

## ***Mahatma Gandhi- A tribute***

**- A brief talk by Dr Vinay P (M.A., Ph.D, Vidwan)**

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If it is for the immortal stature of India of its timeless values of non-violence and truth in the modern era, the pragmatism of the personality of Mahatma Gandhiji is to be cherished in the heart of Indians. The Mahatma is forever the spring-source of inspiration, a personality beyond the relative importance accorded by a singular time-period, a characteristic icon of ideals he lived and died for. A tribute to the one with the sobriquet of the “*soul-great*” is indeed a philosophical investigation, in a way more from the practical perspective.

Born on 2<sup>nd</sup> of October in the era-founding year of 1869 in Porabandar, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, as he was known, imbibed the values he would cherish later from his mother Putlibai. As in the case of any epoch, the era began with a little boy’s realization of the sublimity of sincerity and truth. The Mahatma notes in his well-known autobiography – “A story of my experiments with truth”, the incidents which had reflected the radiance of the great spirit. Even when prompted by his teacher to “copy” from his co-student to get past the education inspector, innocent boy Mohandas Gandhi would not do the act of shame. Another notable mark that was left on the tender mind was the book of Shravana Kumara’s play. The play, together with a moving picture, greatly moved the heart Mohandas which the Mahatma later recollects as:

*“The agonized lament of the parents over Shravana's death is still fresh in my memory. The melting tune moved me deeply, and I played it on a concertina which my father had purchased for me“.*

A yet another drama was that of Harishchandra of the sobriquet of *The Truth* in Indian mythology. Mohandas Gandhi, even as a young boy, imagined himself in the role of Harishchandra and enacted innumerable times. It stirred his emotions as he remarks:

*“To follow truth and to go through all the ordeals Harishchandra went through was the one ideal it inspired in me”*

In his days of youth as a Barister in London, Mohandas Gandhi was influenced by the immediacy of the Bhagavad Gita of Duty and Philosophy. The combination of one's duty with knowledge and renunciation immediately appealed to Mohandas. To the mind of Gandhi, it was treatise to be eternal cherished by a seeker. It was, in the least, a text of denial of the world, as Gandhiji himself notes at the Practical Idealism, of implementing values in a real world, a term he himself clearly coined (Gandhi Marg 2002). The reverence the Mahatma showed may be seen his words as:

*"The Bhagavad-Gita calls on humanity to dedicate body, mind and soul to pure duty and not to become mental voluptuaries at the mercy of random desires and undisciplined impulses."*

To Gandhiji, the Duty was of service to humanity, an ideal nurtured on the complementary ideal of non-violence and sacrifice. The pivotal point of change in the aristocratic Gandhi to the Mahatma began with the Bhagavad Gita book in hand.

Mohandas Gandhi's slightly changed career in South Africa brought him to a fortune to be dreamt of, a whooping amount exceeding ten thousand dollars in those times! The psyche of a man who had the fire of service could hardly be satisfied by any material fortune. The ever-in-service Mohandas Gandhi started an Ashrama in Phoenix where he admired the poor performers for their earnest zeal and even chided the ones who excelled academically for their undue pride.

As a precursor of Indian nationalism of Gandhiji, Gandhiji carved out a niche of service by raising against the atrocity against the colour discrimination. Had not been Mohandas Gandhi not thrown out of the train at Pietermaritzburg for resisting for the impudence of the English to send him out of first class on colour basis and racism, the spark within Mohandas may not have been manifest in the later days as the Mahatma.

Returning to India once and for all in 1915, Gandhiji gave an impetus to the Indian National Congress and a new life into the veins of Indian struggle for Independence. Gandhiji's belief in the non-violent path as the method against all

oppression brought him the status of a living philosopher hailed - *The Mahatma*. Albert Einstein, a legend by himself has this to say on Mahatma Gandhi:

*“Generations to come will scarcely believe that such a one as this (Gandhi) walked the earth in flesh and blood.”*

The movements, all centered on the freedom of India, were Civil Disobedience, Satyagraha widespread, Champaran, Kheda, Khilafat movement, non-cooperation, Salt Satyagraha viz Dandi March, and finally the Quit India movement.

The Mahatma’s soul reigned supreme even his last moments of his worldly life. He had openly refused to co-operate with security measures for himself in face of several failed attempts for his assassination. The Mahatma had mentioned about his end as inevitable, if it has to be like that, and that it had rested in the hands of destiny. His keep of time, ironical in the Mahatma’s last day, was late by ten minutes for Prayer meeting. He is said to have been upset over this, as stated by followers Manu and Abha. January 30, 1948, evening 5 P.M about 10 past saw three insentient bullets fired at the Mahatma’s chest. The nation lost the Father. The New York Times newspaper has this to say:

*“The loss of Mr. Gandhi brings this country of 300,000,000 abruptly to a crossroads. Mingled with the sadness in this capital tonight was an undercurrent of fear and uncertainty, for now the strongest influence for peace in India that this generation has known is gone...”* - The New York Times, 31<sup>st</sup> January, 1948, (Source: Archive)

The Mahatma had only to say “Hey Ram”, which he always had dreamt of uttering in his end-moment. The Mahatma lives today in the heart of Indians and the fraternity of humanist souls worldwide. The Mahatma’s very own message to all, with which all may dive deep in introspection, was: *“My life is my message”*.

***The brief talk Dedicated to my father, P.S. Venkatesh Kumar, a Gandhian in practice, who had introduced the personality of the Mahatma since my childhood days.***