

Gandhi in South Africa

Truly a 'Great Soul'

He practised what he preached and preached what he practised

ONE of the great leaders of the Indian National Congress, Mr Pattabhai Sitaramayya, who was also famous for his History of the Indian Congress, was once asked why the numerous, and knowledgeable leaders of the Congress did not cause the same effect on the masses through their lectures and speeches as did Mahatma Gandhi.

He replied: "The magical effect of the Mahatma on the people of India was due to one factor - Gandhiji - always practised that which he preached and preached what he practised".

This was the secret of his mission, greatness and tremendous success. He believed that "the first dharma (duty) is to practise what one preaches" and that "the supreme dharma is to practise that which one preaches".

Throughout his life he observed and practised this teaching of the Gita.

"Whatsoever a great man does, that other men also do, whatever he sets up as the standard, that the world (mankind) follows. People endeavour to walk in his footsteps."

It was this philosophy of Gandhiji that gave India its freedom. Not only that - it also showed the world a new way to fight injustice.

Gandhiji had a unique balance of fearlessness, outspokenness, insistence on truth, detachment, sacrifice, non-violence and anger against injustice.

His amazing fearlessness and outspokenness is illustrated by this small episode.

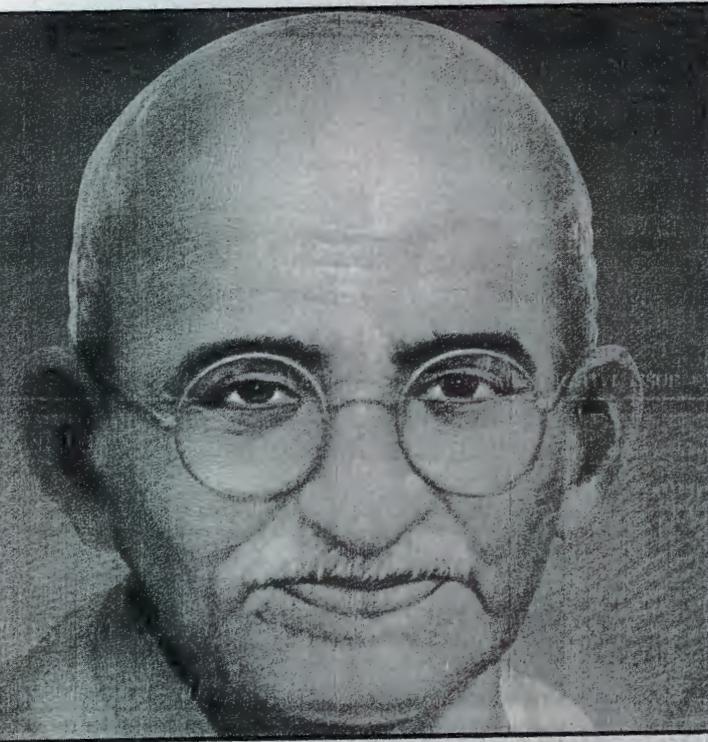
In 1916, there was an official opening of the Banares Hindu University.

SMUTS' TRIBUTE

THE assassination of Mahatma Gandhi, on January 30, 1948, shook the world.

General Smuts, an opponent of Gandhi for seven years, was moved to say:

"I have heard of the assassination of Mr. Gandhi with the deepest grief, which, I am sure, will be shared all over the world. Mr. Gandhi was one of the great men of my time, and a period of 30 years has only deepened my high regard for him, however much we differed in our views and methods. A prince among men has passed away, and we grieve with India in her irreparable loss."



Gandhi - the Mahatma

Extracted from the speech of DR DILIP VEDALANKAR (MA., Ph.d) of India, who delivered the main address at the launch of the Gandhi SA Centenary in Durban on 23 May, 1993.

Gandhiji was present on the auspicious occasion. There was a large procession. The Viceroy of India attended and in the procession there were many soldiers with guns.

Gandhiji observed this. Also present were many Maharajahs, and leading scholars of India.

Gandhiji had worn a Kathiawadi turban, kurta and a short dhoti.

He was one of the speakers at this function. The speech he delivered at that time would amaze us today.

He said "I was late in arriving today for this function. Do you know why? I was late because of the Viceroy of India!"

"He represents the British Government and the Empire in India. But when the people of India try to see him with affection and regard, then guns are pointed at them."

"If he is a true representative of the British Empire he ought to meet the people with love and affection. But the guns caused us to doubt that he is a true representative of the people."

BRAVE ACT

Gandhiji said "Is the Viceroy afraid of us? If it so, then I say it is better to die than to be afraid!"

In that period to speak

such a naked truth and that to the supreme ruler of India required tremendous courage and guts..."

Today in India we have British rule, that I know very well. But when the time comes when British rule is no longer necessary in India I will say so firmly, and say the British must quit India and if they do not I will create such a situation they will have to leave with their bags for good."

To say this in India in 1916 was a real brave act on the part of Gandhiji. Clearly he was without fear and fortright. This was his greatness. This is what freed India, and showed the world a new path to fight oppression, suppression and repression.

Another episode in the life of Gandhi relates how he came to be called Mahatma by another Mahatma Munshirani.

When he left South Africa for India in 1913 he visited Mr Gokhale who advised him to do two things before starting his work for Indian independence.

Firstly, to travel all over India to meet people from all walks of life, and to see the state of the country and,

Secondly, to meet Mahatma Munshirani, rector of Gurukul Kangri, a college for the

system of ancient Indian education in Hardwar on the banks of the Ganges.

Gandhiji duly visited Mahatma Munshirani in his hermitage on the banks of the river Ganges, along with his son, Devadas.

He was received with great respect.

It is important to note a little known fact that the children at this college in India saved money by foregoing a meal a day and they sent a fairly large sum of money to Gandhiji in support of his Satyagraha campaign.

Thus Gandhiji was eager to meet Swami Shradhdhanand and his students at the Gurukul Kangri.

MERITED

In welcoming Gandhiji, Swami promised his students' full support for the freedom struggle of India.

He further said to Gandhiji that the work he was doing was of such a nature as to merit the title of Mahatma and that henceforth he would refer to Gandhiji as Mahatma and not as Mister.

This was the first occasion when Gandhiji was called Mahatma Gandhi and they worked together for many years in the freedom struggle.

When Swami Shradhdhanand was assassinated by a fanatic in 1925 Gandhiji said:

"I pray that, God enables me to live a life like Swami Shradhdhanand and also die of an assassin's bullet."

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"Nothing enduring can be built on violence"

- GANDHI

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