



Mahatma Gandhi And Indian Diaspora: An Assessment

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Mahatma Gandhi was a mass leader whose beliefs have always promoted racial and colonial equality, international understanding, and community harmony. Another area where Gandhi's impact and importance cannot be understated is the diaspora. Mahatma Gandhi has played a significant role in both the development of the Indian diaspora and the development of Gandhi himself. Gandhi's primary revolutionary tool, satyagraha, was tested in the diaspora (South Africa), and at the same time, the success of satyagraha in India spread to many diasporic nations throughout the world. Since his passing in 1948, Mahatma Gandhi has been viewed in a number of ways, and while his reputation has changed with time, overall respect for him and his principles has increased. He is revered as a saint and a spiritual guide by many. Others think highly of him as a broker of peace. In the struggle for civil and political rights, many people have attempted to adopt his strategy of militant nonviolent opposition, or satyagraha. He is revered as a national liberation hero who developed a potent weapon to fight colonial oppression. Others have lauded his criticism of the industrial production system as well as his suggestion for a self-sustaining economy and a more egalitarian society. In this article it has been examined that how Gandhi has both been a source of inspiration for many people and a contentious figure whose legacy has been called into doubt.

Gandhi is revered by many as a saintly figure who fought for world peace and harmony. This image frequently occurs in Western depictions of Jesus. His statue in Tavistock Square shows him sitting cross-legged in meditation with his eyes closed. The effect is enhanced by the flowers and incense sticks that his supporters frequently place at the base of the statue. He is depicted in a like way at a mural in Oxford's St Mary's Church. On the other side, he is typically portrayed in sculptures in India walking forward holding his staff, ready to engage the British in one of his satyagraha. Gandhi is regarded by many, particularly in the West, as the patron saint of nonviolence. But there are some questions about his reputation in this area. He supported the British military throughout the Boer War and World War I because, in his opinion, using force to uphold national honour was preferable than acting cowardly. This was hardly evidence in favour of the pacifist position.

Gandhi's nonviolent civil resistance approach, which he called satyagraha, has been his greatest lasting contribution, even though it hasn't been widely appreciated outside of India. Instead, the term "nonviolence," which he coined and adapted from the Sanskrit word "ahimsa," has come to represent this practice. There was a long-standing countercultural tradition in the United States that embraced nonviolence and civil disobedience, as exemplified by the Quakers and figures like Henry David Thoreau. This aspect of his life's work has garnered particularly strong support in the United States. His most significant early supporter in this regard was an American lawyer who was prominent in the labour movement named Richard Gregg (1885–1974). He was moved by Gandhi's anti-British efforts, so he flew to India to learn more about the Gandhian movement firsthand and was won over to the nonviolent way of thinking. He wrote numerous books on the subject in the 1920s and 1930s, with "The Power of Nonviolence" (1935) being the most well-known. Gandhi's nonviolence was viewed with suspicion by many people, who thought it would be ineffective against a strong foe. In truth, Gregg argued, it was a very successful tactic since it demoralised the opposition.

1.1 Mahatma Gandhi in South Africa:

In 1893, Gandhi arrived in Durban, Natal (now KwaZulu-Natal), to aid trader Dada Abdulla with legal difficulties. In June, Dada Abdulla asked Gandhi to go on a train excursion to Pretoria, Transvaal. The trip started in Pietermaritzburg, Natal, and finished there. Gandhi was seated in the first-class area since he purchased a first-class ticket. A White person who entered the cabin immediately summoned White train officials, who told Gandhi to move to the van compartment since "coolies" and non-whites were not allowed in first-class compartments. Gandhi objected and offered his ticket, but was warned that he would be removed by force if he did not do so politely. When Gandhi disobeyed the order, a white police officer dragged him from the train and his luggage was dumped on the station. As the train accelerated away, Gandhi retreated to the waiting room. Gandhi would jot down the following in his autobiography: "It was winter, and the cold was terribly severe." I trembled in my seat despite the fact that my overcoat was in my luggage, but I dared not ask for it out of respect for the other passengers. He claims that he started to think about his "duty": should he stay and fight for his "rights," or should he go back to India? His own "adversity was merely a symptom of the underlying cancer of colour discrimination," he claimed. The following evening, without incident, he finished his rail excursion. On the stagecoach ride from Charlestown to Johannesburg, a worse catastrophe awaited him. The white conductor was made to sit on the box outside with the coachman while the white passengers sat inside with them. Gandhi didn't want to miss the coach, so he tucked the insult away in his pocket. A conductor who wanted to smoke told Gandhi to sit on a dirty piece of sackcloth so he could take over Gandhi's seat and smoke while they were travelling. Gandhi declined the invitation. In an effort to put him out of his misery, the conductor shouted at him and struck him in the face. Gandhi clung to the brass rails of the train, unwilling to let go and vowing to take no revenge. Gandhi was still sitting in his seat when the conductor was compelled to stop hitting him after other white passengers complained about the horrific assault. Indians faced a harsher condition in the Transvaal than they did in Natal. They had to pay a £3 poll tax, were only allowed to own property in ghetto-like zones that were explicitly allocated for them, were denied a franchise, and were not allowed to leave their dwellings after 9 p.m. without a special permit. Gandhi received a letter from the State Attorney authorising him to be outside at all times when he was out for his daily stroll. An on-duty policeman shoved him off the ground and kicked him into the street when he got close to President Kruger's house. Mr. Coates, an English Quaker who knew Gandhi, happened to be nearby and saw what happened. Gandhi offered to serve as a witness and was encouraged to file charges against the man. Gandhi, however, turned down the offer and stated that he had made it a point not to go to court for a personal matter. Gandhi spent his time in Pretoria studying about 80 works of holy literature. Even though he rejected Christianity, he was nevertheless impacted by it. At this period, Gandhi attended Bible lessons. Within a week after arriving, Gandhi delivered his first speech in front of the general public, emphasising the value of integrity in business. The purpose of the meeting was to educate the local Indian population about the injustice they were experiencing. He brought up the issue of Indians taking first class trains. Indians "who were properly clothed" consequently received first- and second-class seats as promised. This was merely a split victory. These incidents inspired Gandhi to create the concept of satyagraha. Indian immigrants from different cultures, dialects, and beliefs that they had settled in South Africa were brought together by him. By the time Gandhi arrived in South Africa, the White ruling class and the bulk of the White population

(now KwaZulu-Natal) had fuelled a strong anti-Indian feeling that had spread throughout the entire nation. The first Indian-discriminatory law, Law 3, was enacted in the South African Republic, or Transvaal, in 1885. Since Natal had been granted self-government authority in 1893, legislators have come under increasing pressure to pass legislation aimed at lessening the threat posed by merchant (Indians). The independence of Indians was severely curtailed by two acts that were passed in the two years that followed. Any Indian who has been indentured for longer than five years must either return to India or be re-indentured for another two years, according to the Immigration Law Amendment Bill. He would have to pay a £3 yearly tax if he objected. The legislation was ratified in 1895. A bill to change the franchise was introduced in 1894. Its main goal was to limit the franchise to voting-eligible Indians. The Bill infuriated Indian leaders despite the fact that there were only 300 of them compared to 10,000 white votes. They made up their minds to oppose the law in every manner they could. During a farewell dinner held in his honour in April 1894, someone brought him a news piece from the Natal Mercury regarding the Natal Government's proposal to propose a measure to disenfranchise Indians. The bill's dire consequences were immediately apparent to Gandhi, who referred to it as "the first nail in our coffin" and urged his fellow countrymen to take action to resist it. However, they begged him to stay for an additional month, claiming they would be powerless without him. He agreed, not realising that this one month would turn into twenty years. A meeting was swiftly turned into the farewell dinner, and an action committee was established. Following that, the group created a petition that was submitted to the Natal Legislative Assembly. Volunteers came forward all through the night to copy the petition and collect signatures. The petition received a lot of favourable press coverage the following morning. But the legislation was approved. Gandhi persevered in writing Lord Ripon, the Secretary of State for Colonies, a fresh appeal. Within a month, Lord Ripon had the enormous petition with 10,000 signatures, and 1,000 copies had been printed for distribution. Indians learnt for the first time about the tyranny of their compatriots in South Africa after The New York Times agreed with them that their argument had merit. Gandhi reaffirmed that if he had to remain in South Africa for an extended period of time, he would not accept compensation for his public service and stated that he needed about £300 to support his bills because he still regarded himself as a lawyer. As a result, he was appointed as a Natal Supreme Court attorney. It was resolved to reject the Franchise Bill at an Indian conference held on June 25, 1894, at Sheth Abdulla's home, with Sheth Haji Muhammad, a prominent Indian leader from Natal, presiding. Here, Gandhi outlined his plan of attack against the law. Gandhi played a significant role in the campaign's planning. As a great letter writer and conscientious organiser, he was given the responsibility of organising all petitions, setting up meetings with politicians, and writing letters to newspapers. Additionally, he ran for office in India, where his appeal to Lord Ripon, the British Secretary of State for the Colonies, was initially successful. He played a significant role in the establishment of the Natal Indian Congress (NIC), the first body with a long history of upholding and defending Indian rights in South Africa, on August 22, 1894. By 1896, Gandhi had established himself as a political figure in South Africa. This year, he went to India to plan a protest on behalf of Indians living in South Africa. It manifested as letters to newspapers, sit-down interviews with well-known nationalists, and a number of public gatherings. His trip caused controversy in India and raised questions for British officials in Natal and England. Gandhi made the British administration look bad enough for it to block the Franchise Bill in an unprecedented move, which led to dangerously high levels of anti-Indian feeling in Natal. He was compelled to end his vacation while still in India after receiving an urgent message from the Indian community in Natal. He boarded a ship for Durban on November 30, 1896, together with his wife and kids. Gandhi was ignorant that his Green Pamphlet, which listed Indian concerns, had been exaggerated and misrepresented while he was away from South Africa. The European society erupted in wrath and promised to drown all the passengers after being duped by conflicting tales of Gandhi's acts in India and rumours that he was transporting shiploads of Indians to settle in Natal. Following significant media coverage of the attempted lynching, Joseph Chamberlain, the British Secretary of State for the Colonies, sent a telegram to Natal directing the prosecution of all responsible parties. Gandhi, on the other hand, steadfastly resisted identifying and punishing his attackers, arguing that they had been tricked and that once they learnt the truth, they would repent their actions. Gandhi's opinions evolved over the course of his second visit to South Africa. He once worried about maintaining the standards of an English attorney. Now he started methodically reducing his wants and expenses. He began doing his own laundry and cleaning out his own toilets in addition to doing it for his guests. In addition to his hectic legal practise and obligations to the public, he devoted two hours every day of his spare time to a charitable hospital because he was dissatisfied with self-help. He also

taught his two children as well as a nephew at home. He read books on nursing and midwifery, worked as a midwife, and had his fourth and last child in Natal. The Second Anglo-Boer (South African) War started in 1899. Gandhi urged Indians to assist the British cause despite his sympathies for the Boers' struggle for independence, arguing that since they upheld their rights as British subjects, it was their duty to protect the Empire when it was in danger. He created and trained an Indian Ambulance Corps of 1,100 volunteers, which he presented to the government with the assistance of a DR. Booth. Under Gandhi's leadership, the corps displayed outstanding performance, which was noted in dispatches. Gandhi intended to go back to India when the war was over in 1901. His concern was that his success in South Africa would turn him into a "money-maker." With great difficulty, he persuaded his comrades to allow him to leave, promising to return within a year if the society required him. He made it to India in time to attend the Calcutta session of the Indian National Congress, where he was happy to learn that his resolution on South Africa was approved by a unanimous vote. He wasn't happy with the conference, though. He thought Indian leaders spoke plenty but did little. When a cablegram from the Indian community in Natal summoned him, he had just begun to settle into his new practise in Bombay. He had promised them that he would return if they needed him. He left his family behind and sailed away from India. Joseph Chamberlain, who was in South Africa at the time, was summoned, and he was asked to present the Indian case to him. However, the Colonial Secretary, who was there to accept a gift of £35 million from South Africa, had no desire to offend the European population. Gandhi failed in his attempt to win Chamberlain's sympathy and learned that the situation for Indians in the Transvaal had become dangerously worse as a result. He decided to stay in Johannesburg as a result and practice law at the Supreme Court. Despite staying on to fight against White conceit and oppose injustice, he had no ill will and was constantly ready to assist when they were in need. Because of this rare combination of determination to reject evil and capacity to love his opponent, his adversaries were bewildered and inspired to appreciate him. He once more offered his support to the government when the Zulu uprising broke out, this time by organising an Indian Ambulance Corps. He was relieved that the sick and dying Zulus that white doctors and nurses would not touch were being taken care of by him and his troops. Gandhi was a founding participant in the British Indian Association (BIA) in 1903. The movement aimed to halt planned Indian removals from the Transvaal under British authority. According to Arthur Lawley, Lord Alfred Milner, the newly appointed Lieutenant Governor, declared that Whites would be protected from Indians in a "battle between East and West for the inheritance of South Africa's semi-vacant regions."

1.2) Satyagraha:

Following the principles of aparigraha (non-possession) and samabhava, which he had learnt from the Hindu holy book Bhagvad Gita (equability), Gandhi sought to purify his life. Gandhi was given the book Unto This Last by John Ruskin by a friend, and he was captivated by Ruskin's ideas. Gandhi was inspired by the novel to build the Phoenix Settlement, a communal living area outside of Durban, in June 1904 to live in a society where everyone is treated equally and to be free of needless commodities. In June 1903, Gandhi moved his family and the staff of his newspaper, the Indian Opinion, to the Phoenix Settlement. Each community member received three acres of land to build a corrugated iron house on top of, in addition to the press building. In addition to farming, everyone in the village had to be educated and help with the newspaper. In 1906, Gandhi decided to take the brahmacharya vow, which forbids him from engaging in sexual activity with anyone, including his own wife. He believed that this vow would allow him to fulfil his potential as a public figure. He found it difficult to keep this promise, but he made a sincere effort to do so for the rest of his life. Gandhi made the decision to limit his diet in order to curb his appetite because he thought that one passion fuelled another. Gandhi simplified his diet to support him in this attempt, moving away from strict vegetarianism to meals that were unspiced and frequently raw, with fruits and nuts making up a sizable portion of his food choices. He reasoned that fasting would also help one to manage their fleshly desires. Gandhi believed that taking the brahmacharya vow at the end of 1906 gave him the focus he needs to develop the idea of Satyagraha. At its most fundamental, satyagraha is passive opposition. Gandhi, on the other hand, believed that the English term "passive resistance" failed to adequately describe the true nature of Indian resistance because it was frequently linked with the helpless and was a tactic that might be used in a fit of rage. Gandhi coined the term "satyagraha," which literally translates as "truth force," to describe the Indian uprising. Gandhi thought that exploitation could only happen if both the exploited and the exploiter accepted it, and he thought that if one could see past the immediate situation and recognise the ultimate truth, they

might bring about change. Truth (in this sense) may signify "natural right," a privilege granted by nature and the universe that man should not violate. A focused and forceful peaceful protest against a particular injustice in action was known as satyagraha. When opposing injustice, a Satyagrahi (someone who engages in Satyagraha) would refuse to follow an unjust law. Because of this, he wouldn't lose his cool, he wouldn't put up with physical attacks on his person or the taking of his belongings, and he wouldn't slander his opponent with harsh words. A Satyagraha practitioner would never exploit an adversary's challenges. Instead of having a clear winner and loser in the conflict, the goal was for everyone to understand the "truth" and consent to the repeal of the unfair laws. On December 28, 1907, the first arrests of Indians who refused to register were made, and by the end of January 1908, 2000 Asians had been locked up. Gandhi, who had previously served many prison terms, was one of many prominent individuals in the movement who left the colony rather than being detained. Gandhi initially used satyagraha in South Africa in 1907 when he gathered opposition to the Asiatic Registration Law (also known as the Black Act). All Indians, young and old, men and women, were required to have their fingerprints taken as part of the Black Act, which was approved in March 1907, and to carry registration cards at all times. Gandhi urged the Indian community to rebel against the law and refuse to accept this humiliation and imprisonment. Indians resisted having their fingerprints taken in an effort to oppose the documentation offices. Huge protests against the Black Act were planned, the miners went on strike, and many Indians crossed the border into the Transvaal illegally from Natal. Many of the protesters were attacked and taken into custody. He was apprehended in January 1908 and given a two-month sentence in a basic jail. Other Satyagrahis followed in his wake. Gandhi had already served one of several prison sentences. Seven years of opposition resulted in the abolition of the Black Act in June 1914. Gandhi had shown that peaceful protest can be quite powerful. The Indians chose to flout the Transvaal's immigration ban by setting fire to their registration papers. The prison system started to overflow. Gandhi was detained a second time in September 1908 and sentenced to two months in prison, this time with hard labour. Fighting continued. In February 1909, he was apprehended for the third occasion, and he was sentenced to three months of hard labour. He made such good use of his time in prison with study and prayer that he was able to proclaim that "the actual way to ultimate pleasure lay in going to jail and enduring pains and privations there in the service of one's own nation and religion." Before his prison sentence was up, General Jan Smuts promised to repeal the Act as long as the Indians freely registered themselves and sent him an ambassador in that vein. Gandhi and Leung Quin, the leader of the Chinese minority in South Africa, came to an agreement that led to the settlement. While other Indians did not share his belief in trusting his foe, he had always done so. One large Indian, a Pathan, even accused Gandhi of betraying them and threatened to kill him if he registered. Gandhi was ambushed and severely hurt the day he went outside to register by this and other Pathans. When he came to, he saw that his attackers had been captured and demanded that they be set free. Gandhi agreed, but he was let down when Smuts went back on his word and steadfastly refused to repeal the Black Act while also denying any agreements had been reached. The Indians decided to violate the law by setting their registration documents on fire. After successfully maintaining his position as the head of the Transvaal business community, he left for London in June 1909. Gandhi returned to South Africa in December 1909 only to find that the NIC was openly plotting against him. As he battled for his political life, he fled to Tolstoy, a property he had purchased in 1910 to aid the families of passive resister prisoners. Gopal Krishna Gokhale, an Indian leader, visited South Africa in 1912, which led to Gandhi's return to the public eye. Gandhi and his NIC rivals broke off their friendship on April 26, 1913, after Gandhi was accused of prohibiting opponents of his beliefs from speaking with the visitor. In 1911, the Satyagraha campaign was suspended following a temporary resolution of the Transvaal Asian dispute. The following year, Gokhale went to South Africa and convinced Gandhi that the Union Government had pledged to repeal the Black Act, eliminate the racial ban from immigration law, and abolish the £3 tax before he left. Gandhi, on the other hand, had concerns that quickly came to pass. When the Supreme Court ruled that only Christian marriages were permitted in South Africa, invalidating all Indian weddings and turning all Indian ladies into concubines, the Union Government broke its pledge and added a great deal of fuel to the fire. This encouraged Indian women to join the conflict, like Kasturbai. Indians were not allowed to cross the border from the Transvaal into Natal or vice versa without a permit. Indian women from Gandhi's Tolstoy Ashram in the Transvaal crossed the border without authorization and travelled to Newcastle to persuade the Indian miners there to strike. They succeeded, and were captured. Under Gandhi's leadership, thousands of miners and other Indians got ready to march to the Transvaal border in a purposeful act of nonviolent protest. Hundreds of

people disobeyed the Immigrants Regulation Act of 1913 (Act no. 22) on October 29, 1913, when they marched into the Transvaal from Newcastle, Natal Colony (now KwaZulu Natal), headed by Gandhi. Gandhi was followed by two organisations, Thambi Naidoo and Albert Christopher. One of the turning points in South African history was this. He was captured the following day in Palmford. Prior to the march, Thambi Naidoo organised Newcastle's Indian community to begin the Satyagraha Campaign (Passive Resistance Campaign). Gandhi set strict rules for Satyagrahis, who were required to accept insult, corporal punishment, or incarceration without protest. On November 6, 1913, Gandhi was detained while leading a march that had 127 women, 57 children, and 2037 men. After rejoining the march, he was arrested again after being released on bond. At one point, about 50,000 indentured workers went on strike, and there were many more Indians behind bars. The government's crackdown and even shooting resulted in several deaths. One American biographer stated, "In the end, General Smuts did what every Government that ever-resisted Gandhi had to do—he conceded." In Natal, an unplanned Indian strike fundamentally altered the situation. More protesters joined in after several strikes were killed and hurt in altercations with the police. By the end of November 1913, sugar mills had shut down, produce markets in Durban and Pietermaritzburg had stopped operating, and domestic workers were no longer available for hotels, restaurants, and homes. Gandhi's incarceration and police torture became the subject of indignation in India, which compelled the British government to work out a deal with the strikers. Gandhi was set free so that he could consult with Smuts about the Indian Relief Bill, which eliminated the £3 fee on former indentured servants. It was decided to revoke the law. Following Gandhi's release, he and General Smuts came to a tentative agreement in January 1914 in which the main Indian demands were granted. After finishing his work in South Africa, Gandhi and his wife moved to England in July 1914. He presented a pair of sandals he had made in prison to General Smuts before setting sail.

1.3) Return to India:

Gandhi decided it was time to return to India in July 1914 after spending twenty years combating racism in South Africa. On his way home, Gandhi was supposed to stop briefly in England. Gandhi made the decision to remain in England and establish a second Indian ambulance corps to aid the British when World War I broke out during his visit. Gandhi left for India in January 1915 after experiencing health issues due to the British air. The world press extensively reported Gandhi's efforts and successes in South Africa. By the time he got back to India, he had become a hero to the country. He was eager to start making changes in India, but a friend advised him to wait a year and tour the entire nation to get to know the people and their concerns. Gandhi's fame, however, ultimately prevented him from seeing the daily reality that the poor had to deal with. On this tour, Gandhi started dressing more casually by donning a loincloth (dhoti) and sandals, which are frequently worn by the general public. If the temperature was chilly, he would add a shawl. This was his attire for the remainder of his life. Gandhi founded the Sabarmati Ashram, another communal community, at Ahmadabad during this year of remembrance. Along with his family and other former Phoenix Settlement members, Gandhi resided on the ashram for the following sixteen years.

1.4) The Title of Mahatma:

After returning to India, Gandhi was given the honorific title of Mahatma ("Great Soul"). Many people attribute Gandhi's recognition and popularisation to Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore, who earned the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913. The title perfectly captured the feelings of the millions of Indian peasants who revered Gandhi. Gandhi, on the other hand, detested the nickname since it suggested that he was extraordinary while he thought of himself as ordinary. Gandhi was dubbed Mahatma Gandhi after that. Rabindranath Tagore is often credited with bestowing the name.

Conclusion:

Gandhi has made a significant impact on numerous diaspora populations around the world with his complex life. It would not be out of place to view Mahatma Gandhi as the pioneer of integrating the dispersed Indians worldwide in such a setting. Gandhi has actually increased the prominence of the "Indian Diaspora" in the Indian public eye. Gandhi is thus one of the iconic figures who will always be involved in politics, communal life, and cultural activities both in India and abroad. He serves as the diaspora's primary point of contact with the mother nation. Gandhi has made a significant impact on numerous diaspora populations around the world with his complex life. It would not be out of place to view Mahatma Gandhi as the pioneer of integrating the dispersed Indians worldwide in such a setting. He has actually increased the prominence of the "Indian Diaspora" in the Indian public eye thus one of the iconic figures who will always be involved in politics, communal life, and cultural activities both in India and abroad. He serves as the home countries and his diaspora's most vital link.s

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