

Since his legal profession was not going anywhere in Bombay, he moved to Rajkot in Gujarat where he had grown up as a child. There, he began a modest practice which was not going all that well. He got the first taste of the authority of the British officers towards the native Indian population and the shock changed the course of his life. A Gujarati trading firm had an office in South Africa and it was embroiled in a big legal case. Gandhi was asked if he would be willing to go there and help out. "This was hardly going there as a barrister. It was going there as a servant of the firm. But I wanted somehow to leave India. There was also the tempting opportunity of seeing a new country, and of having new experience." (Gandhi, *Autobiography*, 85) So, in 1893, Gandhi and family prepared to go to South Africa.

What was supposed to be a year long stay extended to 20 years. The two decades in South Africa transformed Gandhi from the bumbling barrister into the Mahatma, a title bestowed on him by Rabindranath Tagore on his return to India. It was in South Africa that Gandhi conceived his philosophy of *satyagraha*. "For Gandhi, *satyagraha* seemed to be not only a practical way of responding to wrong, but also a mode of action which would solve the problem of ends and means." (Brown, xv) By the time he had returned to India in 1914, Gandhi knew he had discovered the means for obtaining Indian independence from British rule without the use of violence. It was a momentous discovery in the history of human civilization and Gandhi was aware of it. In 1914, he described it as 'perhaps the mightiest instrument on earth.' (Guha, 550)

But how did this come about? What was the trajectory of its discovery? The problem that Gandhi faced in South Africa was racial bigotry in all its ugly forms because South Africa was also part of the British Empire. The system of racial segregation known as apartheid was firmly in place there and it was only as late as 1994 that it was formally dismantled through the struggle there led by Nelson Mandela. But in 1893, racism was firmly entrenched in the society through the laws passed by the ruling British minority and the targets of this racial discrimination were the native black Africans and diasporic Indian community consisting largely of traders and indentured labourers. One must understand that Gandhi's job there was to be an assistant to the lawyers there. He had no clue what he was getting into when he sailed for South Africa at the age of 24.

The shock came immediately upon arrival. On reaching Durban, he bought a first class train ticket to travel to Pretoria but he was thrown off the train midway when a white passenger complained of having to share the compartment with Gandhi. When the train reached Maritzburg, Gandhi wrote, "the constable came. He took me by the hand and pushed me out. My luggage was also taken out. I refused to go to the other compartment and the train steamed away." (Gandhi, *Autobiography*, 93) It was midnight and shivering in the cold on the railway platform, Gandhi began to ponder. "I began to think of my duty. Should I fight for my rights or go back to India, or should I go to Pretoria without minding the insults, and return to India after

finishing the case? It would be cowardice to run back to India without fulfilling my obligation. The hardship to which I was subjected was superficial - only a symptom of the deep disease of colour prejudice. I should try, if possible, to root out the disease and suffer hardships in the process." (Gandhi, *Autobiography*, 94) These reflections and Gandhi's subsequent response to the problem form the beginnings of *satyagraha*

In South Africa, Gandhi transformed not only in his manners of thinking and evolving a powerful political philosophy, but also in his mode of dress, personal habits, diet and exercise. He believed "that in order to look civilized, our dress and manners had, as far as possible, to approximate the European standard. Because, I thought, only thus could we have some influence, and without influence it would not be possible to serve the community." (Gandhi, *Autobiography*, 155) It was only much later that he renounced the European clothes and donned the simple *dhoti* or loincloth. He felt "lighter for having cast off the tinsel of 'civilization'." (Gandhi, *Autobiography*, 156)

But Gandhi soon learned that no matter how much you adopt the dress and manners of the ruling Europeans, the native population and the indentured Indians were segregated in matters of schooling, commerce and social interactions. The Maritzburg incident was minor compared to the further humiliations and tortures of racial prejudice that he and his family faced. These personal experiences as well as the experiences of others motivated Gandhi to examine the nature of the British Empire. He believed if the British wanted to have their empire, they must rule it equitably and not have one set of rules for the ruling white minority and another set of rules for the subject and subjugated native population. He felt all should be treated equally and campaigned for that.

He thus discovered his innate spirit of service to the community. Side by side with his professional work, he found some satisfaction and peace in doing some humanitarian work by volunteering in the local hospital. "The experience stood me in good stead, when during the Boer War, I offered my services for nursing the sick and wounded soldiers." (Gandhi, *Autobiography*, 169)

South Africa at that time had predominantly two parts, one ruled by the British (in which Gandhi was living) and the other ruled by the Dutch (called the 'Boers'). Guha writes, "The great rush to colonize and claim South Africa took place at roughly the same time as the westward expansion of the United States ... But whereas the European colonists of western America had merely to deal with the natives, their counterparts in southern Africa had this additional complicating factor - the presence of Indians from India, who were not indigenous but emphatically not European either." (Guha, 9)

So when war broke out between the British and the Boers, Gandhi sided with the British and hoped that this loyalty would factor favourably in his petition for equal rights. He wrote, "I felt that, if I demanded rights as a

British citizen, it was also my duty, as such, to participate in the defence of the British Empire." (Gandhi, *Autobiography*, 179)

To communicate both to the indentured Indians for whom he became a spokesman as well as the ruling British, he began a newspaper called *Indian Opinion* in June of 1903 after a decade of stay in South Africa. By that time, he had learned many aspects of organization, communication, and service to the community, knowledge not found in books. The challenges enabled him "to overcome his inherent shyness in public." (Brown, xiv)

Each issue of the weekly newspaper *Indian Opinion* consisted of eight pages. There, Gandhi would write a series of articles on *satyagraha* and thus formulate its essential principles and methods of implementation. Along with this, Gandhi would share with the Indian community, his ideas regarding religion, social reform, sanitation, hygiene and health. Through the power of the written word, Gandhi had become a great communicator, a grand unifier, and gave the entire community consisting of both Hindus and Muslims, a sense of collective identity. Because the writings had a universal quality that applied to all human beings, many, including Europeans, came to help him in his endeavour and experiments. Within a decade, the bumbling barrister of Bombay had become the leader of an enslaved people and a voice for human conscience.

In the summer of 1906, at the age of 37, Gandhi took the vow of *brahmacharya* or sexual abstinence. He wrote, "I have been wedded to a monogamous ideal ever since my marriage, faithfulness to my wife being part of the love of truth. But it was in South Africa that I came to realize the importance of observing *brahmacharya* even with respect to my wife. I cannot definitely say what circumstance or what book it was, that set my thoughts in that direction, but I have a recollection that the predominant factor was the influence of Raychandbhai." (Gandhi, *Autobiography*, 171) As noted earlier, Gandhi viewed Raychand as his spiritual teacher and there is a significant correspondence between the two of them while Gandhi was in South Africa. In the Jain, Buddhist and yogic traditions, celibacy is stressed as an essential factor in spiritual life. Also, by that time Gandhi already had four children and he wrote "it became my conviction that procreation and consequent care of children were inconsistent with public service." (Gandhi, *Autobiography*, 172)

Gandhi's dietetic experiments were motivated by his vow of *brahmacharya*. "Control of the palate is the first essential in the observance of the vow," he wrote. "I found that complete control of the palate made the observance very easy, and so I now pursued my dietetic experiments not merely from the vegetarian's but also from the *brahmachari's* point of view." (Gandhi, *Autobiography*, 175) In summary, Gandhi advocated a simple, spiceless diet. A further aid to this practice was Gandhi's method of fasting. "So overpowering are the senses that they can be kept under control only when they are completely hedged in on all sides." (Ibid., p. 175)

Two books that he read at this time made a deep impression on his emerging ideal of the simple life. The first was Tolstoy's book, "The Kingdom of God is Within You" and the other is Ruskin's "Unto this Last." Ruskin argued that the ideal society should be "one 'which nourishes the greatest number of noble and happy human beings' not which promoted the greatest monetary wealth or produced the greatest number of rich people." (Guha, 175) His core message as understood by Gandhi "was that the work of farmers and labourers was as valuable as the work of lawyers and factory managers. To work with one's hands, and on the land, was more honourable than working with one's brains or with the aid of machines." (Guha, 175)

Gandhi translated Ruskin's book into Gujarati and titled it *Sarvodaya* or 'the welfare of all.' "I believe that I discovered some of my deepest convictions in this great book," he wrote. (Brown, 29) Its three essential teachings as he understood them were that the good of the individual is contained in the good of all, all have the same right to earn their livelihood from their work and that a life of labour, that is, a life of the tiller of the soil or the handicraftsmen is the life worth living. Gandhi reflected, "The first of these I knew. The second I had dimly realized. The third had never occurred to me. *Unto this Last* made it as clear as daylight for me that the second and third were contained in the first. I arose with the dawn, ready to reduce these principles to practice." (Gandhi, Autobiography, 250)

These are the essential ideas of karma yoga extolling the life of service and one of Gandhi's positive character traits was that he knew the difference between academic knowledge and practical knowledge. Ideals must be put into practice. For Gandhi, thought and action were symbiotic. Much of his thought was continuously refined through his writings. For him, writing was a process of his thinking. This explains the extent of his prolific writing which now extends to more than a hundred printed volumes.

The refinement of his thinking on fundamental existential questions was linked to his need to communicate his ideas to others. Gandhi saw that the movement is not a "one-man show" but a collective effort. Brown writes, "Gandhi was not a trained philosopher or even a systematic thinker; his written works grew out of his life and his need to communicate for very practical purposes. ... many of his writings were ephemeral, composed hurriedly in the course of a busy life in response to specific needs and situations." (Brown, xxiv) Gandhi who was right-handed wrote so much that he even trained his left hand to write and thus became ambidextrous. Later in his life in India, Mahadev Desai became his personal secretary who took dictation.

To implement these ideas, Gandhi bought a farm near Phoenix. He moved the printing press of *Indian Opinion* there along with his support staff, who were housed on the farm and given parts of the land to grow their own vegetables. It was not long before others, including European and Indian intellectuals, were attracted by the ideal and joined in Gandhi's movement.

His social experiment in South Africa was modeled after the Indian concept of *ashram* or a religious community that naturally forms around a spiritual personality. Years later, Gandhi's third son Ramdas, recalled the daily regimen at the Phoenix farm (Guha, 613-614):

5:30 Wake-up

5.30 to 7: Cleaning and Prayer

7 to 8: Work in the fields

8 to 9: Breakfast

9 to 11: Work in the fields, in the kitchen and in the printing press

11 to 1: Bath, lunch, washing dishes and the rest

1 to 4.30: School

4.30 to 5.30: Work in the fields and collect firewood

5.30 to 6.30: Sports and Games (football, cricket, kabaddi, etc.)

6.30 to 7: Supper, cleaning of kitchen

7 to 8: Prayer and reading of religious texts

8 to 10: Relaxation

10 to 5.30: Sleep

Thus, imbued with the ideal of the simple life, Gandhi began his writings on the principles of *satyagraha* in his newspaper *Indian Opinion*. It was not long before these principles were tested. The Asiatic Act (or the Black Act as Gandhi called it) required all Indians to be registered and fingerprinted. They were to be segregated and all further immigration was to end. Only Christian marriages would be recognized and all Indians were required to carry their registration cards at all times. Gandhi organized a mass burning of these cards on Sunday July 12, 1908. He was arrested along with others. To deal with unjust laws that were not changed even after formal petitions, the *satyagrahi* must voluntarily break the law and court imprisonment. During this period, Gandhi goes in and out of jails and every time he is released continued his non-violent agitation until finally the law was modified in 1911.

Gandhi had used his jail time to cultivate his reading. He writes, "As a boy, I had not much taste for reading anything outside my school books. ... During my student days in England too the same habit persisted of not reading outside the books for the examinations. When however I began life, I felt I ought to read for the sake of gaining general knowledge. But at the earliest period of my life it became one of storm and stress ... I had therefore not much time for literary pursuits. ... After 1894 all the time for sustained reading I got was in the jails of South Africa. I had developed not only a taste for reading but for completing my knowledge of Sanskrit and studying Tamil, Hindi and Urdu ... The South African jails had whetted my appetite and I was grieved when during my last incarceration in South Africa I was prematurely discharged." (Brown, 37-38)

These events as well as Gandhi's writings were noticed by his compatriot, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, who visited Gandhi in South Africa on 22 October 1912. He asked Gandhi to return to India and join his Servants of

India Society which was promoting the cause of India's independence from British rule. Gokhale felt that the methods of *satyagraha* could be used in India. Gandhi thought about this proposal. Since the Black Act was finally repealed, he felt that perhaps his work there was over and he left South Africa with his entire family to settle back in India in 1915 against the backdrop of the First World War waging in Europe. On his return, he established the *Satyagraha* Ashram in Ahmedabad. In many ways, Gandhi considered Gokhale to be his political mentor. He was saddened to learn that Gokhale died that year. In a talk he gave at Shantiniketan later that year, Gandhi said of Gokhale that "his love for India was truthful and therefore he wanted nothing for India which he did not want for humanity also." (Brown, 36) Here we get a glimpse of Gandhi's view of truth. Truth is universal and like a mother to the human race. It is devotion to Truth that was Gandhi's religion. In Gokhale, Gandhi saw a "really truthful hero." (Brown, 37)

Looking back at Gandhi's life in South Africa, we must remember several things. First, he was twenty-three years old when he went there. He didn't go there with some grand plan but rather to assist other lawyers in the routine administration and preparation of their legal cases. This too was a one-year appointment because he was not successful in Bombay or Rajkot. In South Africa, Gandhi's innate love of service was awakened. The turning point seems to have been the case of Balasundaram. Gandhi devotes an entire chapter to this in his autobiography written much later in 1927 when Gandhi was fifty-eight and imprisoned in India.

Gandhi recalled, "I had put in scarcely three or four month's practice ... when a Tamil man in tattered clothes, head-gear in hand, two front teeth broken and his mouth bleeding, stood before me trembling and weeping. ... Balasundaram - as that was the visitor's name - was serving his indenture under a well-known European resident of Durban. The master, getting angry with him, had lost self-control, and had beaten Balasundaram severely, breaking two of his teeth." (Gandhi, *Autobiography*, 127) This was a turning point because Gandhi used his legal knowledge to free Balasundaram from his white master. Looking back at this episode, Gandhi wrote, "It has always been a mystery to me how men can feel themselves honoured by the humiliation of their fellow beings." (Gandhi, *Autobiography*, 129)

This case brought him in touch with other indentured labourers who sought Gandhi's help in similar cases. Gandhi felt that this work was his calling. "The heart's earnest and pure desire is always fulfilled. In my own experience I have often seen the rule verified. Service of the poor has been my heart's desire, and it has always thrown me amongst the poor and enabled me to identify myself with them." (Gandhi, *Autobiography*, 127) It was this awakening of service that is central in Gandhi's life in South Africa. During this period of about twenty-two years, he discovered the fundamental principle of *satyagraha*, the method of non-violent resistance, perhaps the greatest discovery of the human race. This continues to be a valuable weapon for all oppressed people everywhere. In South Africa, Gandhi min-

gled with all segments of society, from the lowest strata to the highest echelons. He made contacts with other Europeans and some of them joined in his cause and even his experiments in the ascetic life. He read a wide variety of religious literature and embraced the best of all religions. He was always keen to put into practice any great idea he learned about. He was the ideal *karma yogi*.

Surveying Gandhi's period in South Africa, the historian Ramachandra Guha writes, "His religious quest, his individual and social relationships, his work as writer and editor, his legal career, his lifestyle choices - these were all subordinated, in lesser or greater degree, to Gandhi's work for the rights of the Indians in South Africa. This subordination of individual choice to social commitment happened incrementally, over the twenty-odd years that Gandhi spent there." (Guha, 546) Thus, Gandhi learned that reform and change come through increments and not all at once.

On his return to India, Gandhi was honored with the Kaiser-i-Hind medal for his work in South Africa. Gokhale and others saw in him their future leader of the independence movement. But Gandhi would not be swayed by such honours. He saw the Indian National Congress Party as a bit elitist and out of touch with the farmers in the fields and the peasants in the villages. So Gandhi felt he had to learn more about India and the plight of the poorest of the poor. He travelled by train around the country in third class and learned first hand of the social inequities. Gandhi said, "Before we demand independence, we must get our own act together. We must be the change that we want to see." India must therefore remove its age-old practice of untouchability and caste discrimination. He saw such social reform as being an essential pre-requisite for independence. *Satyagraha* now included both the transformation of the individual and transformation of society as essential components.

His *Satyagraha* Ashram was a grand social experiment. Some of the members of the ashram were part of his community in South Africa. Others were supporters from many parts of India. "This is how the Ashram was started," Gandhi wrote. "All had their meals in a common kitchen and strove to live as one family." (Gandhi, Autobiography, 331)

There were two noteworthy personalities that came forward to help him in his cause and became his staunchest allies. One was Vinobha Bhave, a Maharashtrian Brahmin scholar and the other was Jawaharlal Nehru, a Kashmiri Brahmin. Gandhi's message of service to the poor appealed to Bhave. To him, the poorest of humanity was God and the service to them, was his religion. Bhave has often been called the "silent Gandhi" and it was Gandhi who inspired him to build an ashram in Wardha where many of the Gandhian experiments in social service were carried out. Bhave was often arrested for his civil disobedience but his imprisonments did not deter him from his mission. He put his time of imprisonment to good use and his "Talks on the Gita" written while in prison, is a masterly and inspired commentary on the Bhagavad Gita. Today, he is well-known for the 'Bhoodan

movement' and is considered a great Gandhian, greater than even the mahatma.

Nehru grasped Gandhi's political philosophy very early. Being a member of the Indian National Congress, he realised that all the Congress members were doing was passing resolutions and making speeches to each other. Many, perhaps all, were products of Macaulay's India and knew little about India's history or her people. "And then Gandhi came," wrote Nehru. "He was like a powerful current of fresh air that made us stretch ourselves and take deep breaths ... He did not descend from the top; he seemed to emerge from the millions of India, speaking their language and incessantly drawing attention to them and their appalling condition." (Nehru, *Discovery*, 392) Gandhi and his message electrified Nehru and he had an intuition that this would lead to independence. He wrote, "The essence of his teaching was fearlessness and truth, and action allied to these, always keeping the welfare of the masses in view. The greatest gift for an individual or a nation, so we have been told in our ancient books, was *abhay* (fearlessness), not merely bodily courage but the absence of fear from the mind." (Nehru, *Discovery*, 393)

In his tour of India, Gandhi came to know of the plight of the farmers. The first cause he espoused was that of the Indigo farmers at Champaran in Bihar, located in north-eastern India. It seems that the farmers were obliged by the British to plant indigo on their farms. Taking up the cause of the farmers, Gandhi, well versed with legal procedure, began to document the case. He was ordered by the police to leave Champaran. When he failed to do so, he was arrested. The local population of Champaran knew nothing of Gandhi or his work in South Africa. Speaking of them, Gandhi wrote, "The world outside Champaran was not known to them. And yet, they received me as though we had been age-long friends. It is no exaggeration, but the literal truth, to say that in this meeting with the peasants I was face to face with God, *Ahimsa* and Truth. That day in Champaran was an unforgettable event in my life." (Gandhi, *Autobiography*, 344)

In the following year, Gandhi led *satyagraha* on behalf of millworkers in Ahmedabad. Later that year, was another *satyagraha* on the issue of land revenue in the Kaira district in Gujarat. All of these agitations were successful. This was against the background of the end of the First World War.

But the real challenge came with the Rowlatt Bills that banned assemblies and invoked arrests without trial. This seemed to be the test of the power of *satyagraha*. On the 13th of April, 1919, in Amritsar, a crowd gathered consisting of families, along with children, to say prayers. General Dyer, wishing to enforce the Rowlatt Act, came into the compound with artillery and there was a bloody massacre. Speaking of Dyer, Nehru wrote, "He pointed out how he had the whole town at his mercy and he had felt like reducing the rebellious city to a heap of ashes." (Nehru, *Autobiography*, 48)

Until the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, Gandhi was open to a dominion status for India under the British. But after this, he felt nothing short of



full independence or *swaraj* will be accepted. In 1921, Gandhi was elected the leader of the Indian National Congress. He re-organized the Congress and managed to engage both Hindus and Muslims in the cause. He expanded satyagraha now to include the boycott of foreign made goods, with special emphasis on British made clothing. He advocated *khadi* or home-spun clothing and urged everyone to spin their own cloth. This was an extraordinary move. He himself advocated simple clothing and started to spin his own cloth. He felt this will instil self-reliance and simple living. This non-co-operation movement recruited the simple villager and struck the British government on several fronts. On March 10, 1922, Gandhi was arrested, tried for sedition and sentenced to six years in prison. After two years in prison, Gandhi suffered appendicitis and so was released to undergo surgery.

As soon as he recovered, Gandhi instructed all the members of the Indian National Congress to start behaving as if India is already free. This declaration of *purna swaraj* or complete self-rule was formally resolved on 19 December 1929 at Lahore with the tri-colour flag of India with the spinning wheel in the middle. Gandhi was already changing the thinking of the Indian masses.

For further acts of civil disobedience, Gandhi chose to violate the 1882 Salt Act which forced all Indians to buy salt from the colonial government. Violation of this was deemed a criminal offence. Gandhi planned the famous Dandi salt march, whereby he and his fellow *satyagrahis* would march from his ashram in Ahmedabad to the coastal town of Dandi, a distance of 240 miles (350 kilometers) and collect sea salt from there, thereby violating the Salt Act. When the Viceroy, Lord Irwin, was told about this, he said "At present the prospect of a salt campaign does not keep me awake at night," and he ignored it.

Apparently, Gandhi thought through this very carefully. He calculated that 8.2 percent of the British India's tax revenue came from the salt tax. The poorest of Indians had to pay this tax. So Gandhi knew that such a vital commodity as salt was going to animate the common man. He was right. Gandhi began his march with 78 of his followers from his ashram on March 12, 1930. But as he began his march, thousands joined him, including women and children. The final number swelled to 100,000. He reached Dandi on April 5, after 24 days, walking ten miles a day. Gandhi was 61 at the time and the youngest in the ashram group was eighteen. On the morning of April 6, 1930, Gandhi rose early and bathed in the sea. After his morning prayers, he picked up a lump of salty mud and said, "With this, I am shaking the foundations of the British Empire." He then boiled it and produced salt, violating the salt act. All over India, people violated the Salt Act by making their own salt. Thousands were arrested for this act of defiance including Gandhi.

Nehru felt this was the turning point of the independence movement. He wrote, "Of course these movements exercised tremendous pressure on the

British Government and shook the government machinery. But the real importance, to my mind, lay in the effect they had on our own people, and especially the village masses....Non-cooperation dragged them out of the mire and gave them self-respect and self-reliance....They acted courageously and did not submit so easily to unjust oppression; their outlook widened and they began to think a little in terms of India as a whole....It was a remarkable transformation and the Congress, under Gandhi's leadership, must have the credit for it." (Johnson, 37)

In 1931, the British government organized the Round Table Conferences but these conferences were unproductive, mainly because the British still wanted to keep India as a colony with some form of dominion status. To ensure there was no unified India, they invited all religious leaders from India to press for demands along religious lines. Gandhi returned to India without any proper deal. Now at the age of 62, he began a new *satyagraha* and shortly after, Gandhi was again arrested. Pushing their 'divide and conquer' policy, the British invited the untouchables and decided to grant them a separate electorate. This was called the "communal award." Gandhi, still in prison, decided to fast unto death. Public protest enabled the release of Gandhi and the British made a compromise but not much.

Against the backdrop of these events in India, Europe was gripped by Nazism and Fascism. Hitler and Mussolini rose to power. With the onset of the Second World War, Britain was not favourable to granting independence, even though Gandhi re-assured them that India would fight with the allied forces.

In 1942, Stafford Cripps was sent by Britain to India to negotiate a dominion status for India. Again, all religious leaders were invited to the discussion and no consensus was reached. It was very difficult to let go of the "jewel in the crown." The 'Quit India' Movement was launched by the Congress Party in 1942 and Gandhi was again imprisoned from 1942 to 1944. While he was in prison, his wife, Kasturbai, died in 1944. Gandhi's health began to deteriorate and so he was released in May 1944. In August of 1944, America dropped the atom bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan as retaliation for Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. This culminated in the end of the second world war with the surrender of Germany and Japan. Churchill was defeated in the British election shortly after that and the new prime minister, Atlee, announced that the British will leave India by 1948. In the meantime, Jinnah, who was the leader of the Muslim League in India, petitioned for a separate country for the Muslim population. Gandhi and Nehru argued that this would be like trying to separate vital arteries from a living organism. The prospect of partitioning India was a stunning blow to Gandhi's vision of the future India. Reluctantly, Gandhi and Nehru relented seeing that this was perhaps the only way India could gain independence. So, on August 15, 1947, India and Pakistan were created and were declared formally independent from British rule. Nehru became the first prime min-

ister of India and Jinnah for Pakistan. The partition of India saw the largest displacement of populations in the history of the world.

As expected, communal riots broke out. In January 1948, Gandhi began his fast and pleaded for communal unity. Already, there were factions in India who felt that Gandhi was responsible for the partition and so on 30 January 1948, when Gandhi was walking to a prayer meeting, a Hindu assassin fired three shots at him and Gandhi died on the spot. Gandhi was seventy-eight.

What is Gandhi's legacy? First and foremost was his devotion to *ahimsa* (non-violence) and Truth. For him, these two were wedded. He never claimed any originality with regards to this message and would often say that "Truth and non-violence are as old as the hills." But as Martin Luther King Jr. observed, this message in the past was seen to apply only to individuals wishing to lead a spiritual life and often taught in a religious context. Gandhi's originality was that he applied it in the political field, as a weapon of the oppressed against the oppressor. The discovery of *satyagraha* is perhaps the greatest discovery in the history of the human race. Gandhi himself did not know all the nuances and "saw himself as a scientist in the matter of non-violence, experimenting with different kinds of *satyagraha*, and carefully calibrating its nature and operation in particular situations." (Brown, xxxi) In this process, he was guided by the aphorism that "worthy ends deserve worthy means." The methods we adopt to reach a worthy goal must also be worthy. This is perhaps his greatest legacy.

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