



Role of Mahatma Gandhi in national freedom movement in India

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Abstract

One of the first series of non-violent protests nationwide was the non-cooperation movement started by Mahatma Gandhi. This movement officially started the Gandhian era in India. 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. 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. Mahatma Gandhi 'Father of the Nation' is also known as Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. He was born on 2 October, 1869 Porbandar, Gujarat, India. Gandhi ji got married to the Kasturba Makhanji at the age of just 13 years. He had played an important role in India's freedom struggle. Let us read his major movements that helped in achieving freedom from British Raj. The cry of Purna Swaraj or complete independence was raised. After much sacrifices and efforts, India gained its independence on the 15th August, 1947.

Keywords: Mahatma Gandhi, movement, freedom, struggle, sacrifices and independence

Introduction

One of the greatest men in the history of India is unarguably Mahatma Gandhi. The way he gave shape and character to India's freedom struggle is worthy of a standing ovation. He sacrificed his own life for the sake of his country. The respect that he earned for himself despite leading a simple lifestyle is much appreciable. Mahatma Gandhi played a pivotal role in the freedom struggle of India. His non-violent ways and peaceful methods were the foundation for gaining independence from the British. 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.

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Review of Literature

Review of related literature provides an opportunity of gaining insight into the method, measures, subject and approaches employed by the other. A careful review of research, journals, books, dissertations, thesis and other sources of information about the problem to be investigated is one of the important steps in the planning of any studied. Jadhav, Radheshyam (2012) ^[1], holds that ethics is branch of philosophy concerned with actions that are morally permissible and actions that are not. Ethics in media constitutes a normative science of conduct applied voluntarily. Satyagrahi model of journalistic ethics could help to establish the lost credibility of journalism and journalists and could pave the way for development communication for the development of deprived. Throughout his life mission Gandhi treated newspaper and journalism as a responsibility and not mere communication or profit making business. Reader's voice mattered most for Gandhi. Indian Opinion and all his newspapers were tools of communication for change and for development of deprived masses who struggled against the structures of oppression. Truth, accuracy, objectivity, fairness, balance and impartiality are the basic premise of Satyagrahi journalistic ethics. Gandhi's self-restrain mantra is relevant in today's journalism when media ethics debate revolves round the infotainment media, stereotypes, depiction of violence, sex, vulgarity, privacy, right to reply, communal writing, sensational and yellow journalism, freebies and sting operations. Gandhi was of the opinion that newspaper should not be used as means of earning livelihood or profit. Satyagrahi journalism stands for popular participatory process of sustainable social- spiritual- material advancement for emancipation and empowerment. Satyagraha was weapon to the deprived masses and Satyagrahi journalism an alternative model of development communication. Selfishness, anger, lack of faith, or impatience have no room while infinite patience, firm

resolve, single mindedness of purpose, perfect calm are essential qualities for Satyagrahi journalist. He emphasised the role of spirituality in the development and communication process. People's communication and mediums could re-energize Gandhian Satyagrahi journalism.

Harris, Karen, L (2013) ^[2], over a century since Gandhi's historic and personally decisive sojourn in colonial southern Africa, the vast corpus of literature in the Western world on the Mahatma has continued to expand unabated, while the "machines of Gandhi hagiography" are still said to "continue to churn out massive volumes in present-day India". Indeed, this commemorative issue of the Journal of Natal and Zulu History is testimony to this legacy and ongoing fascination, and in particular commemorates a centenary of his global bequest of satyagraha (passive resistance) launched in southern Africa. While much of the literature produced on Gandhi continues to adhere to what Dilip Menon has called the "straight and narrow" or what Tanika Sarkar refers to as "icon making", with a persistent veneration of the Mahatma, others have ventured to question, probe, reappraise and reassess a range of dimensions of the Gandhian epoch. One aspect that has increasingly come under scrutiny is Gandhi's relations with other non-Indian communities, particularly as regards his time in South Africa and the emergence of satyagraha. These ties in with a wider concern about the possible contradictions in his professed rejection of racism and his claim to universalism. It is in this context that his apparent failure to ally with any other ethnic grouping within South Africa is questioned. And it is to this aspect of the satyagraha movement that this article turns, with particular reference to Chinese resistance at the turn of the century.

Singh, Naorem, Nandaraj (2014) ^[3], One of the fundamental concerns of M.K. Gandhi (Mahatma Gandhi) was that of the question of morality. Gandhiji understood man as basically spiritual being, and so a moral being. As such he was mostly concerned with the moral development of each and every individual. In fact, each and every aspect of his philosophical ideas like, Satyagraha, religion, prohibition, human nature, khadi, Swadeshi, constructive programmes, etc. in one way or the other shows his endeavour to give a moral basis for human existence and promotes morality of man. The present paper is an attempt to throw some light of his ideas or understanding of morality, and how it is related to his philosophical ideas and moreover examines their relevance in the modern time.

Methodology

The method used in this paper is descriptive-evaluative method. The study is mainly review based. It is purely supported by secondary source of data, i.e. books, journals, papers and articles and internet.

Results and Discussions

Major movements of Mahatma Gandhi are as follows

Champaran Satyagraha (1917): In Champaran district of Bihar the condition of Indigo cultivators became miserable under Tinkathiya system. Under this system the cultivators were forced to cultivate Indigo on the best 3/20th part of their land and were forced to sell them at a cheaper price. The situation for the farmers became worse due to harsh weather conditions and levy of heavy taxes. Then, Rajkumar Shukla met Mahatma Gandhi at Lucknow and invited him.

At Champaran, Mahatma Gandhi adopted the approach of civil disobedience movement and launched demonstrations and strikes against the landlords. As a result, the government set up a Champaran agrarian committee of which Gandhi ji was also one of the members. All the demands of the cultivators were accepted and the Satyagraha was successful.

Kheda Satyagraha (1917 -1918): A no-tax campaign was started by Mohan Lal Pandey in 1917 who demanded the remission of taxes due to poor harvest or crop failure in Kheda village, Gujarat. Mahatma Gandhi was invited and he joined the movement on 22 March, 1918. There, he started Satyagraha. The movement was also joined by Vallabhbhai Patel and Indulal Yagnik. Finally, the demands were fulfilled by the British government and it was successful.

Khilafat Movement (1919): Khilafat movement was started by the Ali brothers to show the protest against unjust done with the Turkey after the First World War. Under the guidance of Mahatma Gandhi the movement was launched against the British government to restore the collapsing status of the Caliph in Turkey. All India Conference was held in Delhi where Mahatma Gandhi was elected as a president. He also returned the medals received from the British Empire in South Africa. The success of the Khilafat movement made him the national leader.

Non-Cooperation Movement (1920): By the autumn of 1920, Gandhi was the dominant figure on the political stage, commanding an influence never before attained by any political leader in India or perhaps in any other country. He refashioned the 35-year-old Indian National Congress (Congress Party) into an effective political instrument of Indian nationalism: from a three-day Christmas-week picnic of the upper middle class in one of the principal cities of India, it became a mass organization with its roots in small towns and villages. Gandhi's message was simple: it was not British guns but imperfections of Indians themselves that kept their country in bondage. His program, the nonviolent noncooperation movement against the British government, included boycotts not only of British manufactures but of institutions operated or aided by the British in India: legislatures, courts, offices, schools. The campaign electrified the country, broke the spell of fear of foreign rule, and led to the arrests of thousands of satyagrahis, who defied laws and cheerfully lined up for prison.

In February 1922 the movement seemed to be on the crest of a rising wave, but, alarmed by a violent outbreak in Chauri Chaura, a remote village in eastern India, Gandhi decided to call off mass civil disobedience. That was a blow to many of his followers, who feared that his self-imposed restraints and scruples would reduce the nationalist struggle to pious futility. Gandhi himself was arrested on March 10, 1922, tried for sedition, and sentenced to six years' imprisonment. He was released in February 1924, after undergoing surgery for appendicitis. The political landscape had changed in his absence. The Congress Party had split into two factions, one under Chitta Ranjan Das and Motilal Nehru (the father of Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first prime minister) favouring the entry of the party into legislatures and the other under Chakravarti Rajagopalachari and Vallabhbhai Jhaverbhai Patel opposing it. Worst of all, the unity between Hindus and Muslims of the heyday of the noncooperation movement of 1920-22 had dissolved. Gandhi tried to draw the warring communities out of their suspicion and

fanaticism by reasoning and persuasion. Finally, after a serious outbreak of communal unrest, he undertook a three-week fast in the autumn of 1924 to arouse the people into following the path of nonviolence. In December 1924 he was named president of the Congress Party, and he served for a year.

In 1927, however, the British government appointed a constitutional reform commission under Sir John Simon, a prominent English lawyer and politician that did not contain a single Indian. When the Congress and other parties boycotted the commission, the political tempo rose. At the Congress session (meeting) at Calcutta in December 1928, Gandhi put forth the crucial resolution demanding dominion status from the British government within a year under threat of a nationwide nonviolent campaign for complete independence. Henceforth, Gandhi was back as the leading voice of the Congress Party.

Civil-Disobedience Movement (1930): In March 1930 he launched the Salt March, a satyagraha against the British-imposed tax on salt, which affected the poorest section of the community. One of the most spectacular and successful campaigns in Gandhi's nonviolent war against the British Raj, it resulted in the imprisonment of more than 60,000 people. A year later, after talks with the viceroy, Lord Irwin (later Lord Halifax), Gandhi accepted a truce (the Gandhi-Irwin Pact), called off civil disobedience, and agreed to attend the Round Table Conference in London as the sole representative of the Indian National Congress.

The conference, which concentrated on the problem of the Indian minorities rather than on the transfer of power from the British, was a great disappointment to the Indian nationalists. Moreover, when Gandhi returned to India in December 1931, he found his party facing an all-out offensive from Lord Irwin's successor as viceroy, Lord Willingdon, who unleashed the sternest repression in the history of the nationalist movement. Gandhi was once more imprisoned, and the government tried to insulate him from the outside world and to destroy his influence. That was not an easy task. Gandhi soon regained the initiative. In September 1932, while still a prisoner, he embarked on a fast to protest against the British government's decision to segregate the so-called untouchables (the lowest level of the Indian caste system) by allotting them separate electorates in the new constitution. The fast produced an emotional upheaval in the country, and an alternative electoral arrangement was jointly and speedily devised by the leaders of the Hindu community and the untouchables and endorsed by the British government. The fast became the starting point of a vigorous campaign for the removal of the disabilities of the untouchables, whom Gandhi referred to as Harijans, or "children of God." (That term has fallen out of favour, replaced by Dalit; Scheduled Castes is the official designation.)

In 1934 Gandhi resigned not only as the leader but also as a member of the Congress Party. He had come to believe that its leading members had adopted nonviolence as a political expedient and not as the fundamental creed it was for him. In place of political activity he then concentrated on his "constructive programme" of building the nation "from the bottom up"—educating rural India, which accounted for 85 percent of the population; continuing his fight against untouchability; promoting hand spinning, weaving, and other cottage industries to supplement the earnings of the underemployed peasantry; and evolving a system of

education best suited to the needs of the people. Gandhi himself went to live at Sevagram, a village in central India, which became the centre of his program of social and economic uplift.

Quit India Movement (1942): Mahatma Gandhi launches Quit India movement on 8 August, 1942 during Second World War to drive British rule out of India. In the movement Mahatma Gandhi delivered 'Do or Die' speech. As a result the entire members of Indian National Congress were arrested by the British officials and imprisoned them without trial. But the protest continued across the nation. By the end of World War II, British government cleared that they will hand over the powers to India. Mahatma Gandhi called off the movement which results in the release of thousands of prisoners. With the outbreak of World War II, the nationalist struggle in India entered its last crucial phase. Gandhi hated fascism and all it stood for, but he also hated war. The Indian National Congress, on the other hand, was not committed to pacifism and was prepared to support the British war effort if Indian self-government was assured. Once more Gandhi became politically active. The failure of the mission of Sir Stafford Cripps, a British cabinet minister who went to India in March 1942 with an offer that Gandhi found unacceptable, the British equivocation on the transfer of power to Indian hands, and the encouragement given by high British officials to conservative and communal forces promoting discord between Muslims and Hindus impelled Gandhi to demand in the summer of 1942 an immediate British withdrawal from India—what became known as the Quit India Movement.

In mid-1942 the war against the Axis Powers, particularly Japan, was in a critical phase, and the British reacted sharply to the campaign. They imprisoned the entire Congress leadership and set out to crush the party once and for all. There were violent outbreaks that were sternly suppressed, and the gulf between Britain and India became wider than ever before. Gandhi, his wife, and several other top party leaders (including Nehru) were confined in the Aga Khan Palace (now the Gandhi National Memorial) in Poona (now Pune). Kasturba died there in early 1944, shortly before Gandhi and the others were released.

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

Conclusion

Therefore, these are the major movements that led by Mahatma Gandhi and helped India in attaining freedom from the British rule or colonial rule. Mahatma Gandhi was known for his non-violence protest and was a leading figure of freedom movements whether in India or South Africa. With his efforts finally India got freedom from the colonial rule. He always gave importance to human rights. No doubt, Mahatma Gandhi is a true inspiration not only for the past generation but also for the generations to come with his ideology of non-violence, truth, tolerance and social welfare.

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