

Mahatma Gandhi and his form of activism, its impact and its effectiveness.

For this assignment I have chosen Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, who was bestowed the title of Mahatma (meaning 'Great Soul') , whose method of non violent protest and civil disobedience , known as Satyagraha, was “ a way of defeating the enemy without hurting him and without feeling or arousing hatred”. (theorwellfoundation.com.2012). This form of non violent protest, along with his total commitment to integrity and truth, would go on to influence future leaders such as Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela. (indusedu.org,2014). Gandhi taught his countrymen to always fight without the need for any form of arms or ammunition. His principles were simply truth and non-violence. Gandhi would live his life by following 11 vows, these vows were “Ahimsa: non violence, Satya: truth, Asteya: non-stealing, Brahmacharya: self discipline , Aparigraha: non-possession , Sharirshrama: bread labor, Aswada: control of palate, Sarvatra Bhayavarjana: fearlessness, Sarva Dharma Samanvaya: equality of all religions, Swadeshi: use of only locally made goods and Swadeshi: removal of untouchability. (www.gandimanibhavan.org.2024).

So firstly who was Mahatma Gandhi, who was also referred to as the “Father of India and a “Great Soul in Beggars Garb”, (National Geographic,2019). He was born on the 2nd October 1869, in Porbandar, which was in the Gujarat region of India, into what we would acknowledge, as a ‘middle class’, Hindu family. At the time of Gandhi's birth, India had already been under the control of the British for over 150 years. His father Karamchand, was himself an important leader in the Porbandar state.

In 1888, Gandhi left his home and travelled to Britain to study Law in London. After completing his course he was called to the bar in 1891.

In 1893, he moved to Natal in South Africa. It was in Natal in 1894 that Satyagraha first came into prominence . Gandhi led protests against anti-Indian legislation. Many thousands of Indian labourers has helped build Natal, however the “ colony fostered both formal and informal discrimination against people of Indian descent”.(nationalgeographical.com.2019). In 1894 Gandhi would form and organise the Indian resistance, which was to fight the anti-Indian legislation, which had been introduced. This legislation saw Natal strip all Indians living there, of their ability to vote .

Later however It must also be discussed the racism that Gandhi showed towards black African rights and the disparaging comments that he would make of them.

In 1915 Gandhi left South Africa and took Satyagraha, his non violent form of protest back to India. In the same year he was elected to the Indian National Congress. Gandhi's election into the national congress gave him the opportunity to fight against Britains 1919 law, the Rowlatt Act, “ that gave British authorities carte blanche to imprison suspected revolutionaries without trial”. (nationalgeographical.2019). On 13th April 1919, retaliations were started by the British, in response to the resistance, unarmed protestors were mown down. This act of brutality was to be known as the Amritsar Massacre, which was also known as the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre . (wikipedia.org.2024). Estimates at the time put the dead at between 379 and more than 1500 and over 1200 injured, with 192 of those seriously. (wikipedia.org.2024). Indians were stunned at the British brutality and this gave increased support for India's independence from Britain. Gandhi would now increase his aim for home rule and encouraged the boycott of all British goods. In 1930 Gandhi initiated a campaign against the rule that Indians were being forced to buy only British salt, instead of being able to buy and use the salt that was produced in India. Gandhi initiated a march , which was to be known as the Salt March.

The Salt March, which was also known as the Dandi March or Salt Satyagraha (Britannica.2024), saw, Gandhi and his masses of non-violent followers march from Sabermati(near Ahmadabad) what is now in the Western Indian state of Gujarat to the town of Dandi, which is on the Arabian Sea coast, a distance of 240 miles. On their arrival Gandhi and his supporters broke the British salt laws by making their own salt from the seawater. As previously noted, Indians had up until

this march, been banned from making salt by the British Raj. The British Raj had a total monopoly on the production and distribution in India, the result was that a majority of Indians were unable to afford the expensive salt, thus forcing them to only buy the British salt, which totally went against Gandhi's ethos of support locally. Following the march millions of fellow Indians were inspired by Gandhi, to themselves take part in many acts of large scale civil disobedience. These actions incensed the British government and all those involved in the colonial rule of India and over "60,000 peaceful protestors" were arrested and imprisoned. (nationalgeographical.2019). The march attracted international attention also and resulted in , Gandhi gaining further support, not only from within India , but also much further a field. It caused a global outcry towards the British actions in India. The Salt march would go on to be seen as a significant turning point in the fight against the British colonial rule, even though Gandhi at the time was unsuccessful in his negotiations for Indian home rule.

This lead Gandhi on the 8th August 1942 to start, the Quit India movement, whilst at the "All India Congress Committee session in Bombay".(open.ac.uk.2024). Britains reply was to arrest Gandhi, Nehru and other leaders of the Indian National Congress, the next day. Gandhi was placed under house arrest at the Aga Khan Palace in Pune. The actions by the British government only initiated increased non violent protests, but also disorderly ones . The Quit India movement would see " thousands killed and injured and more than 100,000 people imprisoned. (open.ac.uk.2024). On 10th February 1943 Gandhi began a fast " to protest against the arrests and demanded the release of all political prisoners". (governmentofindia.2024). These negotiations resulted in the release of political prisoners. (governmentofindia.2024). It should be noted that Gandhi would use fasting as a method of protest and was known to have undertook 15 'significant' fasts between 1913 and 1948. (governmentindia.2024).

This fast was to last 21 days and drew significant support from across India and only led to increased the resistance to the British rule. The British authorities were becoming increasingly concerned about the continued and growing unrest and also the health of Gandhi was deteriorating. This lead to negotiations taking place on February 18th 1943 between Gandhi and the British authorities. These negotiations resulted in the release of political prisoners. (governmentofindia.2024).

Gandhi's fasting would show him as a leader and would also make sacrifices " Leaders are more likely to be viewed as charismatic if they make self sacrifice, take personal risks, and incur high costs to achieve the vision they espouse". (Yuki, 2010). We see with Gandhi that he lived a simple life and did not surround himself with materialistic pleasures, he shunned western clothes and chose instead to wear a 'dhoti', which his masses of followers themselves wore. By living in such a modest life, Gandhi was able to gain trust from many. He would practice what he preached and would always lead by example. Gandhi , did and would not partake in violence, even though he himself was beaten on many occasions and imprisoned. Gandhi was a servant leader, "servant leaders put other people's needs, aspirations and interests above their own".(Sendjaya.2005).

The Quit India movement was a pivotal point and only increased the support from the Indian population, to unite against the British rule and to finally see an end to it. By the time that Gandhi was released from prison in 1944, the British had suppressed most of the demonstrations. However Gandhi on his release from prison was a very frail man.

India finally gained independence from the British rule in August 1947, after a lifetime of peaceful protesting Gandhi would only live to see a free India for a few months. On the 30th January 1948, Mahatma (Mohandas Karamchand) Gandhi was assassinated by a Hindu fanatic named Nathuram Vinayak Godse. Godse had believed that Gandhi had been far too conciliatory to the Indian subcontinent's large Muslim minority. (Britannica.2024). With over 1 million people (history today.com.2024) lining the 5 mile route of his funeral parade.

There is no doubt that Gandhi was one of the main contributors to an independent India, however it was Nehru(Jawahar) who shaped this independence during his premiership. Gandhi had "envisioned a traditionalist society for the freed country" (SMM.2024) of India, whereas Nehru " envisioned a modern India with an international presence".(SMM.2024). Gandhi was partially eclipsed by Nehru, who could be seen as a more anti fascist leader. Gandhi and Nehru would have many differences , one time Gandhi remarked on their differences and said, " Jawahar wants

Englishmen to go but Angreziat (English ways and culture) to stay, I want Angreziat to go and Englishmen to stay as our friends".(nbu.2024).

On August 15th, 1947, Gandhi's lifelong struggle for India's freedom came into fruition and approximately just a month since the British parliament passed the Indian Independence Act. This act would see what was British India partitioned into two countries, India and Pakistan. Up until this point India had been under direct rule by Britain since 1858. (Britannia.2024). This act caused growing unrest in India. Much has been written concerning Gandhi and Nehru

Gandhi worked tirelessly in battle against "Untouchability", as well as his dedication to help improve the conditions of the oppressed and the poor societies within India. Gandhi had no self interest in his motivation to free India, but he was motivated by the aim to enable betterment and concern of the people of India. He was seen as a humble man who would thank individuals and aimed to nurture those around him. He said that close friendships "are dangerous, because 'friends react to one another' and to loyalty to a friend one can lead into wrong doing". (theorwellfoundation.com,2012). However there were controversies and many did not believe and accept that Gandhi did enough to fight the caste system, racial segregation (especially the struggle of black African rights) and only showed partial support for women's rights. Gandhi has indeed been described as a racist by some, for the disparaging comments he made in relation to the struggle for black African rights in South Africa.

He attracted negativity for his lack of support for black African rights and only minimal support for women's rights and did he really strive enough to challenge and change the caste system in India. Many have disputed whether Gandhi was in fact a racist and turned a "blind eye". Gandhi believed in the "Aryan brotherhood", (Kolge,2016,p89) where whites and Indians were seen and believed to be "higher up than Africans on the civilised scale". (bbc.co.uk,2015). At no time did Gandhi attempt to build an alliance with the black Africans. Gandhi would insist that "what I always wanted was the removal of racial distinctions, not for equality" (Kolge,2016,p89). Therefore would it be acceptable to believe that Gandhi could not fight for the black Africans, when he could not believe that he would ever be able to fight for political equality for the Indians in South Africa. (Kolge,2016,p88-93). Gandhi's grandson Rajmohan Gandhi, stated in his biography of Gandhi that he "was at times ignorant and prejudiced about South Africa's blacks", but he would also go on to state that "Gandhi's struggle for Indian rights in South Africa paved the way for the struggle of Black rights"(bbc.co.uk,2015). Gandhi made numerous racist remarks, comments and writings, especially using the word 'kaffir' when referring to the black Africans ("In South Africa, the use of the term Kaffir to refer to a Black African is a profoundly offensive and inflammatory expression of contemptuous racism that is sufficient grounds for legal action. The term is associated especially with the era of [apartheid](#), when it was commonly used as an offensive racial slur, and its offensiveness has only increased over time. It now ranks as perhaps the most offensive term in South African English([merriam-webster.com,2024](#))), a word, which we know is regarded as extremely racially offensive by today's standards. I think it is difficult to deny that Gandhi would be classed as racist today, he was happy to work with the white colonials, but not with or indeed for, the black South Africans.

Gandhi had to create new rules to deal with the numerous and varied unprecedented situations that he would find himself in. He would teach future leaders that they would require the forward vision and far reaching abilities, which they would need to adapt to be able to have maximum impact. He was a charismatic leader who had the ability to harness his power to lead and inspire others. With the only chosen weapons of Gandhi being marching, fasting and non violent force, with the end result and his main goal was to motivate and unite India. He was seen as a patient and persistent individual, who always stayed true to his values of unity, equality, truth, non-violence, justice and honesty.

Gandhi "activated a social identity"([www.indusedu.org,2014](#)) amongst the people of India, "at a time when their survival was being threatened"([www.indusedu.org,2014](#)).

Seen by many as a natural leader. "Leadership is the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how to do it, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives". (Yuki.2010).

Gandhi died as he had lived most of his life, a private man without wealth, without property, without official title or office. Even though his aim was to blend and join with his followers, whilst he was seen by some as not impressive in statue or appearance, he was undeniably a “crowd puller”. (Meindl.1990). Gandhi was able to achieve a “spontaneous spread of emotional and behavioural reactions among the people through the process of social contagion”. (Meindl.1990)

Even though Gandhi succeeded and failed in his life, it cannot be doubted that he spent his life with his views and actions, trying to bring about a positive change, albeit for what he saw as important.

Gandhi had no personal self-interest in his motivation to free India, but he was motivated by the aim to enable betterment and concern for the people of India. He was seen as a humble man, who would thank individuals and aimed to nurture those around him. He said that close friendships “are dangerous, because ‘friends react to one another’ and through loyalty to a friend one can lead into wrong-doing”. (theorwellfoundation.com.2012).

Despite this can he really say that he was the Father of India or indeed the Great Soul, when there were also such controversies, his lack of interest in women’s rights, lack of fight for the caste system and those within it and his racism. He would have many ideas, but was he able to deal with reality or situations that would also fit with his idealism, at times he would be projected as a naive individual, who found it difficult to want or accept change.

Bibliography

1942 Quit India Movement | Making Britain ([no date]). Available at: <https://www5.open.ac.uk/research-projects/making-britain/content/1942-quit-india-movement> (Accessed: 20 November 2024).

Allen, D. (2007) ‘Mahatma Gandhi on Violence and Peace Education’. *Philosophy East and West* 57(3), pp. 290–310.

BBC News (2015) ‘Was Mahatma Gandhi a racist?’. 17 September. Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-34265882> (Accessed: 20 November 2024).

Crisis and leadership – lessons from the mahatma - IITB-WashU ([no date]). Available at: <https://iitb-wustl.org/crisis-and-leadership-lessons-from-the-mahatma/> (Accessed: 12 November 2024).

Definition of KAFFIR ([no date]). Available at: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Kaffir> (Accessed: 23 November 2024).

Easwaran, Eknath (2010) *Gandhi The man The story of his transformation*. Accessible.

Gandhi’s Legacy | Articles on and by Mahatma Gandhi ([no date]). Available at: https://www.mk Gandhi.org/articles/g_lagacy.php (Accessed: 23 October 2024).

Halder, T. ([no date]) *Coming to terms with Gandhi’s complicated legacy*. Available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2021/4/7/coming-to-terms-with-gandhis-complicated-legacy> (Accessed: 20 November 2024).

How Mahatma Gandhi changed the face of political protest (2019). Available at: <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/culture/article/mahatma-gandhi-changed-political-protest> (Accessed: 6 November 2024).

‘Jallianwala Bagh massacre’. (2024) *Wikipedia*. Available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Jallianwala_Bagh_massacre&oldid=1255985455 (Accessed: 20 November 2024).

Kolge, N. (2016) ‘Was Gandhi a Racist? His Writings in South Africa’. *Economic and Political Weekly* 51(5), pp. 88–93.

Mahatma Gandhi | Biography, Education, Religion, Accomplishments, Death, & Facts | Britannica (2024). Available at: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Mahatma-Gandhi> (Accessed: 23 October 2024).

Mahotsav, A. ([no date]) *Fasting to Freedom: Gandhi's Fasts as a Resistance to British Rule*. Available at: <https://cmsadmin.amritmahotsav.nic.in/district-repository-detail.htm?25186> (Accessed: 20 November 2024).

Mahsud, R., Yukl, G. and Prussia, G. (2010) 'Leader empathy, ethical leadership, and relations-oriented behaviors as antecedents of leader-member exchange quality'. *Journal of Managerial Psychology* 25(6), pp. 561–577. doi: [10.1108/02683941011056932](https://doi.org/10.1108/02683941011056932).

Nehru and Gandhi | Smithsonian American Art Museum ([no date]). Available at: <https://americanart.si.edu/artwork/nehru-and-gandhi-11711> (Accessed: 12 November 2024).

Reflections on Gandhi | The Orwell Foundation (2012). Available at: <https://www.orwellfoundation.com/the-orwell-foundation/orwell/essays-and-other-works/reflections-on-gandhi/> (Accessed: 23 October 2024).

Salt March (1930) | Definition, Causes, Location, & Significance | Britannica (2024). Available at: <https://www.britannica.com/event/Salt-March> (Accessed: 23 October 2024).

Sansom, I. (2010) 'Great dynasties of the world: the Nehru-Gandhis'. *The Guardian* 23 April. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2010/apr/24/india-nehru-gandhi> (Accessed: 12 November 2024).

Sendjaya, S. (2017) 'Leading with the heart'. Available at: https://bridges.monash.edu/articles/journal_contribution/Leading_with_the_heart/4968503/1 (Accessed: 19 November 2024).

Spear, P. (1967) 'Nehru'. *Modern Asian Studies* 1(1), pp. 15–29. doi: [10.1017/S0026749X00000044](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0026749X00000044).

The Death of Mahatma Gandhi | History Today ([no date]). Available at: <https://www.historytoday.com/archive/months-past/death-mahatma-gandhi> (Accessed: 20 November 2024).

The Eleven Vows of Mahatma Gandhi | Articles by Gandhi | Educational Resources | On Gandhi | Mani Bhavan - Gandhi Sangrahalaya: Mahatma Gandhi Museum & Reference Library ([no date]). Available at: <https://www.gandhi-manibhavan.org/educational-resources/the-eleven-vows-of-gandhiji.html> (Accessed: 20 November 2024).

A.a, 3. (2022) 'The Splits of the Indian National Congress in the 1940s and 1960s and the Consolidation of the Party around the Nehru-Gandhi political Dynasty in domestic and Indian Historiography'. *Исторический журнал: научные исследования* (4), pp. 28–38. doi: [10.7256/2454-0609.2022.4.38629](https://doi.org/10.7256/2454-0609.2022.4.38629).