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Mahatma Gandhi is a Father of India

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Abstract- The literal translation of Mahatma, the name which the people of India gave to Gandhiji, is 'the Great Soul', maha, great; atma, soul. The word goes back to the Upanishads, where it is used in speaking of the Supreme Being, and, through communion of Knowledge and Love, of those who become One with Him:

"He is the One Luminous, Creator of All, Mahatma Always in the heart of the people enshrined, Revealed through Love, Intuition, and Though, Whoever knows Him, Immortal becomes..."

The Poet Rabindranath Tagore, on a visit to the Ashram, quoted the above stanza, referring to the Apostle.

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, byname Mahatma Gandhi (born October 2, 1869, Porbandar, India—died January 30, 1948, Delhi) Indian lawyer, politician, social activist, and writer who became the leader of the nationalist movement against the British rule of India. As such, he came to be considered the father of his country. Gandhi is internationally esteemed for his doctrine of nonviolent protest (satyagraha) to achieve political and social progress.

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Mahatma Gandhi is a Father of India

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I. Introduction

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (Mahatma Gandhi) was born on October 2, 1869, into a Hindu Modh family in Porbanadar, Gujarat, India. His father, named Karamchand Gandhi, was the Chief Minister (diwan) of the city of *Porbanadar*. His mother, named *Putlibai*, was the fourth wife; the previous three wives died in childbirth. Gandhi was born into the *vaishya* (business caste). He was 13 years old when married *Kasturbai* (Ba) Makhanji, through his parents arrangement. They had four sons. Gandhi learned tolerance and non-injury to living beings from an early age. He was abstinent from meat, alcohol, and promiscuity.

even as a young child his morals were tested when an inspector of schools came to visit during a spelling test. Noticing an incorrect spelling, his teacher motioned for him to copy his neighbour's spelling but he stoutly refused to do so. And after being told that the power to the British colonial rule was their meat-eating diet, Gandhi secretly began to eat meat. He soon gave up however, as he felt ashamed of deceiving his strictly vegetarian family.

At 19 years old, after barely passing his matriculation exam, he eagerly took the opportunity to travel to Britain to become a barrister. After passing his bar, he returned to India to practise law. He found he was unable to speak at his first court case, however, and when presented with the opportunity to go to South Africa, left India again.

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When he arrived there, however, he became disgusted with the treatment Indians faced by the white settlers. He exhorted his countrymen to observe truthfulness in business and reminded them that their responsibility was the greater since their conduct would be seen as a reflection of their country. He asked them to forget about religious and caste differences and to give up their unsanitary habits. He wanted his countrymen to demonstrate their suitability for citizenship by showing they deserved it. He spent twenty years in South Africa fighting for, and finally gaining Indian citizenship rights.

II. Great Soul of Mahatma Gandhi

Mahatma Gandhi's effort to join spirituality and politics remains beyond the comprehension of most narratives we have today. It is no surprise then that while *Great Soul* only subtly illustrates Gandhi's deep spiritual beliefs through a critique of his political actions, reports about it have cast Gandhi in what may be the easiest media cliché we have these days to describe a man of faith: that of the fallen saint. We seem unable as a culture to evaluate someone whose spiritual integrity stands tall even if his political efforts seem patchy, especially in hindsight. We are so steeped in irony that even a respectful title like *Great Soul*, was, I suspect, misinterpreted by some commentators as a sarcastic one. But if we are to understand what Gandhi meant, we have to admit one seemingly extremely hagiographical fact. To some of his followers, he was more than a holy man, he was a god. As Lelyveld writes, some of the crowds at Gandhi's rallies saw "not a mere mortal but an actual avatar of a god from the crowded Hindu pantheon". This view was not confined to the unschooled and miracle-hungry masses either. I recently read the memoirs of *A.K. Chettiar*, a filmmaker and journalist who made a documentary about Gandhi in the early 1940s. *Chettiar* writes that he and his team simply "worshipped him as an incarnation of god." His adventures in making this film and finally screening it in New Delhi and Washington are full of the kind of fearlessness and generosity Gandhi inspired.

Even if Gandhi's hallowed status was kept aloft after independence by government discourses, the reverence accorded to him was not entirely orchestrated, especially for those of a certain generation. A few years ago, a well-known Indian journalist gave a talk to my students about Gandhi that began, mysteriously, with the story of the ten avatars of Vishnu. He did not claim Gandhi was an avatar of

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Vishnu or anything so simplistic, but suggested that since the Hindu mind sees evolution as natural, Gandhi could be seen as the next stage of evolution that the rest of us would eventually get to; a humanistic and optimistic reinterpretation of avatar hood, if there was one.

But like all gods in India, Gandhi's hallowed status has changed with the politics of the times. Democracy has produced the deification of other leaders, and on occasion the increasing marginalization, if not the outright vilification, of Gandhi. His name may be a symbol for the nation's conscience in some quarters, but it is also now a symbol for the grievances of various groups—displaced Hindus, Dalits, and technocratic urban middle classes embarrassed by his seeming eccentricities, among others. But even if Gandhi is not universally revered in India, there is no shock about his seeming failings as we saw here. This is perhaps because popular Indian mythic tradition sees the imperfections of deities as part of a bigger picture rather than as proof of evil. In contrast, in the West we now have mainly a consumer culture's image of Gandhi, even more sanitized and exalted perhaps, and hence the expose sort of reaction even when there was none.

That reaction though should make us reexamine some of the expectations we have come to have in our media culture. Maybe we have lost the capacity to appreciate greatness, swinging from a misplaced adulation on the one hand to a presumptuous condemnation on the other. We assume perhaps that if a man is considered great, as Gandhi indeed is, then he must have greedily claimed that greatness for himself.

III. Gandhi and Religion

Gandhi was raised in a Hindu family, but he lived in a multicultural community. He had *Christian* and *Muslim* friends as a child, and may have been especially influenced by the Jain religion, with its principle of total ahimsa, or nonviolence. When he traveled to England to study law, he met theosophists who encouraged him to learn more about his native Hindu texts like the *Bhagavad Gita,* as well as those of other religions like , the *Holy Quran* and the bible. 'I see the same God in Gita whom I see in the Bible or whom I want to see in the Quran'. According to him, the best religion of the world is one which contains the best elements of all the creeds of the world. His religion was peace and non-violence. His sword and the shield, both were love which was based upon non-violence and truth.

While Gandhi spent many years reflecting on religious topics, his focus was always on practical action. When a reporter asked Gandhi what his message was, he famously replied, "My life is my message." The same could probably be said of his religious beliefs – that they were most fully expressed in his peaceful and just actions.

IV. Vaishnava Janato

Gandhi's unbound affection for Narsi's composition *Vaishnava janato* is as good a way as any to gauge the Mahatma's religious sensibility. Vaishnavism—which takes its name from the god *Vishnu*—was an important part of the religious milieu in which Gandhi grew into adolescence, Gandhi describes his mother as a saintly woman for whom a visit to the *"Vaishnava temple"* was "one of her daily routines." Gandhi was not particularly interested in the sectarian divide between *Vaishnavas* and *Saivites* (the followers of Shiva), and he sought to endow the term "Vaishnava" with a more capacious meaning. Narsi sings:

Vaishnavajana to tene kahiye, je pira parayi jaane re / par dukha upkaar kare, to ye man abhiman na aane re. Call only him a *Vaishnava,* says Narsi, who feels another's pain as his own, who helps others in their sorrow but takes no pride in his good deeds. The rest of the bhajan further adumbrates the qualities of a Vaishnava, who is pure in thought, action, and speech; despising no one, and treating the low and the high alike, the Vaishnava adopts the entire human family as his own and so works for the liberation of everyone.

Vaishnava janato was sung at Gandhi's daily prayer meetings. As Gandhi commenced his almost 250-mile march to the sea in 1930, writes his biographer Narayan Desai, he was handed his walking stick by his close associate Kaka Kalelkar, and Narayan Khare sang Vaishnava janato. The bhajan remained on the lips of Gandhi and his companions throughout the *Dandi* March. Widely known as Narsi's *Vaishnavajana to* may have been to Gujaratis, it was Gandhi who popularized it through the length and breadth of India.

V. Non-violence of Mahatma Gandhi

Mohandas K. Gandhi (1869-1948), who opposed British imperial rule in *India* during the 20th century.

Gandhi took the religious principle of *ahimsa* (doing no harm) common to *Buddhism, Hinduism* and *Jainism* and turned it into a non-violent tool for mass action. He used it to fight not only colonial rule but social evils such as racial discrimination and untouchability as well.

Gandhi called it *"satyagraha"* which means 'truth force.' In this doctrine the aim of any non-violent conflict was to convert the opponent; to win over his mind and his heart andpersuade him to your point of view.

Gandhi was firm that satyagraha was not a weapon of the weak - *"Satyagraha* is a weapon of the strong; it admits of no violence under any circumstance whatever; and it always insists upon truth."

Gandhi did not think that non-violence was a tool for those who were too scared to take up arms.

Therefore Non- Violence was also a compulsion for Gandhi. At the most it was only one aspect of

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Gandhi's versatile Hindu philosophy but always subordinate to TRUTH, as has been described by the Gandhi in following words:

Life and its problems have thus become to me so many experiments in the practice of truth and non-violence. By instinct I have been truthfulbut not non-violent. As a Jain Muni once rightly said I was not so much votary of 'Ahimsa' as I was of truth, and I put the latter in the first place and the former in the second. For, as he put it, I was capable of sacrificing violence for the sake of truth. In fact it was in the courseof my persuit of truth that I discovered non-violence. Our scriptures have declared that there is no 'dharma'(law) higher than Truth. But non-violence they say is the highest duty. The word 'dharma' in my opinion has different connotations as used in the two aphorisms.(Harijan , 28-03-1936)

VI. Mahatma Gandhi as a Freeedom Fighter

Mahatma Gandhi promoted the values of individual liberty and the rights of free individuals to transcend oppression through free exchange and freedom of religious practice, without divisions amongst the people of India as provoked by the British Empire.

In 1893 he went to *South Africa* to fight a lawsuit on behalf of Dada Abdullah & Company. It was the place, which changed the course of Gandhi's life and the history of India. While traveling in a first class rail compartment, Gandhi was thrown out by railway officials just because a white man objected to his presence in the first class compartment. This and some other such incidents made Gandhi feel that being quiet will not do any good. He stood up for the cause of all the Indians residing there who were suffering humiliation daily. After fighting for the cause of the Indian people in South Africa. He returned to India in 1915. But he was not the same man who left India. He was much transformed - now he had nothing but one resolve - to serve the masses of his country. He was in the battlefield to fight for the independence of his own country, but his ways were totally different. He did not ever use any weapon. *'Satyagraha' A sahyog Andolan'* and **'***Savinay Avagya Andolan* were his weapons. His first Satyagraha was in *Champaran* in 1917 for the cause of peasants of *Champaran.* The harsh *Rowlatt* Act introduced by the British government brought him actively into Indian politics and he remained at its centerstage till his death in 1948. With his *Non Cooperation Movement,* the struggle for independence became the struggle of the masses. He got enormous support in his campaign. He was arrested by the British government and was sentenced to six years of imprisonment. On his release, he undertook the famous *'Dandi March*\' in 1930, to *break the salt law* of the British and he was again arrested but later released unconditionally. On 29th August 1931 he sailed to England for the second round table conference as a delegate of the Congress but returned empty handed. In 1942 he organized *Quit India movement* and gave the *slogan of |'Do or Die|'.* He prepared to organize a *Satyagraha* but along with other freedom fighters was arrested.

Unable to deal with the increasing unrest in India, the British government invited Jawaharlal Nehru to form an Interim government. All this annoyed the Muslim league and Jinnah and resulted in the outbreak of violence Mahatma Gandhi was against the partition of India. But he could not make the leaders of Indian National Congress and Muslim League understand his stand. On 15th August 1947 India finally got independence but Gandhi refused to join the celebrations, mourning for the loss of unity of his countrymen.

On his birthday i.e. on 2nd October 1947, when everyone was greeting him, Some people did not like his message of love and brotherhood. A bomb was thrown at him while he was in prayer meeting but it missed its mark. Ten days later on January 30th 1948, when Gandhi was going for the evening prayers in Birla House, a young Hindu fanatic *Nathuram Godse,* from Poona forced his way to Gandhi and fired three shots at him. Gandhi fell to the ground and breathed his last. He died with the words of God on his lips.

VII. Conclusion

In the eyes of millions of his fellow Indians, Gandhi was the Mahatma ("Great Soul"). The unthinking adoration of the huge crowds that gathered to see him all along the route of his tours made them a severe ordeal; he could hardly work during the day or rest at night. "The woes of the Mahatmas," he wrote, "are known only to the Mahatmas." His fame spread worldwide during his lifetime and only increased after his death. The name Mahatma Gandhi is now one of the most universally recognized on earth.

Mahatma Gandhi was my favourite leader in india . I respect him. He loved and supported to poor people. He supported India to get freedom . *Mahatma Gandhi* is a honour of India. I follow the rules of *Mahatma Gandhi.*

Bapu as we call him, the father of our nation, is no more... The light has gone out, I said, and yet I was wrong. For the light that shone in this country was no ordinary light. The light that has illumined this country for these many years, and the world will see it and it will give solace to innumerable hearts. For that light represented the living truth, and the eternal man was with us with his eternal truth reminding us of the right path, drawing us from error, taking this ancient country to freedom...,,

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