



ROLE OF MAHATMA GANDHIJI ON INDIAN NATIONAL MOVEMENT

**Madhavi Ramagiri, Research Scholar, Department of History, Ekalavya University,
Damoh, Madhya Pradesh, India**

**Dr. Siraj Khan, Associate Professor, Department of History, Ekalavya University, Damoh,
Madhya Pradesh, India**

Abstract:

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1948), here in after Gandhiji, was undoubtedly the most authentic and celebrated representative of the wisdom and culture of India in our times. His countrymen address him, with respect, as the Mahatma. For Many, among the greatest, Gandhiji was the great. He was a social reformer, an economist, a political philosopher and a seeker of truth. We consider him as a 'yugapurusha', one who inaugurated a new era. The contribution of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi to the Indian national movement was un-paralleled. He made the Indian National Congress a peoples 'Congress and the national movement a mass movement. He made people fearless and bold and taught them the non-violent method for fighting against injustice. He had a passion for individual liberty which was closely bound with his understanding of truth and self-realization. He played a pivotal role in the India's struggle for freedom which was the world's largest democratic movement. Indian nationalism achieved its highest peak under Gandhi's leadership. Gandhiji's role in the National Movement of India was undoubtedly the most remarkable. Front 1919 to 1947 A.D. The father of the Nation Mahatma Gandhi was one of these great men who dedicated their whole life to the service of the mankind.

Keywords: Gandhi, Role, India, Independence Movement etc.

Introduction

Mahatma Gandhi played a key role in transforming the content, ideology and range of Indian politics during the National Movement. With his entry into politics there opened a new phase of struggle. With the shift to mass mobilization, he remained the dominant personality during the National Movement and played a crucial role in directing the struggle against British



imperialism. In the initial stage of his entry into Indian politics, Gandhi tried to understand Indian economic, social and political reality and applied new forms of struggle. During his stay in South Africa Gandhi fought against racial discrimination which denied to the Indian community human rights necessary for leading a civilized life. So he was experienced in the techniques of political mobilization. After his return from South Africa, Gandhi emerged the most prominent leader of Indian national movement and using his new techniques of mass mobilization he was able to secure participation of poorer peasants, youth and women. This was visible in the series of movements like Non-Cooperation, Civil Disobedience and Quit India movement. So, understanding Gandhi's ideas and techniques is essential to understand his influence on the National Movement.

Mahatma Gandhi was born on October 2.1869 A.D. in a trading family of porbander, a small town in Kathiawara. His full name was Mohan Das Karam Chand Gandhi and his father was the Diwan of Rajkot. He went off to South Africa after marriage and worked as barrister there for twenty years. In South Africa, he had his first brush with apartheid. Once while he was traveling in a train, he was thrown out of the first class compartment despite having a ticket. This made him swear that he would do his best to erase apartheid from the face of his world. He went back to India only to find that his own country was being ruled by the British and his fellow citizens were being treated harshly by the British. Role of Mahatma Gandhi in Freedom Struggle Like other great men in history, Gandhi took his time to grow and develop his techniques to ensure that his actions made an impact. His faith in different religions was commendable. He listened to the teachings of Christianity with the same belief and faith he read the Hindu scriptures with. Gandhi arrived in India on 9 January, 1915. Initially, he spent a year visiting various places in India to have an understanding of the situation. His political engagement started in the 1917-18 period when he took up the issues of Champaran indigo farmers, the Ahmedabad textile workers and the Kheda peasants.

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was 'a man of millennium' who imparts the lesson of truth, Non- violence and peace. The philosophy and ideology is relevant still today. The philosophy of Gandhi was based on truth, sacrifice, non- violence selfless service and cooperation. In modern



times, nonviolent methods of action have been a powerful tool for social protest. According to Gandhi one should be brave and not a coward. He should present his views, suggestions and thoughts without being violent. One should fight a war with the weapons of truth and non-violence. Gandhi said that ‘There is no god higher than truth’. According to Gandhi’s thoughts nonviolence is ultimate solution of every kind of problem in the world.

Gandhi was single person who fought against the British with the weapons of truth and Non-violence by persuading countrymen to walk on the path of non- violence. Gandhi leading a decades-long nonviolent struggle against British rule in India, which eventually helped India, wins its independence in 1947. By the efforts of Gandhi India became independent. Gandhi initiated non-violence activities like Quit India movement and non-operation movement. Gandhi could never have done what he did alone, but with his ability to identify a seed here, a seed there and nurture it, he was able to create a forest of human change. He understood that it was not enough to be a leader, but to create leaders. In quite simple and clear words, Gandhism consists of the ideas, which Mahatma Gandhi put forth before human world. Along with that, to the maximum possible extent, Mahatma Gandhi treated his individual life in accordance with these ideas. Clearly; Gandhism is a mixture of Gandhi’s concepts and practices. The basic ground ship of Gandhism happens to be non-violence. The non-violence is the most ancient eternal value. This non-violence is the ground of ancient-most civilization and culture of India. Mahatma Gandhi said on this very account while making his concepts and practices based on non-violence: ‘I have nothing new to teach you’ Truth and non- violence are as old as hill. As we know, non-violence and truth are two sides of the same coin. After knowing Gandhism, it is imperative for us to know clearly the concept of non- violence also as it accords the ground for Gandhism. Gandhi’s importance in the political world scenario is twofold.

First, he retrieved non-violence as a powerful political tool and secondly manifestation of a higher spiritual goal, culmination in world peace. For Gandhi, means were as important as the end and there could be only one means - that of non- violence. As a situation opposite to violence is non-violence, we can firmly state, total nonviolence consists in not hurting some other one’s intellect, speech or action per own thought, utterance or deeds and not to deprive



some one of his life. Mahatma Gandhi fully agrees with above-mentioned derivation of non-violence. He himself has said, Non- violence is not a concrete thing as it has generally been enunciated. Undoubtedly, it is a part of non-violence to abstain from hurting some living being, but it is only an iota pertaining to its identity. The principle of nonviolence is shattered by every evil thought, false utterance, hate or wishing something bad unto someone. It is also shattered per possession of necessary worldly things. In this chain Mahatma Gandhi clarified in an edition of Young India: ‘To hurt someone, to think of some evil unto someone or to snatch one’s life under anger or selfishness, is violence. In contrast, purest non-violence involves a tendency and presuming towards spiritual or physical benefit unto every one without selfishness and with pure thought after cool and clear deliberations’. The ultimate yardstick of violence or non-violence is the spirit behind the action. There are many examples of their use like resistance, non-violent resistance, and civil revolution.

Mahatma Gandhi had to struggle in his whole life, but he never disappointed, he continued his innate faith in non-violence and his belief in the methods of Satyagraha. The significance of Satyagraha was soon accepted worldwide. Martin Luther King adopted the methods of Satyagraha in his fight against the racial discrimination of the American authorities in 1950. Gandhism is very much contextual today on this accord. It is significant. We should grasp importance of Gandhism while analyzing it. Presently a big portion of the world happens to be under Democratic system of Government. Theoretically, this system stands out to be the best up to now. This is a truth. It is the best because people are connected with it directly or indirectly at every level. Not only this, it is this very system, which provides maximum opportunities of public progress and development. People can themselves decide in this system the mode of their welfare. However, even though being theoretically the best system of government, if we peruse the democratic nations, we first of all find that there is non-equal development of the citizens. We subsequently find that these nations are more or less victimized by regionalism. They have problem relating to language. They are under clutches of terrorism and communalism.

Major Movement for Freedom India by Mahatma Gandhi

The Satyagrah Movement



According to Gandhiji, truth is what the inner self experiences at any point of time; it 'is an answer to one's conscience; it is what responds to one's moral self. He was convinced that knowledge alone" leads a person to the truth while ignorance takes one away from the truth. Satyagraha means urge for Satya, or truth. Satyagraha is not merely the insistence on truth; it is, in fact, holding on to truth through ways which are moral and non-violent; it is not the imposition of one's will over others, but it is appealing to the reasoning of the opponent; it is not coercion but is persuasion. Gandhiji highlighted several attributes of satyagraha. It is a moral weapon and does not entertain ill-feeling towards the adversary; it is a non-violent device and calls upon its user to love his enemy; it does not weaken the opponent but strengthens him morally; it is a weapon of the brave and is constructive in its approach. One of his major achievements in 1918 were the Champaran and Kheda agitations – a movement against British landlords. The farmers and peasantry were forced to grow and cultivate Indigo, and were even to forced to sell them at fixed prices. Finally, these farmers pledged to Mahatma Gandhi and non-violent protest took place. Where in Gandhiji won the battle Kheda, in the year 1918 was hit by floods and farmers wanted relief from tax. Using non-cooperation as his main weapon Gandhiji used it in pledging the farmers for nonpayment of taxes. Gandhiji got much public support and finally in May 1918, Government gave the provisions related to tax payment.

Khilafat Movement

Gandhiji in the year 1919 approached Muslims, as he found the position of Congress was quite weak and unstable. Khilafat Movement is all about the worldwide protest against the status of Caliph by Muslims. Finally Mahatma Gandhi had an All India Muslim Conference, and became the main person for the event. This movement supported Muslims to a great extent and the success of this movement made him the national leader and facilitated his strong position in Congress party. Khilafat movement collapsed badly in 1922 and throughout their journey Gandhiji fought against communalism, but the gap between Hindus and Muslims widened.



Non-cooperation Movement

One of the first series of non-violent protests nationwide was the non-cooperation movement started by Mahatma Gandhi. The Gandhi Era in the Indian Freedom Struggle took place with the Non Cooperation Movement. This movement was led by Mahatma Gandhi and the Indian National Congress. This was the first-ever series of nationwide movement of nonviolent resistance. The movement took place from September 1920 until February 1922. In the fight against injustice, Gandhi's weapons were non-cooperation and peaceful resistance. But after the massacre and related violence, Gandhi focused his mind upon obtaining complete self-government. This soon transformed into Swaraj or complete political independence. Thus, under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, the Congress Party was re-organized with a new constitution, with the aim of Swaraj. Mahatma Gandhi further extended his non-violence policy to include the Swadeshi Policy, which meant the rejection of foreign-made goods. Mahatma Gandhi addressed all the Indians to wear Khadi (homespun cloth) instead of British-made textiles. He strongly appealed to all Indians to spend some time spinning khadi for supporting the independence movement of India. This was a policy to include women in the movement, as this was not considered a respectable activity. Moreover; Gandhi also urged to boycott the British educational institutions, to resign from government jobs, and to leave British titles. Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore resigned the title knight from the British soon after the Jalianwalabagh Massacre as a protest. When the movement reached great success, it ended unexpectedly after the violent clash in ChauriChaura, Uttar Pradesh. Following this, Mahatma Gandhi was also arrested and sentenced to 6 years imprisonment. Indian National Congress was divided into two segments. Furthermore, support among the Hindu and Muslim people was also breaking down. However; Mahatma Gandhi only served around 2 years and was released. In this freedom struggle, the non-cooperation movement was basically aimed at making the Indians aware of the fact that the British government can be opposed and if done actively, it will keep a check on them. Thus, educational institutions were boycotted, foreign goods were boycotted, and people let go off their nominated seats in government institutions. Though the movement failed, Indians awakened to the concept of going against the British.



Salt Satyagraha Movement - Dandi march

The Salt Satyagraha, also known as The Dandi March, began on 12 March 1930 and was an important part of the Indian independence movement. It was a direct action campaign of tax resistance and nonviolent protest against the British salt monopoly in colonial India, and triggered the wider Civil Disobedience Movement. This was the most significant organized challenge to British authority since the Non-cooperation movement of 1920–22, and directly followed the PurnaSwaraaj declaration of independence by the Indian National Congress on 26 January 1930. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi led the Dandi march from his base, Sabarmati Ashram near Ahmedabad, to the coastal village of Dandi, located at a small town called Navsari, in the state of Gujarat. As he continued on this 24-day, 240-mile (390 km) march to Dandi to produce salt without paying the tax, growing numbers of Indians joined him along the way. When Gandhi broke the salt laws at 6:30 am on 6 April 1930, it sparked large scale acts of civil disobedience against the British Raj salt laws by millions of Indians. The campaign had a significant effect on changing world and British attitude towards Indian independence and caused large numbers of Indians to join the fight for the first time.

Quit India Movement

In August 1942, Gandhiji launched the Quit India Movement (“Bharat Chhodo Andolan”). A resolution was passed on 8 August 1942 in Bombay by the All India Congress Committee, declaring its demand for an immediate end of British rule. The Congress decided to organize a mass struggle on non-violent lines on the widest possible scale. Gandhiji’s slogan of „Do or Die“ (Karoya Maro) inspired the nation. Every man, woman and child began dreaming of a free India. The government’s response to the movement was quick. The Congress was banned and most of its leaders were arrested before they could start mobilizing the people. The people, however, were unstoppable. There were hartals and demonstrations all over the country. The people attacked all symbols of the British government such as railway stations, law courts and police stations. Railway lines were damaged and telegraph lines were cut. In some places, people even set up their independent government. The movement was most widespread in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Bengal, Bombay, Odisha and Andhra Pradesh. Places such as Ballia, Tamruk, Satara,



Dharwar, Balasore and Talcher were freed from British rule and the people there formed their own governments.

India Independence

After the Quit India Movement the freedom struggle got even more intense and passionate. Entire India was united together in the movement for freedom. Everyone contributed what they could in the freedom struggle. The cry of PurnaSwaraj or complete independence was raised. After much sacrifices and efforts, India gained its independence on the 15th August, 1947.

Conclusion

Mahatma Gandhi's role in India's independence movement was of utmost importance. His philosophy of nonviolence, civil disobedience, and passive resistance galvanized public support and brought about a change in the mindset of the people. Gandhi's vision for India was one of unity, inclusiveness, and social justice, and he worked tirelessly to promote these values. Gandhi's Salt March and the Quit India Movement are examples of his commitment to the cause of Indian independence. His efforts led to the eventual independence of India from British colonial rule in 1947. Despite being opposed to partition, Gandhi worked towards promoting peace and reconciliation between Hindus and Muslims during the tumultuous period of the partition. Gandhi's assassination in 1948 was a great loss for India and the world. However, his legacy continues to inspire movements for peace, social justice, and human rights across the globe. His philosophy of nonviolence and his commitment to the welfare of the marginalized and oppressed remain relevant even today. Mahatma Gandhi's contribution to India's independence movement was monumental, and his legacy will continue to inspire generations to come. His philosophy of nonviolence and his vision for a united and inclusive India serve as a reminder of the power of peaceful protest and the need for social justice in the world today. His greatest achievement in the field of social reform was the campaign against inhuman institution of untouchability which had degraded millions of Indians. His other achievement was in the field of cottage industries. He saw in the charkha, the spinning wheel, the salvation of the village people and its promotion became part of the congress programme. In addition to infusing people with the



spirit of nationalism it provided employment to millions and created a large group of people who were ready to throw themselves into the struggle and court imprisonment. The charkha became so important that it eventually became a part of the flag of the Indian National Congress. Gandhiji devoted himself to the cause of Hindu-Muslim unity .He regarded communalism as anti-national and inhuman. Under his leadership the unity of the nationalist movement was secured and the people worked hard for independence.

Gandhi was having an unflinching and unshakable faith in the theory of nonviolence. For his whole life, both in South-Africa as well as in India, he preached and practiced the theory of non-violence, not as a policy but as a principle, as a conviction and creed. Nonviolence was the first article of his faith and it was also the last article of his creed. Though he was not the pioneer of the doctrine of non –violence, but he is credited with redefining the philosophy of non-violence. Gandhi evolved and developed a powerful non-violent method, giving it the name Satyagraha. Gandhi defined Satyagraha as a Non-violent force or Truth-force or Love-force or Moral-force or Spiritual-force and strength to adopt and apply it in every field of life. Champaran Satyagraha laid the foundation stone of Gandhi’s future leadership at all-India level which waged a consistent and long moral and non-violent warfare to make India free from the British imperialism and colonialism. Like Champaran Satyagraha, the successes of Ahmedabad Satyagraha and Kheda Satyagraha further strengthened the people’s confidence in Gandhi’s theory of non-violence and his non-violent method of Satyagraha. Through the successful application of these three Satyagraha, Gandhi succeeded in awakening the people to unite against the injustices, evils and exploitations committed either by the Indian people or the Britishers. Gandhi entered the Congress and assumed the national leadership enjoying the support and fulfilling the aspirations of both the Muslims and Hindus and thereby, building up a strong moral pressure on the British Government to pay to the demands of the Indian people.



References:

1. Percival Spear, The History India, Vol 2.
2. Percival Spear, Oxford History of Modern India 1740- 1947.
3. Bipan Chandra et.al, India's Struggle for Independence.
4. SumitSarkar, Modern India 1885- 1947.
5. SekharaBandyopadhyaya, From Plassey to Partition: A History of Modern India.
6. A. R, Desai, Social Background of Indian Nationalism.
7. Bose, S. (2004). A Hundred Horizons: The Indian Ocean in the Age of Global Empire. Harvard University Press.
8. Brown, J. M. (2003). Mahatma Gandhi: Nonviolent power in action. Columbia University Press.
9. Chandra, B. (1989). India's struggle for independence. Penguin Books.
10. Gandhi, M. K. (1993). Autobiography: The story of my experiments with truth. Beacon Press.
11. Khan, Yasmin (2007). The Great Partition: The Making of India and Pakistan. Yale University Press. p. 18. ISBN 978-0- 300-12078-3.
12. Khan, Yasmin (2007). The Great Partition: The Making of India and Pakistan. Yale University Press. p. 1. ISBN 978-0- 300-12078-3.
13. Cush, Denise; Robinson, Catherine; York, Michael (2008). Encyclopedia of Hinduism. Taylor & Francis. p. 544. ISBN 978-0-7007-1267-0.
14. www.india.com/top-n/gandhi-jayanti-top-5-movements-forindependence-by-mahatma-gandhi-162192/
15. www.iloveindia.com/history/modern-history/role-ofgandhi.html
16. www.preservearticles.com/201012271756/quit-indiamovement.html
17. www.historytuition.com/swaraj_to_complete_independence/gandhiji_contribution.html
18. <https://egyankosh.ac.in/bitstream/123456789/73863/1/Unit-11.pdf>
19. Pankaj Borah, Gandhi's Role in Indian Freedom Struggle: A Critical Understanding, Global Research Methodology Journal, V01-II, 7th issue, Nov-Dec-Jan, 2012-13.