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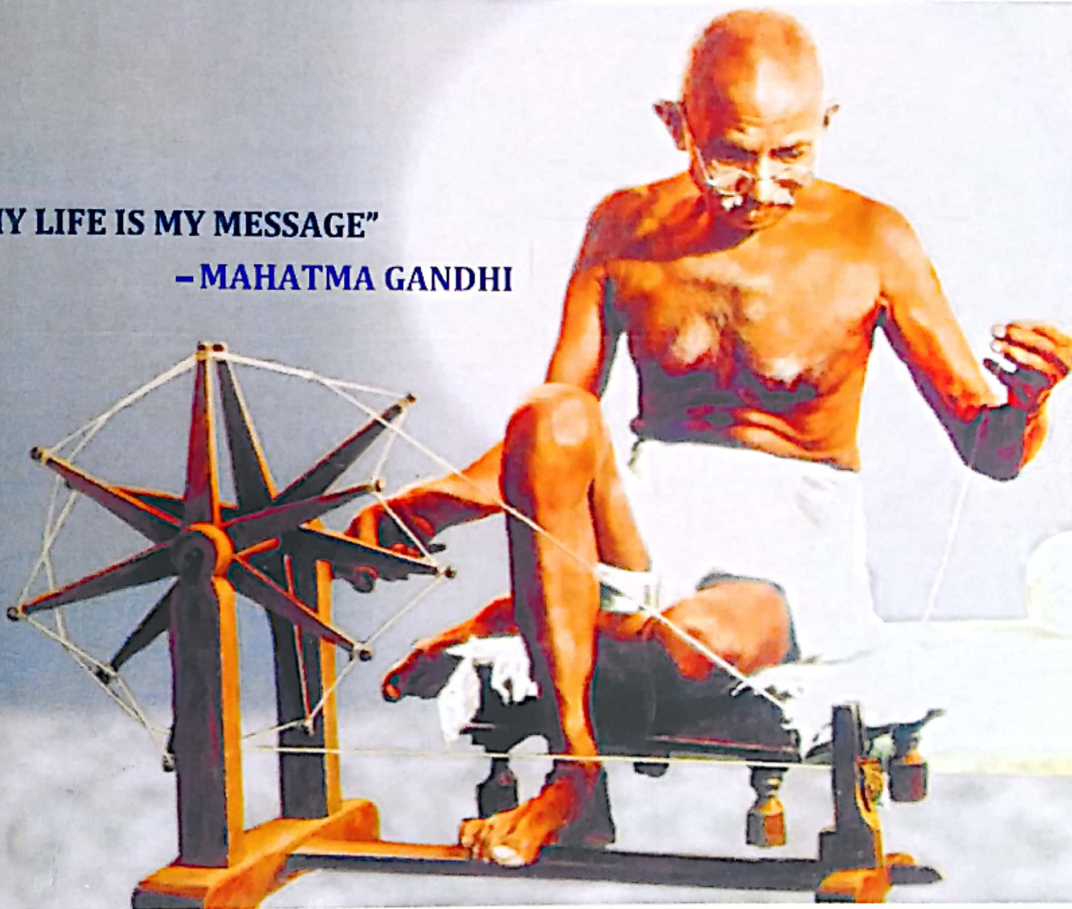
International Multidisciplinary E-Research Journal

PEER REFREED & INDEXED JOURNAL

February - 2020 Special Issue - 224 (D)

RELEVANCE OF GANDHIAN THOUGHTS

"MY LIFE IS MY MESSAGE"
– MAHATMA GANDHI



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- Scientific Journal Impact Factor (SJIF)
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Mahatma Gandhi's Perspectives on His First Case as A Lawyer

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Introduction:

An international figure, Mahatma Gandhi is recognized by all the Father of the Indian Nation, a social reformer and the leader of the neglected poor social strata. He has been widely read and referred through print and web sources. At present, everyone is acquainted of his life story as a whole through his book 'An Autobiography' or 'The story of My Experiments With Truth'. An effort has been done by choosing one of the aspects of Mahatma Gandhi's life that is, Gandhiji as a lawyer.

He was a lawyer by profession. At the same time, he can be studied as anti-colonial nationalist, who dedicated his whole life for Indian struggle movement by implementing the practice of truth, non-violence, satyagrah, civil-disobedience etc. Meanwhile, philosophers worldwide are attracted towards this 'Indian Fakir' as Winston Churchill has named him.

Gandhiji as Interpreted Globally:

Mahatma Gandhi always had emphasized the appliance of 'truth'. He considers that 'truth' is his religion and the way of gaining it is the 'non-violence'. Through it only one can reach towards truth. Simultaneously, he also launched the cleanliness campaigns in India. Travelling the world around, he realized that the dirtiness is also one of the reasons of our poverty, for, it wastes lot of money. On 10th April 1917, Mahatma Gandhi started opposing the brutal law of British government and the court of law. This activity of Satyagrah movement in Champarnya provided Gandhiji a unique identity of 'Bapu'. Further he gave an alarming call of 'Do or Die' against the Britishers in Gowalia Tank Maidan (renamed August Kranti Maidan) in Mumbai on August 8, 1942. Here Bapu demanded to free and quit India which later on saw the fruitful independence.

Making of a Lawyer:

After his early education is over in India, Mahatma Gandhi choose England to study law. In September 4, 1888, he boarded on a ship for England where he encountered with Trimbak Rai Mujumdar, a *Vakil* from Junagadh who was also sailing to the same country to qualify himself as a barrister. Both soujourned in the room of Victoria Hotel. While his stay in London, Gandhiji meet Dr. Panjivan Mehata who was an Indian migrated to London. He helped Gandhiji in knowing all the manners and etiquettes in an alien country. Later on, Gandhiji kept term at the Inner Temple where he rised in the examination on 10th June 1891. As a result he was enrolled in the High Court of England and thus attained his goal of a barrister.

Gandhiji's First Case as a Lawyer:

Mahatma Gandhi was a staunch follower of humanitarian doctrine and the adeptness of it can be traced out with succeeding incidents in Indian freedom struggle. The 'first case' was the example that deals with the experiment of true incident of his life in Bombay. It begin with the mugging up the lessons of Indian Law, which he received from his friend Virchand Gandhi. To Mahatma Gandhi, studying the law was an irksome job as he knew from Virchand the stories about the barristers. Virchand interpret it in a following way, "Sir Pherozechah's ability, lies in his profound knowledge





of law. He has the Evidence Act by heart and knows all the cases on the thirty-second section. Badruddin Tyabji's wonderful power of argument inspires the judge with awe." (Desai: 87)

In his acquiring knowledge of Indian law and practice, Gandhiji was really benefitted by the guidance of his mentor Virchand. Actually, for Gandhiji, all these facts would unnerve him. He would somehow manage his expenses and everyday routine, as he was supported financially by his brother.

Gandhiji's Experiences as a Lawyer:

Subsequently, in his autobiography, Gandhiji has provided enough clues of the doing or wrongdoing. He was interested in perceiving the knowledge in the areas like Evidence act and Mayne's Hindu law deeply, but he oscillate in judgement in the court of law. Gandhiji admit his shyness as, "I was helpless beyond words, even as the bride comes fresh to her father-in-law's house!" (Desai: 87)

Next is the occasion when Gandhiji vehemently denied the condition of giving any type of commission for the case of Mamibai. While on the other hand it was common there to pay commission in the law court office. It was his first case to which he charged only thirty rupees as his fees. Here Gandhiji firmly admits that , he failed to concentrate on the case. He felt it unnatural and asked the agent to hand over the same to his fellow Mr. Patel. He was embarrassed by this incident. "I hastened from the court, not knowing whether my client won or lost her case, but I was ashamed of myself, and decided not to take up any more cases until I had courage enough to conduct them." (Desai: 88)

Further Mahatma Gandhi adds the occurrences that he faced in High Court daily in Bombay. Mostly he would return empty handed from the court without a case and earning. While spending an aimless life as a barrister, unknowingly, Gandhiji had developed a habit of walking to and fro to the High Court. He himself asserts, "This walk to and from the court saved a fair amount of money, and when many of my friends in Bombay used to fall ill, I do not remember having one had an illness." (Desai: 89) This can be the fine example of fitness to follow by everyone. There are many illustrations of Gandhiji's long march in the history of Indian freedom struggle. By providing his own example, here Gandhiji expected others to practice the habit of walking. After the hardships in Bombay, Gandhiji decided to move to Rajkot with the same profession but it would not work so long.

The Lawyer in South Africa:

Instead of the unsuccessful practice as a barrister, it was in 1893, fate came to his aid and Gandhiji's brother received a message from a Meman Muslim merchant named Dada Abdulla Seth who was settled in South Africa's Pritoria for trading company. The letter contains the message as follows, "If you sent your brother there, he would be useful to us ... And he would have the advantage of seeing a new part of the world, and of making new acquaintances." (Desai: 94) He needed a lawyer from India for a period of a year to solve his disputed matter money in the court against his relative and partner in business Seth Tyeb Haji Khan Muhammad. Having been invited by keeping the faith in Gandhiji's talent as a Barrister, it is now Gandhiji's turn to come his dream true. The confidence was built in the mind of Gandhiji within a period of one year in Pritoria. Here he learnt the various methods regarding the trials in the court in the company of senior and junior barristers. Gandhiji adds, "I purchased a book on book-keeping and studied it. That gave me confidence. I understand the case." (Desai: 102) At the first time he realized that he can overcome and can achieve the success in the case. The variations can be traced between Mamibai's first case in Bombay and Seth Abdulla's first case in Pritoria.





After the minute study of the case, Gandhiji reached to the conclusion that it is better to solve the case outside the court through an arbitrator of their choice. Gandhiji advised Seth Abdulla that, "I would only suggest to him to come to an understanding, and so save a lot of unnecessary litigation" (Desai: 103) Thus, Gandhiji, by persuading both the parties got success to settle down the court matter outside the court itself through compromise which benefitted with money to Seth Abdulla and Seth Tyeb the moderate installment of money. The first case in Pritoria rewarded Gandhiji a successful lawyer. The incident reflects the loyalty and honesty of a lawyer like Mahatma Gandhi.

Conclusion:

Thus, Mahatma Gandhi continued the law practice for over twenty years. At many occasions, he came across the malpractices in the court which made him distress. To him, it was a moral degradation. He never turned back of his disciplines of truth and the honour of the profession. Consequently, he gave up the law practice and rather devoted his life in service of the downtrodden, the untouchables as well as the uneducated poor people who were deprived of their rights and freedom. He represented the society that became the victim of violence and slavery. Mahatma Gandhi remained an embodiment of inspiration to all human beings.

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