

Gandhi's India
A Biographical Sketch
IWC Gandhi Study Group
James Tepfer, April 8, 2004

1. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was born on October 2, 1869 in Porbandar, India, a city on the coast of West India. He was the fourth and last child, with two older brothers and one older sister.
2. His family was relatively well off by Indian standards, as his father was a Prime Minister of a small Indian State.
3. He was born a Hindu, a member of the third caste, the Vaishyas or merchant caste, and was raised as a vegetarian and non-drinker.
4. India was, at the time of Gandhi's birth until five months before his death, British India.
5. What was British India? What were the conditions of India at the time of Gandhi's birth? How can we understand the culture and times of Gandhi's India?
6. Seven thousand years ago a peoples called the Aryans (nobles) migrated into what is now called India and Pakistan, Iran and Europe. Hence, the Indo-European language family: Sanskrit and European languages have a strong relationship. For example, in Sanskrit, "father" is pitri, in Latin pater and in Greek pater. Likewise, in Sanskrit, "mother" is matri, in Latin, mater and in Greek, meter.
7. The Aryans gradually conquered the Northwest Indian peoples and eventually settled into the Indus Valley – the name "India" is derived from the name of the river, Indus.
8. The civilization of the Aryans was highly cultured in two senses. They already had a highly developed system of philosophical religious thought and a high degree of material sophistication. Their religious teachings were expressed in the *Vedas*, the oldest written texts. Materially speaking, The findings of Mohenjo-daro in 1922 revealed a city in Northern India over fifty six hundred years old, laid out with geometrical precision, bathrooms, a sewage system, finely woven silks and cottons, jewelry, etc.
9. Eventually, the Aryan populations migrated into Southern India where they conquered the darker Dravidians or South Indians, who already had a developed civilization.
10. From the invasion of South India by the Aryans to the time of Gandhi, the Indian sub-continent (India and modern Pakistan) had been invaded twenty six times. It was invaded twenty four times through the Hindu Kush and the Khyber Pass into the Indus Valley. For example, Assyria invaded India in 2200 B.C. Many invasions later, Persia invaded north India in 530 B.C. (Indians probably fought the Greeks at the famous battle of Marathon.) Alexander the Great invaded India and defeated the Persians in 321 B.C. at the age of thirty. Alexander stayed in India for nineteen months and left with several Indian philosophers
11. India brought its philosophical influence into Greece and the Middle East and affected both Judaic and Christian mysticism. Via the Greeks and later the Romans and Arabs, Indian science percolated into the West. For example, the Arabic numerals were invented in India. The concept of zero in mathematics was also an Indian invention. It was also an Indian who developed the world wide system of numerical placement. For example, the numerals 14 mean fourteen and a 1.4 means one and four-tenths. The game of chess is also said to have been first developed in India.

12. Genghis Khan and later the Moslems invaded India and made their converts. But India absorbed them all because of the elasticity of its philosophical outlook and its cultural tolerance.

13. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries various European powers competed for outposts in India. In 1610 the East India Company in London began its quest for dominance of Indian trade. England (East India Company) fought many battles with the Dutch, French and Portuguese for control on India. Finally, by means fair and mostly foul, they controlled the entire Indian sub-continent by 1818, either directly or indirectly, by controlling various maharajas and Moguls. In 1858 India officially became a colony of the British Empire and the first Viceroy of India was appointed.

14. The British ruled India with an iron fist and they drained it of its commercial wealth. The British saw themselves as racially and culturally superior to Indians and they excluded them from any meaningful positions of power or authority. Despite this, they were not interested in converting Indians to their religion and they readily recognized their intellectual ability and the facile nature of the Indian mind. The best and brightest Indians could pursue their education at colleges and universities in England as well as in India. British educators infused the best of English and European literature into India and, likewise, the best of the British imbibed the rich, subtle philosophies and mythologies of Indian culture. (See *The Moral and Political Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, Volume I, pg 265 Å1266).

15. At the time of Gandhi's birth, there were three hundred million Indians, of which 85% were Hindus, the rest being Moslems, Parses and Christians.

16. Hinduism is philosophically rich, ranging from philosophical monism, to theism, to pantheism to idol worship. The belief in rebirth and karma is fundamental to almost all of Hinduism six different schools of philosophy. The ideal of the Upanishads is the Sage and the heart of the religious life is renunciation of the self in order to realize Brahman or the Transcendent God. To the Hindu, God can incarnate or over brood a human being. Such a being is called an Avatar and the recognized Avatars include not only Rama and Krishna, but also Buddha and Christ. There are innumerable rites and ceremonies from offering fruit to animal sacrifice, from observing the first movement of an infant in the mother's womb to one's 'second birth' ceremony. (See *The Moral and Political Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, Volume I, pg 266).

17. Gandhi's main source of spiritual inspiration was the *Bhagavad-Gita* which taught the primacy of egoless action in the service of God.

18. Hinduism has four castes: the priestly, the warrior, the merchant and the servant caste. In addition, there were (and are) the outcasts, the most repressed of human beings. They were considered untouchables and even their shadow could pollute members of the other castes.

19. Gandhi was born into the merchant caste and that principally meant that he could only marry into the same caste and was not allowed to dine with members of other castes. However, Gandhi became, at a relatively early age, completely devoted to the elimination of untouchability.

20. Gandhi was born a Hindu and died a Hindu. But, as he pointed out, he was a Hindu from his own point of view. He believed that there was ultimately only one religion, and that all religions or religious teachings were only relative expressions of the one religion. All religions were imperfect and needed to be reformed periodically. There was no need

to change religions since all religions stressed the same universal ethics. One need only reject the impure, accept the pure and practice it.

21. Gandhi studied all major religions and learned from each and all although he said that he found in Hinduism all that was present in every other major religion.

22. The essence of Gandhi's life was religious, that is, he incessantly sought the realization of God through the identification with and the service of mankind. This is the basis of all his decisions and activities in all spheres of life Ål from the political to the personal. His decisions were guided by universal ethics and not by personal considerations. He was able to do this because he realized that the only way to serve was to be truthful and non-violent in thought, word and deed. Self-examination and self-discipline went hand in hand with the service of the community.

23. Gandhi was unconditionally devoted to God and man and was completely fearless. Because he had conquered the ego he was unafraid of death. A few years before his death he prophetically spelled out what in fact occurred on January 30th, 1948, five months after helping India win her political freedom from Great Britain.

24. Gandhi was assassinated on January 30, 1948 in New Delhi at the age of 78. He was on his way to an evening prayer meeting and was killed by an ultra conservative Hindu. His last words were the equivalent of "Hail to God" and, in a sense, were a blessing to his assassin.

Gandhi's Life – The Early Years

James Tepfer, April 22, 2004

1. Gandhi was born on October 2, 1869 in the city of Porbandar in Gujarat. Porbandar is located on the western coast of India, next to the Arabian Sea. At the time of Gandhi's birth, Porbandar and the surrounding area was ruled by a multitude of small principalities. These small principalities were headed by maharajas who ruled their people despotically but who otherwise danced to the tune of the British.

2. Culturally, this pocket of India was relatively untouched by the waves of western influence washing across the major cities of British India. The area of west Gujarat was Hindu, Jain and very traditional.

3. Gandhi's family was Hindu. They were of the third caste or the Vaishya caste. They were of the Modh Bania sub caste. The word 'Bania' is a synonym in India for a sharp, astute businessman. The word 'Gandhi' originally meant grocer. But by the time of Gandhi's birth one's profession had little to do with caste distinctions.

4. Gandhi's lineage on his father's side was actually more political than mercantile. Both Gandhi's grandfather and father were prime ministers of maharajas in small principalities. Gandhi's father was known to be loyal, principled and politically astute. He was semi-educated and enjoyed listening to the reading of religious texts and to engaging in discussion on abstract religious issues with members of different religions. For a large portion of his life he was financially well off, owning three houses in three different cities.

5. Gandhi's mother was a very traditional Hindu. She honored all the traditional Hindu rules and observances. She was in fact the fourth wife of her husband (the previous three had died). She was very devotional and continually took vows of self-denial that she invariably kept. In addition to her strength of character, Gandhi's mother was herself

politically astute and was sought out by many ladies of the court for advice on various domestic and diplomatic matters.

6. Gandhi was born into a three story house in Porbandar. He was the youngest of four children, with two older brothers and one older sister. The eldest brother became a lawyer and quite well-to-do, often helping out Gandhi later in life with his wealth. His other brother became an accountant for a police station and his older sister followed the traditional Hindu path for women of marriage and family.

7. As a young boy, Gandhi grew up in a relatively happy, healthy home. The house was full of books on religion and mythology and as a young boy he enjoyed spinning tops, playing tennis and cricket. Shortly after he was born, his father hired a nurse for him by the name of Rambha. Because he suffered from various childhood fears, Rambha introduced him to using the name of Rama whenever he was afraid. This helped to cure him of his fears of the dark and the unknown. (When he grew up he made the love of God the primary purpose of his life and the name of Rama was the last words he uttered when dying from an assassin's bullet.)

8. Gandhi was a 'mediocre student', but managed to learn English and Sanskrit as well as math and geometry in his high school days. Throughout his early years he was incredibly shy, very self-conscious and completely inept at speaking in public. Yet, he was morally precocious- in his degree of honesty and fearlessness. When at the age of eleven his teacher tried to get him to copy his answers from another student in order to deceive a British examiner, he quietly refused. When he stole money from his older brother to buy cigarettes, he later wrote a full confession to his father asking for forgiveness, full punishment and, characteristically, promised never to steal again. Furthermore, at age fifteen, he decided to become a meat eater in order to build the strength necessary to defeat the British. However, when he realized that he could only continue meat eating at the expense of deceiving his parents, he ceased doing so and vowed not to eat meat until both had passed away. Finally, even at a very young age he could not understand or accept exclusiveness. When his mother would remind him that if he accidentally touched an untouchable on the way to school that he should immediately touch a Muslim boy going by, he only laughed. He could not fathom what it could mean and why some people were considered inferior to others.

9. Gandhi also learned quickly. Once, at the age of fifteen, he resolved to eat poisonous seeds to take his life (together with a Muslim friend). However, he lost his courage at the last minute. He then realized that talking about taking one's life was one thing and doing it completely different. Thus, later in life he could never be morally blackmailed by people threatening to take their lives unless such and such happened.

10. Gandhi was betrothed three different times. The first two young girls died, the third did not. Gandhi did not know of these engagements since they were arranged by his parents. He married Kasturbai when they were both thirteen years of age. Kasturbai was beautiful, willful and uneducated. Years later he considered Kasturbai a God-send but childhood marriage, itself, a disaster.

11. From the age of thirteen to eighteen when he left for London, he was preoccupied with studies and marriage. Not surprisingly, he found that he was continually distracted by his focus on Kasturbai. He found himself to be possessive, jealous and lustful. Fortunately, there were enforced periods of separation that helped them both to cope with the challenges of being married at such a young age.

12. When Gandhi was fifteen his father died and Kasturbai became pregnant. The baby was born, but died some two to three days thereafter.
13. After graduating from high school Gandhi enrolled in a local college but found his studies both tedious and difficult. He withdrew from college and contemplated his future. He loved taking care of people and had considered the months he had spent nursing his father in his final days to have been amongst the happiest of his young life. He considered medicine as a serious possibility. However, his older brother overruled him by pointing out that their father would never have approved since it involved the vivisection of animals. Gandhi deferred to his brother and turned to law since it was generally held in the family that he should one day become Prime Minister. His older brothers were not interested in that career path. To be a good lawyer, however, required him to study in London for three years and take the bar exam at the High Court. Gandhi jumped at the idea. His mother was not keen on it however because of the temptations that would come to a young man in a foreign land away from his culture and his wife.
14. After many twists and turns of fate, Gandhi received his mother's blessings on the condition that he take three vows before leaving for London: i) not to touch another woman, ii) not to eat meat and iii) not to drink alcohol. Gandhi readily agreed and the vows were administered by a Jain monk in the presence of his mother and siblings.
15. Gandhi's elder brother provided the funds for the three year stint in London. Kasturbai, who already had one son, would stay with Gandhi's family in India.
16. Before Gandhi left Bombay for London, however, the head of the Bania sub caste in Bombay heard of Gandhi's intent to 'cross the waters' to England. This was anathema from the standpoint of the caste because one could not practice Hinduism outside of India. Gandhi met with the caste leaders and after much tumult and debate he was excommunicated. Gandhi was indifferent to this but those who were traditional in Bombay found themselves hampered in later years when they attempted to help Gandhi in his various activities.
17. Shortly before his eighteenth birthday Gandhi sailed to London. Thus began the next phase of his life in which his first two vows would be tested and the germs of his spiritual awakening would be sown.

Gandhi's Life – The London Years
James Tepfer, May 13, 2004

(1888 – 1891)

1. Gandhi arrived in London shortly before his 19th birthday in 1888 and left two and a half years later in June of 1891 at the age of 21. During his stay in London -- which he called a 'living university' -- he studied for the bar at the Inner Temple. During the course of his study of British law he managed to master Latin and French as well as other relevant subjects. He successfully passed his law exams in June of 1891 and immediately departed for India.
2. While in London, two seminal currents began to flow within the consciousness of young Gandhi. The first led to the slow metamorphosis of his personality and the second to the gradual awakening of the religious spirit.
3. Gandhi's initial attitude toward Great Britain and the British Empire was positive. He believed that India should be self-governing, but only within the confines of the British

Empire which was essentially good. He therefore sought to fit in and harmonize his life with that of other Indians in London who were trying to be successful within the racial parameters of British society. Understandably, Gandhi attempted to mold himself into the image of the 'English Gentleman'. He dressed very British, with spats, cravat, walking cane and top hat. He took dancing lessons but soon quit. He attempted to learn the violin and quickly failed. He then hired an elocution teacher and in no short time realized that it was a waste of his brother's funds.

4. During the course of his effort to reshape himself into the 'English Gentleman' he put himself into many tempting and trying situations. The three vows he took for the sake of his mother's approval were soon brought to the forefront of his life. In the first few weeks after his arrival in London, he almost starved to death. Fortunately, he discovered vegetarian restaurants and eventually moved out on his own and began to cook for himself. Some friends tried to convince him that Utilitarian Ethics advocated meat eating but Gandhi demurred because of his vow. Providentially, he came across Henry Salt's book on vegetarianism. It convinced him, on medical and health grounds, that meat eating was decidedly unhealthy and thus vegetarianism became a matter of conviction and not simply a cultural practice.

5. While aspiring to be the English Gentleman, Gandhi pretended to be unmarried. However, he soon got himself into hot water (or seemingly so) as he came to believe that an English lady friend was developing romantic feelings for him. He realized that dissembling was unworthy of a lover of truth so he dropped the facade and openly spoke of his married state. The young English lady was simply amused by Gandhi's confession and continued to be friends with Gandhi.

6. The upshot of Gandhi's efforts to conform to a certain English image amidst the moral trials he encountered was that it makes evident his life-long commitment to mastering and remaking himself. Whatever Gandhi believed, he committed himself to it wholeheartedly. And, if he subsequently discovered it was the wrong choice, he had the courage to admit his mistakes and change his course. (It was not until South Africa, however, that Gandhi experienced a 'second birth'.)

7. While Gandhi was beginning to see through the illusions of 'playing the English gentleman' and, concomitantly, the traps of modern civilization, another rich vein of gold was slowly being unearthed within himself through his encounter with religion; namely, the deep treasure of God-realization.

8. Gandhi, as a young man, was not enchanted with formal religion. He confesses, for example, that he did not care for formal temple activities. However, he was acutely aware that the heart of religion was morality. Beyond that he had not thought deeply about religious matters even though his family upbringing was rather 'universal'. While both his parents were Hindus, they were broad mindedly so. They often went to temples of Shiva and of Rama as well as their own Vishnu temple. Gandhi's father frequently had Jain priests as well as Parsees and Muslims come to his house to discuss religious subjects. The deepest religious impression in his early life was the reading of the *Ramayana* by a friend of the family. This friend came and read the *Ramayana* over a period of many weeks to his father, mother and siblings. Gandhi found it uplifting and later concluded that the *Ramayana* was the greatest book of devotional literature. (The devotee who gave the readings from this Hindu epic was a man who had contracted

leprosy but had eventually cured himself of it by using sacred leaves and by reciting the *Ramayana*.)

9. Young Gandhi claimed to be 'somewhat atheistic' and also prejudiced against Christians due to the narrow attitudes of Christian missionaries. However, while in London he finally 'crossed the Sahara of atheism'. He was introduced to Sir Edwin Arnold's *The Song Celestial* by two Theosophists. He was entranced by this English translation of the *Bhagavad Gita*. He was then given -- by these same two friends -- Sir Edwin Arnold's *The Light of Asia* on the life of the Buddha. He was profoundly moved by this exquisite portrait of the remarkable life and teachings of Gautama Buddha. Subsequently, he read H.P. Blavatsky's *The Key to Theosophy* which helped him to appreciate the spiritual and philosophical wealth of Hinduism and to increasingly understand that every religion embodies some form of spiritual wisdom.

10. Pursuing this germinal religious impulse, Gandhi undertook to read the Old and New Testaments. He was primarily bored with the former and very moved by the latter. He was particularly thrilled by the *Sermon on the Mount*. He felt that it was akin to the *Gita* and to the message of the Buddha.

11. Gandhi claims that he initially attempted to rationally integrate the entire religious corpus he read, but his 'raw mind' could not grasp the underlying unity. However, he did grasp that the essence of all religion was 'renunciation'. To Gandhi, this meant that religion was essentially concerned with morality and that the latter, as he later stated, was essentially Truth.

Gandhi's Life – South Africa (I) (1891 – 1893)

1. We last left Gandhi as he arrived in Bombay, fresh from his stay in London of two years and eight months. The first news he received after being greeted by his brother was news of his mother's death. She had apparently attempted to live until he arrived but she passed away two weeks before his return. Gandhi was shaken because of his closeness to his mother, but he managed to internalize the pain and grieve within himself more so than expressing it outwardly.

2. When Gandhi arrived in Bombay at the age of 21 he was more aware of the world. His personality was also beginning to take shape. As Louis Fischer said: "He was self-critical and self-confident, temperamentally shy and intellectually sure."

3. He rejoined his wife and their first son. But, as far as the practice of law went, Gandhi was seemingly inept. His shyness was still an impediment and he found himself incapable of uttering even one word in a simple ten dollar court case in Bombay. Furthermore, after a particularly demeaning encounter with a British political agent, Gandhi realized that his hopes to enter into politics or to become an Indian judge were unrealistic. Not only was he hampered by his lack of articulateness in public but he saw through the pettiness, intrigues and other character debilitating aspects of Indian-British politics.

4. Still, Gandhi was penniless and was living off the income of the brother that financed his schooling in London. He continued to drift and struggled to earn a living as an assistant to his brother's legal practice. The question continually arose, what was he to do for a career? What could someone so shy and yet possessed of so much integrity possibly do to support a growing family?

5. As Gandhi would later say about many turning points in his life, 'God came to the rescue'. A Muslim firm in India hired him to go to South Africa for a year to assist its

local lawyers in resolving a legal dispute between two Muslim business firms. Gandhi jumped at the chance and told Kasturbai, his wife, that they would be reunited again in no more than a year. He landed in South Africa in May of 1893, a twenty four year old lawyer with precious little experience and still in search of a clear purpose. Before he left South Africa for good some twenty years later he had emerged as a remarkable leader, an original social reformer, the editor of two newspapers, a highly successful lawyer, a tested proponent of non-violent action in the public realm and a spiritual seeker of the first order. The uniqueness of the Gandhi that eventually emerged lay in his creative moral genius, his ability to relate spiritual values to daily human encounter within the ever-shifting sands of modern civilization.

6. When Gandhi arrived in Durban, South Africa in 1893 the population consisted of four million Blacks, 650,000 whites and 90,000 Indians. South African society was sharply divided by color, class, religion and profession. Indians and native Africans were at the bottom of the social order. The root causes for this stretch back into the sixteenth century when the Dutch, the first white settlers, arrived. The Dutch brought their own slaves and decided in the ensuing centuries that the best crops to cultivate were sugar cane, tea and coffee. However, the Blacks – both indigenous and slaves – were not industrious enough workers and eventually the Dutch made arrangements with British India to ship Indians to South Africa to become indentured serfs. These Indians initially worked for five years for a white farmer (Dutch or English), were provided free room and board for their families and given a small monthly stipend. At the end of five years their passage home was paid or they could sign on for an additional five years. Many Indians chose to stay on after the initial five year period of serfdom and strike out on their own. Many previously indentured Indians ended up making a successful living. Soon, the industriousness of the Indian people began to threaten the white population.

7. When Gandhi arrived in Durban, Indians were referred to by white South Africans as ‘coolies’. To avoid this demeaning designation, Parses from India chose to say they were ‘Persians’ and Muslims called themselves ‘Arabs’. When Gandhi arrived he would be regarded as a ‘coolie lawyer’. He would soon discover by personal experience exactly what that could mean to the Indian in South Africa.

8. From the time Gandhi arrive in Durban until he made it to the capital city of Pretoria nine days later he was: i) rebuked by a circuit judge for not removing his turban in court ii) thrown off a train for attempting to ride first class (even though he had a first class ticket), iii) forced to spend the night in a freezing waiting room in a train station, iv) beaten by a stage coach driver when he tried to ride inside the stage coach v) denied lodging in a Pretoria hotel and vi) refused service in a hotel restaurant because it caused the guests discomfort. However, during that same period of time Gandhi had: i) witnessed sympathetic stagecoach passengers intervening on his behalf and insisting that he be allowed to ride with them, ii) received a note from the stagecoach manager apologizing and stating that he would not be molested again iii) received a first class train ticket to Pretoria from a sympathetic stationmaster on the condition that Gandhi not sue the company if the guards threw him off the train, iv) witness an English passenger on the Pretoria train intercede on his behalf and insist that Gandhi be allowed to ride first class since he had the requisite ticket, v) received unsolicited help in Pretoria by an American Black who overheard Gandhi looking for a hotel and vi) been informed by the American owner of the hotel in Pretoria that he felt embarrassed about refusing to let Gandhi eat in

his restaurant and, upon checking with the hotel guests, was assured that they had no objections to Gandhi eating with them for meals. The germs of good will were present even if buried beneath the arid soil of racism.

Gandhi's Life – South Africa (II) (1893 – 1894)

1. A week after his arrival in Pretoria, Transvaal, Gandhi was moved to daring. The fire of courage began to burn bright. He called a meeting of the Indians in Pretoria to discuss the full picture of their condition. He was twenty four and it was his first public speech. Most of those present were Muslim merchants with a few Hindus. His message was four-fold: i) be truthful even in business, ii) adopt more sanitary habits iii) ignore caste and religious divisions and iv) learn English.

2. After this first meeting, Gandhi called more meetings and soon knew every Indian in Pretoria. Gandhi also took the initiative and contacted railway authorities and got them to formally concede that Indians properly attired would be allowed to purchase first and second class tickets for travel. Soon, Gandhi formed the Pretorian Indians into a permanent organization.

3. In the course of assisting his client with his law suit, Gandhi was increasingly led into the wider European community. He proved to be a magnet for genuine people and his presence and personality often dissolved the shallow categories of race and profession. Additionally, he continued to ponder deep religious questions. He was still searching out the right path with respect to the understanding and worship of the Godhead. When it became known to those around him that he was a spiritual seeker, he was readily approached by Christians of every stripe. Gandhi was a willing recipient of the attempt of many friends and acquaintances to convert him to their religious view.

4. Catholics, Protestants, Quakers and special groups earnestly sought to open his eyes and heart to their vision of God and the path to salvation. Gandhi was an amiable, but nonetheless critical student. Invitations came from every quarter of the religious compass. The European lawyer working with Gandhi invited him to a daily prayer meeting in his law office with the rest of his staff. Gandhi assented and they prayed and sang hymns together at 1 pm every work day. Gandhi also attended various church services and was invited to the homes of ministers and other European families to dine and discuss Christianity and its virtues. He listened, questioned and expressed his feelings and concerns frankly. He disappointed many but offended few. He assured everyone that if the inner voice ever commanded him to adopt Christianity that he would do so immediately and openly.

5. He read books on religion and wrote Raychandbai in Bombay about Hinduism. His search continued and it became clearer to him what he must reject. He deeply respected Christ and he developed strong bonds with many Christians but neither his reason nor his heart could accept the Christian view of Christ and his teachings. Gandhi could not accept the view that salvation from sin comes through belief in Jesus Christ suffering for our sins. Gandhi stated that he was not seeking to be saved from the consequences of his sins, but from sin itself. Christians said that this was impossible. Furthermore, Gandhi reasoned that if God could have one son (Jesus) than he could have more. In fact, wasn't every human being likewise a son or daughter of God? Furthermore, why could only Christians go to heaven? Did Christians have a monopoly on heaven? Was God a Christian? Did God have a prejudice against non-Christians? These and other questions

were smugly set aside by zealots, offended the unthinking, stimulated the thoughtful, amused the faithful and encouraged courageous Christians to look more deeply into the fathomless well of the Sermon on the Mount.

6. Gandhi felt that all the fine qualities in Christ's teachings were present in Hinduism, but more so. However, while he was beginning to perceive the greatness of pure Hinduism, he equally challenged the prevailing belief that any one religious teaching was the 'only' revelation from God. All genuine spiritual scriptures were the works of God and all spiritual teachings, being expressed by imperfect human beings, were naturally imperfect expressions of the Divine Law.

7. On the legal side, Gandhi disliked the competitiveness of lawyers. The law suit that Gandhi came to South Africa to help win was costing both parties huge sums with a high probability of both companies suffering greatly. Gandhi urged arbitration and finally got both parties to agree to let an Arbitrator decide their fate. Eventually, Gandhi's client won his case against his cousin. The costs to the cousin for restitution, however, were staggering – thirty seven thousand pounds. This would have resulted in bankruptcy which Gandhi felt was both harsh and hurtful. After considerable effort and pleading, Gandhi convinced his client to let the loser of the law suit pay his debt in installments stretched out over a long period of time. This eventuality sealed Gandhi's growing conviction that out-of-court settlements were preferable to trials.

8. The case over, Gandhi prepared to return to India. In appreciation for his work in the Indian community and for his helping to resolve the law suit amicably for both parties, a going-away party was held in Durban. During the festivities, Gandhi read a newspaper article stating that legislation was before the Natal government to deny the right of qualified Indians to vote for members of the Natal legislature. Gandhi said it should be resisted. An appeal was made by those present and Gandhi agreed to stay for one month longer. He ended up staying for twenty years.

Gandhi's Life – South Africa (III) (1894 – 96)

1. Gandhi decided to remain in South Africa (Natal State) for one year to help the Indians with a political issue. The Parliament of Natal was proposing to pass a bill that precluded qualified Indians from voting in general elections or in running for general office. The proposed legislation would deny Indians this political right based on the fact that they were Indians and not really for any other legally justifiable reason. The Europeans (English and Dutch) were worried about the growing number of Indians in South Africa and feared that their increase would soon take over the wealth of the country and, if permitted political rights, take over the government as well.

2. The Indians in South Africa, in general, were divided into three classes: i) indentured Indians, ii) Indians who were no longer indentured and iii) Indians who were tradesmen and had never been indentured. It was primarily the latter who qualified to vote or run for office since they were often wealthy and had actually taken the initiative to register.

3. Gandhi got together the immediate Indian Community in Durban and, under the name of the Natal Indian Congress, sent an appeal to the Natal Legislature signed by 400 Indians strongly objecting to passing such a bill. The Natal Parliament was shocked to receive such an unexpected appeal but went ahead and passed the law anyway.

4. Gandhi then organized a petition that would be sent to the Colonial Secretary in London. All major legislation by British colonies had to be endorsed by the British Home

Office. The petition was signed by 10,000 Natal Indians, almost the entire adult population in Natal. The Colonial Secretary read the proposed law and informed both the Natal Parliament and the Natal Indian Congress that the British government could not support the legislation since it was based solely on color. This nullified the law and sent it back to the Natal Parliament. Gandhi considered this a victory and so did the Indian community which had never challenged anything.

5. Shortly thereafter, the Natal Parliament passed a new law which, in effect, prevented free Indians from voting. It set up so many non-racial barriers to voting that it eroded any political rights of free Indians. The Natal Indian Congress considered challenging the law but decided in the end that it would only get bound up in endless legalities and so they let the matter drop.

6. In 1896 Gandhi returned to India for six months to retrieve his family for a longer stay in South Africa. While in India, he met and conferred with many Indian leaders. He apprised them of the situation in South Africa and even wrote and distributed a pamphlet which was widely distributed. Unfortunately, the reports of Gandhi's speeches in India were grossly distorted by Reuters and further magnified in South African newspapers, especially in Natal. When Gandhi returned with his family to Durban he faced a major crisis.

7. Essentially, the newspaper reports had riled the public against Gandhi. He was portrayed as someone who misrepresented Europeans in South Africa and as someone who sought to flood Natal with Indians in order to crush the Europeans. Neither was true. When the ship arrived in the port of Durban, thousands of angry European citizens gathered to meet the ship. To 'protect' the ship (and encourage it to return to India), the Port of Durban declared it under quarantine. It remained in port for 23 days without the passengers able to disembark. The Indians aboard refused to yield, the long suffering Muslim tradesman who owned the ship likewise remained steadfast. Finally, the Attorney General of Natal State, who was also chairman of the Committee of Concerned Citizens, informed Gandhi that all passengers could leave the ship the next day. He warned Gandhi, however, that it would be best for him to leave under cover of darkness by himself. Gandhi was convinced by his European council that he should leave with the latter in the early evening when the docks were free and that there was no need to await nightfall. Gandhi took the advice.

8. Once off the ship, Gandhi was soon recognized and within minutes he and his council were surrounded by local hostiles as they headed to the nearest safety point. Soon they were being beaten. The council bravely accompanying Gandhi was thrown aside and the crowd began to beat Gandhi. Fortunately, the Superintendent of Police's wife, who Gandhi knew, saw what was happening and intervened. She stood next to Gandhi and raised her umbrella. She walked beside Gandhi who struggled to get, with her help, to the police station. Within a short period of time constables from the Durban Police Station arrived and surrounded Gandhi. They escorted Gandhi to a friend's house. Within an hour Gandhi had been located and the house was surrounded by a mob calling for Gandhi to come out or they would burn down the entire home with the residents in it. The Superintendent of Police kept the crowd at bay by talking to them, telling jokes and singing songs. Meanwhile, Gandhi agreed to dress like a policeman and managed to make his escape.

9. The next day an article appeared in the Natal Daily. It was an interview with Gandhi made by a senior reporter shortly before Gandhi had left the ship. The journalist presented Gandhi's actual speeches in India accurately. Out of a sense of elementary justice it also set out documented facts about certain incidents of maltreatment by European owners of Indentured Indians in Natal. The reporter indicated that, while he did not support the Indian cause, Mr. Gandhi was quite misrepresented and the Indians aboard the liner were made to suffer unfairly. He also said that Gandhi would be within his rights to press charges against those who attacked him. This article embarrassed many and cooled down the situation in general. Gandhi also felt that it enhanced the prestige of the Indian community who showed determination, truthfulness and a willingness to suffer for a just cause.

10. The Attorney General met privately with Gandhi to apologize on behalf of the government and to give Gandhi the opportunity to press charges against his assailants. (The Colonial Secretary had wired the Attorney General that Gandhi should be given every avenue of legal redress since he was clearly within his rights.) Gandhi refused to press charges but took the Attorney General to task for his and the government's participation in provoking the citizens of Durban.

Gandhi's Life – South Africa (IV) (1897 Å–1900)

'The Boer War'. The Boers

a) South Africa was composed of four separate states: Natal (English), Cape Colony (English but with a predominately Boer population), Transvaal (Boer, but with English ownership of mines in Johannesburg) and Orange Free State (Boer). The Boers were (and are) descendants of the original Dutch peoples that immigrated to South Africa in the 1600s. The Dutch became farmers and basically enslaved the native population. In time the Dutch developed their own special form of the Dutch language and they eventually became known as the 'Boers'. The Boers were strong believers in the Old Testament and were convinced of their religious and cultural superiority. (Gandhi claimed that all of Europe basically believed in the Old Testament and only paid lip service to the New Testament -- which they never studied.)

b) The Boers were natural fighters and were absolutely fearless Å women as well as men. Simultaneous with the coming of the Boers to South Africa, the English came as well. Tensions developed over the centuries and periodic skirmishes occurred Å usually won by the seemingly indomitable Boers. In the late 1800s war between the British and the Boers became inevitable.

II. The Boer War (1899 – 1902)

a) In the late 1890s wealthy English residents of Johannesburg complained bitterly about their treatment by the Boer government in the Transvaal. The Boer ruling elite refused to issue reforms. The British government eventually issued warnings and also indicated that the Boer treatment of Indians needed to be reformed as well.

b) War broke out in 1899 and the Indian community faced a dilemma. Over the years, British apologists always criticized the Indian community as takers and not givers. The claim was that Indians were willing to benefit economically from their 'citizenship' in the British Commonwealth but were not willing to make sacrifices for their 'privileges'. Some members of the Indian community now wanted to demonstrate that these charges were baseless. But how?

c) Two basic lines of thought eventually emerged in the South Africa Indian community: First argument: “We are equally enslaved by the British and the Boers. It is only a matter of degree. Furthermore, it is not at all clear that the smaller Boer army will lose. If we support the British and the Boers should win, the Boers would be even harsher on us than they are now. Why should we do anything other than keep a low profile?”

Second argument: “Whatever the defects of British citizenship to Indians, it is by virtue of that citizenship that we enjoy what rights we have. It would be unbecoming of us to ignore the needs of Britain in her hour of need. Furthermore, inaction on our part would simply confirm to the British that we are money grabbers and not contributors. If we desire to win our true rights under the British Empire then we must step forward. This must be done even though justice is on the side of the Boers. Every single subject of a state must not hope to enforce his private opinion in all cases. The authorities may not always be right, but so long as the subjects owe allegiance to a state, it is their clear duty generally to accommodate themselves, and to accord their support to acts of the state. If subjects of a state consider the action of their government to be immoral from a religious standpoint they must endeavor fully and even at the risk of their lives to dissuade the government from pursuing such a course. We Indians have done nothing of the kind. Our ordinary duty as subjects therefore, is not to enter into the merits of the war, but when war has actually broken out, to render such assistance as we possibly can. Finally, to argue that we will suffer more from the Boers if they win is to forfeit our manhood. What soldier considers consequences when he joins a war? This argument also does an injustice to the chivalrous spirit of the Boers.” The second argument was supported by Gandhi and it carried the day. While Gandhi’s views changed later in life, he claimed that the underlining point of Satyagraha was still valid. One must appear to be as one really is and then act accordingly. In 1899 Gandhi argued and acted in accordance with the truth that he saw. Next time we will examine what in fact the Indian community actually did during the Boer War.

Gandhi’s Life – South Africa (V) (1897 – 1900)

I. The Indian Community decided after due consideration to accept the argument made by Gandhi and others that they had a responsibility as citizens of the British Empire to assist the British government in their war against the Boers.

a) The problem that now faced the Indian leadership was manifold. To whom should the appeal be made? What are we qualified to do? What skills do we have and what training should we undertake? How could we endure the crude and insulting treatment we would receive at the hands of the British when trying to help them? The outcome of all this self-scrutiny was a common resolve to make the most of the situation by volunteering to do whatever work was assigned to the Indian volunteers and to put up with whatever maltreatment they received. Accordingly, offers were repeatedly made to the government and just as often refused. Finally, when the British realized that their wounded were reaching high numbers and their current ambulance core was stretched beyond capacity, they accepted the offer of the Indian leaders to form a temporary Indian Ambulance Corp.

b) The Indian Ambulance Corps consisted of eleven hundred volunteers: free Indians, free indentured Indians and eventually indentured Indians. There were thirty seven leaders. Dr. Booth (a Christian minister as well as a doctor) was in charge. All thirty

seven leaders were speedily trained by Dr. Booth et al and were expected to set the example and direct other Indians who's main charge was to carry the wounded and perform manual tasks. The Indian leaders were primarily lawyers and accountants and the rest were either craftsmen or field laborers. All religious creeds were represented and well as all classes of men. The Indian Ambulance Corps acted side by side with the European Ambulance Corps (also a temporary creation).

c) The Indian Ambulance Corps was unconditional in its willingness to go and do whatever it was told for the sake of helping the troops. The Government, however, granted the Indians immunity from rendering help within the firing line. The main responsibility of the Indian helpers was to carry the wounded from beyond the firing line to the field hospital. This was, on average, seven miles or fourteen miles round trip. (On one occasion Gandhi states that they had to carry wounded soldiers twenty five miles from the point of pick up to awaiting doctors!)

d) The war went so badly for the British for a while that the Natal Government gave the Indian Ambulance Corps the option of working within the firing line if they wished. The Corps responded wholeheartedly and they successfully rescued many a British soldier suffering from life-threatening wounds.

e) The members of the Indian Ambulance Corps were treated respectfully by both the British soldier and the European Ambulance Corps. The latter was composed of a number of individuals who were part of the anti-Indian agitation before the Boer War. The willing service of the Indians temporarily melted their hearts and there was an unspoken brotherhood between all involved. The Indian corps disbanded after two months and the war continued for several more years. However, war medals were conferred on all thirty seven Indian leaders and letters of appreciation were received from the Natal Government.

f) Gandhi, as always, felt that much good came out of service and bravery. He cited two examples of exemplary sacrifice to show that human beings can do extraordinary things if given the chance. One such case was the instance of Parbhusingh. He was a collier laborer in the city of Ladysmith. The Boers attacked the British settlers at Ladysmith by putting cannons on a nearby hill and shooting into the city for several days. Whenever a cannon was shot it would take the ball a full minute to strike the city. The officer in charge of the Ladysmith put Parbhusingh in charge of notifying the city of an impending cannon ball by ringing a bell from atop a tree. As soon as Parbhusingh saw a cannon flash he would ring the bell and people would seek cover – all except him. During the course of the entire siege Parbhusingh never failed to give a warning. The bravery of Parbhusingh reached Natal and eventually found its way to Lord Curzon, the Viceroy of India. Lord Curzon then sent a Kashmiri robe to the government in Natal and asked them to hold a public ceremony in which Parbhusingh was honored for his bravery and loyalty. The Mayor of Durban held the ceremony in Town Hall and it lifted the spirits of the entire indentured population as well as of Indians in general.

g) In addition to the Parbhusingh story, Gandhi noted a story of extraordinary bravery and suffering. It occurred near the end of the Boer War. Lord Kitchener decided to break the Boer spirit. He took prisoners and separated them into a camp for males and one for their wives. He decided to come down hard on the women in these concentration camps to dispirit them and their husbands. To quote Gandhi: "The women underwent indescribable suffering. They starved, they suffered biting cold and scorching heat.

Sometimes a soldier intoxicated with liquor or maddened by passion might even assault these unprotected women. Still the brave Boer women did not flinch. And at last King Edward wrote to Lord Kitchener, saying that he could not tolerate it, and that if it was the only means of reducing the Boers to submission, he would prefer any sort of peace to continuing the war in that fashion, and asked the General to bring the war to a speedy end. When the cry of agony raised by the women in the concentration camps reached England – through a few high-souled Englishmen and women who were then in South Africa, the English people began to relent. The late Mr. Stead publicly prayed and invited others to pray, that God might decree the English a defeat in the war. This was a wonderful sight. Real suffering bravely borne melts even a heart of stone. Such is the potency of suffering or tapas. And there lies the key to Satyagraha.” (*Satyagraha in South Africa*, pg 16)

Gandhi’s Life: South Africa (VI) (1901 – 1906)

I. The efforts of Indians in the Boer War had won some recognition for the Indian peoples. War medals were distributed to many Indians (including Gandhi). The Ambulance Corps was even hailed in an article by the British editor of the Pretoria News who wrote:

“After a night’s work, which had shattered men with much bigger frames, I came across Gandhi in the early morning sitting by the roadside eating a regulation army biscuit. Every man in (General) Buller’s force was dull and depressed, and damnation was invoked on everything. But Gandhi was stoical in his bearing, cheerful, and confident in his conversations, and had a kindly eye. He did one good. I saw the man and his small, undisciplined corps on many a battlefield during the Natal campaign. When succor was to be rendered they were there. Their unassuming dauntlessness cost them many lives, and eventually an order was published forbidding them to go into the firing line.” Gandhi returned to India in 1901 feeling that the Indian community had earned some reasonable measure of respect from the Europeans. Gandhi settled down in Bombay with his family to practice law and to enter politics. He was moderately successful in both arenas. However, he received an emergency telegram from South Africa asking for his immediate return. The British Colonial Secretary, Chamberlain, was visiting South Africa to meet with the Boers and receive war reparations. The Indian community wanted Gandhi to meet with Chamberlain in order to present Indian grievances. Gandhi agreed and left for South Africa immediately, his family to follow. Gandhi’s meeting with Chamberlain was chilling. It became apparent to the Indian community that Britain was far more interested in mollifying the Boers or Dutch than with dealing with minority issues. Tensions mounted, especially in formerly Boer Transvaal. Gandhi decided to move into the middle of the potential volcano, so he set up a law office in Johannesburg, Transvaal. The Transvaal Government soon established the Asiatic Department. It was run by former British army officers. They looked out for the interest of the Transvaal Government, not the Asiatics. Gandhi met with the head of the department and spoke about the fine qualities of the Indian worker -- his industry, frugality, patience and the like. The department head’s response was: “Mr. Gandhi, you are preaching to the converted. It is not the vices of Indians that Europeans in this country fear but their virtues.” General Smuts, the Dutch politician who later became Gandhi’s main political foe, declared in his election speech to the residents of the Transvaal in 1904: “The Asiatic

cancer, which has already eaten so deeply into the vitals of South Africa, ought to be resolutely eradicated.” The Indian was an economic threat to the indigenous Europeans, British and Dutch alike.

III. The Zulu Rebellion

Despite the burgeoning tensions between the ten thousand Indians of the Transvaal and the Government, Gandhi joined the British army in 1906. More specifically, Gandhi and twenty four Indians volunteered to be stretcher bearers and sanitary aids during the ‘war’ with the Zulus. The so-called ‘war’ was really a police action against the Zulus for a questionable incident. And the poor Zulu were in no position to resist the British army in any meaningful military way. Gandhi’s sympathies were entirely with the Zulus, but he held that unless a person had taken the position that a particular war was immoral or irreligious before the war began, one could not protest it in good conscience.

Furthermore, Gandhi believed that ‘the British Empire existed for the welfare of the whole world’ and he had a strong sense of loyalty to it. The Zulus were brutalized. They were shot, hung and flayed alive. The white doctors refused to tend to them or address their wounds. Gandhi and his crew were the only salvation of the Zulu. They tended to their needs and often nursed them back to health. The Indian corps often marched forty miles a day and suffered considerably. However, Gandhi and his assistants plodded on bravely and treated everyone, including the British Tommy, with compassion and dignity. At the end of one month the ‘war’ was over and the Indians disbanded. Gandhi was a sergeant major at the end and was again awarded a medal for his services.

After returning to Johannesburg, Gandhi entered into a ‘moral war’ with the British that ultimately resulted in victory for the Indians in South Africa.

Gandhi’s Life – South Africa (VII)(1900 –1906)

Gandhi’s Transformation

1. Gandhi went through a personal transformation in South Africa just as he had done in England. He began in South Africa attempting to conform to the ideal of what it meant to be a true citizen of the British Empire. Paradoxically, it was because he took the ideals implicit in the British Empire seriously that he eventually became its opponent. More specifically, his opposition to British policy was based on his conviction that the European officials in South Africa were not living up to the professed principles of either Christianity or civilization. This forced Gandhi to change his attitudes, his behavior and his practices but not his principles. His understanding of truth and non-violence became clearer and the modalities adopted to express them more defined. But this was a gradual process and it was one of great integrity. Gandhi yearned to be authentic in a world full of hypocrisy and he only changed as the truth that he saw dictated.

2. According to Louis Fischer, Gandhi at one point in the early 1900s was a successful South African lawyer – even though an extremely honest one. At one point, Gandhi earned the equivalent of thirty thousand dollars a year for his legal work. (In today’s terms Gandhi’s salary would have been about one hundred thousand dollars annually.) He even rented an English villa at the beach in Durban, a few doors from the Attorney-General’s home. And, much to the chagrin of his wife and sons, he insisted that his family dress like Englishmen and that they use knives and forks to eat. This was entirely compatible with his conception of the ideal even while questioning and coping with the growing tensions between the Indian and the European communities. He was determined

to confront injustices legally and, as a last resort through non-violent civil disobedience, but he still sought acceptance for the Indian by attempting to conform to the outer symbols of British civilization.

3. Gandhi was ceaselessly seeking to be genuine, to act in accordance with his deepest moral sentiments and according to the best moral codes of decency. While trying to cope with political matters, he continued to nurse the sick, to develop home made remedies for friends and strangers. He even delivered his fourth son at home without a doctor when there was no time to fetch one. He hired a maid to help his wife but he personally spent a great deal of time with the children when they were infants. Gandhi also initiated specific moral and social reforms in his household. He insisted on housing needy friends, associates, fellow religious seekers and the like. This put his wife to the test. Gandhi also insisted that his wife take care of the chamber pots, even for untouchables. This led to many confrontations. But Gandhi was insistent and asserted his husbandly authority.

4. When Gandhi was leaving South Africa to return to India in 1901 (to return less than a year later), he was given many expensive jewels as a gift from the Indian community – including a beautiful gold necklace for Kasturbai. Gandhi was uncomfortable. His views about possessions and wealth were changing. He argued with himself about keeping the gifts for financial security or renouncing them and returning them to the community. According to his own account, he finally decided to return them. However, he knew that Kasturbai would take issue with this. He solicited the help of his two ‘oldest’ sons. With his two willing allies, Gandhi approached Kasturbai and the battle of persuasion was on. Gandhi proposed that all valuables be returned. Kasturbai argue that the jewels should be kept for the boys’ future wives. (She accepted she should not wear them since Gandhi had already insisted a year earlier that she give up wearing jewelry.) Gandhi responded that the boys could take care of themselves when older. Kasturbai retorted that young brides would expect jewelry and Gandhi, in turn, replied that such women would not be suitable daughters-in-law. Kasturbai dismissed this by saying that to find such young women was impossible and unrealistic. Gandhi, conceding the point, simply said that they would discuss the issue at the time of the boys’ marriages. Kasturbai retorted that such a prospect was highly unlikely said he never changed his mind once he decided on a course of action. Nonetheless, Kasturbai retreated somewhat. She claimed that the gold necklace had been given to her and she should be allowed to keep it. Gandhi then argued that it was given to her for his services to the community. Kasturbai then argued -- through tears -- that there was no difference between his service and hers since she served him and that made it possible for him to help others. The point hit home, but Gandhi retreated to the higher ground of principle and simply said that no public servant should accept gifts for voluntary public work and that all of the jewelry would be given over to trustees – end of argument. In fact, all gifts were given to Gandhi-appointed trustees who formed a public fund that provided assistance to poor Indians in South Africa for many decades into the twentieth century. The transformation was on.

Gandhi’s Life: South Africa (VIII) (1906 – 1907)

Gandhi’s Transformation

1. In August 1906 the Transvaal legislature proposed to pass a law that was extremely insulting to the Indian peoples. The proposed law would require all Indian men and women over the age of eight to register with the authorities, give their fingerprints and

carry a certificate at all times. If they did not, they would be imprisoned or deported. This proposed measure was focused explicitly on Indians and was intended eventually to drive them out of the country. The entire Indian community was in an uproar over this issue.

2. On September 11, 1906 a meeting of some three thousand Indians was held at the Imperial Theater in Johannesburg. Indians of every religious belief, economic condition and caste were present. Gandhi sat on the platform with other leaders. There was general outrage from every quarter. The chairman for the occasion introduced a resolution drafted by Gandhi and others which denounced the legislature's bill and firmly stated that there would be complete non-compliance with the registration provisions of the new law. The chairman then asked all to vote on the resolution with 'God as their witness'. When Gandhi heard this he immediately sensed that this was a momentous occasion. This was really not just a vote, but a solemn vow. Gandhi was given permission by the chairman to speak before the show of hands was taken. Gandhi then spoke to the assembly about the seriousness of a vow as distinct from other forms of action or from voting. A vow was unconditional and one must be willing to follow it out even if one were to have to stand alone. As Gandhi declared: "There is only one course open for me, to die but not to submit to the law. I am confident that I will never violate my pledge. If you have not the will or the ability to stand firm even when you are perfectly isolated you must not only not take the pledge but you must declare your opposition before the resolution is put." Every one must be true to his pledge even unto death, no matter what others do."

3. Everyone in the theater stood and, by their standing, signified that they had consciously taken a vow. Strangely enough, the very next day the Imperial Theater burnt to the ground. Serendipity? A few weeks later, the bill was rewritten such that Indian women were excluded from having to register. Shortly thereafter Gandhi went to England for six weeks to try and convince the British Colonial Secretary to deny the proposed bill sitting in the Transvaal Parliament. The King and the Colonial Secretary agreed to do as Gandhi requested, but, in reality, it was a rouse. The Dutch were to assume control of the Transvaal government in January of 1907. So the British Government came out against the proposed resolution but as soon as January came the now Dutch Government passed the dreaded 'Black Act' into law.

4. Gandhi now formulated what he eventually called the Satyagraha movement. It meant 'holding on to Truth' or 'soul force'. It was later characterized as 'civil resistance', borrowing from Thoreau's term 'civil disobedience'. As Gandhi said, it was really about 'evil resistance' and 'civil conduct'. Gandhi and many Indians refused to register at the appropriate deadline and were arrested. Gandhi received a two months jail sentence which he admitted that he rather enjoyed.

5. When the jails began to fill up, General Smuts summoned Gandhi from jail for a meeting. Smuts offered Gandhi a compromise. He would rescind the compulsory registration law if Indians voluntarily registered. Gandhi eventually agreed to these terms. Gandhi and all prisoners were immediately released.

6. When Gandhi returned to the community he met a storm of protest about the compromise. Gandhi answered criticism methodically but did not persuade everyone. Many doubted General Smuts' reliability and wondered why the law wasn't repealed first. Gandhi's response was that a Satyagrahi says goodbye to fear. He trusts his opponent and even if faith is broken twenty times he is willing to trust a twenty-first time.

7. When Gandhi went to register in compliance with the new law in February 1907, a giant Pathan and his associates beat Gandhi unconscious. He was taken to the house of a sympathetic Christian minister who had him treated by a doctor. After Gandhi was bandaged, he had the registrar summoned immediately and, in great pain, Gandhi managed to officially register. (The Registrar, who was a determined political enemy of Gandhi, was visibly shaken by Gandhi's beating and when he witnessed Gandhi's agony in signing the documents, he openly wept.) Gandhi also refused to bring charges against the Pathans saying that they did so out of ignorance.

8. Many Indians followed Gandhi's example and registered, even though they did not agree with him. After most Indians voluntarily registered, General Smuts refused to repeal the registration and submitted all Indian registrations as legitimate instances of their agreement with the law.

9. Understandably, many Indians were upset with Gandhi. Gandhi told the disenchanted Indians and friends that the virtue of Satyagraha is that when truly practiced it uncovers hidden motives and reveals the truth. Now that they knew what Smuts was up to, they would burn their registration cards and refuse to register. They did, were arrested and Gandhi began his second term in prison. One of the first packages he received in prison was from General Smuts. It contained two books on religion. Knowing Gandhi's interest in religion, Smuts wrote that he thought Gandhi might like reading them to pass the time away in his soon-to-be-familiar prison cell.

Gandhi's Life – South Africa (IX) (1909)

A Constellation of Satyagrahis

1. As we might recall, after General Smuts reneged on his agreement, Gandhi and many others burned their registration cards. They were given the opportunity to pay a fine or go to jail. They chose the latter and they did so in increasing numbers. It built pride and self-confidence in many an ordinary Indian to consciously break an unjust law and willingly incur a jail sentence. To choose to take the fine instead of going to jail was in the eyes of Gandhi and others, cowardice. Furthermore, as Gandhi noted, jail had its good side. In jail one only had one warden, while in free life one had many. There was also no need to worry about food. Physical labor was good for the health of the body and it helped to keep down 'vicious habits'. The body and personality were caged, but the prisoner's soul was free to pray to God. Finally, going to jail and undergoing sufferings and privations for the sake of one's country and religion was the real road to happiness. Like Thoreau, Gandhi believed that it was more honorable to be right than to be law-abiding.

2. Gandhi was surrounded by characters of all kinds Ål from charlatans to saints. For example, the relative who had convinced him to eat meat when they were both young continued to be a reprobate even as an adult. He eventually followed Gandhi to South Africa, won his way into Gandhi's home, was discovered in his bedroom with a prostitute and evicted by Gandhi. He became a great critic of Gandhi, eventually married a saintly woman who converted him to better ways and, in time, became a supporter of the Indian cause (as well as a writer of bad poetry). There were doubters, sincere skeptics, colleagues with political ambitions, 'false pietists of bewildered soul' but also sterling individuals of extraordinary ability and self-sacrifice.

3. Among Gandhi's more stellar colleagues was Herman Kallenbach, a German Jew from Johannesburg. Kallenbach was a very wealthy architect who met Gandhi by chance. They

discovered a mutual interest in Buddhism and became inseparable friends. Kallenbach assisted Gandhi in every respect: in mutual study, in taking moral vows, in dietary experiments in vegetarianism, in serving the cause of the Indian community by confronting angry Europeans calmly and fearlessly at political meetings, and, by offering timely financial help as well. Their lives were so intertwined that each could tolerate the quirks of the other with almost total understanding. (Only a Kallenbach could smile when Gandhi took a pair of expensive binoculars out of his hands and threw them out the porthole of a ship because he considered them unnecessary distractions in the spiritual life.) It was Kallenbach who purchased Tolstoy Farm outside of Johannesburg for Gandhi and all Satyagrahi families to live, engage in spiritual and social reform and to train for civil resistance.

4. Another golden warrior in the non-violent army was Miss Schlesin, originally a private secretary and stenographer for Kallenbach. She was of Russian-Jewish origin, but Scottish by birth. At the recommendation of Kallenbach, Miss Schlesin, then seventeen, became Gandhi's personal secretary. Miss Schlesin's virtues soon became apparent despite her age. To quote Gandhi:

"She is one of the few women I have been privileged to come across, with a character as clear as crystal and courage that would shame a warrior. She knew neither night nor day in toiling for the cause. She ventured out on errands in the darkness of the night all by herself, and angrily scouted any suggestion of an escort. Thousands of stalwart Indians looked up to her for guidance. When during the Satyagraha days almost every one of the leaders was in jail, she led the movement single-handed. She had the management of thousands, a tremendous amount of correspondence, and Indian Opinion in her hands, but she never wearied."

Gandhi's opinion of Ms. Schlesin was later echoed by the illustrious Indian leader, Gokhale. As Gokhale commented to Gandhi:

"I have rarely met with the sacrifice, the purity and the fearlessness I have seen in Miss Schlesin. Amongst your co-workers, she takes the first place in my estimation."

5. There were numerous other individuals who sparkled within the celestial, expansive orbit of Gandhi. Reverend Charlie Andrews, an Englishman, was a jewel in the Christian rough. He was a true follower of the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount, a lover of India and a fearless disciple of the Christ-like Gandhi. He, like the devoted Reverend Doke, a South African, responded to the call of justice and endured the ridicule and criticism of many Christian Europeans.

6. Gandhi, like all true spiritual revolutionaries, drew to his aid the best and the brightest.