

SCIENCE AND CULTURE

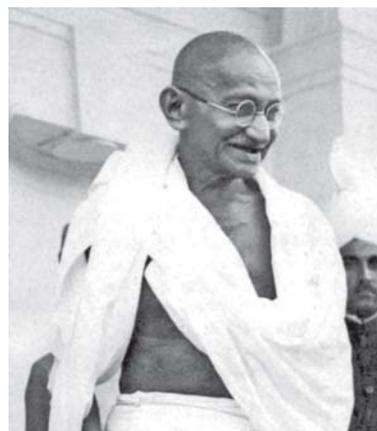
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EDITORIAL

ARCHITECT OF THE INDIAN NATION: MOHANDAS KARAMCHAND GANDHI – MISSED NOBEL PRIZE



Mahatma Gandhi (02.10.1869 to 30.01.1948) is known as the **Father of the Nation**, Civil Rights Activist in South Africa, Satyagraha (truth force) Movement and Quit India Movement. Gandhi was born in Porbandar, the western flank of India, Gujarat called the **Mahatma (great soul)** by



Rabindranath Tagore although they admired and revered each other but also differed each other greatly in ideology sharing a deep mutual respect and admiration. Gandhi was a product of the adverse and oppressing circumstances around him, basically an Indian lawyer who led his country to freedom from British colonial rule in 1947. He met Tagore after more than half their lives were over and when *each one of them was an acknowledged icon celebrated not only in India but also in the global arena*. It was a period during which India found its identity and its downtrodden multitude was aroused from a stupor of centuries into the dawn of freedom. Gandhi is an undisputed architect of this awakening. Gandhi proposed his scheme of Basic Education in a well formulated approach to education in 1937 in his newspaper “Harijan”. Gandhi is most famous for his philosophy of nonviolence that has inspired civil rights leaders around the world. Gandhiji’s birthday of 2nd October is commemorated as a national holiday in India and it is also the International Day of Nonviolence. He believed in peace.

Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose was the first person to call Mahatma Gandhi as the **“Father of the Nation”**. Later, the Parliament of Independent India officially recognized Gandhi as the Father of the Nation. Albert Einstein called Gandhi **“a role model for the generations to come”** and **“I believe that Gandhi’s views were the most enlightened of all the political men in our time”**. Rabindranath Tagore

said **“Mahatma Gandhi came and stood at the door of India’s destitute millionswho else has so unreservedly accepted the vast masses of the Indian people as his flesh and blood Truth awakened Truth”**. Five important lessons to learn from Gandhi are Non-violence; Truth and Honesty; Forgiveness; Perseverance; and Mindfulness. Gandhi said **“Live as if you were to die tomorrow. Learn as if you were to live forever”**.

Mahatma Gandhi, Architect of the Indian Nation, being the most effective Champion of World Peace was never awarded Nobel Prize. He has been recognized as the Indian National Leader having the strongest symbol of Non-Violence at the global level. Gandhi was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize on 12 occasions by the global leaders. Gandhi was nominated for the first time for Peace Nobel Prize in 1937 and later in 1938 and 1939 by Ole Colbjornsen (Labour Party), a member of the Norwegian Storting (Parliament). Gandhi’s nomination was written by leading women of the Norwegian branch of **“Friends of India”** having positive approach for the award. The **“Friends of India”** associations had been established in Europe and the USA in early 1930s having the members of a network of pro-Gandhi.

Gandhi was duly selected as one of thirteen candidates on the Norwegian Nobel Committee’s short list

in 1937 but finally not selected. Professor Jacob Worm-Muller, The Nobel Committee's adviser made very critical comments on Gandhi's nomination: (i) *"He is, undoubtedly, a good, noble and ascetic person – a prominent man who deservedly honoured and loved by the masses of India"* and (ii) *"sharp turns in his policies, which can hardly be satisfactorily explained by his followers. He is a freedom fighter and a dictator, an idealist and a nationalist. He is frequently a Christ, but then, suddenly, an ordinary politician"*. Professor Worm-Muller expressed his own doubts as to whether Gandhi's ideals were meant to be universal or primarily Indian : *"One might say that it is significant that his well-known struggle in South Africa was on behalf of the Indians only, and not of the blacks whose living conditions were even worse"*.

Gandhi was again nominated in 1947 by three Indians namely Babasaheb Gangadhar Kher (Politician and the first Chief Minister of Bombay state) along with Govind Ballabh Pant (Politician and the first Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh) and Ganesh Vasudev Mavalankar (President of the Central Legislative Assembly and the first Speaker of the Lok Sabha) by telegram from India via the Norwegian Foreign Office and the message was *"Recommend for this year Nobel Prize Mahatma Gandhi architect of the Indian nation the greatest living exponent of the moral order and the most effective champion of world peace today"*. Gandhi was one of the six names on the Nobel Committee's short listed candidates for 1947 award. The Historian Jens Arup Seip, The Nobel Committee's Adviser submitted a new report on account of Gandhi's role in Indian political history after 1937. Seip also wrote *"from 1937 to 1947, led to the event which for Gandhi and his movement was at the same time the greatest victory and the worst defeat – India's independence and India's partition"*. The report also categorically mentioned that how Gandhi acted in three different but mutually related conflicts before independence: (i) the struggle between the Indians and the British; (ii) the question of India's participation in the Second World War and finally (iii) the conflict between Hindu and Muslim Communities. Seip also reported on the ongoing separation of India and the new Muslim state Pakistan. The members of the Norwegian Nobel Committee opined that should Gandhi be selected for being a symbol of non-violence, and what political effects could be expected if the Peace Prize was awarded to the most prominent Indian leader – relations between India and Pakistan were far from developing peacefully. Considering all points two acting committee members of the Norwegian Nobel Prize namely the Christian conservative Herman Smitt Ingebretsen and the Christian liberal Christian Oftedal spoke in favour of Gandhi but

other two members namely the Labour politician Martin Tranmael was very reluctant to award the Prize to Gandhi in the midst of the Indian-Pakistani conflict, and the former Foreign Minister Birger Braadland agreed with Tranmael. The Committee Chairman Gunnar Jahn conducted the final meeting on October 30, 1947 and quoted himself as saying *"While it is true that he (Gandhi) is the greatest personality among the nominees – plenty of good things could be said about him – we should remember that he is not only an apostle for peace; he is first and foremost a patriot. Moreover, we have to bear in mind that Gandhi is not naïve. He is an excellent jurist and lawyer"*. It seems that the Committee Chairman suspected Gandhi's statement one month earlier to be a deliberate step to deter Pakistani aggression. Three of five members thus being against awarding the 1947 Prize to Gandhi.

Finally Gandhi was again nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize having six letters of nomination by the global leaders before his assassination on 30 January 1948. The nominators were (i) Emily Greene Balch (Writer, Professor and economist - Nobel Peace Prize winner in 1946), (ii) Christian Stephansen Oftedal (Norwegian politician for the Liberal Party and Member of the Norwegian Nobel Committee-1945-1948), (iii) American Friends Service Committee, (iv) 5 Professors of Philosophy at Columbia University (Herbert Schneider), (v) 6 Professors of Law at the University of Bordeaux (Maurice Duverger) and (vi) Frede Castberg (Norwegian jurist, Professor and Rector at the University of Oslo and President of the Hague Academy of International Law. This is the third time Gandhi was again shortlisted and the list only included three names. But according to the statutes of the Nobel Foundation nobody had ever been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize posthumously. The Committee adviser Seip and the Director of the Norwegian Nobel Institute, August Schou asked the Swedish prize-awarding institutions for their opinion about posthumous award to Gandhi but the answers were negative. The posthumous awards should not take place unless the laureate died after the Committee's decision had been made. Finally the Norwegian Nobel Committee on November 18, 1948 decided to make no award that year on the grounds that *"there was no suitable living candidate"*. Ultimately Mohandas being an acknowledged Icon of India missed Nobel Peace Prize.

With this write up we are paying our respectful homage and tribute to Mahatma Gandhi as the whole country is celebrating 156th birth anniversary for his brilliant personality, significant contributions and his wealth of legacy as legendary Icon. □

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