



A Govt Degree College for
women, Chitrala.

History Project Work

Topic :- Biography of Mahatma Gandhi

Submitted To

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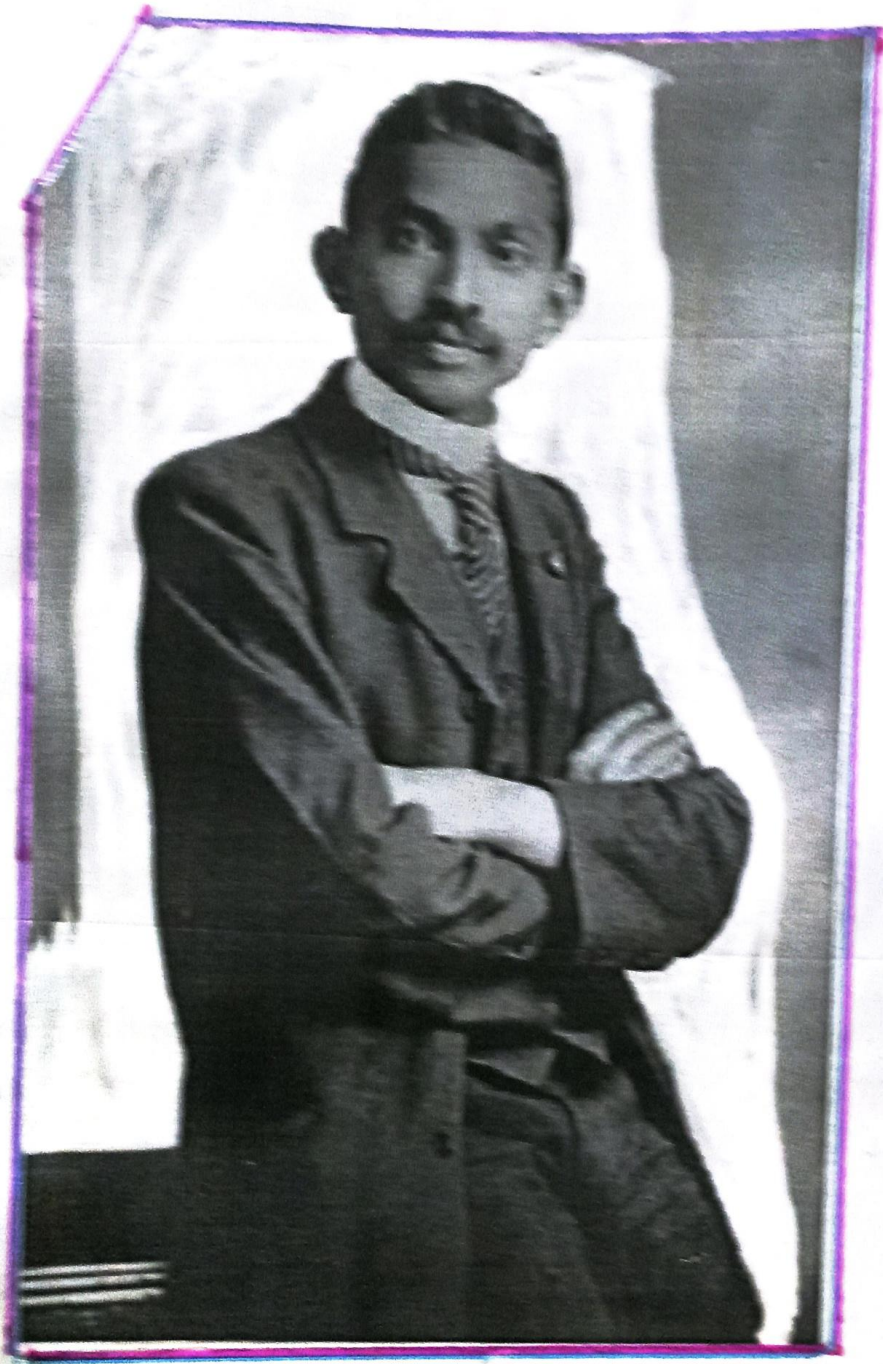
Mohandas Gandhi was the father of the Indian independence movement. While fighting discrimination in South Africa, Gandhi developed satyagraha, a nonviolent way of protesting injustice. Returning to his birthplace of India, Gandhi spent his remaining years working to end British rule of his country and to better the lives of India's poorest classes.

Early Life

Mohandas Gandhi was born October 2, 1869, in Porbandar, India, the last child of his father Karamchand Gandhi and his fourth wife Putlibhai. Young Gandhi was a shy, mediocre student. At age 13, he married Kasturba Kapadia as part of an arranged marriage. She bore four sons and supported Gandhi's endeavours until her 1944 death.

In September 1888 at age 18, Gandhi left India alone to study law in London. He attempted to become an English gentleman, buying suits, fine-tuning his English accent, learning French, and taking music lessons. Deciding that was a waste of time and money, he spent the rest of his three-year stay as a serious student living a simple life-style.

Gandhi also adopted vegetarianism and joined the London Vegetarian Society, whose intellectual crowd introduced Gandhi to authors Henry David Thoreau and Leo Tolstoy. He also studied the "Bhagavad Gita", an epic poem sacred to Hindus. These books' concepts set the foundation for his later beliefs.



Gandhi passed the bar on June 10, 1891, and returned to India. For two years, he attempted to practice law but lacked the knowledge of Indian law and the self-confidence necessary to be a trial lawyer. Instead, he took on a year-long case in South Africa.

South Africa

At 23, Gandhi again left his family and set off for the British-governed Natal province in South Africa in May 1893. After a week, Gandhi was asked to go to the Dutch-governed Transvaal province. When Gandhi boarded the train, railroad officials ordered him to move to the third-class car. Gandhi, holding first-class tickets, refused. A policeman threw him off the train.

As Gandhi talked to Indians in South Africa, he learned that such experiences were common. Sitting in the cold depot that first night of his trip, Gandhi debated returning to India, or fighting the discrimination. He decided that he couldn't ignore these injustices.

Gandhi spent 20 years bettering Indian's rights in South Africa, becoming a resilient, potent leader against discrimination. He learned about Indian grievances, studied the law, wrote letters to officials, and organized petitions. In May 1894, Gandhi established the National Indian Congress. Although it began as an organization for wealthy Indians, Gandhi expanded it to all classes and castes. He became a leader of South Africa's Indian community, his

Returning to India in 1915



- In 1915, Gandhi returned from South Africa to live in India. He spoke at the conventions of the Indian National Congress, but was primarily introduced to Indian issues, politics and the Indian people by Gopal Krishna Gokhale, a

activism covered by newspapers in England and India.

Return to India

In 1896 after three years in South Africa, Gandhi sailed to India to bring his wife and two sons back with him, returning in November. Gandhi's ship was quarantined at the harbor for 23 days, but the real reason for the delay was an angry mob of whites at the dock who believed Gandhi was returning with Indians who would overrun South Africa.

Gandhi sent his family to safety, but he was assaulted with bricks, rotten eggs, and fists. Police escorted him away. Gandhi refused to the claims against him but refused to prosecute those involved. The violence stopped, strengthening Gandhi's prestige.

Influenced by the "Gita", Gandhi wanted to purify his life by following the concepts of aparigraha and samabhava. A friend gave him "Unto This Last" by John Ruskin, which inspired Gandhi to establish Phoenix Settlement, a community outside Durban, in June 1904. The settlement focused on eliminating needless possessions and living in full equality. Gandhi moved his family and his newspaper, the Indian opinion, to the settlement.

In 1906, believing that family life was detracting from his potential as a public advocate, Gandhi took the vow of brahmacharya. He simplified his vegetarianism to unspiced, usually uncooked foods - mostly fruits and nuts, which he believed would help quiet his urges.



Satyagraha

Gandhi believed that his vow of brahmacharya allowed him the focus to devise the concept of satyagraha in late 1906. In the simplest sense, satyagraha is passive resistance, but Gandhi described it as "truth force," or natural right. He believed exploitation was possible only if the exploited and the exploiter accepted it, so seeing beyond the current situation provided power to change it.

In practice, satyagraha is nonviolent resistance to injustice. A person using satyagraha could resist injustice by refusing to follow an unjust law or putting up with physical assaults and/or confiscation of his property without anger. There would be no winners or losers; all would understand the "truth" and agree to rescind the unjust law.

Gandhi first organized satyagraha against the Asiatic Registration law, or Black Act, which passed in March 1907. It required all Indians to be fingerprinted and carry registration documents at all times. Indians refused fingerprinting and picketed documentation officers. Protests were organized, miners went on strike, and Indians illegally traveled from Natal to the Transvaal in opposition to the act. Many protesters, including Gandhi, were beaten and arrested. After seven years of protest, the Black Act was repealed. The nonviolent protest had succeeded.

Back to India

After 20 years in South Africa, Gandhi returned to India. By the time he arrived, press reports of his South African triumphs had made him a national hero. He traveled the country for a year before beginning reforms. Gandhi found that his fame

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conflicted. with observing conditions of the poor, so he wore a loincloth and sandals, the grab of the masses, during this journey. In cold weather, he added a shawl. This became his lifetime wardrobe.

Gandhi founded another communal settlement in Ahmadabad called Sabarmati Ashram. For the next 16 years, Gandhi lived there with his family. He was also given the honorary title of Mahatma, or "Great Soul". Many credit Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore, winner of the 1913 Nobel Prize for Literature, for awarding Gandhi this name. Peasants viewed Gandhi as a holy man, but he disliked the title because it implied he was special. He viewed himself as ordinary.

After the year ended, Gandhi still felt stifled because of world war I. As part of satyagraha, Gandhi had vowed never to take advantage of an opponent's troubles. With the British in a major conflict, Gandhi couldn't fight them for Indian freedom. Instead, he used satyagraha to erase inequities among Indians. Gandhi persuaded landlords to stop forcing tenant farmers to pay increased rent by appealing to their morals and fasted to convince mill owners to settle a strike. Because of Gandhi's prestige, people didn't want to be responsible for his death from fasting.

Confronting British

When the war ended, Gandhi focused on the fight for Indian self-rule. In 1919, the British handed Gandhi a cause: the Rowlatt Act, which gave the British nearly free rein to detain "revolutionary" elements without trial. Gandhi organized a hartal, which began on March 30, 1919. Unfortunately,



the protest turned violent.

Gandhi ended the hartal once he heard about the violence, but more than 300 Indians had died and more than 1,100 were injured from British reprisals in the city of Amritsar. Satyagraha hadn't been achieved, but the Amritsar Massacre fueled Indian opinions against the British. The violence showed Gandhi that the Indian people didn't fully believe in satyagraha. He spent much of the 1920s advocating for it and struggling to keep protests peaceful.

Gandhi also began advocating self-reliance as a path to freedom. Since the British established India as a colony, Indians had supplied Britain with raw fiber and then imported the resulting cloth from England. Gandhi advocated that Indians spin their own cloth, popularizing the idea by traveling with a spinning wheel, often spinning yarn while giving a speech. The image of the spinning wheel became a symbol for independence.

In March 1922, Gandhi was arrested and sentenced to six years in prison for sedition. After two years, he was released following surgery to find his country embroiled in violence between Muslims and Hindus. When Gandhi began a 21-day fast still ill from surgery, many thought he would die, but he rallied. The fast created a temporary peace.

Salt March

In December 1928, Gandhi and the Indian National Congress announced a challenge to the British government. If India wasn't granted commonwealth status by December 31, 1929, they would organize a nation wide protest against British taxes.

The deadline passed without change.

Gandhi chose to protest the British salt tax because salt was used in everyday cooking, even by the poorest. The salt march began a nationwide boycott starting March 12, 1930, when Gandhi and 78 followers walked 200 miles from the Sabarmati Ashram to the sea. The group grew along the way, reaching 2,000 to 3,000. When they reached the coastal town of Dandi on April 5, they prayed all night. In the morning, Gandhi made a presentation of picking up a piece of sea salt from the beach. Technically, he had broken the law.

Thus began an endeavour for Indians to make salt. Some picked up loose salt on the beaches, while others evaporated saltwater. Indian made salt soon was sold nationwide, Peaceful picketing and marches were conducted. The British responded with mass arrests.

Protestors Beaten

When Gandhi announced a march on the government-owned Dharasana Saltworks, the British imprisoned him without trial. Although they hoped Gandhi's arrest would stop the march, they underestimated his followers. The poet Sarojini Naidu led 2,500 marchers. As they reached the waiting police, the marchers were beaten with clubs. News of the brutal beating of peaceful protesters if Gandhi called off the protests. While many Indians believed that Gandhi hadn't gotten enough from the negotiations, he viewed it as a step toward independence.



Independence

After the success of the salt march, Gandhi conducted another fast that enhanced his image as a holy man or prophet. Dismayed at the adulation, Gandhi retired from politics in 1934 at age 64. He came out of retirement five years later when the British viceroy announced, without consulting Indian leaders, that India would side with England during world war II. This revitalized the Indian independence movement.

Many British parliamentarians realized they were facing mass protests and began discussing an independent India. Although Prime Minister Winston Churchill opposed losing India as a colony, the British announced in March 1941 that it would free India after world war II. Gandhi wanted independence sooner and organized a "Quit India" campaign in 1942. The British again jailed Gandhi.

Hindu - Muslim Conflict

When Gandhi was released in 1944, independence seemed near. Huge disagreements, however, arose between Hindus and Muslims. Because the majority of Indians were Hindu, Muslims feared losing political power if India became independent. The Muslims wanted six provinces in northwest India, where Muslims predominated, to become an independent country.

Gandhi opposed partitioning India and tried to bring the sides together, but that proved too difficult even for the Mahatma.

Violence erupted; entire towns were burned. Gandhi toured India, hoping his presence could curb the violence. Although violence stopped where Gandhi visited, he couldn't be everywhere.



Partition

The British, seeing India headed for civil war, decided to leave in August 1947. Before leaving, they got the Hindus, against Gandhi's wishes, to agree to a partition plan. On August 15, 1947, Britain granted independence to India & to the newly formed Muslim country of Pakistan.

Millions of Muslims marched from India to Pakistan, and millions of Hindus in Pakistan walked to India. Many refugees died from illness, exposure, and dehydration. As 15 million Indians became uprooted from their homes, Hindus and Muslims attacked each other.

Gandhi once again went on a fast. He would only eat again, he stated, once he saw clear plans to stop the violence. The fast began on January 13, 1948. Realizing that the frail, aged Gandhi couldn't withstand a long fast, the sides collaborated. On January 18, more than 100 representatives approached Gandhi with a promise for peace, ending his fast.

Assassination

Not everyone approved of the plan. Some radical Hindu groups believed that India shouldn't have been partitioned, blaming Gandhi. On January 30, 1948, the 78-year-old Gandhi spent his day discussing issues. Just past 5 p.m., Gandhi began the walk, supported by two grandnieces, to the Birla House, where he was staying in New Delhi, for a prayer meeting. A crowd surrounded him. A young Hindu named Nathuram Godse stopped before him and bowed. Gandhi



bowed back. Gandhi was shot by Godse three times. Although Gandhi had survived five other assassination attempts, he fell to the ground, dead.

Legacy

Gandhi's concept of nonviolent protest attracted the organizers of numerous demonstrations and movements. Civil rights leaders, especially Martin Luther King Jr., adopted Gandhi's model for their own struggles.

Research in the second half of the 20th century established Gandhi as a great mediator and reconciler, resolving conflicts between older moderate politicians and young radicals, political terrorists and parliamentaries, urban intelligentsia and rural masses, Hindus & Muslims, as well as Indians & British.

His deepest strivings were spiritual, but unlike many fellow Indians with such aspirations, he didn't retire to a Himalayan cave to meditate. Rather, he took his cave with him everywhere he went. And, he left his thoughts to posterity: His collected writings had reached 100 volumes by the early 21st century.