

Making of Gandhi as a National Leader: Contribution of South Africa.

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Introduction

Gandhi was born on 2 October 1869 in Kathiawar, also known as Porbandar, Saurashtra, to a devoutly pious Modh Bania family.

In Gujarat, it is also known as Sorath Bhoomi, the land of heroes.

He is known as a spiritual, political, and social reformer, nationalist, and man of the universe who introduced the world to a revolutionary philosophy.

His journey to London as a Diaspora student was his first experience crossing an ocean.

Reasons and conditions of dispersal of Gandhi to England and then to South Africa

Gandhi emigrated to England from India. Gandhi broke down national barriers. In those days, it was looked down upon to cross the ocean, which made it difficult for him to travel abroad. This was the scepticism of the traditionalist Modh Bania caste. Gandhi disregarded it. Gandhi had spent three years in England as a student of the diaspora. He developed a revolutionary perspective and conception of life in the expatriate country. As a student in England, he developed his unique character. He demonstrated to the Diaspora students that it is possible to abstain from non-vegetarian food and wine in England. His greatest qualities were his integrity, spirit of sacrifice, and instinctive patriotism.

Relation of Gandhi with the host hand and homeland

As a student in London and upon his return to India, Gandhi's principal focus was generating income. He had no success as a lawyer. He could only earn 300 rupees per month as a petition and memorandum writer, a field in which he eventually became an adept. Frustrated, he took a job offer from a South African friend of his brother. Sheth Abdullah, a wealthy businessman who resided in Durban and lacked an understanding of English, chose him as his legal counsel.

Gandhi was awarded first-class travel and £105 in addition to his local costs for the year. He was housed as a boarder in Pretoria, so when he was offered a position as a legal advisor, he jumped at the chance because it offered better potential for his legal career. He was a 23-year-old barrister who left Bombay on April 3 on the ship Safari in search of chances in a new country.

Gandhi had obtained employment, initially as a merchant's employee and subsequently as an advocate in Durban and attorney in Johannesburg - Gandhi discovered a vocation due to his spirit of service.

Gandhi realized the dangerous condition of the small Indian community, the experience of extreme racism amongst Indians, and the repeated betrayals of promises by the authorities in South Africa and Britain did not lead him to despondency or to a lack of faith in humanity (Gandhi M.)

Colonialists' view of slave countries

“A general belief seems to prevail in the Colony that the Indians are little better, if at all, than savages of the Natives of Africa,” wrote Gandhi- but that he would “show at once that the Indians were, and are, in no way inferior to their Anglo- Saxon brethren”. (Scroll.in, 2020)

Indians - the indentured labours were called coolies by the Europeans. A coolie meant a porter. The expression was used so extensively that they themselves began to address themselves as coolies. Even the Indian lawyers and traders were called coolie lawyers and coolie traders. They were used with purposeful disdain.

European planters in Natal solely desired slaves. They could not afford labourers who, at the completion of their sentence, would be free to compete with them. The indentured labourers went to Natal because they had been unsuccessful in agriculture or other permits in India, but it is not reasonable to assume that they had no knowledge of agriculture or did not comprehend the value of the land. They discovered that they could earn a good living in Natal by cultivating solely vegetables. Consequently, upon the expiration of their servitude, a great number of individuals began to engage in small-scale commerce. The European planters were

unaware of this new development, which they perceived as a challenge to their monopoly.

A movement against these indentured laborers was initiated. It is startling to see that, while on the one hand Europeans demanded more and more laborers and readily accepted as many as came from India, on the other hand they began to harass former indentured laborers in various ways. (Gandhi M. , Satyagraha in South Africa, 1928) They didn't give the opportunity to the Indians to settle and earn. On the contrary, they sent back the indentured so that fresh labourers could be brought to Natal with the new clause included in their contracts. They advocated the imposition of a heavy annual capitation tax at the end of five years. They wanted to make it impossible for Indian indentures to live as free men in Natal in any circumstances. (Gandhi M. , Satyagraha in South Africa, 1928, p. 25) As Natal was still Crown Colony, the Colonial Office was fully responsible for its government. Natal therefore could not protest injustice and eventually conferred on Natal 1893

The officials proposed the imposition of an annual poll tax of twenty-five pounds, or three hundred and seventy-five rupees, on each Indian who had been freed from indenture. It was evident that no Indian labourer could pay such an exorbitant tax and live in Natal as a free man. Lord Elgin, the Governor-General of India, considered that the amount was excessive, and ultimately, he accepted an annual poll tax of three pounds. This was equivalent to nearly six months' earnings on the indenture scale. The tax was levied, not only on the labourer himself, but also upon his wife, his daughter aged thirteen years or upwards, and his sons aged sixteen years or upwards. There was hardly any labourer who had not a wife and a couple of children. Thus, as a general rule, every labourer was required to pay an annual tax of twelve pounds. It is impossible to describe the hardships that this tax entailed.

Apartheid behavior

Gandhi was immediately exposed to the practise of racial discrimination in South Africa. The European magistrate asked him to remove his turban in a Durban court, but he refused and left the courtroom. A few days later, while going to

Pretoria, he was ejected from a first-class train compartment and left freezing and glum at the Pietermaritzburg train station. During the remainder of his voyage, he was beaten by the white driver of a stagecoach because he refused to ride on the footboard to make place for a European passenger, and he was ultimately denied access to lodgings reserved "exclusively for Europeans." These humiliations were a daily occurrence for Indian merchants and employees in Natal, who had learned to accept them with the same resignation with which they stowed their meagre cash. Not Gandhi's experience but his attitude was novel. He had not previously stood out for his assertiveness or aggression. However, something occurred while he endured the insults thrown upon him. The travel from Durban to Pretoria was one of his most creative experiences; it was his moment of truth. Henceforth, he would not accept injustice in South Africa as part of the natural or unnatural order; he would defend his dignity as an Indian and a man. (Nanda)

In 1894, The Bar Association in Natal rejected Gandhi just because he wasn't white. Gandhi was almost killed in 1897 while returning from India. He and 600 other Indians were feared of plague germs and were forcibly quarantined in Durban. Local newspapers labelled it as "Asiatic invasion," stoking large numbers of hostile working-class Europeans to mobilize onshore, while the passengers awaited clearance for three weeks. Gandhi survived thanks to the quick thinking and artful use of a parasol by the police superintendent's wife. (King, 2019)

He applied for accreditation to the Supreme Court of Natal as an attorney. The Natal Law Society opposed because of a provision that prohibited the inclusion of a coloured barrister on a roll. Many such incidents occurred which speak volumes about the apartheid behaviour of the British. The Europeans throughout Africa agitated on the grounds of their way of life. They considered Indians closed-fisted and dirty. (Gandhi M. , Satyagraha in South africa)

Historian Maureen Swan portrays the typical working week of most Indian laborers who toiled on the sugar plantations as six nine-hour days. During crushing and planting seasons, however, these laborers faced 17- or 18-hour days, producing "abnormally high disease and death rates." Indentured Indians also suffered

privations and immigration restrictions and could not venture more than two miles beyond their place of work without written permission. Indians were commonly forbidden to own land in Natal, while ownership was more permissible for native-born peoples. (King, 2019)

Gandhi's individual discontentment with prevailing political arrangements.

Two bills were passed in the following two years restricting the freedom of Indians severely. The Immigration Law Amendment Bill stated that any Indian had to return to India at the end of a five-year indenture period or had to be re-indentured for a further two years. If he refused an amount of £3 annual tax had to be paid. The bill came into law in 1895. A Franchise Amendment Bill was introduced in 1894. It was designed to limit the franchise to Indians who had the vote. Although there were only 300 of them, in comparison to 10 000 white voters, the Bill caused outrage among Indian leadership. They decided to contest the measure by any means available to them. Having completed his work in Pretoria, Gandhi returned to Durban and prepared to sail home. At a farewell dinner, in April 1894, given in his honour someone showed him a news item in the Natal Mercury that the Natal Government proposed to introduce a bill to disfranchise Indians. Gandhi immediately understood the ominous implications of this bill which, as he said, "is the first nail into our coffin" and advised his compatriots to resist it by concerned action. But they pleaded their helplessness without him and begged him to stay on for another month. He agreed little realizing that this one month would grow into twenty years. Within a month the mammoth petition with ten thousand signatures was sent to Lord Ripon and a thousand copies printed for distribution. Even The Times admitted the justice of the Indian claim and for the first time the people in India came to know of the oppressive lot of their compatriots in South Africa. (South African History Online, n.d.)

By 1896 Gandhi had established himself as a political leader in South Africa. In this year, he undertook a journey to India to launch a protest campaign on behalf of Indians in South Africa. It took the form of letters written to newspapers, interviews with leading nationalist leaders and a number of public meetings. His

mission caused great uproar in India and consternation among British authorities in England and Natal. Gandhi embarrassed the British Government enough to cause it to block the Franchise Bill in an unprecedented move, which resulted in anti-Indian feelings in Natal reaching dangerous new levels. While in India, an urgent telegram from the Indian community in Natal obliged him to cut short his stay. (Power, 1969)

He was sentenced to jail for organising the non-violent movement in 1908 but after meeting with General Smuts who was a British Commonwealth Statesman, he was released. In 1913, he fought against the override of non-Christian marriages.

Major dissent events organised by Gandhi in South Africa.

While in Pretoria, Gandhi studied the conditions in which his fellow South Asians in South Africa lived and tried to educate them on their rights and duties, but he had no intention of staying on in South Africa. In June 1894, when his year contract was about to get over, he was back in Durban, ready to sail for India. At a farewell party given in his honour, he happened to glance through the *Natal Mercury* and learned that the Natal Legislative Assembly was considering a bill to deprive Indians of the right to vote. "This is the first nail in our coffin," Gandhi told his hosts. They professed their inability to oppose the bill, and indeed their ignorance of the politics of the colony, and begged him to take up the fight on their behalf. (Britanica)

Gandhi formed the Natal Indian Congress in 1894 in a response to the atrocities conducted by British on the Indian community, which marked the birth of the first permanent political organisation to strive to maintain and protect the rights of Indians in South Africa. This organisation led non-violent protests against the oppressive treatment of the white people towards the native Africans and Indians.

During the outbreak of the Boer War in 1899, Gandhi gathered around 1,100 Indians and organized the Indian Ambulance Corps for the British but the ethnic discrimination and torture continued on Indians. (Today)

Gandhi got encouragement from John Ruskin's book *Unto this last* and decided to set up Phoenix farm near Durban where Gandhi trained Indians

Satyagraha. Therefore, we can call Phoenix farm as the mother of Satyagraha but it was Tolstoy farm which shaped this weapon of protest.

In September 1906, Gandhi composed the primary Satyagraha crusade to challenge the Transvaal Asiatic mandate that was comprised against the neighborhood Indians. Once more, in June 1907, he held Satyagraha against the Black Act. In 1908, he was condemned to prison for sorting out the peaceful developments. Be that as it may, after his gathering with General Smuts, a British Commonwealth legislator, he was delivered. Be that as it may, he was later assaulted for this and was again condemned to prison against which he composed Satyagraha once more. In 1909, he was condemned to a three-month prison term in Volkshurst and Pretoria. After his delivery, Gandhi went to England to look for the help of the Indian people group there. He composed another tranquil opposition crusade in Transvaal against the abuse that Indian minors were experiencing. He drove around 2,000 Indians over the Transvaal fringe. (Ashe, 1968, p. 73).

On 25 June 1894, at the living arrangement of Sheth Abdulla, a gathering of Indians was held and it was set out to offer resistance to the Franchise Bill. Here Gandhi laid out his game plan to restrict this bill. Gandhi assumed a noticeable job in the arranged crusade. As a gifted letter-essayist and fastidious organizer, he was doled out the undertaking of accumulating all petitions, orchestrating gatherings with legislators and tending to letters to papers. He likewise battled in India and made an, at first, fruitful intrigue to the British Secretary of State for the Colonies, Lord Ripon. (South African History Online, n.d.)

Acceptance of Gandhi as a leader.

By 1896 Gandhi had established himself as a political leader in South Africa. He undertook a journey to India to launch a protest campaign on behalf of Indians in South Africa. It took the form of letters written to newspapers, interviews with leading nationalist leaders and a number of public meetings. His mission caused great uproar in India and consternation among British authorities in England and Natal. (Anver, 2019)

The struggle in South Africa lasted for more than seven years. Under Gandhi's leadership, the small Indian minority kept up its resistance against heavy odds. Hundreds of Indians chose to sacrifice their livelihood and liberty rather than submit to laws repugnant to their conscience and self-respect. In the final phase of the movement in 1913, hundreds of Indians, including women, went to jail, and thousands of Indian workers who had struck work in the mines bravely faced imprisonment, flogging, and even shooting. It was a terrible ordeal for the Indians, but it was also the worst possible advertisement for the South African government, which, under pressure from the governments of Britain and India, accepted a compromise negotiated by Gandhi on the one hand and the South African statesman Gen. Jan Christian Smuts on the other.

Once, during his not-infrequent stays in jail, Gandhi had prepared a pair of sandals for Smuts, who recalled that there was no hatred and personal ill-feeling between them, and when the fight was over "there was the atmosphere in which a decent peace could be concluded." (Britanica)

By the time Gandhi left to return to India, he was a far different man than he was upon arrival in South Africa 20 years earlier. He not only paced a fight against apartheid but also arrived back to India possessing a nonviolent technique for achieving justice, which he believed was ethical, practical and effective- Satyagraha. And with this departure, a world leader was about to take birth. (King, 2019)

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