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THE RISE OF MAHATMA GANDHI

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Abstract

The research paper delves into the life, principles, and impact of Mahatma Gandhi, tracing his evolution from a young lawyer in South Africa to the iconic leader of India's independence movement. The advent of Mahatma Gandhi onto the Indian political scene ushered in a transformative chapter in the Indian nationalist struggle, often characterized as an epoch of widespread grassroots engagement and mobilization. Mahatma Gandhi earned the revered title of "Mahatma" or "great soul" due to his unwavering commitment to courageous, selfless, and nonviolent methodologies, which defined his life's work in advocating for reform and betterment. In this paper, we delve into the profound insights that can be derived from the complex persona of Gandhi—a figure both enigmatic and flawed, yet endlessly inspiring and captivating. We seek to unravel the teachings and wisdom imparted by this astute tactician and strategist, who navigated the intricacies of social and political change with remarkable foresight and resilience. Through our exploration, we endeavor to illuminate the transformative journey of learning advocated by Gandhi, whose legacy continues to captivate and motivate individuals across the globe. Through an analysis of historical events, personal writings, and scholarly interpretations, this paper explores the factors contributing to Gandhi's rise as a transformative figure, emphasizing his unwavering commitment to nonviolent resistance.

Introduction

"I worship God as Truth only. I have not found Him, but I am seeking after Him...as long as I have not realized his Absolute Truth, so long must I hold by the relative truth as I have conceived

*it. That relative truth must meanwhile be my beacon, my shield."*¹

In the tumultuous era of the early 20th century, amidst one of the darkest periods in human history, Mahatma Gandhi emerged as a beacon of hope, advocating for the highest principles of humanity and ethical governance. Despite the widespread destruction and despair engulfing the world, Gandhi demonstrated through his life and actions that it was indeed possible to uphold noble ideals and engage in politics with unwavering ethical integrity.

¹ "M. K. Gandhi, An Autobiography, p. 11"

When queried about the legacy he wished to impart to future generations in the twilight of his life, Gandhi famously asserted that his life itself was his message—a testament to his belief in the paramount importance of actions over mere words.

Gandhi's philosophy was not one of dogma or rigidity; rather, it was characterized by a profound commitment to constant self-reflection and adaptation in light of new knowledge and insights. While he placed immense value on the power of thought and contemplation, Gandhi's primary focus was always on translating his ideals into practical action aimed at uplifting humanity and rectifying injustices in society. This sentiment is aptly captured in the title of his autobiography, "Experiments with Truth," wherein Gandhi chronicles his lifelong quest to align his beliefs with his actions in service of a greater good.

Foremost among Gandhi's enduring legacies is his pioneering role in advocating for nonviolent resistance against British imperialism—a movement that not only challenged the very foundations of colonial rule but also served as a catalyst for anti-colonial struggles across Asia and Africa. Gandhi's insistence on nonviolence as a means of effecting social and political change not only defied conventional wisdom but also fundamentally altered the discourse surrounding power and resistance in the modern world. Through the study of Gandhi's movement, we gain invaluable insights into the early challenges to the notion of empire and the pivotal role played by India's freedom struggle in inspiring liberation movements worldwide.

In essence, Mahatma Gandhi's life and teachings serve as a timeless reminder of the transformative potential of individual action rooted in moral courage and unwavering commitment to truth and justice. His legacy continues to inspire generations of activists, scholars, and ordinary citizens alike, underscoring the enduring relevance of his principles in navigating the complexities of our contemporary world.

Early Life and Formative Years

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, born in the quaint town of Porbandar in West India in 1869, hailed from a prosperous family. His father, Karamchand Gandhi, held esteemed positions as the prime minister to local princes in Porbandar, Rajkot, and Kutiana, Princely States. Porbandar, situated along the Arabian Sea, flourished as a hub of trade with India, Persia, Arabia, and Africa, aligning with the Gandhi family's affiliation with the Bania sub-caste of the Vaishya or merchant caste.

Raised amidst a milieu of diverse religious sects, young Mohandas experienced a blend of Hindu and Jain beliefs, influenced by his mother's lineage tracing back to the Pranami sect, which sought to bridge Hinduism and Islam. Mohandas's early education was unremarkable, marked by the typical rites of passage for a young boy of his background. At the tender age of 13, he entered into an arranged marriage with Kasturbai, a union that initially brought about its share of challenges due to differences in temperament and outlook.

Struggling with insecurity and a fragile self-esteem during his formative years, Mohandas briefly rebelled against his Hindu upbringing, experimenting with behaviors such as meat-eating and smoking in search of strength and

confidence. However, his rebellious phase was short-lived, as he gravitated towards the teachings of Buddhism and Jainism, finding solace in their philosophical tenets.²

After the death of his father in 1885, Gandhi's family decided that he should pursue higher education abroad, eventually leading him to study law in London, England. In 1888, Gandhi embarked on this journey, leaving behind the familiar landscapes of his homeland for the bustling streets of the British capital. His time in London was not merely an academic pursuit; it was a period of profound personal growth and intellectual exploration. Gandhi immersed himself in the study of law at the Inner Temple, while also delving into the teachings of various philosophical and religious traditions, including Christianity, Hinduism, and Theosophy.

Despite facing the challenges of adapting to life in a foreign land and grappling with feelings of isolation and homesickness, Gandhi thrived academically and intellectually during his time in England. His exposure to Western legal principles and the British system of governance would later prove invaluable in his efforts to confront injustice and advocate for the rights of the oppressed.

However, it was Gandhi's experiences in South Africa that would serve as a crucible for his moral and political awakening.

Gandhi in South Africa

Gandhi's sojourn in South Africa marked a pivotal juncture in his life, where he confronted the entrenched system of apartheid, which sought to perpetuate white supremacy at the expense of the rights and dignity of non-white communities. Upon his arrival in South Africa, Gandhi was immediately confronted with the harsh realities of racial discrimination, where the color of his skin and his heritage subjected him to demeaning treatment and outright hostility. One significant incident that reverberated through the annals of civil rights history occurred when Gandhi was forcibly ejected from a First-Class railway compartment at Pietermaritzburg solely on the basis of his race.

This transformative experience compelled Gandhi to ponder his course of action, leading him to a momentous decision: to confront injustice head-on rather than retreat in defeat. It was a watershed moment that galvanized Gandhi to challenge the oppressive system that sought to dehumanize and marginalize non-white communities. With unwavering resolve, Gandhi embarked on a journey of resistance, advocating for the principles of humanity, tolerance, and equality in the face of intolerance and discrimination.

Gandhi's commitment to justice found expression in his tireless efforts to organize and mobilize the Indian diaspora in South Africa, culminating in the formation of the Natal Indian Congress in 1897. Despite facing formidable obstacles, including the passage of discriminatory laws such as the 1894 bill that deprived Indians of

² "David M. Troubetzky (1997) Mahatma Gandhi's Satyagraha and NonViolent Resistance, CUNY Academic Works"

their right to vote, Gandhi's grassroots activism succeeded in amplifying the voices of the oppressed and drawing attention to their grievances on the global stage.³

During the Boer War in 1900, Gandhi's volunteer service took a unique form that showcased India's rich cultural heritage. Instead of following conventional paths, Gandhi organized the Natal Indian Ambulance Corps, a group of stretcher-bearers that transcended the boundaries of conflict by offering aid to both British and Zulu forces. This unconventional approach not only garnered attention but also exemplified Gandhi's commitment to principles of compassion and humanity in the face of war and strife.

As Gandhi's profile rose in the public eye due to his humanitarian efforts, he began to navigate an evolving landscape of activism, increasingly focusing on issues of broader public interest and importance. It was during a mass meeting in Johannesburg that Gandhi introduced the concept of "Satyagraha," a form of nonviolent resistance aimed at seeking truth through peaceful means.

Encouraging Indians in South Africa to confront the unjust regulations and willingly accept the consequences, Gandhi embarked on a journey of political transformation, gradually transitioning from dialogue and engagement to passive resistance and civil disobedience. His methodology evolved over time, from moderate measures such as prayers and petitions to more assertive forms of protest designed to awaken the conscience of oppressors and challenge systemic discrimination.

In South Africa, Gandhi honed his skills in protest tactics, persuasion, and public relations, laying the groundwork for a distinct legacy that he would carry with him upon his return to India in 1915. His experiences in South Africa not only shaped his approach to activism but also informed his understanding of the power of nonviolence as a transformative force in effecting social and political change. Gandhi's time in South Africa marked a pivotal period of growth and development, laying the foundation for his future role as a leader of India's independence movement and a global advocate for peace and justice.⁴

Return to India and Leadership in the Indian National Movement

In response to a request conveyed by C. F. Andrews on behalf of Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Mahatma Gandhi came back to India in 1915, bringing with him an esteemed status as a prominent "Indian nationalist", "thinker", and "community organizer". Embraced by the "Indian National Congress" upon his arrival, Gandhi was introduced to the intricacies of Indian politics and societal issues, primarily under the mentorship of Gokhale. Gokhale, renowned for his moderation and commitment to working within the established system, provided Gandhi with invaluable guidance and insights, shaping his initial approach to Indian affairs.

³ "Kumar, K. (1994). Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. In Z. Morsy (Ed.), Thinkers on education (Vol. 2, pp. 47– 65). Paris, France: UNESCO"

⁴ "Deeya Mukherjee and Ishfaq Majid, Gandhi – India's Greatest Contribution To Mankind. Think India Journal,

Drawing from Gokhale's liberal perspective, which was influenced by British Whiggish traditions, Gandhi embarked on a transformative journey to imbue Indian nationalism with indigenous values and principles. Embracing Gokhale's emphasis on constructive engagement, Gandhi skillfully adapted these ideals to resonate with the ethos of Indian culture and society. Under Gokhale's tutelage, Gandhi honed his leadership skills and deepened his understanding of India's socio-political landscape.⁵

Assuming leadership of the "Indian National Congress" in 1920, Gandhi embarked on a path of escalating demands and nonviolent resistance, gradually intensifying the struggle for India's independence. On January 26, 1930, the Indian National Congress boldly declared India's independence, marking a significant milestone in the nation's quest for self-rule.

Champan Satyagraha

Gandhi's inaugural triumph unfolded in 1917 amidst the Champaran agitation, a pivotal moment in Bihar's history. Here, the local peasantry found themselves embroiled in a bitter confrontation with predominantly British landlords, staunchly supported by the local administration. Forced to grow Indigofera, a cash crop utilized in the production of Indigo dye, despite its declining popularity over the previous two decades, the peasantry faced further oppression as they were coerced into selling their produce to the planters at fixed prices.

Faced with this unjust arrangement, the peasantry turned to Gandhi, seeking redress for their grievances. Responding with characteristic resolve, Gandhi orchestrated a campaign of nonviolent protest that caught the administration off guard. Through strategic planning and unwavering commitment to peaceful resistance, Gandhi effectively challenged the status quo and compelled the authorities to make concessions to the aggrieved peasantry.

Kheda Satyagraha

In 1918, the district of Kheda in Gujarat was devastated by floods and famine, exacerbating the plight of the already struggling peasantry. Faced with the double burden of natural calamities and oppressive taxation policies, the peasants urgently sought relief from the burdensome taxes imposed by the British administration. Sensing the gravity of the situation, Gandhi relocated his headquarters to Nadiad and swiftly mobilized a formidable coalition of supporters and volunteers, notably including Vallabhbhai Patel.

Employing non-cooperation as a potent tool of resistance, Gandhi led a signature drive, mobilizing peasants to commit to refusing tax payments despite the looming threat of land seizure. Concurrently, a wide-ranging social ostracism of revenue officials in the district was launched, intensifying pressure on the administration to heed the

⁵ "Dr. T. Balasubramanian, et.al (2020). Mahatma Gandhi's Life and Freedom Struggle, Journal of Shanghai Jiaotong University, Volume 16, Issue7"

demands of the aggrieved peasantry. Gandhi's tireless efforts to garner nationwide support for the agitation played a crucial role in amplifying its impact and visibility.

Despite facing staunch resistance from the administration for five arduous months, Gandhi's steadfast determination ultimately bore fruit. Until the famine subsided, key provisions were conceded by the government, and the conditions of revenue tax payment were relaxed by the end of May 1918. In Kheda, Vallabhbhai Patel emerged as a formidable representative of the farmers, negotiating with the British authorities and securing concessions that included the suspension of revenue collection and the release of imprisoned protestors.⁶

Ahmedabad Satyagraha

In Ahmedabad, Gandhi employed yet another powerful form of Satyagraha to address a contentious conflict between the laborers and the proprietor of a textile mill. Recognizing the dire economic conditions faced by the laborers and their legitimate grievances regarding wages and working conditions, Gandhi embarked on a hunger strike as a means of peaceful protest. Through his self-imposed deprivation, Gandhi sought to draw attention to the plight of the workers and exert moral pressure on the mill owner to accede to their demands.

Gandhi's hunger strike captured the imagination of the nation, galvanizing widespread support for the cause of economic justice. As the strike gained momentum, it became a focal point for solidarity and collective action, with workers and sympathizers alike rallying behind Gandhi's principled stand. The moral authority of Gandhi's nonviolent resistance proved insurmountable, compelling the mill owner to acquiesce to the workers' demands and agree to a substantial wage increase of 35%, a significant victory for the labor movement.⁷

This episode in Ahmedabad not only underscored Gandhi's unwavering commitment to the principles of Satyagraha but also demonstrated the transformative potential of nonviolent resistance in effecting social change.

Satyagraha and Civil Disobedience

“Satyagraha is like a Banyan tree with innumerable branches. Civil disobedience is one such branch, satya (truth) and ahimsa (nonviolence) together make the parent trunk from which all innumerable branches shoot out... We must fearlessly spread the doctrine of satya and ahimsa and then, and not till then, shall we be able to undertake mass satyagraha.”⁸

Khilafat movement

In the aftermath of World War I, Mahatma Gandhi, then 49 years old, embarked on a quest for political cooperation with Muslims in the fight against British imperialism. Recognizing the potential for Hindu-Muslim unity as a potent force for political progress, Gandhi sought to bridge communal divides that had long plagued British India.

⁶ “Aggarwal M. History of Gandhian Mass Movements for the Freedom of India”

⁷ “Global Nonviolent Action Database. Ahmedabad textile labourers win strike for economic justice 1918”

⁸ “M.K. Gandhi, The Hindu, April 21, 1919”

Despite previous communal disputes and religious riots, Gandhi believed in the power of solidarity and collaboration across religious lines to challenge British colonial rule.

Gandhi's overtures toward Muslim communities took shape through his support for the Ottoman Empire, which had been conquered in the war. By championing the cause of the Ottoman Caliphate, Gandhi aimed to galvanize Muslim support for the broader struggle against British oppression. This strategic move, however, was met with mixed reactions. While it initially garnered strong Muslim backing for Gandhi's leadership, it also raised concerns among Hindu leaders, including luminaries like Rabindranath Tagore, who questioned the wisdom of aligning with the Sunni Islamic Caliphate.

Despite these challenges, Gandhi's support for the Khilafat movement, which sought to uphold the authority of the Turkish Caliph as a symbol of Sunni Muslim unity, temporarily halted Hindu-Muslim communal violence. Joint demonstrations and rallies against the Rowlatt Act, a repressive piece of legislation passed by the British colonial officials, showcased a rare moment of inter-communal harmony. Gandhi's efforts not only elevated his stature as a political leader but also underscored the potential for unity across religious lines in the struggle for Indian independence.⁹

Non-co-operation movement

At the age of 40, Mahatma Gandhi made a profound declaration in his book *Hind Swaraj* (1909), asserting that British rule in India had only persisted due to the cooperation of Indians. He fervently believed that if Indians refused to cooperate with British authorities, their rule would crumble, paving the way for *swaraj*, or self-rule. This conviction laid the groundwork for Gandhi's strategy of nonviolent resistance, which he would later employ in his quest for Indian independence.

In February 1919, Gandhi issued a cautionary cable communication to the Viceroy of India, warning that in the event that the British government passed the Rowlatt Act, he would urge Indians to participate in civil disobedience. Despite Gandhi's warning, the British authorities proceeded with the passage of the law, dismissing Gandhi's threats as insignificant. This act of defiance prompted Gandhi to initiate *satyagraha*, or civil disobedience, with people across India gathering to protest the repressive legislation.

The escalation of tensions reached a tragic climax on March 30, 1919, when British law officers opened fire on defenseless protesters gathered in Delhi, sparking riots in retaliation. Undeterred by the violence, Gandhi urged his followers to maintain nonviolence towards both the British authorities and each other, advocating for peaceful protests and boycotts of British goods. Despite government warnings to stay away from Delhi, Gandhi defied the order and was subsequently arrested on April 9, 1919, further fueling public outrage.

The situation reached a boiling point on April 13, 1919, when British officer Reginald Dyer commanded his troops to open fire on a crowd of unarmed civilians, including women and children, gathered in Amritsar's Jallianwala Bagh park. The resulting massacre, known as the "Jallianwala Bagh massacre" or Amritsar massacre, shocked the

⁹ "Tendulkar, D. G. (1960). *Mahatma: 1869–1920*. New Delhi, India: Publications Division, Government of India"

subcontinent and drew condemnation from around the world. However, it was met with approval by some Britons and sections of the British media, highlighting the deep-seated divisions and injustices of British colonial rule in India.¹⁰

Gandhi spinning yarn

Expanding his campaign of nonviolent non-cooperation, Gandhi introduced the swadeshi policy, advocating for the boycott of foreign-made goods, particularly British products. Central to this movement was the promotion of khadi, or homespun cloth, as a symbol of self-reliance and resistance to British economic dominance. Gandhi called upon Indians from all walks of life, irrespective of their wealth or social status, to dedicate time each day to spinning khadi in solidarity with the independence movement.

By targeting the economic, political, and administrative pillars of British rule, Gandhi aimed to undermine the foundations of British India's governance. The call for non-cooperation gained widespread social traction, attracting participation from across Indian society. However, Gandhi's bold stance did not go unchallenged. On March 10, 1922, he was arrested and charged with sedition, leading to a six-year prison sentence. His imprisonment not only disrupted the momentum of the non-cooperation movement but also sparked divisions within the Indian National Congress.

In Gandhi's absence, the Congress party split into factions, with differing views on participation in legislatures. Meanwhile, the collapse of the Khilafat movement following the rise of Ataturk in Turkey led to the departure of Muslim leaders from the Congress, further fragmenting the political landscape. Despite these challenges, Gandhi's steadfast commitment to nonviolent resistance endured. His release from prison in February 1924, after serving only two years due to an appendicitis operation, marked a pivotal moment in his ongoing struggle for Indian independence.

Salt Satyagraha (Dandi march)

On December 31, 1929, a momentous event unfolded in Lahore as the flag of India was unfurled, symbolizing a bold declaration of independence. Led by Gandhi, the Indian National Congress celebrated January 26, 1930, as India's Independence Day in Lahore, an occasion that reverberated across the nation and was embraced by various Indian organizations. This collective assertion of independence laid the groundwork for Gandhi's next act of defiance against British rule.

In March 1930, Gandhi embarked on a new Satyagraha, this time targeting the oppressive tax on salt imposed by the British colonial administration. Salt, a vital commodity in everyday life, had long been monopolized by the British through draconian laws that banned Indians from independently producing or selling salt. Instead, they were compelled to buy costly, heavily taxed salt, placing a disproportionate burden on the impoverished masses.

Undeterred by the risks, Gandhi initiated a historic march from Sabarmati Ashram to the coastal city of Dandi, spanning over 385 kilometers. This symbolic act of defiance garnered widespread support among Indians and

¹⁰ "Aggarwal M. History of Gandhian Mass Movements for the Freedom of India"

captured the attention of the world. Along the shores of the Arabian Sea, Gandhi and his followers demonstrated their resistance by picking up handfuls of salt, effectively challenging the unjust laws and asserting their right to produce salt.¹¹

World War II and “Quit India” movement

Gandhi's steadfast opposition to providing assistance to the British war effort during World War II reflected his unwavering commitment to India's struggle for independence. Despite his campaign against Indian participation in the war, Gandhi faced significant resistance from many Indian leaders, including Sardar Patel and Rajendra Prasad, who disagreed with his stance. Consequently, over 2.5 million Indians disregarded Gandhi's plea and volunteered to join the British military, aligning themselves with the Allied forces on various fronts.

Gandhi believed that India should not support a conflict purportedly fought for democratic freedom while it remained subjugated under British colonial rule. Additionally, Gandhi vehemently condemned Nazism and Fascism, earning the endorsement of other Indian leaders who shared his anti-totalitarian sentiments. With the advancement of the war, Gandhi heightened his demands for independence, reaching a climax in his iconic 1942 address in Mumbai, during which he insisted on the British to "Quit India."¹²

The Quit India speech marked a pivotal moment in Gandhi's and the Congress Party's quest for liberation, representing their most definitive revolt against British rule. In response to Gandhi's impassioned plea, the British government swiftly arrested him and all members of the Congress Working Committee. This act of repression triggered widespread civil unrest, with Gandhi's countrymen retaliating by damaging or destroying hundreds of government-owned facilities, including railway stations and police stations, and disrupting communication networks by cutting telegraph wires.

Impact and Legacy

As civil disobedience movements gained momentum, drawing participation from millions across various societal strata and reviving ancient Indian traditions of non-violence, Gandhi simultaneously addressed numerous other critical issues that profoundly impacted the masses.

Gandhi's legacy and society

Gandhi vehemently condemned the entrenched caste system and the deplorable practice of untouchability within Indian society. His legacy is underscored by his unwavering commitment to gender equality, as he passionately advocated for the empowerment of women. Gandhi staunchly opposed the Purdah system and the prevalent

¹¹ “Deeya Mukherjee and Ishfaq Majid, Gandhi – India’s Greatest Contribution To Mankind. Think India Journal, Vol-22-Issue-10- November-2019”

¹² “Dubhashi P. R. (2011). The legacy of Mahatma Gandhi. Mainstream Weekly, XLIX(IV)”

customs of child marriage, which held sway in society at the time. Additionally, he vehemently denounced the practice of Sati, firmly standing against any form of oppression or discrimination.

Gandhi's legacy and economy

Gandhi passionately advocated for Swadeshi and adamantly opposed the proliferation of largescale industries. He firmly believed that India's path to economic self-reliance lay in the promotion of cottage industries. The enduring symbol of self-reliance, Khadi clothing, epitomizes Gandhi's legacy and continues to resonate with his ideals.

In advocating for balanced economic growth over centralized control, Gandhi championed a harmonious relationship between laborers and capitalists. While he recognized the importance of capital, Gandhi vehemently opposed the exploitative nature of capitalism.

Gandhi's vision of "spiritualizing economics" finds expression in his concept of trusteeship, rooted in the teachings of the Isopanisad. According to Gandhi, individuals should dedicate their resources to serving the greater good and utilize them only as necessary. In the Gandhian economic framework, production is driven by societal needs rather than personal greed.

A key distinction between Marxian socialism and Gandhian socialism lies in their methods of achieving social transformation. While Marxian socialism advocates for revolutionary violence, Gandhi's approach emphasizes a transformation of consciousness among the affluent. In Gandhian socialism, trust and nonviolence are paramount, paving the way for a more equitable and compassionate society.¹³

Gandhi's legacy and religion

Gandhi was deeply spiritual, finding solace in the recitation of Ramdhun. He envisioned a society akin to Ram Rajya, where harmony among all religions was his paramount objective. Gandhi staunchly maintained that the principles of love and service inherent in religion could only be upheld through Ahimsa, or non-violence. Furthermore, he advocated for a politics rooted in the moral teachings of religion. Throughout his life, Gandhi exemplified true secularism through his practice and beliefs.¹⁴

Gandhi's legacy and education

Education held paramount importance for Gandhi as a means of nation-building. He pioneered an Ashram-based educational system known as "Nai Talim," which underscored the holistic development of students encompassing

¹³ "Shukla S. K. (2004). Conflict Resolution and Peace Possibilities in the Gandhian Perspective. Gandhi Research Foundation"

¹⁴ "Aggarwal M. History of Gandhian Mass Movements for the Freedom of India"

physical, mental, and moral aspects. "Nai Talim" aimed to instill self-reliance and respect for manual labor, emphasizing vocational training as its cornerstone.

For Gandhi, "Nai Talim" served as a transformative tool, nurturing values such as social service, national duty, and humanity in individuals. The establishment of national schools and colleges emerged as a direct manifestation of Gandhi's educational vision, reflecting his enduring legacy and commitment to fostering a well-rounded citizenry.

Gandhi's legacy and Panchayat

Gandhi envisioned a decentralized governance system where each village would function as an autonomous republic or Panchayat, empowered with full authority over its affairs. Central to his vision was the idea of self-sufficiency, whereby every village would be capable of managing its own needs independently.

The Directive Principles of the Constitution reflected Gandhi's vision by advocating for the promotion of village Panchayats as units of self-government. This laid the groundwork for the establishment of a three-tiered Panchayat Raj system, culminating in the 73rd Amendment, which enshrined Panchayati Raj institutions in the constitution.¹⁵

Gandhi in the modern era

India, amidst its swift economic modernization and urban expansion, has diverged from Gandhi's economic principles, yet embraced much of his political ideology and continues to hold his memory in high regard. According to journalist Jim Yardley, "modern India is hardly a Gandhian nation if it ever was one. His vision of a village-dominated economy was shunted aside during his lifetime as rural romanticism, and his call for a national ethos of personal austerity and nonviolence has proved antithetical to the goals of an aspiring economic and military power." Despite this shift, Gandhi is credited with shaping India's political identity as a tolerant, secular democracy.¹⁶

However, Gandhi remains an indelible figure in contemporary India, revered as the "Father of the Nation," a title bequeathed upon him by Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose.¹⁷ Despite Bose's designation, Gandhi had long been affectionately referred to as "Bapu" by the common people of the country. Additionally, the honorific "Mahatma" was bestowed upon him by the esteemed poet Rabindranath Tagore. One of Gandhi's enduring legacies in modern India is the Swachh Bharat movement, highlighting his emphasis on cleanliness as a paramount value.

Gandhi as a legacy and the world

Few individuals have garnered as much international attention as Gandhi did during his lifetime. The roster of influential figures who admired and revered Gandhi and his legacy is truly remarkable. Martin Luther King, renowned for his advocacy of civil liberties in the United States and the fight against racial discrimination, regarded Gandhi as his mentor and drew inspiration from his teachings. Alongside King, a multitude of eminent personalities from various fields expressed admiration for Gandhi and followed in his footsteps. From Romain Rolland to Aldous

¹⁵ "Dubhashi, P. R. (2011). The legacy of Mahatma Gandhi. *Mainstream Weekly*, XLIX(IV)"

¹⁶ "Yardley J. (2010). Obama Invokes Gandhi, Whose Ideal Eludes India. *New York Times*"

¹⁷ "Radio Speech by Subhas Chandra Bose"

Huxley, from Bernard Shaw to Albert Einstein, a diverse array of luminaries found inspiration in Gandhi's principles. Even figures like Charlie Chaplin, Leo Tolstoy, and Desmond Tutu were deeply influenced by Gandhi's philosophy of nonviolence and social justice. The list extends to include modern leaders such as Barack Obama, Nelson Mandela, and Aung San Suu Kyi, among others, who have acknowledged Gandhi's profound impact on their own struggles for justice and equality.

One of the early advocates and practitioners of Gandhi's principles was John Haynes Holmes, a notable Unitarian minister and reformer known for his staunch pacifism during World War I. He initially articulated his encounter with Gandhi's ideas in a sermon entitled "The Christ of Today," which gained widespread circulation. In a subsequent sermon delivered in 1922 titled "Who is the Greatest Man in the World Today?", Holmes further expounded on his admiration for Gandhi's philosophy.¹⁸

Gandhi's principles of civil disobedience and non-violence have served as the foundational principles for various protest movements worldwide. From the velvet revolutions in Eastern Europe to the events at Tahrir Square in Egypt, Gandhi's philosophy has proven to be a potent force. It played a pivotal role in shaping the U.S. civil rights movement and influenced antiauthoritarian struggles during the 1980s and 1990s, exemplified by movements like the "people power" uprising in the Philippines and Czechoslovakia's "Velvet Revolution." Additionally, Gandhi's teachings were evident in the Arab Spring of 2011, demonstrating the enduring relevance and universal applicability of his ideas.¹⁹

Conclusion

In conclusion, the rise of Mahatma Gandhi stands as a testament to the power of individual courage, moral conviction, and unwavering commitment to nonviolent resistance. Throughout his life, Gandhi tirelessly advocated for social justice, human rights, and the principles of truth and nonviolence. From his early days in South Africa, where he first confronted racial discrimination, to his pivotal role in India's struggle for independence, Gandhi's legacy has left an indelible mark on the world.

Gandhi's philosophy of Satyagraha, or truth force, inspired countless movements for freedom and equality around the globe. His steadfast adherence to nonviolent protest as a means of effecting change served as a beacon of hope for oppressed peoples everywhere. Whether leading mass demonstrations, participating in hunger strikes, or advocating for the rights of the marginalized, Gandhi's unwavering commitment to his principles earned him the respect and admiration of millions.

¹⁸ "Walker, C. C. (1967). The Impact of Gandhi on The US Peace Movement. Ramachandran and Mahadevan, eds., op. cit, 195-208"

¹⁹ "Mantena, K. (2017). How India's Nonviolent Resistance Became a Shifting Global Movement. Zocalo"

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