

Albert Einstein and Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi

Facsimiles, Sources, Transcripts

Gandhi Information Center, Berlin
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Einstein's first letter to Gandhi

Translation (English):

"Respected Mr. Gandhi !

I use the presence of your friend in our home to send you these lines. You have shown through your works, that it is possible to succeed without violence even with those who have not discarded the method of violence. We may hope that your example will spread beyond the borders of your country, and will help to establish an international authority, respected by all, that will take decisions and replace war conflicts.

With sincere admiration,

Yours

A. Einstein.

I hope that I will be able to meet you face to face some day."¹

Transcript (German):

„Caputh bei Potsdam, den 27. September 1931

Verehrter Herr Gandhi !

Ich benutze die Anwesenheit Ihres Freundes in unserem Hause, um Ihnen diese Zeilen zu senden. Sie haben durch Ihr Wirken gezeigt, dass man ohne Gewalt Grosses selbst bei solchen durchsetzen kann, welche selbst auf die Methode der Gewalt keineswegs verzichtet haben. Wir dürfen hoffen, dass Ihr Beispiel über die Grenzen Ihres Landes hinaus wirken und dazu beitragen wird, dass an die Stelle kriegerischer Konflikte Entscheidungen einer internationalen Instanz treten, deren Durchführung von allen garantiert wird.

Mit den Ausdruck aufrichtiger Bewunderung

Ihr

A. Einstein.

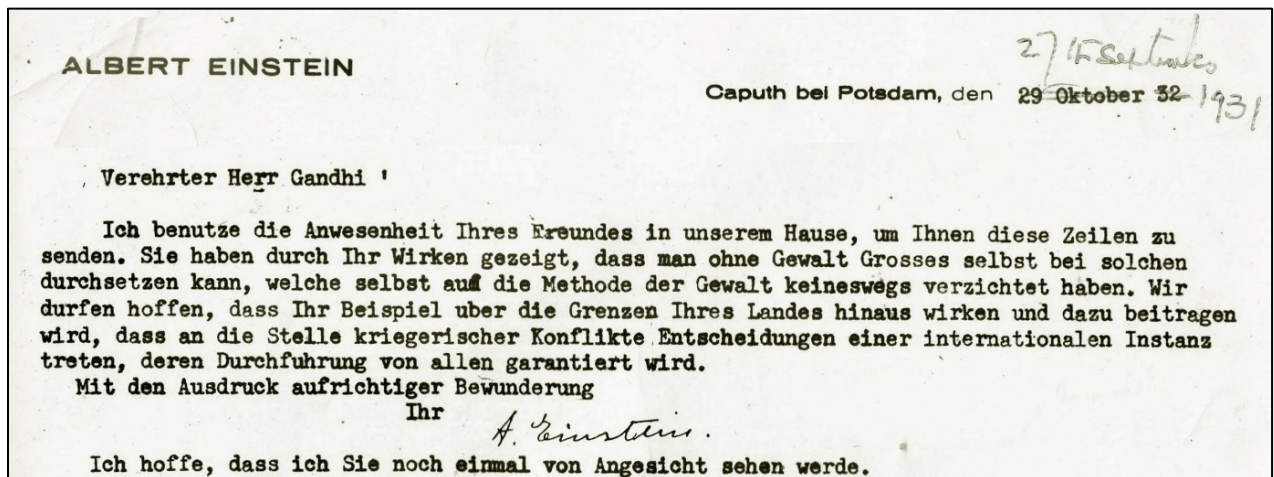
Ich hoffe, dass ich Sie noch einmal von Angesicht sehen werde."²

¹ Source: <https://flashbak.com/albert-einsteins-letter-gandhi-eternal-law-love-387683/>

² „Brief Albert Einsteins an Mahatma Gandhi, im Privatbesitz und mit freundlicher Genehmigung von Saraswati Albano-Müller (geborene Sundaram), der Tochter des von Einstein in dem Brief erwähnten Freundes.“ (quoted in: Ram Adhar Mall/Klaudius Gansczyk: „Interkulturellen Humanismus als Hoffnung für das 21. Jahrhundert.“ <https://stiftung-erdball-fans.de/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/0509011MallGansczykEuropaEndversionabgesprochen.pdf>. Access: 12 December 2023). On Saraswati Albano-Müller see: https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saraswati_Alban-M%C3%BCller.

„it was my father sundaram who visited prof.einstein with wilfrid israel in 1931,as a young emmisary of mahatma gandhi- after talking to einstein for two hours,got this letter to take with him to London.iam delighted about this article.saraswati in Germany“ <https://www.kollermedia.at/2009/10/03/einsteins-brief-an-gandhi/> Access: 12 December 2023. On Wilfred Israel (1889-1943) see: https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wilfrid_Israel and https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wilfrid_Israel. On Vellalore Annaswamy Sundaram (1896-1967) see: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/V._A._Sundaram.

Facsimile³:



³ „Transkript des Briefes von Einstein an Gandhi, überreicht am 27.9.1931 in Caputh an den Vater der Inderin Saraswati Albano-Müller (geb. Sundaram), die in ihrer Kindheit Gandhi in ihrem Elternhaus in Indien oft erlebt hat und in ihrem Haus in Schwelm/NRW Philosophische Gastmahle im Geiste von Gandhis interkulturellen Humanismus veranstaltete.“
<https://stiftung-erdball-fans.de/zukunftsfaehige-aufeinander-aufbauende-visionen-fuer-eine-nachhaltige-gerechte-und-friedliche-weltordnung/>

Gandhi's response

Transcript (English):

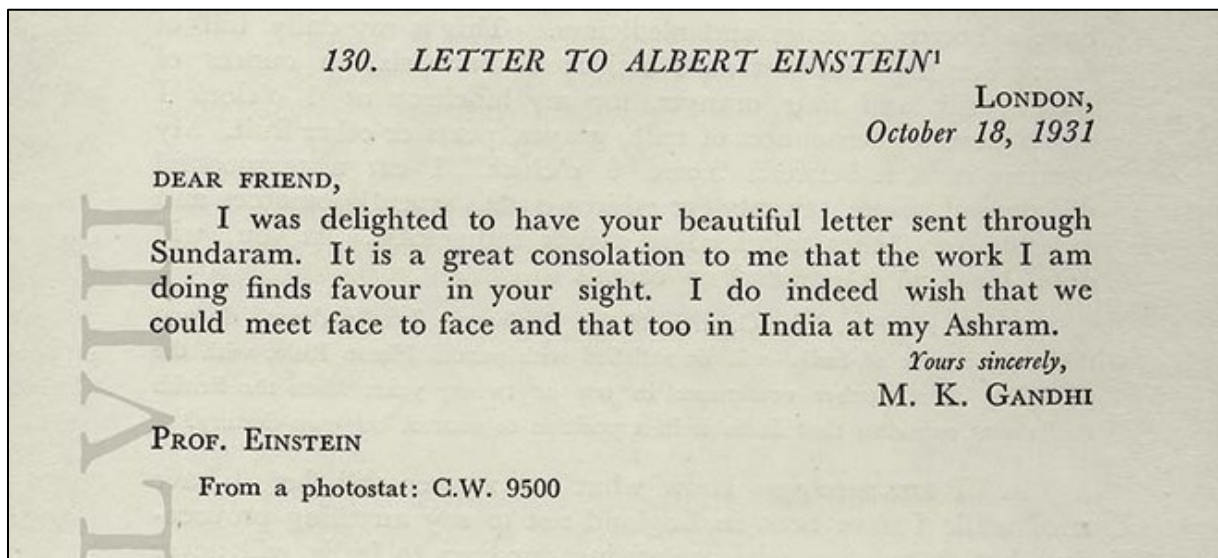
“London,
October 18, 1931

DEAR FRIEND,

I was delighted to have your beautiful letter sent through Sundaram. It is a great consolation to me that the work I am doing finds favour in your sight. I do indeed wish that we could meet face to face and that too in India at my Ashram.

Yours sincerely,
M. K. GANDHI”

Facsimile of the transcript: *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. 48, p. 182:



Translation (German):

„Lieber Freund,
ihr schöner Brief (durch Sundaram überbracht) hat mich zutiefst erfreut. Es ist mir ein großer
Trost, dass meine Arbeit in Ihren Augen Anerkennung findet. Es ist in der Tat auch mein
Wunsch, dass wir uns einmal von Angesicht zu Angesicht treffen können, gerne in Indien in
meinem Ashram.
M. K. GANDHI“


Einstein on Gandhi, 1939

Facsimile⁴

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$$\int (-nx^{n-1} + 2\alpha x^{\frac{n-1}{2}}) \varphi dx = 0$$

Gleichung lösen, 

$$2 \int (-nx^{n-1} + 2\alpha x^{\frac{n-1}{2}}) dx = 0$$

$$2 \left[-\frac{n}{2} x^{\frac{n-1}{2}} + \frac{2\alpha}{\frac{n-1}{2}} x^{\frac{n-1}{2}} \right]_{-b}^{+b} = 0$$

$$n=1 \quad \left| -\frac{1}{2} + \frac{2\alpha}{\frac{1-1}{2}} \right|_{-b}^{+b} = 0$$

$$b = \frac{\sqrt{2\alpha}}{2\alpha}$$

$$(A + Br + Cr^2 + Dr^3) e^{-r} = f$$

$$f' = [B + 2Cr + 3Dr^2 - A - Br - Cr^2] e^{-r} \quad B = A$$

$$[R(2C-B)r + (3D-C)r^2] e^{-r}$$

$$f'' = (\varphi'' - 2\varphi' + \varphi) e^{-r} = [2(3D-C) - 2(2C-B)] e^{-r}$$

$$6D - 5C + 2B = 0$$

$$\text{Nun } D=0 \quad C = \frac{2}{5}A$$

$$f' = \left[\left(\frac{4}{5} - 1 \right) r \right] e^{-r} \quad f(0) = -\frac{1}{5}A \quad D=0 \text{ willkürlich gesetzt.}$$

A. Einstein Archiv
28-458

Mahatma Gandhi's Lebenswerk steht in der politischen Geschichte einzig da. Er hat ein ganz neues und humanes Mittel für den Befreiungskampf eines gedrückten Volkes eronnen und mit größter Energie und Hingabe durchgeführt. Der moralische Einfluss, den er auf die bewusst denkenden Menschen der jungen zivilisierten Welt ausgeübt hat, dürfte ein weit nachhaltigerer sein, als es in unserer Zeit mit ihrer Überwältigung brutaler Gewaltmittel den Menschen haben mag. Denn ~~freudig~~ ^{besonders} wirkt das Werk solcher Staatsmänner eine Wirkung, die durch ihr Beispiel und erzieherischer Worte die moralischen Kräfte ihres Volkes wecken und festigen.

Nur dürfen alle glücklich und dankbar sein, dass uns das Schicksal einen so leuchtenden ^{und} Zeitgenossen geschenkt hat, ein Vorbild für die kommenden Generationen.

A. Einstein Archiv
28-459

⁴ Handwritten manuscript [in German, 1939, one page], Albert Einstein Archive, Jerusalem, Israel, Archival call number: 28-459. <https://ein-web.adlibhosting.com/aea/Details/archive/110020795>.

Transcript (German):

„Mahatma Gandhi's Lebenswerk steht in der politischen Geschichte einzig da. Er hat ein ganz neues und humanes Mittel für den Befreiungskampf eines gedrückten Volkes ersonnen und mit grösster Energie und Hingabe durchgeführt. Der moralische Einfluss, den er auf die bewusst denkenden Menschen der ganzen zivilisierten Welt ausgeübt hat, dürfte ein weit nachhaltigerer sein, als es in unserer Zeit mit ihrer Überschätzung brutaler Gewaltmittel den Anschein haben mag. Denn dauernd wirkt nur das Werk solcher Staatsmänner, die durch ihr Beispiel und erzieherisches Wirken die moralischen Kräfte ihres Volkes wecken und festigen. Wir dürfen alle glücklich und dankbar sein, dass uns das Schicksal einen erleuchteten Zeitgenossen geschenkt hat, ein Vorbild für die kommenden Generationen.

Transcript (English):

“Mahatma Gandhi's life achievement stands unique in political history. He has invented a completely new and humane means for the liberation war of an oppressed country, and practised it with greatest energy and devotion. The moral influence he had on the consciously thinking human being of the entire civilized world will probably be much more lasting than it seems in our time with its overestimation of brutal violent forces. Because lasting will only be the work of such statesmen who wake up and strengthen the moral power of their people through their example and educational works. We may all be happy and grateful that destiny gifted us with such an enlightened contemporary, a role model for the generations to come.”

Published as: Albert Einstein: Gandhi's Statesmanship. In: *Mahatma Gandhi, Essays and Reflections on his Life and Work*. Presented to him on his Seventieth Birthday, October 2nd, 1939. Edited by Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1939, pp. 79-80:

BHAGAVAN DAS

then organize a strong band of (Hindu and Muslim and Christian) *volunteers*, possessing the necessary spirit of self-denial, capacity for travel and hard work, and the gift of speech, and adequate *intellectual equipment*, or readiness to newly acquire it if not already possessed—volunteers who will dedicate themselves, for a while, to the work of carrying, jointly, to every corner of India (1) the good news of the traditional Scheme of Scientific Socialism, the Scheme of Organization devised by the ancient patriarchs, not only for the Indian People, but for the whole Human Race, without distinction of caste, creed, colour, race, or sex, and (2) the further Message of all the Great Re-proclaimers of the one Universal Religion, that *all Religions are One and the same in Essentials*. The Congress Committees which exist in practically every town and district, and now in a number of States also, could easily provide all needed facilities for the work of such dedicates. They would educate public opinion, tell the people that “freedom” means freedom to exercise rights and, even more, to discharge duties, as laid down in the Scheme of Social Organization for the different vocations.

GANDHI'S STATESMANSHIP

by ALBERT EINSTEIN, D.Sc.
(The Institute of Advanced Studies, School of Mathematics, Princeton University, U.S.A.)

Gandhi is unique in political history. He has invented an entirely new and humane technique for the liberation struggle of an oppressed people and carried it out with the greatest energy and devotion. The moral influence which

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he has exercised upon thinking people through the civilized world may be far more durable than would appear likely in our present age, with its exaggeration of brute force. For the work of statesmen is permanent only in so far as they arouse and consolidate the moral forces of their peoples through their personal example and educating influence.

We are fortunate and should be grateful that fate has bestowed upon us so luminous a contemporary—a beacon to the generations to come.

GANDHIJI AS A SOCIAL SCIENTIST AND SOCIAL INVENTOR

by RICHARD B. GREGG
(South Natick, Mass., U.S.A.)

Because of his widely misunderstood attitude toward machinery, Gandhiji is regarded in the West as almost the antithesis of a scientist, but that is a mistake.

He is a social scientist because he follows social truth by the scientific method of observation, intuitional and intellectual hypothesis, and experimental test. He once told me that he considered Western scientists not very thorough because not many of them were willing to test their hypotheses on themselves. He, however, always makes the first test of an hypothesis on himself, before he asks anyone else to try. That is so, whether the hypothesis relates to a matter of diet, sanitation, spinning-wheel, caste reform, or Satyāgraha. The title he chose for his autobiography was *My Experiments with Truth*.

He is not a mere scientist: he is a great scientist, in the

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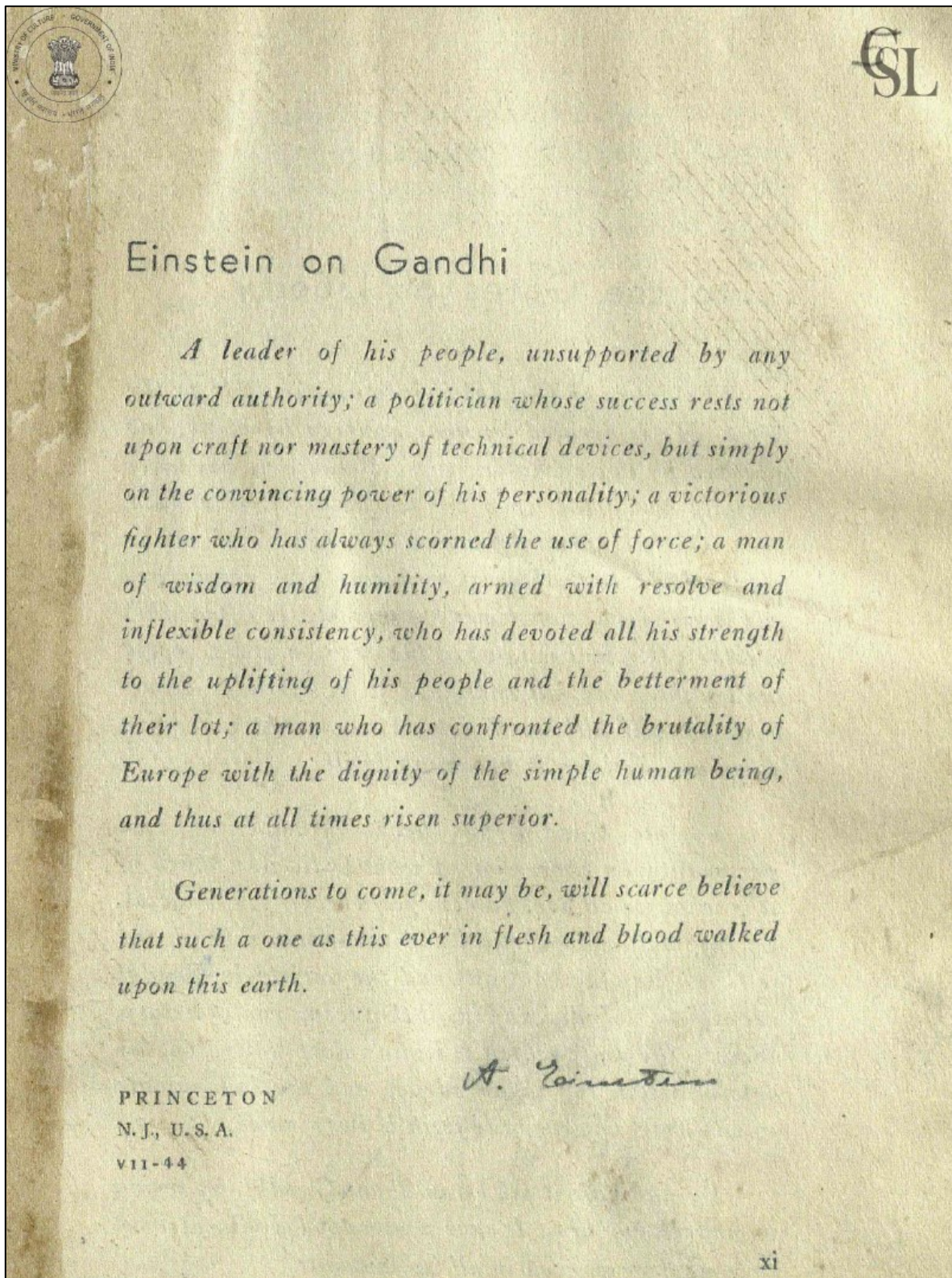
Einstein on Gandhi, first published July 1944 / republished 11 June 1953

Transcript (English):

“A leader of his people, unsupported by any outward authority: a politician whose success rests not upon craft nor the mastery of technical devices, but simply on the convincing power of his personality; a victorious fighter who has always scorned the use of force; a man of wisdom and humility, armed with resolve and inflexible consistency, who has devoted all his strength to the uplifting of his people and the betterment of their lot; a man who has confronted the brutality of Europe with the dignity of the simple human being, and thus at all times risen superior. Generations to come, it may be, will scarce believe that such a one as this ever in flesh and blood walked upon this earth.”

Published as:

- a) Einstein on Gandhi. In: *Gandhiji. His Life and Work. Published on his 75th Birthday, October 2, 1944.* Edited by D. G. Tendulkar, M. Chalapathi Rau, Mridula Sarabhai and Vithalbhai K. Jhaveri. Bombay: Karnatak Publishing Ho, 1944, p. xi.



- b) Albert Einstein: Mahatma Gandhi. In: *Out of my Later Years*. New York: Philosophical Library, 1950, p. 240.

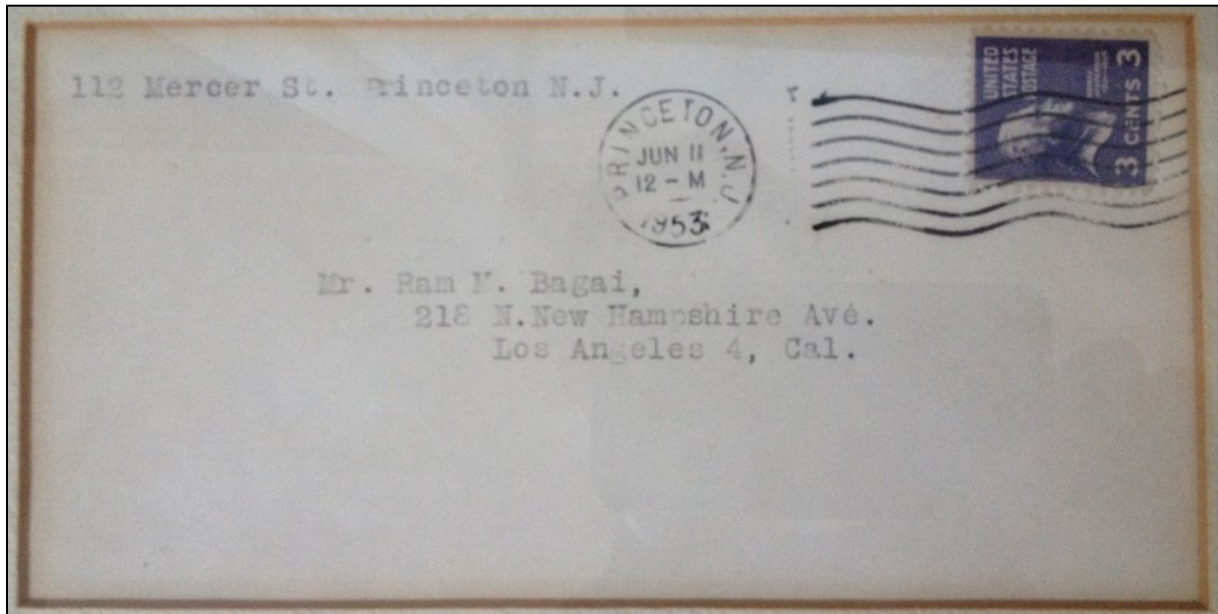
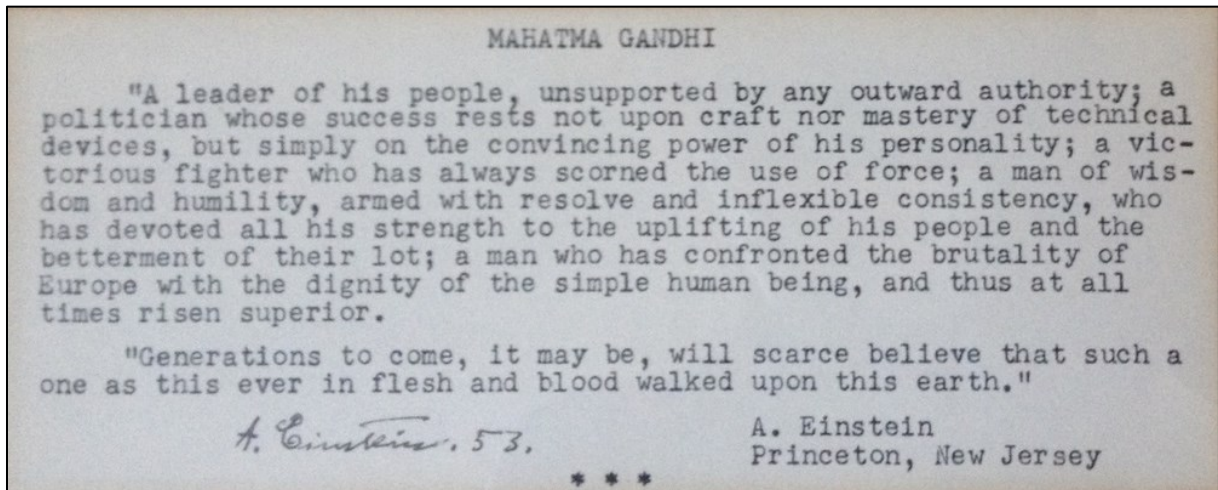
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MAHATMA GANDHI

A LEADER OF HIS PEOPLE, unsupported by any outward authority: a politician whose success rests not upon craft nor the mastery of technical devices, but simply on the convincing power of his personality; a victorious fighter who has always scorned the use of force; a man of wisdom and humility, armed with resolve and inflexible consistency, who has devoted all his strength to the uplifting of his people and the betterment of their lot; a man who has confronted the brutality of Europe with the dignity of the simple human being, and thus at all times risen superior.

Generations to come, it may be, will scarce believe that such a one as this ever in flesh and blood walked upon this earth.

Facsimile⁵:



⁵ [Einstein on Gandhi, 11 June 1953]. Einstein Quotation Regarding Mahatma Gandhi, Ram Bagai Materials, Rani Bagai. South Asian American Digital Archive (SAADA). <https://www.saada.org/item/20160921-4667>

Einstein on Gandhi, February 11, 1948

Transcript:

"On January 30, 1948, Gandhi, India's great leader for whom Einstein had long felt a deep affection, was assassinated. On February 11, 1948, Einstein issued the following statement for a memorial service in Washington:

'Everyone concerned with a better future for mankind must be deeply moved by the tragic death of Gandhi. He died a victim of his own principle, the principle of nonviolence. He died because, in a time of disorder and general unrest in his country, he refused any personal armed protection. It was his unshakable belief that the use of force is an evil in itself, to be shunned by those who strive for absolute justice.

To this faith he devoted his whole life, and with this faith in his heart and mind he led a great nation to its liberation. He demonstrated that the allegiance of men can be won, not merely by the cunning game of political fraud and trickery, but through the living example of a morally exalted way of life.

The veneration in which Gandhi has been held throughout the world rests on the recognition, for the most part unconscious, that in our age of moral decay he was the only statesman who represented that higher conception of human relations in the political sphere to which we must aspire with all our powers. We must learn the difficult lesson that the future of mankind will only be tolerable when our course, in world affairs as in all other matters, is based upon justice and law rather than the threat of naked power, as has been true so far."⁶

Einstein on Gandhi, 1948

Audio recording:

Albert Einstein: Interview with Jeff Sparks, University of Princeton, "Year of Decision: A Progress Report on the Atom (Part 2)", 01-Jan-1948,
<https://www.unmultimedia.org/avlibrary/asset/C791/C791b/>, 22:09 – 24:56.

Transcript:

"Taken on the whole, I would believe that Gandhi's views were the most enlightened of all the political men in our time. We should strive to do things in his spirit: not to use violence in fighting for our cause, but by non-participation in anything you believe is evil."⁷

⁶ *Einstein on Peace*, edited by Otto Nathan and Heinz Norden. Preface by Bertrand Russell. New York, 1960, pp. 467f.

⁷ Note that there exists a second, slightly different recording, the transcript of which reads:

"I believe that Gandhi's views were the most enlightened of all the political men in our time. We should strive to do things in his spirit: not to use violence in fighting for our cause, but by non-participation in anything you believe is evil." (Audio snippet: <https://www.nonviolent-resistance.info/exhibitions/eng/gandhi/pg41.htm>).

A third source provides the following introduction and yet another variation of the manuscript text:

"On June 18, 1950, just a week before the outbreak of the Korean War began, Einstein participated in a documentary broadcast, "Year of Decision," part of a series sponsored by the United Nations under the title "The Pursuit of Peace": [...] 'On the whole, I believe that Gandhi held the most enlightened views of all the political men in our time. We should strive to do things in his spirit: not to use violence in fighting for our cause and to refrain from taking part in anything we believe is evil.'" *Einstein on Peace*, edited by Otto Nathan and Heinz Norden. Preface by Bertrand Russell. New York, 1960, pp. 527-529.

Einstein on Gandhi, March 20, 1951

Transcript:

“Revolution without the use of violence was the method by which Gandhi brought about the liberation of India. It is my belief that the problem of bringing peace to the world on a supranational basis will be solved only by employing Gandhi's method on a large scale.”⁸

Einstein on Gandhi, September 20, 1952

Transcript:

“[Morikatsu Inagaki, an old Japanese friend who had served as Einstein's interpreter on his visit to Japan twenty-five years before] solicited from Einstein a message to the internationally attended Asian Congress for World Federation, held in Hiroshima November 3-6, 1952. [...]

Einstein replied immediately, on September 20, 1952 [...]:”

‘Gandhi, the greatest political genius of our time, indicated the path to be taken. He gave proof of what sacrifice man is capable once he has discovered the right path. His work in behalf of India's liberation is living testimony to the fact that man's will, sustained by an indomitable conviction, is more powerful than material forces that seem insurmountable.’”⁹

⁸ *Einstein on Peace*, edited by Otto Nathan and Heinz Norden. Preface by Bertrand Russell. New York, 1960, pp. 543.

⁹ *Einstein on Peace*, edited by Otto Nathan and Heinz Norden. Preface by Bertrand Russell. New York, 1960, pp. 582-584.