

M.K. Gandhi in South Africa: Whose Example Did He Follow & Why?

To celebrate 128 Years of Mahatma Gandhi's first visit to Durban, South Africa, School of Education & NSS, ApeejayStya University Gurgaon, Delhi-NCR in collaboration with Gandhi Information Centre, Berlin, Germany (Research & Education for Non-Violence) organized the International Webinar on May 25.

IN the turbulent times where the world is grappling with so many problems, it is imperative to strive to inculcate Gandhian philosophy in various facets of life and governance. Gandhism starts with the famous line – 'Simple living and high thinking' and its objective is to transform the individual and society.

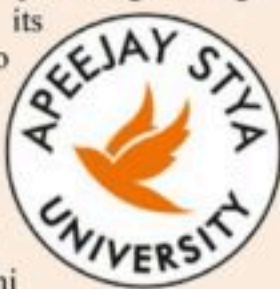
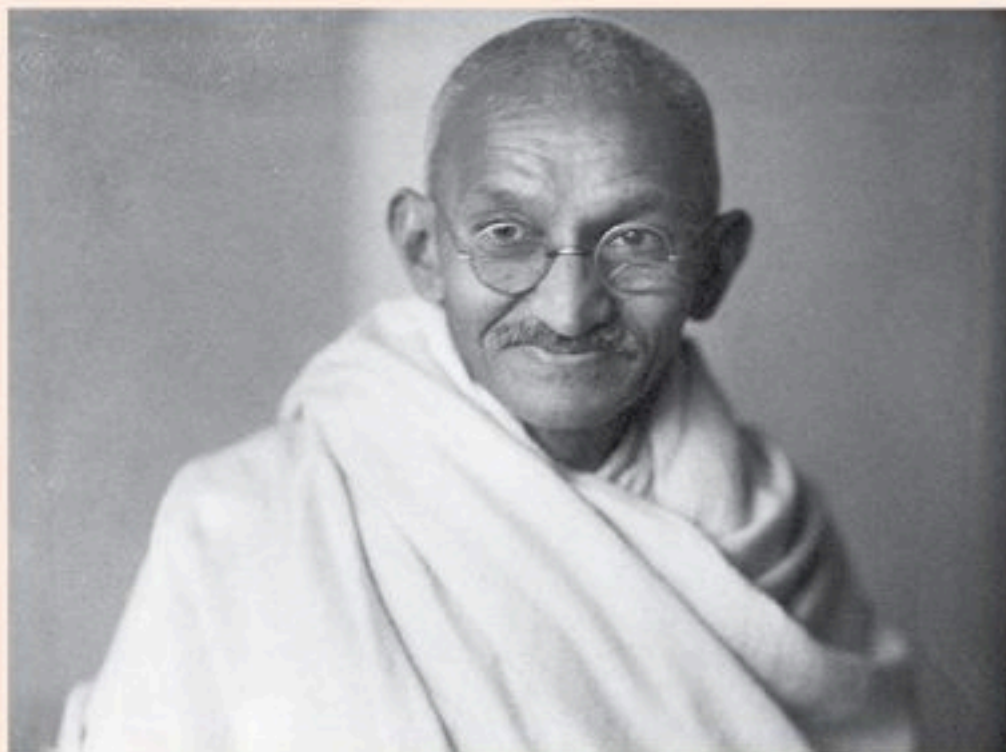
'The best part of my life' is how Gandhi described his days in South Africa twenty-five years after he had left it. It was certainly the most formative period of his career. Without the challenges, the trials, and the opportunities that his South African experience brought him, it is unlikely that his personality and politics could have been cast in the unique mould which made him one of the most charismatic and creative leaders of the twentieth century.

The webinar was resourced by Dr. Christian Bartlof, President, Gandhi Information Centre, Berlin. He is a renowned Gandhian philosopher. Christian Bartlof has extensively researched Mahatma Gandhi's correspondences with contemporaries and published several books (biographies, monographies) and articles (Banarsidass, Palgrave, Sage, Suhrkamp) on mainly Tolstoy, Gandhi and Nonviolent Resistance.

WHO WAS GANDHI INSPIRED BY?

Many people were influenced by Gandhi and he inspired them. The tradition of non-violence behaviour is precious to me, so I question myself who Gandhi was inspired by, said Dr. Christian Bartlof.

Mahatma Gandhi was inspired by people as well as books. He was greatly influenced by many western



The biography of Gandhi's Satyagraha in South Africa is a masterpiece. It should be given a Nobel prize for literature.

DR. CHRISTIAN BARTLOF,
PRESIDENT, GANDHI
INFORMATION CENTRE,
BERLIN

thinkers and writers in formulating his theories and non-violent mode of struggle, said Dr. Christian Bartlof while discussing Gandhi's inspiration.

Mentioning the names of Henry David Thoreau, John Ruskin, Leo Tolstoy, Socrates, Florence Nightingale, Elizabeth Fry, Dr. Christian Bartlof said, "Each one of them, their stories, their thinking and ideologies has influenced Gandhi to formulate



his Satyagraha principles."

WORDS OF GANDHI

Reading the statement of Gandhi, he said, "Truth is God or God is nothing but truth. We come across this idea in every religion. It is the divine Lord, he who serves the truth that God will never suffer defeat. Sometimes matters of truth appear to be a failure, but in reality they are not defeated."

SEVEN SOCIAL SINS ACCORDING TO GANDHI

- Politics without Principles
- Wealth without work
- Pleasure without conscience
- Knowledge without character
- Commerce without morality
- Science without humanity
- Worship without sacrifice.

TOLSTOY AS AN EARLY INFLUENCE OF GANDHI

In the early days when Gandhi was a student, he read Tolstoy.

Gandhi and Tolstoy have been the two greatest exponents of non-violence as a way of life and means of resistance. According to Gandhi, Tolstoy's *The Kingdom of God is Within You* (1893) "left an abiding impression" on him and the Russian's idea of "love as law of life" and care for the entire mankind greatly moved him. Gandhi named his second ashram in South Africa after Tolstoy where he experimented with methods of Satyagraha. He praised that Tolstoy practiced what he talked, Dr. Christian Bartlof said.

WHAT INSPIRED ME TO STUDY GANDHI?

"My grandparents have seen the Second World War and since my childhood, I got traumatized while listening to the noise of sirens. I had a fear of being killed by war. While growing up, I wanted to find out the alternative to war. I was inspired by Gandhi and I studied him," he said.

- Written by Chayyanika Nigam