlike many of his fellow Indians with such aspirations, he did not retire to a cave in the Himalayas to meditate on the Absolute; he carried his cave, as he once said, within him. For him truth was not something to be discovered in the privacy of one's personal life; it had to be upheld in the challenging contexts of social and political life.

Gandhi won the affection and loyalty of gifted men and women, old and young, with vastly dissimilar talents and temperaments; of Europeans of every religious persuasion; and of Indians of almost every political line. Few of his political colleagues went all the way with him and accepted nonviolence as a

creed; fewer still shared his food fads, his interest in mudpacks and nature cure, or his prescription of *brahmacarya*, complete renunciation of the pleasures of the flesh.

Gandhi's ideas on sex may now sound quaint and unscientific. His marriage at the age of 13 seems to have complicated his attitude toward sex and charged it with feelings of guilt, but it is important to remember that total sublimation, according to the best tradition of Hindu thought, is indispensable for those who seek self-realization, and *brahmacarya* was for Gandhi part of a larger discipline in food, sleep, thought, prayer, and daily activity designed to equip himself for service of the causes to which he was totally committed. What he failed to see was that his own unique experience was no guide for the common man.

Scholars have continued to judge Gandhi's place in history. He was the catalyst if not the initiator of three of the major revolutions of the 20th century: the movements against colonialism, racism, and violence. He wrote copiously; the collected edition of his writings had reached 100 volumes by the early 21st century.

Much of what he wrote was in response to the needs of his coworkers and disciples and the exigencies of the political situation, but on fundamentals he maintained a remarkable consistency, as is evident from the *Hind Swaraj* (Gandhi M. K., 1998 Edition) ("Indian Home Rule"), published in South Africa in 1909. The strictures on Western materialism and colonialism, the reservations about industrialism and urbanization, the distrust of the modern state, and the total rejection of violence that was expressed in that book seemed romantic, if not reactionary, to the pre-World War I generation in India and the West, which had not known the shocks of two global wars or experienced the phenomenon of Adolf Hitler and the trauma of the atom bomb. Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's objective of promoting a just and egalitarian order at home and nonalignment with military blocs abroad doubtless owed much to Gandhi, but neither he nor his colleagues in the Indian nationalist movement wholly accepted the Gandhian models in politics and economics.

In the years since Gandhi's death, his name has been invoked by the organizers of numerous demonstrations and movements. However, with a few outstanding exceptions—such as those of his disciple the land reformer Vinoba Bhave in India and of the civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr., in the United States—those movements have been a travesty of the ideas of Gandhi.

Yet Gandhi will probably never lack champions. Erik H. Erikson (Erikson, April 17, 1993, p. 440), a distinguished American psychoanalyst, in his study of Gandhi senses (https://www.jstor.org/stable/1849243?seq=3#metadata_info_tab_contents) “an affinity between Gandhi’s truth and the insights of modern psychology.” (Rao, 2018). One of the greatest admirers of Gandhi was Albert Einstein, who saw in Gandhi’s nonviolence a possible antidote to the massive violence unleashed by the fission of the atom. And Gunnar Myrdal, the Swedish economist, after his survey of the socioeconomic problems of the underdeveloped world, pronounced Gandhi “in practically all fields an enlightened liberal.” (<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Mahatma-Gandhi/Place-in-history>). In a time of deepening crisis in the underdeveloped world, of social malaise in the affluent societies, of the shadow of unbridled technology and the precarious peace of nuclear terror, it seems likely that Gandhi’s ideas and techniques will become increasingly relevant.

Gandhi reigns in the hearts of millions of Indians as The Father of the Nation, for the path breaking role that he played not in the Indian struggle for independence but for moulding the national character and the lives of the Indians alike. At a time when the fabric of the Indian society was tearing apart, he accomplished the Herculean task of unifying the nation. Confronted with diverse political ideologies like hard line extremism, the moderate approach and the newly emerging communist forces the confused Indians found solace in the simple philosophies of Gandhi. He worked assiduously for the upliftment of the downtrodden like the dalits and gave them a new identity. Women, under his aegis, found back their long lost confidence and actively participated in the tasks of national cause. Gandhi with similar perseverance championed the cause of the secularism. As a visionary, he realized right at the onset that the real strength of India lies in communal harmony and brotherhood.

Thus, the emergence of Gandhi, as a national leader, as a humanist, as a visionary, as a social and political reformer and most importantly as a spiritual leader has been critically instrumental in shaping a new India, firmly rooted in its historical past and at the same time welcoming the progressive trends of modernity.

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