

Remembering Mahatma on his 150th Birth Anniversary: Life, Works and Legacy



Gandhi interacting with his followers sitting in a train compartment

Introduction

The nationwide celebration of the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi has been initiated last year on the day of *Gandhi Jayanti*. The yearlong celebration will be completed this year. To commemorate the great event, the Indian Railways has already taken a number of initiatives throughout the year. As a part of these initiatives the Asansol Division of Indian Railways has decided to bring out a booklet on Mahatma as homage to the great soul. There is no dearth of writings on Mahatma Gandhi and his manifold contribution in India and abroad. It would be a gross mistake to judge Mahatma as merely a political leader who led an unprecedented struggle against the strongest colonial power of the world. Mahatma was not at all satisfied with mere political freedom. He dreamt of a new social order free from exploitation, inequality and violence which is yet to be achieved. We are living in a society where inequality and exploitation of numerous forms are the rule of the day, communal hatred escalating day by day, violence mounting high, terrorism and counter-terrorism emerged as the greatest threat to the humanity, and pollution has brought the world on verge of extinction. In this context we could realize that the life and teachings of Mahatma are more relevant in this unstable world than his lifetime. The present work is a humble attempt to understand the journey of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi from a young practicing lawyer to Mahatma, the father of nation, his association with rail and his relevance to the contemporary world.

Early life and South African Experience: The year 1919 saw the emergence of Mahatma Gandhi as a leading political leader. Under his influence the teeming millions of India dreamt



Figure 1 Mohandas in his young age

of liberating the country from the bondage of foreign rule. Gandhiji favoured local vernacular language in place of English. He led a saintly life, full of love for mankind. He believed that the soul of India resided in the lowly thatched cottage of the half-fed, half-clad peasantry of the numerous villages in India. The up gradation of their status was imperative in order to achieve freedom for India.

Gandhiji was born as Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi on October 2nd, 1869 in a wealthy Jaina Gujarati family at Porbandar, Gujarat. His father served as the *Diwan* of the Porbandar State. At a young age Mohandas was sent to England for higher education. He became a barrister from England in 1891 and joined the Bombay Bar. But soon he left for Natal in South Africa. The Durban coast of South Africa was famous for sugarcane plantations ran by



Figure 2 Gandhi in London

the English and the Dutch planters. These planters called Boer procured cheap labour from the Tamil community. These poor workers termed as coolies had to undergo inhuman torture. Gandhi began to fight for these poor souls and was satirically termed as Coolie-Barrister. He himself became a victim of racial discrimination at South Africa twice while travelling in a train and then in a stage coach. He did not react violently

in return. Instead he wrote two letters to the rail authority and the owner of the stage coach. This was the beginning of his struggle against violence.

Between 1894 and 1906 Gandhi's struggle for the cause of the Indians in South Africa initiated the first stage of his political activities. He started passive resistance against racial

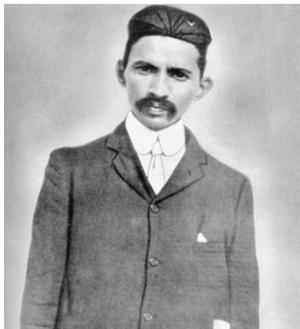


Figure 3 Gandhi at Johhanburg

discrimination and received the support of the masses. Plantation coolies and industrial workers alike spontaneously participated in this passive resistance movement. Here in South Africa Gandhiji adopted his famous techniques 'Ahimsa' and 'Satyagraha'. By 'Satyagraha' Gandhi meant adherence to truth. 'Satyagraha' had two sides: 'ahimsa' and truthfulness. Throughout his life Gandhi struggled to uphold this truth above everything else. He believed

that the power of truth lies dormant in every man. He wanted to use this power in two ways- one way was creative and the other is resisting wrongs. Regarding creative or constructive works, Gandhi laid stress on uplifting the village life. The basic tenet of 'Satyagraha' is non-cooperation with whatever is unjust. To reach the spring-head of 'Satyagraha' a devotee should follow the path of 'Ahimsa'. This path could be followed by a common peasant also, if he is given proper training and motivation.

Back in India: Gandhiji came back to India in 1915. But he did not join politics then and



Figure 4 Gandhi and Kasturba on their return to India

there. On the advice of his political Guru Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Gandhi travelled throughout the length and breadth of the country. He got acquainted with Indian society, the people of India and the mode of political endeavour of her people at that time. He established an 'Ashram' on the banks of river Sabarmati in Ahmadabad, where his admirers, friends and disciples flocked to live with him and take lessons on the philosophy of 'Satyagraha'.

Champaran, Kheda and Ahmadabad: before plunging into full fledged politics Gandhiji



Figure 5 Gandhi and Annie Besant

used his '*Satyagraha*' weapon in Champaran, Kheda and Ahmadabad. Gandhiji was moved by the untold miserable conditions of the indigo peasants in Champaran in Bihar. Although indigo plantations lost significance after the invention of synthetic blue dye in Europe, the British indigo planters of Bihar forced the peasants to cultivate indigo. Gandhiji went to Champaran and witnessed the miserable plight of the indigo peasants. He launched '*Satyagraha*' agitation there at once and even courted arrest. But following his impressive words, the colonial government passed the Champaran Agrarian Bill in 1917. This law relieved the peasants from a century long period

of suffering in the hands of the planters. "Champaran was the first triumph in India of the new weapon forged by Gandhi (*Satyagraha*) or civil disobedience".

Gandhiji then went to Ahmadabad in 1918 to lead a strike of the labourers in the local mills demanding a pay-hike. He advised the workers to carry on strike without any violence. He even decided to go on fasting unless the mill owners come to terms. It produced result and the



Figure 6 Gandhi during Kheda Satyagraha

mill owners agreed to increase the workers' pay up to 35 percent. This strike gave Gandhi a place among the labourers.

In 1918, crops failed below 25 percent of usual yield. The cultivators in Kheda or Kaira district of Gujarat were in no position to pay revenue. So they appealed to the government for revenue relief. But the government officials refused to pay heed to their prayer for revenue exemption as per law. Hence Gandhi called upon the peasants to take resort to '*Satyagraha*'. The peasants pledged not to pay the revenue and suffer all the

consequences. They showed great fortitude in this struggle.

Ultimately the government offered terms to the cultivators which they accepted. The poor peasants being illiterate started comparing Gandhi with 'Ram'.

Rowlatt Bill Agitation: From 1915 onwards revolutionary and terrorist activities were increasing in India. The British Government formed a commission under Sir John Rowlatt in December 1917 to find a solution against all revolutionary activities. This commission

suggested introducing a law that gave the government the right to a closed door trial without jury, to extort heavy amount of money from a suspect and keep surveillance on their residence. Passed in 1918 this bill opened Gandhi's eye to the brutish character of the British Raj. Gandhiji decided to apply his weapon of 'Satyagraha' against the unjust bill.

In protest against the Bill, Gandhiji organised 'Satyagraha Sabha' in Bombay. Then he appealed to the country to observe 'hartal' on All India basis on April 6th, April 1919. This was the first All India Strike in history. With this 'hartal' India's struggle for freedom got a new dimension. The movement against Rowlatt Bill culminated in the Jallianwallabag Massacre of April 13th, 1919. The situation in Punjab in 1919 was volcanic. The Lieutenant Governor Punjab Michael O'Dyer tortured people at every pretext. He opened fire at a peaceful public meeting arranged at Jallianwallabag on April 13th, 1919. About ten thousand people assembled in the garden unarmed in the evening of April 13th. General O'Dyer opened fire at the crowd without prior warning. Since the garden had only one entrance, the crowd could not disperse easily. Many fell in front of the bullet and many plunged into a nearby well while trying to escape.

As the news of the massacre spread all over India, a wave of horror and indignation swept all over the country. The great poet Rabindranath Tagore relinquished his 'kighthood' in protest. Gandhiji was mortified to see the Satyagraha movement against the Rowlatt Bill turned violent. He called off the movement on April 13th, 1919. Though the movement failed yet Gandhi was able to unite all sections of Indians under one banner to carry on non-violent resistance to the Rowlatt Bill.

Non Cooperation and Khilafat Movement: Gandhi gave the clarion call for a non violent



Figure 7 A poster brought out during the Non Cooperation Movement

Non Cooperation Movement in 1920. He declared that the Satyagraha movement was launched for fulfilment of two objects. The first object was political i.e. attainment of *Swaraj* or Self Government by the Indians. The second object was social reform within the country. The people responded to Gandhiji's call with unprecedented

energy. At Gandhi's call people started courting arrest. Peasants stopped payment of revenue, students left schools and colleges and lawyers gave up their practices. At the same time Gandhi supported the Khilafat Movement conducted by the Indian Muslim leaders.

The Indian Muslims regarded the Caliph of Turkey to be their religious head. Turkey had joined the First World War in support of the Axis Powers. After the end of the war, the Allied Power including the British tried to dismember Turkey. Britain deprived the Caliph of the religious places like Palestine and Jerusalem. This was a serious insult to the Muslim World. Therefore the Indian Muslims launched a movement to restore the authority of the Caliph. This was called the Khilafat Movement. Gandhi realising the necessity of the unity of the Muslims and Hindus for attaining independence, merged the Khilafat issue with the Non Cooperation Movement on August 1st, 1920.

The Government adopted repressive measures upon the *satyagrahis*. But the movement turned violent when agitated public set fire to the local police station on February 5th, 1922 causing the death of twenty-two policemen at Chauri Chaura, Gorakhpur in United Provinces. Following this incident Gandhi withdrew the movement on February 25th, 1922. Despite the failure of the movement it created a strong feeling of nationalism against the British rule.

Civil Disobedience Movement: the decision for Civil Disobedience Movement was adopted at a meeting of the Congress Working Committee held on February 14th-16th, 1930 at Sabarmati Ashram. Gandhi was entrusted with the task of launching the Civil Disobedience Movement. Earlier in the Young India issue of January 30th, 1930 Gandhi placed his eleven



Figure 8 Dandi March

point programmes before the Government. These included release of prisoners, reduction of rents and salary of high-paid employees, revocation of salt tax and others. On March 2nd, 1930 Gandhiji informed the Governor-General that he would launch the Civil Disobedience Movement by violating the Salt Act at Dandi on the Gujarat sea coast. But the Governor-General warned Gandhi against conducting the movement. But an aggrieved Gandhi started the famous Dandi March on March 12th, 1930 from the Sabarmati Ashram with around seventy eight followers. The British Government had monopolised the production of salt. Gandhi reached the coast of Dandi on April 5th, 1930 covering nearly 241 miles within

twenty four days and broke the Salt Laws on April 6th, 1930. The movement was spontaneous. It spread to Bengal, Bihar, Delhi, Bombay, Madras, Punjab, North-Western Frontier Province, Gujarat, Karnataka and United Provinces. In coastal areas people violated the Salt Act.



Figure 9 Delegates at the second session of the Indian Round Table Conference, St James's Palace, London

Despite severe measures taken by the government, people irrespective of age, creed, and sex participated in the movement voluntarily. The Governor-General Lord Irwin convened the First Round Table Conference in London on

November 1930. Thus was signed the Gandhi-

Irwin Pact on March 5th 1931. By this pact Gandhi agreed to withdraw the Civil Disobedience Movement and participate at the Second Round Table Conference. In the Second Round Table Conference, Gandhiji demanded responsible government both at Centre and the provinces in India. As he was adamant in his demand the Conference was a dismal failure. On January 3rd 1932, the second phase of Civil Disobedience Movement began. People spontaneously joined the movement. Gandhiji and other top leaders were arrested on January 4th, 1932 and the government issued repressive ordinances. After his release from jail Gandhi devoted himself to the development of the *harijan* community.

Quit India Movement to the last days of Gandhiji's life: Gandhiji was always in favour of peaceful *Satyagraha* movement. But in 1942 he was in a different mood. On July 14th, 1942, in a message to the nation Gandhi declared, "I shall not be happy anything short of complete independence. We shall fight to the finish"- '*Karenge yah Marenge*'. Before the day-break of August 8th, 1942, Gandhi and all the prominent leaders of the Indian National Congress were arrested. When this news spread, spontaneous outbursts of people began on August 9th, 1942. But in the absence of the leader people reacted in whatever manner they could. Though the movement was a failure, yet it sounded the death-knell of the British rule in India.



Figure 10 Gandhi at Noakhali, 1946

The year 1946 saw the country in the grip of communal riots. On October 10th, 1946, the Muslims of Noakhali in Eastern Bengal massacred Hindus. On October 25th, 1946 a mass upsurge took place in Bihar while

observation of Noakhali Day was on.

The local Hindu peasants clashed with the Muslims and in turn about seven thousand people were massacred. By March 1947 India was sitting on the edge of a volcano. Gandhiji was disturbed at the growing tension in the country. But by then it was clear that the British were

about to quit India but at the cost of dividing the country. Gandhiji categorically stated that he opposed partition. On August 15th, 1947 when people were rejoicing, Gandhiji was in Calcutta disturbed at the incidents of communal violence. But unfortunately some Indians thought that he was sympathetic towards a section of the masses and hence he was assassinated on January 30th, 1948.



Figure 11 Gandhi Smriti, New Delhi

Rail, Asansol and Mahatma Gandhi

The development of Asansol as an urban centre began in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Asansol was connected to northern India which opened a new horizon for this industrial zone. Incidentally the seeds of nationalism were sown in this belt the day when Mahatma Gandhi first set his foot on this soil. In course of time Gandhi developed close contact with this belt. But this part of the historical fact is still lying in obscurity. Gandhi even developed close link with two neighbouring areas of Asansol i.e. Burdwan and Purulia. These two places were also blessed with his footsteps. Needless to say that, the East Indian Railway (EIR) was the medium of contact between Gandhi and Asansol.

Mahatma Gandhi's association with railways was a sort of love-hate relationship. He had a bitter experience of railway journey in South Africa. During his political career he



Figure 11 Gandhi stepping off a train in the early 1940s

extensively travelled almost every corners of India through the available railway networks. However, he was a stern critique of railways. In *Hind Swaraj* he criticized railways for making people impoverished, spreading epidemics and promoting famine condition by facilitating transportation of food grains for commercial purpose. He severely criticized the inhuman condition prevailed in the third class compartments of Indian railways where the common people had to travel. He pointed out the exploitative nature of colonial railway management which deprived the passengers of the 3rd class compartments of the basic amenities of railway journey on hand and on the other unjustly provided luxuries to the upper

class passengers at the cost of the former. He was shocked by the dehumanization of the passengers of 3rd class compartments of rail and urged for proportionate distribution of amenities among the passengers of different categories. The passengers of the 3rd class compartments should not bear the burden of luxuries of the passengers of the upper classes.

He himself wrote that if he narrates the experiences in a third class train compartment, another Mahabharata would be written. He even lodged complaints against these exploitations to the rail authority. In his book 'Third Class in Indian Railways' Gandhiji narrated in details about the miserable conditions of the passengers....

“On the twelfth instant I booked at Bombay for Madras by the mail train and paid 13.9 rupees. It was labelled to carry twenty-two passengers. These could only have seating accommodation. There were no bunks in this carriage whereon passengers could lie with any degree of safety and comfort. There were two nights to be passed in this train before reaching Madras. If not more than twenty-two passengers found their way into my carriage before we reached Poona, it was because the bolder ones kept the others at bay. With the exception of two or three insistent passengers, all had to find their sleep being seated all the time. After reaching Raichur, the pressure became unbearable. The rush of passengers could not be stayed. The fighters among us found the task almost beyond them. The guards or other railway servants came in only to push more passengers.”

Before launching Non-violent Non Cooperation Movement, Gandhiji was travelling all over India by train. It was at this juncture that he set his foot for the very first time in Asansol rail station. But he was shocked and equally sad to witness the miserable conditions that prevailed in the Retiring Room there. In another book ‘Mahatma Gandhi his life, Writings and Speeches’ Gandhiji observed,

‘They are discreditable-looking places where there is no order, no cleanliness but utter confusion and horrible din and noise. Passengers have no benches or not enough to sit on. They squat on dirty floors and eat dirty food. They are permitted to throw the leavings of their food and spit where they like, sit how they like and smoke everywhere. The closets attached to these places defy description’.

Very few people know that Gandhiji had a bitter experience in Asansol station on that day. From Burdwan station he along with his wife and Maganlal boarded a Poona bound train. He had bookings for a third class carriage. But all the third class compartments were packed with extra passengers. As he was unable to enter any of the third class compartments, he asked for the guard’s help. But the guard on duty curtly replied, ‘you must try to get in where you can or take the next train’. Since Gandhi was in a hurry to reach Poona he boarded an inter class compartment along with his family. This incident was noticed by the guard and he charged Gandhiji extra fair at Asansol Station. Gandhiji vehemently protested saying, ‘It was your duty to find us room. We could not get any, and so we are sitting here. If you can accommodate us in a third class compartment, we shall be only too glad to go there.’ But the white skinned guard paid no heed to Gandhiji’s protest. Gandhiji time and again protested

against the inconveniences faced by passengers while travelling in trains. This was a clear proof of his anti British feelings.

At the call of Gandhiji people of Asansol plunged into the national movement. Even people of nearby areas of Burdwan, Galsi, Purulia, Jharia etc. were ready to participate in freedom movement. At that time Purulia was under Manbhum district in Bihar. On September 12th and 13th, 1925, the sixteenth Conference of the Bihar Congress was held at Purulia. It was



Figure 12 At Bangshogopal Town Hall, Bardhaman 26th May 1925

attended by Gandhiji along with Dr. Rajendra Prasad. Gandhiji arrived at Purulia town boarding a train from Bombay via Chakradharpur and Sini. During the second phase of Civil Disobedience Movement, Gandhiji once again came to Purulia to launch anti touchability movement. On May 29th, 1934,

Gandhiji participated in a mass meeting in support of the Harijan movement. Earlier in 1921, Gandhiji had visited Jharia. On May 26th, 1925, Gandhiji arrived at Bardhaman at night and was greeted warmly by the people of Bardhaman. He stayed that night at the Guest House of Maharaja of Bardhaman. On the next day afternoon he addressed a huge gathering at the Banghsogopal Town Hall Ground. Later on in October 1938, due to Gandhiji's initiative Binoy Choudhury and some other nationalist leaders were released from long term imprisonment. Renowed leader Binoy Chowdhury was at this time one of the leading figures in the nationalist movement of the industrial area in Asansol.



Figure 13 Septic Tank at Ushagram Missionary School

Gandhiji was even closely associated with the Ushagram Missionary School in Asansol. His personal secretary visited this school twice at the direction of the Mahatma. Reverend Fired G. William, then in charge of the school and his wife invented a septic tank at a very nominal cost. The news of this

invention spread far and wide. To have knowledge about how this Rural Home Sanitation functions, Gandhiji's personal secretary came to Asansol.

In 1935 at Gandhiji's Sevagram Ashram this model of septic tank was introduced. But due to some technological fault it could not function. Later in August 1941, Gandhiji wrote a letter to Reverend William. He invited Reverend William and his wife to come to Sevagram and

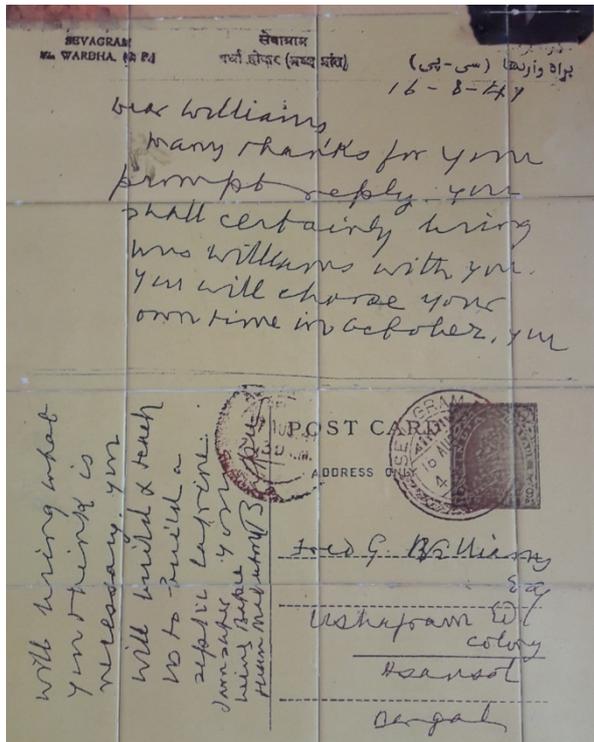


Figure 14 Gandhiji's letter inviting Reverend F.G. William and his wife at Sevagram Ashram

impart knowledge about the proper use of the septic latrine.

In 1946, Gandhiji arrived at Raniganj station. Once again he was travelling in a third class compartment and his destination was Calcutta. This time he was accompanied by a goat. People flocked to Raniganj station to have a glimpse of Gandhi. The Colonial Government had strict orders not to detain the train at Raniganj for long. But the Mahatma could not ignore the demand of the masses and thus set his foot on the platform. That day ignoring the orders of the Raj, Gandhiji was felicitated by the former head of Raniganj Municipality Dr. Jyotish Chandra Ghosh. Dr. Ghosh along with other

freedom fighters donated a handsome amount of subscription to Gandhiji for the cause of national movement. Worthy to mention that it was from Raniganj that the highly educated woman Saraswati Devi Khaitan was the rightful disciples of Gandhiji at Sabarmati Ashram.

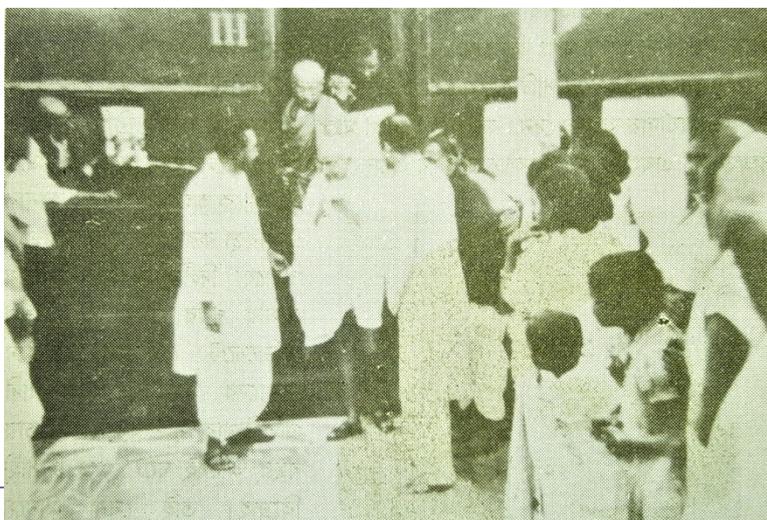


Figure 15 Gandhiji at Raniganj Railway Station in 1946. Standing on the right side in black coat is Dr J.C. Ghosh

What was more interesting was that in the very station of Asansol where once Gandhiji was harassed by a European guard, it was in the same station that Nepal Roy, a member of Indian Territorial Army and also a MCM staff of

Carriage and Wagon gave salutation to Gandhiji. Nepal Roy, before his death had confessed this very memorable incident of his life of saluting Gandhiji to Sri Jagannath Samanta, the author of *Asansoler Itihas* .

The legacy of Mahatma in contemporary world

Mahatma Gandhi was a phenomenal personality during his lifetime. His struggle in South Africa and India made him a living legend throughout the world. He was shot dead quite easily but not his ideas. His ideas have become more powerful nowadays than they had been during his lifetime. His worldview and his method of action based on truth (*satyagraha*) and non violence (*ahimsa*) was unique indeed and still very much relevant in handling the gravest threats the world is facing today.

Today we can realize the so called greatness of modern scientific and technological development which has brought the world on the verge of extinction. Since the heydays of Industrial Revolution, industrial pollution has been making this world more and more unsuitable for healthy living. Once Rabindranath Tagore raised some questions to the almighty in one of his poem, *Prashno*:

“যাহারা তোমার বিষাইছে বায়ু, নিভাইছে তব আলো,
তুমি কী তাদের ক্ষমা করিয়াছ, তুমি কী বেসেছ ভালো”

(Have you ushered your mercy on them?
Have you really loved them? Oh my lord, O God.)

The world and the environment around us have been taken for granted to fulfil our greed which goes against the intimate and reciprocal relationship between man and nature. As the world is facing the challenges of nature and climate change, it is time to remember Gandhi’s cosmocentric approach. He stressed that all lives were sacred and gave immense importance to limit one’s greed. He had rightly said, “The earth, the air, the land and the water are not an inheritance from our forefathers but on loan from our children. So we have to handover to them at least as it was handed over to us.” Deep understanding of the Mahatma’s cosmocentric approach to human beings are needed more than ever before to find out a sustainable solutions to the ever increasing problem of biodiversity conservation.

It is commonly believed that Gandhi was against modern science and technology. However, he was not against science and technology but of its abuses. Mahatma visualized an

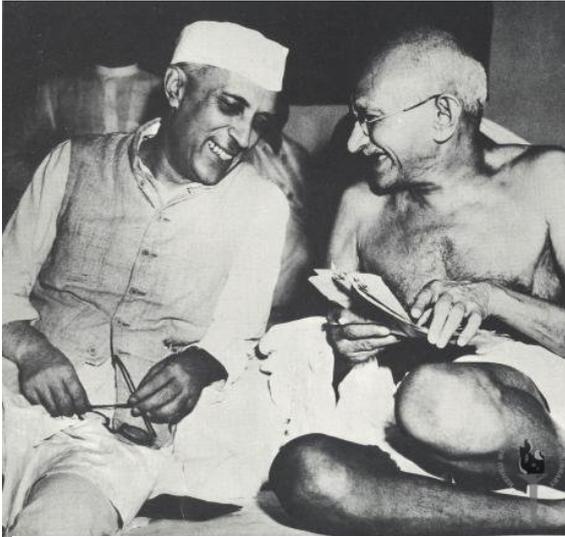


Figure 16 Gandhi and Nehru: two visions of new India

alternative path of development fundamentally different from that of Western/Capitalist model of development which was primarily based on materialistic development and the development of a few. Mahatma's notion of development was based on a cooperative relationship between man and nature, a sort of an organic relationship like that of the human body where all the organs function in cooperation with the other. However, the free India for which Gandhi fought relentlessly, took the path of rapid 'development' contrary his vision of

swaraj. It was such a development that uprooted millions of common people from their soil for the erection of the 'temples of modern India'. Mahatma never dreamt of that sort of development and disheartened by seeing the "madness and the vain imitation of the tinsel of the West". The so called 'development' eventually marginalized the downtrodden people living in the countryside more rapidly than before and ultimately resulted in the development of underdevelopment in the long run.

Another aspect where we can feel the relevance of the ideas of Mahatma Gandhi is the growing sense of insecurity in almost every sphere of our life, from private to public, from local to global. Peace has become a mirage to the modern civilization. The western civilization fought relentlessly with each other in the name of making nation state. They organized Peace Conferences after all the great wars they fought to ensure peace. We know the outcomes of those peace conferences that ultimately led to another series of wars in the long run. The establishment of peace by means of violence is the greatest fallacy of our time. Mahatma devised the unique method of *ahimsa* and *satyagraha* to ensure peace from within. He taught us that violence could not be ended by resorting to counter violence. Armed peace is nothing but an illusion. Nations are producing or purchasing tons of nuclear weapons to ensure their security. However, even the strongest nation is not feeling safe and suffering from a fear psychosis. The end of Cold War did not erase the sense of insecurity in the ear of globalization and information revolution, rather intensified the crisis. The terrorist groups are operating globally and they have the network, resources, popular support and technology required for creating havoc at anytime and anywhere. It is clear that only repressive measures cannot resolve this problem as violence produces more violence. Here we can look back to

the epic struggle Mahatma fought against the strongest colonial power of the world and showed the effectiveness of *satyagraha*. The power of *satyagraha* was again proved effective in the Chipko Movement and Save Narmada Movement long after the death of Mahatma.

Religious fundamentalism has been a considerable source of violence and suffering in recent years in almost every part of the world, including such developed countries as the USA and such developing countries as Iran, Pakistan, and India. Gandhiji dealt the issue very judiciously as his approach to religion was based on the principle that religion is a collective property and a common human heritage. Even firmly rooted in a particular religion, a man can freely borrow ideas from other religions. A truly religious person should respect other religions. To him religion was not a monolithic structure of ideas and practices. He often used the metaphor of living in a house with its windows wide open to allow cultural winds from all directions to blow into it and to enable him to breathe fresh air at his own pace and in his own way. This was Mahatma Gandhi who looked very traditional but a truly modern man from his heart. One of the greatest lessons we learn from Mahatma Gandhi was his deep faith in the goodness of every individual and his firm belief that humanity is proceeding towards well-being. His strong belief on humanity is reflected as, “You must not lose faith in humanity. Humanity is an ocean; if a few drops of the ocean are dirty, the ocean does not become dirty.”

Thus the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi should be celebrated not by worshipping Mahatma but by inculcating his spirit of love for truth and non violence, a new world order based on peaceful coexistence, cooperation rather than competition; and a healthy, reciprocal relationship between man and nature.

Gandhiji had close association with the railways till the last days of his life. Once he had some negative views about the rail. In spite of his criticism on the management of the Indian railways during the colonial period, Mahatma travelled throughout India by railways and successfully campaigned against the colonial regime through these railway journeys. In fact it was he who popularised this maxim, ‘Real Indian can only be seen through Indian Railways’. Later he himself wrote, ‘I am not aiming at destroying railways or hospital, though I would certainly welcome their destruction’. The third class compartment was his favourite. Hence he wrote ‘Third class in Indian Railways’. After his death, his sacred ashes were carried in five third class compartments of the Asthi Special Train from Delhi to Prayag in Allahabad. Gandhiji had attacked a system of rail that was entirely colonial. On the eve of Indian independence, Gandhiji wrote a letter to Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru on October 5th,

1945, stating his visions about a better railway system. Railway played a very crucial role in the propagation of nationalism by connecting people belonged to different parts of since the days of Surendranath Banerjee's campaign before the formation of Indian National Congress. With the end of the colonial regime, the Indian railways became truly a Peoples' Rail and the lifeline of India. Mahatma appealed to the masses not to travel without ticket and to keep the railway clean.

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