CHAPTER - I

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND
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History records the details of only a few important personalities out of millions. Such personalities are reformers, pathmakers, leaders etc. Mohan Das Karam Chand Gandhi born on Oct. 2, 1869 was such a personality.

Gandhi was truly called Mahatma 'The Great Soul' but if we peep into his childhood we find that he was not a born Mahatma. This greatness he achieved in later part of his life. In the days of his childhood and even upto his attainment of adulthood, he had weaknesses like an ordinary man but surely enough there was a strong talent in him which developed with time.

The factors responsible in moulding his life were the family background, the atmosphere he was brought up and his early marriage. The time spent in England to study law, his experience in South Africa and the influence of the contemporary political thinkers, social reformers, religious writings etc. developed in him a rare calibre that gave him the charismatic authority over the Indian masses. He involved himself so much with the down trodden that they began to love him and worship him as their hero.

By studying early years of Gandhi's life, it becomes easier to understand later developments of his life and political activities. One can see in them all the seeds that later flowered into bloom. His love of truth,
desire for the freedom of his motherland, love for simple things and simple people, passion for purity even to austerity, use of courage and quiet moral strength, all these qualities were struggling within him to find suitable expression in the field of labour big enough to call them into plan.

Gandhi hailed from a well-to-do family. His grandfather, father and elder brother were the prime-ministers of Porbander State. Gandhi's father was bold, truthful, generous, incorruptible and an impartial man. These qualities influenced Gandhi very much. The strategy of non-violence, which he practised in his later life, developed in him while he nursed his injured father in 1883.

Gandhi was inclined towards politics due to his family background and his religious thinking was the influence of his mother. His experience in South Africa enabled him to synchronize these two diverse qualities in him.

Gandhi's mother was a pious and religious lady. She used to visit temple everyday. At the same time she used to take interest in state matters and had quite impressed the court with her intelligence. Her influence on Gandhi was most prominent. Gandhi wrote in his Autobiography "The outstanding impression my mother has left on my memory is that of saintliness." Her parents belonged to a sect which honoured and followed the teachings of both Islam and Hinduism. She had no prejudice against any religion. All this had everlasting effect on Gandhi. Her tolerance laid the path for his later strategy of passive resistance. These elements

of his mother's character seem to have left an indelible mark on Gandhi's mind. In this way Gandhi was bound by very strong, very positive relationship with both his mother and his father.

Whereas the relation between Gandhi and his parents for the most part were warm and supportive, those between him and his wife and children were often strained. His marriage was never a marriage of minds. Gandhi's wife Kasturba was strong willed, having her own world view. However, both of them adjusted themselves with time. She was described as 'small, hard-working and level headed' by one of the Gandhi's biographers. Brahmacharya way of life was adopted by Gandhi in 1906. Gandhi felt the discord between sexuality and his higher spiritual quest. It was the time when Gandhi started his 'Satyagraha' campaign.

A school incident reveals about hidden quality in him. During school inspection, the teacher wanted Gandhi to copy from his fellow students but Gandhi could not. In his autobiography Gandhi says, "I never could learn the art of copying." This incident can be viewed as a faint sign of his late passion in truth and his sense of right and wrong. There are other such incidents which reflect his sensitive nature and scrupulous regard for truth.

6. Ibid., pp. 5-6.
Once a Muslim friend convinced Gandhi that freedom could be attained if all Indians start eating meat as it made people strong. He secretly took meat for one year but then gave up as he didn't like doing this in secret. Gandhi once stole a gold ornament for smoking purposes. But he confessed his guilt to his father in writing. His father read it through and pearl drops trickled down his cheeks. That was an object lesson in Ahinsa for Gandhi. Gandhi used to avoid sports in his school days. One day he was late for school and thus missed his gymnastic class. When questioned by headmaster, Gandhi told him that he was attending his ailing father. The headmaster didn't believe him and called him a liar. Gandhi felt it very much and cried in pain. The story of Shravan's devotion to his parents greatly impressed him. Shravan became his ideal as far as his parental duties were concerned. King Harish Chandra's story also moved him deeply and he questioned himself as to why everyone should not speak the truth. Such reactions were the signs of moral consciousness in his early years.

The London years were crucial in his intellectual growth. There he developed himself as a committed vegetarian. Since he had limited money he was forced to lead a simple life. Regarding his simple living he commented that it harmonised his inward and outward life and his life was certainly more fruitful and his soul knew no bounds of joy.

In London he mostly had contacts with vegetarians, reformers and clergymen. The clergymen made him think deeply about religion. There he studied the 'Gita' in Arnold's translation, the light of Asia by Arnold, the Old Testament and the New Testament. He was very much

impressed by the New Testament as its teachings were in conformity with the Vaishnaviti and Jain ideas and practices in which he was brought up at home. He found the morals of Gita and New Testament same. Even after spending three years in England, he remained as diffident and as shy as ever; speaking only when spoken to. His efforts at public speaking were a dismal failure. But he remained true to the vows he had taken at the instance of his mother.11

He was elected to the executive committee of the London Vegetarian Society. While attending meetings he remained quiet. He was unable to make a speech even if he wanted to. He published some articles in the society's journal. This was his maiden experiment in journalistic writing. The written word was to be his principal medium of self expression in later life.12 He used to attend the meetings of 'The Anjuman Islamia', a small body formed by Indian residents. Fredrick Pincult, a guide of Indian students, advised Gandhi how to prepare himself in his professional life and also tried to make him optimistic.13

He returned to India on June 12, 1891. Here his self-respect was hurt and he felt disappointed over the incident at Porbandar. Then he was offered an appointment to represent an Indian firm in South Africa Republic to handle its court case pending there. This was a march towards the path of his destiny.

Gandhi spent 21 years in South Africa. The society was plurist and divided into classes there. These were his formative years. He was 22

when he arrived in South Africa. These were the years of his great learning. Lessons of exceptional value were learnt which later formed the basis of his struggle in India. He had gone to South Africa for career as a Barrister. He was stunned to see the intolerable conditions of Indians living there. He was named as a 'Coolie barrister' and was not allowed to wear Indian turban by a magistrate.

Indian community's fight was against the South African Government's apartheid policy. Satyagraha, a non-violent protest against injustice, as the hub of the matter, was a very very old phenomenon. But *Gandhi modified it and created a new class of thinking*. Besides satyagraha, Gandhi stressed the need of ethical values in politics. The Gandhian effect was visible as a unique kind of radiance which even the hard headed cynics could not lightly dismiss.

His fight against apartheid, exploitation of Indians and injustice in South Africa convinced him to stay in South Africa and work for the fellow Indians. The turban incident in the local magistrate's court\(^ {14}\) and Pietermaritzburg train incident where he was forcibly removed from first class\(^ {15}\) further steeled his resolve to fight for the unprivileged Indians in South Africa at all cost. Many years later, in India, Dr. John R. Matt, a Christian missionary, asked Gandhi, "What have been the most creative experiences in your life?" In reply, Gandhi told the story of the might in the Maritzburg Station.\(^ {16}\)


Gandhi has described the attitude of the colonists towards Indians thus, "The man in the street hates him, curses him, spite upon him.................. The tram-cars are not for Indians. The railway officials treat the Indians as beasts.................. the hotels shut their doors against them".

Gandhi was in South Africa for purely professional reasons and could easily have returned to India. But these indignities forced him to consider his position more deeply. "I began to think of my duties," he later wrote. "Should I fight for my rights or go back to India, or should I go on to Pretoria without minding the insults, and return to India after finishing the case? It was to 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. Redress for wrongs I should seek only to the extent that would be necessary for the removal of the colour prejudice."

The journey from Durbon to Pretoria was decisive for Gandhi, it was to be the first stage of a spiritual adventure. The mental pain he suffered did have more than little effect on him. It was his share of the total of helpless Indians in South Africa. The novelty was not in what he had suffered but in his reaction. He took up the cause of the helpless Indians including the indentured labour and soon became a recognised exponent of their legitimate grievances.

In 1893, a responsible Government came into existence in Natal. By that time, a period of thirty three years had elapsed since

indentured Indians started arriving in Natal. All the white residents were unanimous over four points regarding Indian question. (1) No Indian labour should be allowed to remain in Natal after completing his contract. (2) Indians should not be given the voting right. (3) Immigration of free Indians to be stopped and (4) No licence should be given to Indians to do business in Natal. There was every possibility of achieving these goals since the British government had lost some control over the colonial government.

To achieve these objectives, first attempt was made by a Natal Delegation which came to India in 1894 in Calcutta and suggested termination of all indentures. This attempt failed but the delegation was successful in getting the approval of Government of India for levying a three-pound tax annually on all formerly indentured Indians who failed to return to India on termination of their contracts. The objective was to induce Indians to leave Natal which objective was never attained. The tax, though, became an intolerable burden for a family earning 12 to 16 pounds a year because fee was imposed on adult males, female, dependents above 13 years age and boys above 16 years.

The Natal Government's and the white residents' attitude was becoming more and more hostile towards the natives as well as towards nonwhites. Just at that time Gandhi was in Durban and was also subjected to humiliations in the hands of whites. He wrote a letter to the 'Natal Advertiser' objecting to an editorial in which Indian traders were quoted as unethical, semi-barbarous and undesirable element in the colony. Ten days after, Gandhi again wrote to the 'Natal Advertiser' on the issue of Indian

franchise in which he pleaded that Indians were sufficiently civilised to vote. 20

Then he submitted petitions to the assembly and exchanged letters with Natal Government officials. On June 28, 1893 a petition was filed by Indians of Natal under the leadership of Gandhi for Indian franchise mentioning the ancient tradition of panchayats. Gandhi also wrote to the prime minister of Natal about this issue. 21 Several petitions, one after the other, were sent by him to the Governor and the Legislative Council and finally to Lord Ripon, the secretary of state for colonies under signatures of some 10,000 Indians 22 He also wrote a letter to Dadabhai Naoroji, a Member of British Parliament and was able to gain his favour on the cause of South Africa's Indians. 23

Gandhi then founded the 'Natal Indian Congress' and was made its secretary. This was the first political organisation with a definite aim of bringing pressure of public opinion from all sides on white-hall. It was established on August 22, 1894. The other issues before the Natal Indian Congress were boosting of moral of Indians; their social and political uplift, removing their hardships and sufferings and helping the poor among them. The 'Natal Indian Congress' also had the task of promoting good relations between Indians and Europeans living in the colony and to feed information to masses in India about the conditions of Indians in South Africa. Soon

23. Nanda, B.R., Mahatma Gandhi, Delhi, 1958, p.44.
the membership of the 'Natal Indian Congress' rose to 228, most of whom were well-to-do persons (85% merchants and 12% white-collar occupations). The formation of the Natal Indian Congress was the outcome of the extra-ordinary organizing ability of Gandhi. His dealing with the seasoned businessmen was praise-worthy. His devotion to duty was appreciated by all. On account of his modest behaviour and straightforwardness, nobody could misunderstand him. He was very particular about keeping the account of funds collected for the congress. He accounted for every penny and spent money with maximum care. 

On June 5, 1896 Gandhi left South Africa for India to inform the people about the condition of Indians in South Africa. The Natal Indian Congress had appointed him as their official representative in India. After reaching Calcutta, he boarded a train for Bombay. Due to a mishappening he had to break his journey at Allahabad. He utilised this period by meeting the editor of 'Pioneer' and was able to convince him to give coverage to the problems of Indians in South Africa. Gandhi's stay in India was full of activities. He addressed many meetings and wrote many articles. He published a pamphlet 'The Grievances of the British Indians in South Africa', an appeal to the Indian people which was named as 'Green Pamphlet' on account of its green colour. In this pamphlet he described the sufferings of the Indians in Natal, Cape colony the Orange Free State, the South African Republic (Transvaal) and Rhodesia and disclosed the abuses to which they were subjected to and nicknamed as 'Ranysamy' 'Mr. Samy' (deformed from Swami) or 'Mr. Coolie'. He explained how Indians were damned, spat upon, pushed off from trains, railway compartments and

hotels. He gave details of the inequities of the pass system, three pound tax and the restraints on Indians wishing to acquire property in Zululand.\textsuperscript{25} The 'Pioneer' was the first to give an editorial comment on it and the 'Times of India' demanded a public enquiry.

The Green pamphlet was followed by an independent and entirely factual 'Note'. This 'Note' contains a lucid account of the position of Indians in each state of South Africa.\textsuperscript{26}

Gandhi supported his movement of educating public opinion in India through printed word and by personal appearance on the platform.

After distribution of pamphlet, he visited Bombay where he met Badruddin Tyabji, Mahadeva Govinda Ranade and Sir Pherozeshah Mehta. The later showed a keen interest in the matter and arranged a public meeting for Gandhi to address it. Though Gandhi could not speak in the meeting himself due to his nervousness, his written speech was read out in which he gave an account of the humiliations, atrocities and indignities which the Indians were facing in South Africa. He explained how the tide of opposition from the European colonists and the local governments had been rising against them and how their political degradation and economic ruin were the result of the Anti-Asiatic laws enacted by the South African Legislatures. The Indians were, he warned, "hemmed in from all sides" and he appealed to the people of India and the Indian and Imperial governments for the protection of their interests\textsuperscript{27} The audience were very much impressed.

\textsuperscript{27} Address in Bombay, \textit{Collected Works in Mahatma Gandhi}, Vol. II, pp. 94-121.
At Poona, he met Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Gopal Krishna Gokhle. He was very much impressed by both. From Poona he went to Madras, the Tamil speaking region of the South which had contributed the largest share of Indian immigrants to Natal. There he held a public meeting with great success. On demand from the public, he got the pamphlet reprinted for distribution among the people of Madras.

After a fortnight in South, he moved to Calcutta, where he contacted editors of 'The Statesman' and 'The Englishman'. He was specially successful in mobilizing help from them.

He visited Pune again before his departure to South Africa. At Pune he addressed a public meeting and met Gopal Krishna Gokhle. He returned to South Africa sailing aboard the 'Courtland' along with his family. His ship anchored in Durban on December 18, 1896.

Along with 'Courtland' the steamship on which Gandhi had sailed, another vessel 'Naderi' with 400 Indians on board arrived at Durban at the same time. Both the vessels were stopped at the outer anchorage on the pretext that these had sailed from Bombay which was infected with plague. A mild form of plague was no doubt there in some parts of Bombay but the health authorities had given them a clean chit. Inspite of this both the ships were quarantined by the port's health officer. Even after expiry of quarantine, ships were not allowed inside the harbour. In fact the Government of Natal purposely delayed the entry of ships because public opinion on the Indian question was at the flash point.

On the other hand people on shore were agitating against the landing of Indians. They had heard that most of the passengers from India

were skilled workers which poised a threat to the colonial artisans. Quite a big hostile crowd gathered at the shore which urged the Indians to return to their homes and threatened to kill Gandhi in case he landed. The white colonists were especially angry with Gandhi for his speeches in India disclosing their misbehaviour towards Indians in Natal and the contents of the Green Pamphlet. Gandhi in an interview with the representative of ‘Natal Advertiser’ made it clear that there were only 600 passengers on the two ships and not 800 as thought to be by the Durban citizens and that 200 were to disembark at Durban out of which only 100 were new immigrants. 29

At the time when both the ships were entering the harbour a local butcher, Harry Sparks, captain of the Natal Mounted Rifles of the Volunteer Force gave a call to citizens of Durban for holding a meeting on January 4, 1897 and to arrange a protest march against landing of Asiatics 30

On the appointed day there was a large gathering in the Durban Town Hall and a resolution was passed in the meeting requesting the Government to send back the Indians at Government expense and pledged to help the Government in this work 31 When the Government showed its inability to do so, another meeting was held in which a Durban solicitor and a captain in the Durban Light Infantry declared that if the Government did nothing Durban would do it herself by going to the harbour. 32

31. Ibid., p. 173.
32. Ibid., p. 174.
Another purpose of the meeting was to intimate their wish to call a special session of parliament to extend quarantine. On January 13, 1897, the quarantine was set aside. A crowd marched towards the point to check the disembarkation. At the harbour Harry Escombe, Natal's Attorney General and minister of defence addressed the crowd and implored in the name of queen to disperse. The mob demanded to punish Gandhi by putting tar and feathers on him but Escombe's speech finally had the desired effect and crowd dispersed.

While most of the Indians disembarked peacefully and safely, Gandhi, whom the whites hated most, was not spared. As he landed and was passing through the West Street of Durban a mob surrounded him and man-handled him. He was saved from severe injury by the intervention of wife of Durban Police Chief. Later when Natal Government was asked to prosecute the culprits by the Secretary of State, Gandhi did not press charges and said that they had behaved in that manner due to the misunderstanding on their part as to what he (Gandhi) had done in India regarding Asiatic question.

The Indian Government was concerned about indentured Indians and as such the Natal authorities tried to avoid any dispute which could stop the supply of Indian labour. The Arabs, on the other hand, had free choice of coming to Natal and were not governed by laws for indentured Indians.

34. Ibid., pp. 207-208.
35. Ibid., p.209
So the main issue before the colonial government was to check the entry of free-Indians into Natal. The first act, which was Act 14 of 1897, was passed by the Natal Government imposing restrictions on immigration such as possession of property and knowledge of European language. Since the act could not be called racial, the British Government allowed it but it was administered in such a way that the Europeans were considered to be eligible while Indians were not.\(^{37}\)

Another more harmful act than those of immigration and franchise was passed and came to be known as Natal Act 18 of 1897 in which law relating to licenses to wholesellers and retailers was amended and made all applicants for trading licenses and their renewal subject to checking by municipal licensing officers appointed by the corporations. Municipalities of Natal wanted to do away with merchants selling goods at lower prices than Europeans or those who employed Europeans in their establishments. Appeals against the municipal licensing officers were to be heard by a board constituted of municipal officials and not in courts.\(^{38}\)

The Indian Government did not oppose the new licensing act on the pretext that their main problem was the indentured Indians and free Indians already established in Natal. The act was utilized by the municipalities to get rid of all Asiatic Traders. The appeals against licensing officers were never taken seriously by the boards and dismissed even when supported by evidences.

At this juncture, the Indians in Natal had the only ray of hope in Gandhi who had now engaged himself actively in their affairs. Gandhi was


\(^{38}\) Ibid., pp. 131-138.
convinced that Natal Government had decided to send back all Indians to India. He wrote to Chamberlain, the secretary of state about the hardships encountered by Indians in Natal and how in an anti-Indian meeting held at Pietermeritzburg, Indians were named as 'black vermin' and were accused of breeding like rabbits.\(^\text{39}\)

On July 2, 1897, Gandhi again submitted a memorial to Chamberlain on behalf of Indian Community in Natal protesting the quarantine immigration restrictions and licensing bills. Regarding Immigration Restriction Act he wrote that objective of this act was to deal with Asiatics and not Europeans.\(^\text{40}\) The Licensing Act was referred to by him as the one which was meant to prevent those who competed with Europeans and was against the right of the subjects interfering the course of law.\(^\text{41}\) He also objected to the act formulated to protect uncovenanted Indians from arrest as in reality it provided the police a license to arrest Indians without any risk of being punished.\(^\text{42}\)

On December 31, 1898 Gandhi and several other Indians, mostly Muslims wrote in strong language a petition highlighting the misuse of licensing act to the Secretary of State in which they reminded him of the Indian soldiers who were fighting for the British and of the Indian labourers who were helping them to open new fields for colonization. Then they questioned him if it was fair on their part to deprive an opportunity to the Indians to make a living.\(^\text{43}\) Gandhi mentioned that only those were

\(^{40}\) Petition to Chamberlain, Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, pp. 327-328.
\(^{41}\) Ibid., p. 334.
\(^{42}\) Ibid., p. 337.
\(^{43}\) Petition to Chamberlain, Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol. III, p. 27.
appointed as licensing officers who were strictly anti-Indian and cited the example of Somnath Maharaj of Durban who was denied the license inspite of the fact that he was fully justified for it and in whose case the Natal Supreme Court commented that decision of Town Council was disgraceful.  

The various articles and letters written by Gandhi impressed Lord Curzon, the then Viceroy of India, so much that he wrote to Lord George Hamilton at the India Office, London about the misuse of Immigration Restriction Act in Natal and requested him to preserve the vested interests of Indians in Natal.

In reality it was on account of Gandhi that the Natal Legislation was continuously kept under scrutiny by liberals and humanitarians in Britain otherwise the fate of Indians would have been worse.

Though Gandhi remained in Natal in his early years of stay in South Africa, his activities were not confined to Natal only. He had involved himself to problems of Indians in Cape Colony, Afrikaner Republics of Orange Free State and Transvaal.

In 1892, a franchise and ballot act was passed by the Cape legislator according to which an eligible voter must be able to write his name, address and occupation in English. Proper condition for franchise was also raised from 25 to 72 pounds. The secretary of state Lord Ripon had to give his consent to this bill inspite of protests from coloured residents because he could not find any discriminatory element in it.

Though there were few Indians in Orange Free State in 1890, yet the government there passed legislation prohibiting Indians from owning land or carrying on trade within the republic.

In Transvaal, the situation was more complicated. The law there clearly discriminated between white and coloured persons. The coloured persons (which included Indians) were to be treated and governed differently under special laws. Then there was law 3 which required the Indians to reside and trade in special locations separated from the municipality. On July 21, 1899 Gandhi addressed a letter to the British Agent in Pretoria requesting him to remove only those Indians to new locations who lived in unsanitary circumstances and not those who possessed handsome unliquidated assets to avoid unwarranted financial burden on them. On the other side the Indians violated even the non-controversial sections of law 3 with impunity and frequently acquired property through the medium of white trustees. The difference between the British Government and independent Transvaal on Indian question continued. The negotiations came to halt on eruption of Anglo-Boer War.45

When the Anglo-Boer war started, the Indian question in Natal and in other republics was held in back-ground. Major problem now was the Indian refugees coming into Natal from the South African Republic. The colonial government, however, relaxed its strict immigration restrictions to admit them in the colony. Gandhi and the Indians there, saw a chance to show their faithfulness and loyalty to Britishers. So Gandhi formed an ambulance corps with 800 free Indians and 300 indentured Indians to serve in war under Natal Government. The corps did a remarkable job of carrying the wounded under heavy fire. General Sir William Olipherts as well as the press appreciated the services rendered by the corps46 Sir

John Robinson, the Prime Minister of Natal thanked Gandhi for organising such a help.

In addition to the war time services Gandhi rendered at that time, he got the opportunity to come in close contact with the indentured Indians which provided him to understand their problems all the more. And against one call of Gandhi so many Indians had joined the ambulance corps willingly is an ample proof of his able leadership.

Yet the Government did not change its attitude towards Indian question. It wanted to solve it in their own favour. It was long time before Gandhi was convinced that show of loyalty to Britishers was in no way fruitful. Inspite of the fact that Gandhi and the Indians helped the Britishers, there was no improvement in the condition of Indians in Natal. As the Boer war was over, the Indians who had fled, started coming back to Transvaal. They had expected a change in the behaviour of British masters but they found them no better than their Boer predecessors. Their condition became worse than before, as the new rulers began to implement the same republican legislation with great enthusiasm.

Gandhi had so far never thought of settling permanently in South Africa. The period of eight years stay in South Africa and the activities in which he remained engaged, had transformed him into a public man. His mind had accepted the public work as his real occupation. During his visit to India in 1896, he had met important national leaders and had seen a wider political field. Gandhi in his autobiography remarked that after Anglo-Boer war he felt that his work was no longer in South Africa but in

India. This was a sort of frustration that he could do no more in South Africa. He decided to play a part in India's public life. Apart from this, his friends and relatives in India were pressing him to come back. Future of his children also was an important issue who had already suffered a loss as far as their education was concerned. Bearing in mind all these aspects, he decided to return to India in 1901. On the request of Indians in South Africa he, however, promised to come back to South Africa whenever the community should need him. He along with his family set sail from Port Natal for India on October 20, 1901.

Once in India, he proceeded to Calcutta to attend the Annual Session of Indian National Congress with the aim of presenting the case of Indian Community in South Africa and he succeeded in his aim. From Calcutta, he decided to travel in third class compartment on his way to Rajkot to acquaint himself of the prevailing conditions in the country. Gopal Krishna Gokhle appreciated this and was present at the railway station to see him off. He said he would not have come if Gandhi had chosen to go by first class. Gandhi started practising law at Rajkot but after sometime on Gopal Krishna Gokhle's proposal he shifted to Bombay to practise at Bar and side by side help Gopal Krishna Gokhle in public work.

One year had elapsed since Gandhi left South Africa but he remained in touch with the problems of Indians there through his associates at Durban. Gandhi came to know from them that the Natal Government had issued a regulation debarring such persons for recruitment in Government service who were found not eligible for parliamentary franchise. 49

Gandhi received another disturbing news from Durban that according to a proposed amendment to the Indian Immigration Act, the

children of indentured immigrants on attaining maturity would either have to return to India. or accept indenture in case they stay or take out a license on payment of 3 pounds annual fee. Gandhi with the help of press and Gopal Krishna Gokhle. requested East India Association in London for help and arranged a memorial to be sent from the Bombay Presidency Association to the Secretary of State for India. He had not forgotten the pledge to return to South Africa if required by the Indians there. At that time he got the news that Joseph Chamberlain had planned to visit South African colonies and also got the call from Indians to return to South Africa to help them. In reply to the call he set sail for Natal in the third week of November, 1902.50

Gandhi reached Durban in time to prepare a petition on behalf of Indians living in Natal. Gandhi headed the delegation of 16 persons who met Chamberlain on December 28, 1902. Chamberlain clearly told that nothing could be done as the colony had a responsible Government. He advised the Indians to bear with the Europeans if they wanted to live among them. Gandhi was very much disappointed. Gandhi then went to Pretoria and drafted the memorandum to be presented to Chamberlain but the Department of Asian Affairs did not allow him to represent Transvaal Indians as he was not a domiciled Indian there. Gandhi could do nothing.51

At this stage, Gandhi saw that he had a lot of work to do in South Africa and hence he decided to stay there for some more years. So he moved to Johannesburg in Transvaal in February, 1903. The newspaper 'Indian Opinion' started by Gandhi in Durban was now shifted for publication to

51 Copley, Antony, op.cit., p. 23.
Phoenix Estate Johannesburg and became the voice of Indians in South Africa.  

When Gandhi assumed responsibility for conducting 'Indian Opinion' a weekly, he said that though he was not the editor, he "had to bear the burnt of the work, having for most of the time to be practically in charge of the journal." He added "I poured out my soul in its columns, and expounded the principles and practice of Satyagraha as I understood it. During ten years, i.e. until 1914, excepting the intervals of my enforced rest in prison, there was hardly an issue of 'Indian Opinion' without an article from me. I cannot recall a word in those articles which was set down without thought or deliberation, or a word of conscious exaggeration or anything merely to please. Indeed the journal became for me a training in self-restraint, and for friends a medium through which to keep in touch with my thoughts'. He also tells about the ideas which he set before himself as a journalist. He writes, "In the very first month of 'Indian opinion', I realised that the sole aim of journalism should be service. The newspaper press is a great power, but just as an unchained torrent of water submerge whole country-side and devastates crops, even so an uncontrolled pen serves but to destroy. If the control is from without, it proves more poisonous than want of control. It can be profitable only when exercised from within. If this line of reasoning is correct how many of the journals in the world would stand the test?"

This passage shows the ideals that Gandhi kept before himself as a journalist. These ideals are needed much more in these days than when

52. Huttenback, Robert A., op. cit., p.126.
he conducted 'Indian Opinion'. Gandhi had not only to give his time to the journal but also all the finances that he could save from his earnings.

Gandhi all along, had actively engaged himself in solving the problems of the Indians. In 1906, during the Native Rebellion in Natal, Gandhi formed a 'Stretcher bearer company' in aid of wounded. At the end of rebellion when Gandhi returned to Johannesburg, he came to know about the 'Draft Asiatic Ordinance' cancelling the permits issued to the Asiatic settlers. Everybody was now required to establish their bonafides afresh with certificates bearing full set of finger impressions. In a protest meeting addressed by Gandhi at Johannesburg it was resolved to oppose it and people were ready to go to jail rather than to submit to the insulting law54. After passing the resolution Gandhi asked them to take an oath to adopt 'Passive Resistance' (Satyagraha) path and explained to them the implications and responsibilities of Satyagraha55. With a show of great zeal the Transvaal Indians took the oath. For the first time, a new political technique was introduced.

At the same time, a deputation consisting of Gandhi and H.O. Ally, a merchant and chairman of Hamidia Islamic Society was sent to London by Transvaal Indians. The delegates met Lord Morley, the Secretary of State for India, several Members of Parliament and finally Lord Elgin, the Secretary of state for South Africa on November 8, 1906. Gandhi was able to convince Lord Elgin to some extent who proposed to Selborne, not to proceed further with the ordinance till formation of a responsible Government. Selborne strongly pleaded his side but the British

Government did not sanction the draft Asiatic ordinance and the Satyagraha weapon of Gandhi was not put to test so far.\textsuperscript{56}

Then a responsible government came into existence in Transvaal and passed the Asiatic law amendment bill (Act 2 of 1907) which was in fact same as draft Asiatic Ordinance. Then it passed an Immigrants Restriction Act (Act 15 of 1907). Meanwhile the Indians continued their agitation. Time set for registration expired and many were tried for disobedience of law. Gandhi was sentenced to two months imprisonment and 155 other Indians were also put in jail. While Gandhi was in jail, General Jan Smuts, colonial secretary of the Government extended negotiation proposing voluntary registration and outside the act and finger printing restricted to a section of Indians. With some alterations proposed by Gandhi, a settlement was reached. General Jan Smuts said that the act would be revoked after the Indians had voluntarily registered but it was not revoked. As a protest Gandhi asked the Indians to burn the certificates in a bonfire. Over 2000 certificates were burnt. This was the first round of Satyagraha.\textsuperscript{57}

In the second round of Satyagraha, Indians started going to Transvaal from Natal without certificates, Indian howkers refused to produce their licenses and merchants sold vegetables without licence. Law breakers along with Gandhi were arrested and put into jail in October, 1908. Gandhi was released in December, 1908 but again put into jail in February, 1909. In February, 1911 the South African Government announced that further entry of Indians would be restricted on grounds of education and not race. Further Jan General Smuts assured that Black Act would go. On this Gandhi suspended the Satyagraha.\textsuperscript{58}

\textsuperscript{56} Huttenback, Robert A., \textit{op.cit.}, p.168.
\textsuperscript{57} Kriplani, J.B., \textit{op.cit.}, pp. 36-37.
\textsuperscript{58} Copley, Antony, \textit{op.cit.}, p.24.
In October, 1912 Gopal Krishna Gokhle visited South Africa for six weeks. Gopal Krishna Gokhle after meeting with General Jan Smuts and other ministers told Gandhi that everything was settled, black act would be repealed and pound 3 tax would be abolished. But Smuts did not keep his promise.59

The Satyagrahis were provided with another opportunity when on March 14, 1913 Cape Supreme Court ruled in a case that only the marriages performed under Christian rites and registered in South Africa were valid. According to the decision wives of all Indians in South Africa were concubines. Now the women joined the Satyagrahis.

Gandhi chalked out a programme of these Satyagrahis women. Women from Tolstoy Farm were to enter Natal and if not arrested for violation of law would proceed to Newcastle Coal mining centre to invite the Indian Coal Miners to go on strike. Other batch of women from Phoenix were to enter Transvaal.60 The Phoenix women were arrested for breaking the law but the women from Tolstoy Farm reached Newcastle where they were welcomed and joined by the indentured labour declaring a strike. Then the Tolstoy Women were also arrested. Gandhi, too, reached, Newcastle to help the strikers and decided to march towards Transvaal. On November 10, 1913, the Government checked them in Transvaal and took them back to Newcastle in trains. They were kept inside the mines as prisoners, whipped and ill-treated. Some miners were even killed in firing.61

When news of cruelties to these miners spread, the Indian miners and plantation workers all over Natal numbering about 50,000 went on strike.

The measures adopted by the South African Government were condemned by the Viceroy of India and the press. An enquiry commission had to be appointed by General Jan Smuts. Since the commission had no Indian member in it, Gandhi objected to it and announced another march on January 1, 1914 to Durban. But this was postponed when he heard that white employees of South African railway had gone on strike. He did not want to take advantage of Government's difficulties as per his principles of Satyagraha.\(^\text{62}\)

The postponement sent a message of goodwill and several meetings between Gandhi and General Jan Smuts were held. As a result Indians' Relief Act was passed, Pound 3 Tax was abolished and marriages in Indian Way were recognised. General Jan Smuts assured that laws would be administered in a just manner. Though civil rights were not fully granted to South African Indians, yet they had been legally accepted in South Africa. This was a battle won by Satyagraha.

On July 14, 1914, Gandhi left South Africa for India. In his speech at the time of departure he said that he was going with no ill will against a single European.

It was a strange coincidence that Gandhi's first experiment in non-violent mass resistance took place in South Africa. Gandhi in fact had gone there mainly for a career as a lawyer. But he was shocked to discover the intolerable conditions under which the Indians were living in that land. Instead of running away from the problems or difficulties like a coward, Gandhi decided to fight out for their rights. He took up the cause of the indentured Indian labour and launched a non-violent and peaceful agitation against

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\(^{62}\) Kriplani, J.B., _op.cit._, p.48.
several discriminatory Acts which deprived the Indian community of its primary civic rights and virtually closed the doors for any new immigrants. But before starting the Satyagraha movement, Gandhi had exhausted all other peaceful remedies through petition, deputation, interviews and correspondence.

The years in South Africa had equipped him with an entirely new methods of political struggle. His economic and Social values had also undergone a profound change, and the farm communities he had set up near Durban-Phoenix Farm in 1904 and Tolstoy Farm near Johannesburg in 1910, were symbolic of a new philosophy.

Not only the qualities of a leader but also of journalist developed in him there. In 1903 he added the press to his armoury by starting up a weekly called 'Indian Opinion'.

Gandhi became preacher of Satyagraha in South Africa. This word literally means 'holding on to truth'. Though he believed that "truth and non-violence are as old as the hills", but when he puts these old values before humanity, he gives them a new significance and new depth of meaning.

During the Transvaal civil rights campaign between 1907 and 1913, Gandhi got the chance to test out and give shape to the essential elements of his techniques of passive, non-violent resistance Satyagraha. It was however in South Africa that Gandhi applied the principle of Satyagraha to practical problems in the social and political field. There he launched the first Satyagraha to fight the organised discrimination of the whites against the Indians who had settled in South Africa. It proved to be a dynamic idea full of immense potentialities in all spheres of life. It was this new spiritual weapon which was instrumental in winning Swaraj in India. In South
Africa, Gandhi imparted a sense of strength, cohesiveness and courage to Indians settled over there. He not only whipped up their nerves and determination but gave them hope and chance to win. While fighting for the cause of indentured Indians he experimented with new weapons and a strategy. His genius lay in understanding the psychology of these Indians. The ground realities of South Africa were in no way congenial for outright success. But his efforts did prepare the ground for trust and common direction that had characterised the movement he launched against the Government. However, it must be conceded that the real unity seemed illusory, just as confrontation in concrete situation with the insidious realities of white racism made Indian power also seem a mirrage. Gandhi seems to have realised his objective condition. He found that the enemy was in effect an entire political system. The limited power of Indians in a foreign land was too obvious to Gandhi. It was this realisation which made Gandhi to decide to choose new play-field i.e. India. In India, he found specific issues to fight for, to lead campaigns involving large numbers, for numbers give visibility to the action and courage to the participants. Somewhere, deep in his heart he appears to have acknowledged that the future movement must reach those at the bottom, the hungry and the deprived, and offer them a solution to their deprivation which they themselves can see as a solution. It was this acknowledgement which brought him back to India. Here in India, he soon plunged himself in the struggle uniting all the classes against the common enemy, one of the first to whom he courted was the labour class. The broad road along which a movement could march was clear to his mind. Leaving behind crisscrossing pathways he now charted a new strategy and technique which he for the first time applied in Ahmedabad Labour Movement. The Second Chapter is devoted to this problem.