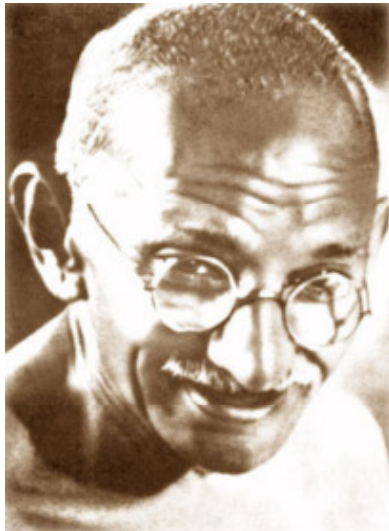


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<http://www.mahatma.org.in/pictures/pictures.jsp?link=og> (Portraits/Bild 8)

Mahatma Gandhi
and
Martin Luther King
– a non-violent fight
for freedom and
tolerance



<http://www.romacsupply.com/heritage/images/king.jpg>

Weiterverwendung nur mit dem Einverständnis des Autors

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1. Preface

"I am told that religion and politics are different spheres of life. But I would say without a moment's hesitation and yet in all modesty that those who claim this do not know what religion is." (Erikson, p.22)

This quotation given by Gandhi is for me a very significant statement concerning our present. It describes a fact that true knowledge of religion is found seldom which is the reason why deeds and thoughts of the two great and far more than just political personalities Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King are not imitated today. We have to face the extremes of fanaticism and atheism instead on whose basis the stability of peace will remain insecure. This is the more surprising as both of them already pointed out the direction that true principles in policy have to take and showed the way how inner and outer evil must be dealt with. That is why a study of their lives and thoughts which are inseparable and of timeless validity are valuable.

2. Social and political circumstances in India and in the USA

2.1. India

It was in 1818 when India became a British colony and in 1858 Queen Victoria proclaimed officially the rule of the Crown and the principle of equality for this country. In fact, however, this principle was not kept and discrimination as well as exploitation of raw materials began. In 1857, a big Indian struggle to overthrow the British rule failed and as result the British parliament took over the entire Indian Administration.

The Empire had reached its climax as a world power during the time of Gandhi's youth and reigned India by a British Viceroy. Therefore, the Indian National Congress of which Gandhi was president two times was of importance for the country's counter-balance. The most decisive fact in its fight for independence was that the oppressor was in minority and, therefore, dependent on a kind of cooperation of the more than 300 million Indian people to maintain their position.

Tension caused the two big religions Hinduism and Islam existing together since former times with no mutual acceptance. This inner dispute was, of course, welcome to the rulers because they weren't confronted with a united power that would have been more difficult to control.

2.2. USA

The United States had to face many incidents in their history concerning segregation. Already when the basic constitutional law for this country - the "Declaration of Independence" - was signed in 1776 the statement of "all people are created equal" wasn't valid for black slaves. Although slavery was abolished through the American Civil War the "Emancipation Proclamation" didn't end racism after 1865, especially not in the South. Later, this disregard resulted the foundation of an organisation for civil rights called NAACP.

In 1915, the Ku Klux Klan was re-established and soon had five million members. After World War I, a new race consciousness arose that had its climax in the Harlem Renaissance. Nevertheless, the new black culture of this period couldn't cause acceptance of Afro-Americans as equal citizens and discrimination by whites remained. "The blacks went on living in slums and were excluded from white facilities. For a long time, people took disfranchisement, economic dependence, segregation and recurrent violence [...] for granted." ¹⁾

Their situation was different from the Indian one. They were in minority on foreign land and had never had rights before in that country.

In both cases pride and self-respect of the oppressed was little and discrimination was public and constitutional which gave evidence that it was rooted deeply in the mind.

3. The non-violent fight of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King

3.1. Their prehistory and first non-violent actions

3.1.1. Gandhi's development and his work in South Africa

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was born in 1869 in Gujarat, a province of Bombay (as "Mahatma" which means "Great Soul" he was referred to later). His ancestors belonged to the third caste of Hinduism. Young Gandhi, whose outstanding characteristic was shyness, was influenced by his very devout mother and, therefore, early confronted with fasts and

¹⁾ <http://dadj.mytoday.de/start/inhalt/facharbeittext.html#intro>

the idea of a higher and all-pervasive Truth. Later, he regretted and criticised the customary child-marriage which he had to make at the age of 13 with a girl called Kasturba. When he was 18 he was sent to London to study law and there he experienced not only a confrontation with a different life-style but also a more aware one with his own traditional scriptures. After three years, he was qualified as a barrister and accepted an employment in a company in Natal, a British colony in South Africa. It was racial discrimination openly revealed on him when he e.g. was thrown out of a first class compartment that made him "[...] abandon[ed] his shy self literally overnight and commit[ted] himself to his political and religious destiny as a leader" (Erikson, p.47) says the psychoanalyst Erikson not denying that he had to solve an identity-crisis during this time.

For him the function of a lawyer was not to prove the guilty innocent but to discover the truth and to practise it to solve the cases. When he helped a "coolie" (a "coloured" Indian), who was maltreated by his employer, many more followed, his office flourished and he became popular.

In the following years the British Government decided on many unjust regulations and Gandhi couldn't understand why his friends just intended to remain silent. Before he confronted it with non-violent resistance he had tried to gain the Empire's respect by a first aid assistance in conflicts the British had with natives but wasn't recognized.

As a consequence, the forced registration of the Indian minority was boycotted and he achieved a strike of the mine-workers to protest against a tax that was much too high. Thereupon those on the plantations stopped working, too, and as a consequence thousands of members of the resistance were imprisoned – Gandhi even three times within four days. Marches and mass meetings occurred and put pressure on the government so that in 1909 the responsible General Smuts proclaimed he would never cancel the extreme humiliating annulment of Indian marriages. In 1914, however, he luckily accepted its renewed legalisation.

One incident should be described further. During this time of civil disobedience a strike of white railwaymen occurred and Gandhi interrupted his campaign according to principles of Satyagraha ("Truth Force") that will be described later: one may not take advantage of a bad situation of his opponent. This decision caused recognition and, finally, the tax was abolished and the marriages were established again.

In 1914, Gandhi came back to India after 21 years of experiments with non-violence, after a personal radicalisation devoting himself exclusively to reach the Truth that had led him into politics and, of course, after an encouraging proof of its power.

3.1.2. King's development and the boycott in Montgomery

Being a Negro in America means being herded in ghettos, or reservations, being constantly ignored and made to feel invisible. You long to be seen, to be heard, to be respected. But it is like blowing in the wind. (King, p.66)

It was South Africa from where black slaves were imported in the USA about 250 years before Martin Junior's birth in Atlanta, Georgia in 1929. He was the son and grandson of respected Baptist ministers who had been engaged in the NACCP and had fought for civil rights. It has to be added that in regard of social and political exclusion church was the mightiest institution for a Negro and Martin at the age of 19 also studied theology when he learned about Gandhi's techniques in non-violent action: "His message was so profound and electrifying that I left the meeting and bought a half-dozen books on Gandhi's life and works." (Lewis, p.34) This confrontation would be relevant for him later as a pastor in Montgomery when the incident provoked by Rosa Parks occurred.

Montgomery can serve as a typical example for a southern city of America. Despite the Supreme Court's decision from 1954 prohibiting segregation in public schools they were still separated, just as public facilities and transportation in taxis and buses. The government of Alabama arranged that the Negro's right for voting was restricted and of 30,000 eligible blacks 2,000 were registered. However, this low number was also derived from their apathy and their little interest of getting active. A particular problem was an indifference of black clergymen and a lethargy of the black educated society who didn't want to risk their jobs. On the whole, Negroes and whites lived their own social and cultural life.

In 1955, the turning point occurred with coloured Mrs. Parks who refused to give her seat to a white man and was arrested because of an infraction of the city's seating regulations. This gave the occasion to implement a bus boycott and on Sunday Martin was one of the coloured preachers who proclaimed it and also the way how confrontations with whites should be dealt with: non-violently with an inner attitude of love which was repeatedly stressed during the whole campaign. A transportation committee was organized and those for whom no car was available rather proudly walked to work. The almost total black solidarity was amazing and the buses mainly used by Negroes were empty.

The movement was more and more led by Martin and became widely known beyond the state of Alabama. When King was jailed for the first time because of an irrelevant incident many people got active and he was released before a hearing was made. In fact, the more strong his position became the more terror he had to face. When anonymous callers

threatened him with racist revenge and his house was dynamited it was a very burdened test for him which he overcame through his belief in God.

A long period of intransigence and refusal followed but after one year of boycott the US Supreme Court affirmed the issue as unconstitutional and Montgomery's buses were integrated. When a success of the Negroes had taken place it would become a tendency that violent retaliation occurred. After Martin's symbolic return to the buses, destruction of churches, buses and houses took place but, nevertheless, Montgomery was the first psychological victory for the black people. For the next years Martin planned more extensive actions against discrimination on all fields and to be free of any other task he quitted his job in Montgomery and went to Atlanta to fulfil his increasing responsibility. On the whole, one can say that his spirit and motives came from Christ but the method came from Gandhi because of him King even visited India in 1957.

3.2. Satyagraha expressed in non-violent resistance

3.2.1. Its principle and actions in India till 1919

"Non-co-operation and civil disobedience are but the different branches of the same tree called satyagraha." ¹⁾ This word Gandhi created was often translated with "passive resistance" but this term is normally used in the meaning of a method of the weak who will immediately return to weapons as soon as the situation allows it. Satyagraha, however, means a total restriction from violence and is understood as a weapon of the strongest that isn't "passive" at all. This principle has a deeper significance and advises man to answer brutality and hate with true politeness and love combined with readiness for self-suffering and even death to transform the opponent. A Satyagrahi in regard of his clearly defined aim must be fearless, has always to trust the enemy and doesn't seek to defeat. In spite of injustice and physical harm, an attack is always directed on the evil and not on the people who do the evil, so that Gandhi had nothing against the British citizens and it wasn't King's direct intention to fight the whites. Well-understood, both of them preferred violence more than cowardice.

Satyagraha develops a moral shame and is the only way anger, hatred and the spirit of revenge can be removed from the mind. According to the sermon on the mount of which Gandhi was inspired, too, it can be compared with the words of Jesus: "[.] but if one strike

¹⁾ <http://www.mkgandhi.org/epigrams/s.htm#SATYAGRAHA>

thee on thy right cheek, turn to him also the other [...] But I say to you, Love your enemies [...]”²⁾ (Matthew, 5). By doing so it is the way of realising Truth, the all-pervasive Reality that is for Gandhi equal with God.

As an example for its logic he creates a situation of a thief that comes at night:

Instead of being angry with him, you take pity on him. You think that this stealing habit must be a disease with him. Henceforth, you, therefore, keep your doors and windows open, you change your sleeping-place, and you keep your things in a manner most accessible to him; nevertheless, he takes away your things. But his mind is agitated. (Erikson, p.221)

He tried successfully with an inexhaustible "soul-force" to live according to his ideals and so his life was the best example of what he demanded of the Indian people. He extended his individual motto on whole India: "Home Rule equals Self Rule and Self Rule equals Self-Control" (Erikson p.217) and, therefore, Gandhi's fasts weren't merely starvation but self-purification and should later be of national significance.

Derived from Phoenix- and Tolstoy-Farm that he had founded in South Africa he established a Satyagraha-Ashram which was a disciplined living and working community. In it Gandhi also took despised "Untouchables" that belonged to the lowest caste, a discriminatory fact that he had never accepted. "The untouchability of Hinduism is probably worse than that of the modern imperialists."¹⁾

One more time his method was decisive when he was asked for help in Champaran. He wasn't eager to put an official blame on the white Indigo-planters, who exploited the Indian farmers, but tried to handle out a practical compromise that changed their situation justly. Through his whole work so far and his popularity, he played a central part as a politician in the National Congress in 1919 where he achieved to gain acceptance for non-violent non-co-operation.

3.2.2. "Sit-ins" and Freedom-Rides of Negro-students

In 1960, inspired by a brochure on the "Montgomery Story" students started continuously to take seats at whites-only lunch counters and this so called "sit-in" syndrome spread all over the segregated South. The Supreme Court decided for the "sit-ins" in 1963 which caused other willing infractions like "read-ins" in segregated libraries or "kneel-ins" in churches. Martin supported this movement and he helped the students to organize Freedom Rides from Washington, DC through the deep South demanding immediate desegregation

²⁾ <http://www.theworkofgod.org/Bible/NewTestm/Matthew.HTM>

¹⁾ <http://www.mkgandhi.org/epigrams/u.htm#UNTOUCHABILITY>

of public facilities. When their buses stopped at stations they used whites-only toilets and lunch counters. Defenceless black "Satyagrahis" that had been trained in non-violence were often attacked by aroused whites without an intervention of the police.

The big enduring problem for the black people and finally for the movement had been the difference between national legislation and its local execution. Regulations of national validity weren't obeyed by the states and its police. That's one reason why the SCLC (Southern Christian Leadership Conference) was founded with Martin as its president that aimed a coming into effect of laws.

According to the Civil Rights Act of 1960 separation was prohibited and the equality of races was guaranteed but Southern authorities widely ignored it and just in this year more than 5,000 students were imprisoned.

3.3. Failure of the non-violent movements

3.3.1. A "Himalayan miscalculation"

The British tried to deal with the troubled post-war period by passing so called "Rowlatt-laws" that authorized them to control mass movements better. This law expressing arbitrariness and distrust of the Indian people despaired Gandhi who as a protest declared the first national civil disobedience in history. He proclaimed a one-day hartal that was a traditionally known general strike. In regard of this strike, Hindus and Muslims showed an amazing unity.

In Delhi this offensive against the Empire was a great success and just the police was violent but after Gandhi had led a demonstration in Bombay he wasn't allowed to enter the capital. It was tactical unwise because although he was just shortly arrested, the news spread quickly and riots occurred. According to grave troubles in Panjab, General Dyer wanted to put up a sign and when a banned meeting was held he let his soldiers shoot in the crowd for ten minutes which turned out to be a planned mass execution: almost 400 people stayed lying and more than thousand were wounded. Gandhi immediately stopped the campaign and confessed a "Himalayan miscalculation" (Lewis, p.103). He hadn't expected the masses to be so enraged against the government. Additionally, the principle of Satyagraha wasn't known to a high number of people although he had indefatigably travelled through India and proclaimed this method.

Nevertheless, the massacre in Panjab was the beginning of the end of British rule.

3.3.2. Mistakes in Albany

For coloured people representing forty per cent of Albany's population life was hard, unequal and especially brutal. Naturally, blacks didn't vote and didn't join public facilities. The Albany Movement directors hoped to cause national attention by blacks riding on the Freedom Train that was awaited by hundreds of people. However, when they entered the white waiting room, the chief of police lost his professionalism and arrested everybody. Then Martin and other demonstrators were incarcerated, too, and his arrest was a topic even of international concern. Maybe it was a mistake that he accepted release on bail because the implemented integration wasn't sufficient at all to the demands. "Buses, parks, libraries, and cinemas remained segregated. No permanent biracial committee existed and no black police had been hired." (Lewis, p.150) Martin tried to put further pressure on Albany's authorities and intensified a bus boycott that had been put into action but as a result the company was bankrupted and the city bus service ended.

After more than thousand persons had been imprisoned still the demands of the movement were rejected and even the President declared publicly that he couldn't understand the city's intransigence. Martin and other protesters were arrested again and when a high number of Klansmen were involved, too, violence was inevitable. At that point, blacks weren't able to contain their negative emotions anymore and nearly two thousand people rioted against the police.

This was the first failure for Martin Luther King because the claims of the movement hadn't been clearly defined so that they had concentrated on too many issues and also preparations hadn't been sufficient. Although he was still recognized and highly regarded as a leader other powers came up against him that wanted to act faster and more radical.

3.4. Further steps against injustice

3.4.1. Boycotts against exploitation and foreign rule

In the long run Gandhi had planned a boycott of British textiles in the sign of the spinning wheel because this action would only make sense when India could fit its requirements itself. He urged people to spin their own cloth which he regarded as the only possibility to overcome rural unemployment and the deepening poverty. Henceforth, in lots of cities huge burnings of foreign textiles were organized which should become a national ritual.

When Gandhi suggested an Indian flag he preferred orange, for it's the holy colour of the Hindus, green, which is the colour of the Muslims, white for all other religious groups and because of the importance of self-sufficiency the emblem of the spinning wheel as a part of the flag.



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Hoping that the campaign would lose power the government didn't interfere and, therefore, a further offensive had to follow. But Gandhi didn't expect the people to be ready for a direct law infraction yet, so he and other politicians made use of no general but specific civil disobedience. They appealed publicly on Indian soldiers to quit the British-Indian army and for a longer time, a boycott of educational establishments was planned. In 1921, about 40,000 students had left state institutions and were mainly taken over in new founded ones which reduced the dependency on British rule. Moreover, Gandhi damned alcohol that the British had brought with them. He described the poor as the greatest sufferers who in their hopelessness buy alcohol with the little money they earn instead of food and stood up for its rejection.

In 1922, Mahatma Gandhi was arrested and made no apology but demanded the highest penalty like he had always done. He sincerely explained in front of court that it had been his duty to non-cooperate with evil so that the judge regretfully sentenced him to six years. In fact, he was released in 1924 because of an illness.

In this year he especially concentrated on a reconciliation between Hindus and Muslims because both became more and more radical. Gandhi believed in the power of a renouncing penance and fasted for 21 days to purify the atmosphere.

In 1922, Gandhi had decided to try a mass refusal of paying taxes but due to permanent fear that it would end with violence he had cancelled the Satyagraha campaign and reorganized it in 1928. An oppressive increase of taxes was crucial for its general non-payment whereupon the people's possessions were confiscated by the government and some were driven off their land. Nevertheless, the farmers, who had to suffer most, remained non-violent. These governmental measures were condemned by an independent investigation committee and in order to protest, Indians that worked in public administration, quitted their jobs. It was an issue of national concern and so the Viceroy had to face it, too. He had a responsibility for his reigning competence towards Great Britain and when this civil disobedience couldn't be solved otherwise the government was forced to give in. The attachments and the increase of tax was reversed and Gandhi ascribed this victory a national importance that would have an influence on tax policy in whole India. For him, however, the non-occurrence of violence was even more gratifying.

3.4.2. Constitutional changes reached in Birmingham

"In any nonviolent campaign there are four basic steps: collection of the facts to determine whether injustices exist; negotiation; self-purification; and direct action. We have gone through an these steps [...] Birmingham is probably the most thoroughly segregated city in the United States. Its ugly record of brutality is widely known. Negroes have experienced grossly unjust treatment in the courts. There have been more unsolved bombings of Negro homes and churches in Birmingham than in any other city in the nation. These are the hard, brutal facts of the case." (Out of: Letter From A Birmingham Jail)

That was how Martin described reality in this industrially advanced but morally retarded city. In regard of all these reasons mentioned above, in 1963, it was chosen for a better prepared campaign that the SCLC focused on the business community. A kind of army was built up when about 250 volunteers introduced thousands of blacks in non-violent techniques. Just as Gandhi recommended to the individual to take an oath to define promise and will, Birmingham volunteers had to sign a "commitment card" with its signature they pledged e.g. not to seek victory but reconciliation and to refrain from violence. The jails began to fill when "sit-ins" were originated and a march for voter registration was held. In April, Martin and his close friend Ralph Abernathy were imprisoned and King was put in solitary confinement where he wrote his famous "Letter From A Birmingham Jail".

Strangely enough, Gandhi and King's stays in prison were in general very useful for them. Then they had time for recreation, for contemplation and for writing down their thoughts and teachings.

Additional to Atlanta, it was the second time that upon an appeal of Martin's wife Coretta the Kennedys' influence was decisive for his release.

On May 2, when some six thousand children and youth marched singing into town more than 900 of them were arrested while excellent discipline of the overwhelmed adults was kept. This spectacular confrontation gave proof of a profound psychological change of the American blacks.

Meanwhile, violence that had been brutally provoked by the police erupted and negotiations were urgently required. Black demands contained four conditions:

"(1) desegregation of lunch counters, rest rooms, fitting rooms, and drinking fountains in department stores; (2) upgrading and hiring of blacks on a nondiscriminatory basis throughout the city's business and industrial community; (3) dropping of all charges against demonstrators; and (4) formation of a biracial committee to prepare a timetable for desegregation in other areas of Birmingham." (Lewis, p.195)

The authorities didn't accept one of them and riots continued. In his book "Why We Can't Wait" Martin mentioned 2,500 incarcerated people and when the capacity of prisons was

exhausted, "Bull" Connor, a notoriously brutal chief of police made use of water hoses and released dogs.

Gradually, the SCLC leaders had lost control of the large number of demonstrators. Although aggression had nothing to do with the non-violent principle it unfortunately might have been necessary to achieve an end of the crisis and to oppose the whites who requested a truce. Nevertheless, tension remained and Martin announced that demonstrations wouldn't stop until their demands had been agreed on. Finally, Birmingham was the turning point for the Kennedy Administration and because of efforts of the White House the essential black demands were accepted by white negotiators.

The answer that followed was one of two time bombs damaging the house of Martin's brother who escaped harm and the second injuring several persons. According to the brutality of "Bull" Connor's men a crowd of Negroes rioted through the ghetto area and next day President Kennedy dispatched federal troops to assure the city's return to order. Whereas in 1960, most of all participators had been students, due to the black awakening in Birmingham people of all ages overcame their fear and took part in further activities in many states. Besides, also white people, who had never thought earnestly about the racial issue before, became more engaged in it.

3.5. The two great symbolic marches

3.5.1. The Salt March

As far as the next movement was concerned, Gandhi wanted it to be turned out as a mass campaign and he indirectly started it with a symbolic revolution. For the 26th of January, he proclaimed a day of Indian's independence and published a list with eleven demands that were essential for it. Some points he mentioned were a ban on alcohol, a reduction of property tax, a toll on foreign textiles and an abolition of the salt tax which were corresponding to a variety of interests and could bring about a national unity. Of course, Gandhi's symbolic gesture caused indignation of the British who didn't know what his intention was. This demands, if fulfilled, would mean a real independence of India whereas it could have been possible that a further economic exploitation went on even under its self-rule. "My ambition is no less than to convert the British people through nonviolence,

and thus make them see the wrong they have done to India. I do not seek to harm your people." ¹⁾

In his opinion to solve India's inner Hindu-Muslim-conflict first the vicious British had to leave and through common action against them a solidarity of the religious groups could be enhanced.

In 1930, Gandhi let the Viceroy know that on March 11 civil disobedience would begin which was focused on the British salt monopoly. An extraction and possession of salt was not allowed to an Indian and its heavy taxation especially affected the poor. This public provocation would certainly cause a direct confrontation with the government and determined Gandhi started from one of his ashrams to undertake the 24-day-march to the



<http://www.mahatma.org.in/index.jsp>

sea. On his way several thousands joined him and masses greeted the walking people when they went through the big cities where Gandhi held speeches. It is conceivable that the British authorities hesitated to arrest him and although there was no violence at all many people were imprisoned. After their arrival at the coast the

marchers gathered salt and dried sea water while thousands were watching them. However, the most decisive event happened while Gandhi was already arrested and his friend led 2,500 Satyagrahis for an invasion of the salt works of Dharsana. Although they were beaten down brutally by hundreds of policemen when they tried to march in no one fought back.

The illegal gathering of salt continued more often so that officials were busy to destroy depositions of salt at the coast. Jails were full and the police was frustrated because it didn't have the means of transport to be at all the places where law infractions occurred.

Thereupon a refusal of the salt tax was provoked by the National Congress but, finally, the hated tax was not abolished. The fact is not that bad because the real success of this non-violent resistance was that the British oppression was unmasked and they, therefore, lost their moral prestige.

¹⁾ <http://www.san.beck.org/WP19-Gandhi.html>

3.5.2. The March On Washington, DC

On June, Martin Luther King undertook a speaking tour from Los Angeles to New York and its most triumphal success took place when he led 125,000 Negroes and whites on a Freedom Walk in Detroit. To lead the protest movement of the summer of 1963 to a climax responsible Negroes decided for a great march on Washington, DC. They intended to give priority to jobs and to put pressure on Congress so that the President's Civil Rights Bill would be passed. August 28 was the historical day of the blacks' fight for equality and 250,000 people, about a third of them white, from all parts of the United States came to join the most immense demonstration this country had ever seen.

Famous performers entertained the people that gathered around the Washington monument, speakers were heard and what they all had to say was expressed through songs of freedom like "We Shall Overcome" that had been especially for blacks very meaningful throughout the movement. In front of the Lincoln Memorial King delivered his famous "I have a dream" speech of which some excerpts should be cited:



<http://www.infoplease.com/spot/mlkbiospot.html>

[...] The marvelous new militancy which has engulfed the Negro community must not lead us to distrust of all white people, for many of our white brothers, as evidenced by their presence here today, have come to realize that their destiny is tied up with our destiny and their freedom is inextricably bound to our freedom. We cannot walk alone.

[...] Some of you have come fresh from narrow cells. Some of you have come from areas where your quest for freedom left you battered by the storms of persecution and staggered by the winds of police brutality. You have been the veterans of creative suffering. Continue to work with the faith that unearned suffering is redemptive.

[...] I say to you today, my friends, that in spite of the difficulties and frustrations of the moment, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream.

I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: "We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal"

[...] I have a dream that my four children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.

I have a dream today. [...] (King, p.99ff)

Afterwards, black leaders met President Kennedy and called for a fair employment program to stop job discrimination. Later, in 1964, the very comprehensive Civil Rights Act was signed by President Lyndon Johnson.

All in all, this day that was often compared with Gandhi's salt march was highly recognized because no disturbances had taken place at all.

But this peace was temporary. Through the rest of the year, a bomb exploded during a service and four girls died immediately, two black boys were shot down and further

churches were damaged. It seems that racism was more deeply rooted in the mind than the British insistence on ruling.

3.6. Tireless efforts towards their dreams

3.6.1. "Quit India"-campaign

In 1931, the British feared that refusals of Indian soldiers could gain the upper hand and, furthermore, they couldn't have withstood a revolt of farmers. That's why Viceroy Irwin released Gandhi and demanded peace talks whose result was the Gandhi-Irwin Pact. It ended civil disobedience and had in general more the character of a capitulation but for the Mahatma a negotiation itself was a positive sign. The Viceroy invited him to the Round Table Conference in London where, in fact, the table wasn't "round" at all and equal partnership couldn't be expected. All in all, the talks turned out to be a diplomatic spectacle that failed in regard of a useful conclusion: the government neither supported the concessions Lord Irwin had made nor granted a dominion status for India (which meant self-government under the British Crown). Nevertheless, Gandhi was granted an enthusiastic reception when he went on an excursion through England. He tried to achieve understanding of the textile workers for the Indian boycott and by the way gained British publicity.

In the following years, the conservative Lord Willingdon became Viceroy of India and soon began to establish a radical emergency regime that declared the National Congress as illegal, treated farmers who refused to make payments harsher and remorselessly increased the salt tax, for example. When civil disobedience shortly was revived again in 1932, Gandhi and other politicians were arrested and the movement gradually vanished before its official abandonment in May 1933. Especially prosperous people entirely subjected themselves to this regime which carried on to terror. Gandhi was pessimistic and retired from politics to engage in religious problems.

When in 1940 the Viceroy still had made no concession concerning India's independence Gandhi announced "individual Satyagraha". He excluded himself so that no riot could break out through his possible arrest and an eventual British counter offensive caused by a nationwide campaign should also be avoided. The middle course turned out to be chosen Satyagrahis who one after the other publicly stood up against an Indian support of the British participation in World War II that was decided without its consent. Gandhi

informed the authorities accurately about the speaker's appearance and in fifteen months 25,000 people were imprisoned.

What also followed was the most radical campaign he had ever led when the Congress passed the "Quit-India" resolution in 1942. Gandhi's final nation-wide movement called for a non-violent mass struggle on all possible scales while the British faced a military crisis because of Japan's interference. The world-wide resonance, which negotiations with Gandhi would have caused, wasn't welcome to the Viceroy who rather relied on the British forces and gave order to imprison Gandhi and the whole Congress leadership. A violent "August-Revolution" was the effect and rebels even took over control of some provinces during this month. But then the British re-established their status again.

In 1944, Kasturba, who had always stood faithfully and bravely by her husband's side, died during her arrest with Gandhi. When the government had nothing to fear anymore he was released unconditionally and it should have been his last imprisonment. On the whole, he had spent five years and seven months of his life in captivity.

In political regard, scarcely any productive dialogue took place between India and Britain at that time and, besides, Prime Minister Churchill wasn't interested in an agreement.

3.6.2. Further steps towards justice

In all major Northern cities demonstrations occurred. In Chicago 225,000 school children refused to attend classes and in New York even more to protest against segregationist policies. After the Civil Rights Bill was passed, killing and injuring of blacks increased and marching and sitting in were still necessary to speed desegregation.

Then on November 22, an incredible incident questioned the integrity of America – the assassination of John F. Kennedy. It was cruel when afterwards Martin said to his wife: "This is what is going to happen to me also [...] I keep telling you this is a sick society." (Lewis, p.236)

In October 1964, Martin got the news of his nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize in hospital where he recovered because of total overwork and exhaustion. At the age of 35, Martin was the youngest recipient in history and on December it was handed over to him in Oslo symbolizing an international recognition. (In spite of several nominations this prize was never given to Gandhi which is argued from the British pressure on the Norwegian Nobel Committee.)

In this year, a "Freedom Summer" project was launched and students went to the South to train undereducated blacks in voting. Some were maltreated and even murdered after racist

police officers had arrested them and had turned them to Klansmen. In Selma, Alabama, a campaign to secure voting rights was planned because there for several citizens a registration was violently impeded. In 1965, a group of blacks were jailed on their way to become recognized as voters and Martin with them.

Released on bail he organized a march from Selma to Montgomery when demonstrators were cruelly attacked and hunted by troops on horsebacks and bombed with tear gas. The nation was watching ragingly the pictures on TV. As a consequence, Martin organized a second bigger march at what time an remarkable incident occurred. On a bridge marchers stood opposite to the Alabama troopers and when their progress wasn't prohibited they knelt down and prayed. After they had risen to their feet again, the commanding officer unexpectedly gave order to open the way to Montgomery. Even more amazing was Martin's reaction who didn't exploit this manoeuvre but instructed his three thousand followers to retrace their steps. Thereupon, he was criticised and called a coward but like Gandhi he didn't strive for victory but for reconciliation. The third march of eight thousand people finally reached Alabama's capital and was one of the most impressive actions concerning the Negroes' fight for civil rights in the South. "I sat there and began to think back over the years of struggle from 1955 to 1965. I realized we had really come a long way from our start in the bus protest, when only a handful people ... were involved."

(Lewis, p.291)

The whole campaign that was centred around the right to vote, succeeded when in August 1965 the Voting Rights Act was passed that assured equal rights for blacks. What followed revealed the powerlessness of a mere law when the police answered with more violent treatment of those who wanted to be registered. In addition to the laws, big economic and social efforts had been required to get rid of the slums. Even in the North, unemployment and bad dwelling conditions built up tensions and in Los Angeles revolts occurred in the Negro ghetto Watts. The police brutalized the rioters but in spite of numerous arrests and murders the blacks didn't stop whereupon the authorities cut off water and electricity to enforce a capitulation. The revolts in the Watts section caused more killed people than in all the non-violent demonstrations before.

Martin's dream of a better future that he had expressed in Washington seemed to shatter and for him even more depressive times should follow.

3.7. Their final years

3.7.1. A religious disaster for Gandhi

The more the method of civil disobedience had lost power the more Gandhi made use of "individual Satyagraha". After the Indian powerful period of 1930, the British tried to prevent a national unity by provoking its own inner conflict. In 1932, the government tried to stir up distrust between Moslems and Hindus and planned to institute separate electorates for Untouchables and other "Depressed Classes". This would have meant a political representation for people who lived in isolation without any rights and due to the strict Hindu orders its followers would have been enraged against the despised people. Gandhi, who had always fought for the abolition of Untouchability, didn't regard this decision merely as an act of respecting minorities but as an attempt of fixing a problem that should be ended. A general right for voting that was claimed by him in any case would make such a special provision unnecessary.

Gandhi knew that if an inner break, which was initiated by the British, occurred a healing would have been prohibited for generations and would have facilitated imperialism to continue for an unlimited period of time. In September 1932, he proclaimed out of prison that he would perpetually fast "unto death" if such an electorate was passed and he left no doubts about his determination. That was how he intended to awaken the Hindu conscience and soon worried leaders gathered at the prison and promised to reject this representation. Temples were opened for the outcasts and they got permission for using fountains. Finally, after the seventh day he cancelled his fast when news from London guaranteed the pact's ratification – the British Government couldn't risk to be responsible for his death.

Gandhi named the Untouchables "Harijans" ("Children of God") and in the following years, he often made use of the pressuring effect of his fasts for their rights. He also toured to every province in India to help to remove this discriminatory fact that had been conventional since thousands of years. Due to the scarcely changeable Hindu understanding of their religious teachings Gandhi's reputation as a traitor came up. Later after the failed "Quit India"-campaign, political silence was around him and his only chance were talks with Jinnah who was president of the Muslim party. Jinnah had already propagated the theory of two separate nations and, in 1940, for the first time the name Pakistan had occurred in a resolution. Of course, a partitioning after independence

wouldn't represent the India Gandhi had ever dreamt of and so he devotedly continued to make efforts for unity and tolerance.

The minister-president of Bengal wanted Hindus to leave Calcutta because there existed a Muslim majority and the city was planned to be Pakistan's capital. So he organized a riot and in the "Great Calcutta Killing" of 1946 about 5,000 Hindus were murdered. While Gandhi tirelessly went there to preach against hostility among the two religious groups the same acts of violence occurred in Bihar the other way round where a Muslim minority had to face Hindu revenge.

Meanwhile, the Labour Party, who was known for its sympathy for a free India, had won the elections in Britain and unscrupulous imperialists like Churchill were replaced. Their policy allowed its independence but demanded a peaceful separation. The last Viceroy of India was Lord Mountbatten with whom Gandhi and Jinnah began conferences in New Delhi.

The definite announcement of the end of British rule caused enthusiasm in whole India but with this weakening of their authority revolts couldn't have been met properly and so they hurried up for leaving.

In December 1946, a framework of an Indian Constitution had already been started and, in June 1947, the Viceroy, the National Congress and Muslim League leaders finally decided that India should become free on 15th August 1947. A division of the country into India and Pakistan was accepted by the Congress although Gandhi had opposed it.

In Calcutta he was attacked by young Hindus who accused him of supporting Muslims more than them whereupon he decided to fast till a profound peace was re-established. Soon leaders of political groups guaranteed their cooperation and the effect convinced Gandhi.

When he arrived in Delhi he experienced hate and retaliation and stayed to lessen the tensions. The capital was without a leader and anarchy and chaos were prevalent. The situation was tragic for him and he there spent the last five months of his life.

3.7.2. Impatience and black extremism

Already in 1960, black extremism had grown stronger and stronger. Negroes had been treated as if only people with a white skin would have rights. The radical movement "Black Power", however, turned it round by saying that the Negro shouldn't strive for an integrated society but for a development of his own power and superiority. They intended to enforce, if necessary with violence, a black policy and their demands were also

influenced by the Islamic idea of a separate state. Harlem was their main residence and when one time Martin was present during a rampage in New York he was greatly troubled by the savage destruction. Till 1963, Malcolm X, who was spokesman of the Black Muslims, claimed a radical revolution and opposed King's conviction. But many black people had lost their patience and, therefore, their trust in the non-violent method that they more and more regarded as an humiliation. They had become angry about the sluggishness and deafness of white authorities and, finally, all their will for non-violent action had disappeared through the synthesis of self-confidence and hate. Since 1955, a Negro had obtained many rights that were, in fact, slowly and reluctantly realized and he felt that time of forbearance was up.

When Martin committed himself to housing and employment projects in Chicago he was alarmed by the missing humbleness of the youth. The president of the students' organization significantly said: "This is the twenty-seventh time I have been arrested — and I ain't going to jail no more." (Lewis, p.324) This would be a long hot summer in Chicago. Violence erupted when the police shot a person whereupon blacks fought back and a gunfire exchanged. On June, Martin led a march to Philadelphia, Mississippi, and while he was speaking participants were attacked by white citizens without an intervention of the police. The next stop in Canton was a calamity and those who had already joined the Selma campaign said that it was even worse. Martin explained what the black people didn't want to understand: "The ultimate weakness of a riot is that it can be halted by superior force. We have neither the techniques, the numbers nor the weapons to win a violent campaign" (Lewis, p.332).

At that time, he knew that the occurred riots would soon be reproduced if black extremism wasn't met by vigorous federal antidotes. He described it as "tragic" (Lewis, p.334) that contrary to the South in the more moderate North armed escorts were necessary to protect the demonstrators of being killed by whites.

Necessary conditions of previous times had diminished when a lack of confidence existed between the NACCP and the SCLC and, moreover, Martin wasn't as much supported by the current President Johnson as he had been by Kennedy.

Disturbed by all that hateful and hostile incidents, Martin persisted even more on his non-violent position, enlarged his campaign from civil to human rights and, in 1967, demanded publicly to stop the "immoral" Vietnam War. Nevertheless, especially after he had led a demonstration in Memphis, which later was described as a "full scale riot", he was sorrowful and frustrated.

4. The assassinations

Well, I don't know what will happen now. We've got some difficult days ahead. But it doesn't matter with me now. Because I've been to the mountaintop. And I don't mind. Like anybody, I would like to live a long life. [...] But I'm not concerned about that now. I just want to do God's will. [...] I'm not fearing any man. Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord.
(King, p.114)

I shall have won in my mission, if I am granted a death in which I can demonstrate the strength of Truth and Non-violence. If I have been sincere in their pursuit, and acted with God as my witness, I shall certainly be granted that kind of death. I have expressed my wish at prayer that, should someone kill me, I should have no anger in my heart against the killer, and that I should die with Rama Nama on my lips.

<http://www.mahatma.org.in/lastmonth/lastmonth.jsp>

Before their assassinations, both of them had known that their lifespan was limited but they didn't change their course.

Many attempts on the Mahatma's life had been made but he regarded it as Providence that it didn't harm him. Even ten days before he was killed a bomb exploded at a prayer meeting in New Delhi but he refused a protection of his life and carried on as usual. On January 30 in 1948, he was on his way to participate in the evening prayer when he was shot by an Indian. Nathuram Godse was a young fanatic Hindu who had been bitter because of Gandhi's fight against Untouchability and his policy of peace towards Indian Muslims. It is said that the Mahatma really died with the words "Hé Ram" on his lips which shows the strong presence of God in his life. He was 78 years old.

The quotation of Martin Luther King mentioned above was delivered almost 24 hours before his assassination in Memphis, Tennessee on April 4 in 1968. There he was called to stand by a strike of sanitation workers and many people wanted to hear him speak. When he was shot and killed on a balcony of a hotel it also wasn't the first attempt to take his life and already ten years before a black woman had thrust a letter-opener into his chest. He became half as old as his mentor Gandhi.

After this deed was committed, riots broke out in the whole country and many states were under martial law. Of course, this would have stood in great contrast to Martin's intention. James Earl Ray, a white racist who had been made responsible for this offend although he had denied it, died in 1998 in a prison hospital. Nevertheless, facts and speculations rather point to an organized conspiracy in which the FBI is expected to have played a crucial part. Its director J. Edgar Hoover hadn't concealed that he hated Martin and the FBI had even invaded King's privacy.

These assassinations and their knowledge of it might seem cruel and full of suffering for somebody who is not familiar to their lives and thoughts. In fact, both of them were ready to pay the price of physical death to free their people "from a permanent death of the spirit"

(Lewis, p.242) and Gandhi even once said that he would control the art of death. All their longings and strivings were concentrated on an everlasting power that is unchangeable and transcends everything. Due to their belief this power often guided them in their human imperfection and I think one can say that Gandhi came closer to a unity with it than King.

5. Evaluation

King's work had emerged an overdue revolution of the American blacks concerning their right to vote, the use of public facilities and transportation and their strengthened self-confidence. Apart from that, the antithesis of war and the alleviation of poverty became a national subject only after Martin's death.

As a result of Gandhi's work one can say that he decisively shaped the method of violence on the highest scale and effectively led the greatest non-violent revolution in history. However, a further realization of his ideals wasn't carried on by his successors which contained a common language Hindustani, an enhancement of rural agriculture and an introduction of educational changes. Although Untouchability couldn't be entirely abolished it was at least banned constitutionally.

In retrospect of the problems Mahatma Gandhi und Martin Luther King had to face in their countries it turned out to be similar on a different level.

In America racial segregation had a greater dimension than in India and South Africa whereas religious intolerance worried Gandhi much more than King.

Economic exploitation of the oppressed was for the British more an imperialistic aspect than for whites in the USA who didn't grant equal employment and wages because of the skin colour. "I had also learned that the inseparable twin of racial injustice was economic injustice." (King, p.26) Both personalities opposed imperialism and capitalism so that Gandhi who had already experienced the way a Negro was treated in the United States explained:

"It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God!" [...] I hold that economic progress ... is antagonistic to real progress. [...] I have heard many of our countrymen say that we will gain American wealth but avoid its methods. I venture to suggest that such an attempt if it were made is foredoomed to failure." (Erikson, p.281)

Nevertheless, after Gandhi's death the missed industrialisation of India was caught up without consideration for the millions of villages.

King and the Mahatma believed in a world-wide coherence of all nations and so Martin also engaged in the protest against the Vietnam War and Gandhi with an inconceivable consequence advised the British, the Jews, the Czechs and others to fight Hitler non-violently. Martin said: "Our destiny as a nation is linked to the destiny of India. So long as India, or any other nation, is insecure, we shall never be secure." (King, p.16)

In the internet I read that King shall have been more concentrated on a change of society whereas Gandhi's concern shall have rather been self-realization but I think their personal strive and their actions were closely linked and can't be separated like this.

Although for both discrimination was decisive for their development as leaders and just in this position their self-fulfilment was possible, on the whole their attitudes and actions were in some ways different. King seemed more conservative and maybe it was a mistake that he didn't put as much pressure on the opponent as Gandhi had done through national movements. Martin had never initiated a nationwide organized disruption of traffic, an inundation of streets and municipal buildings or an occupation of transport centres for example.

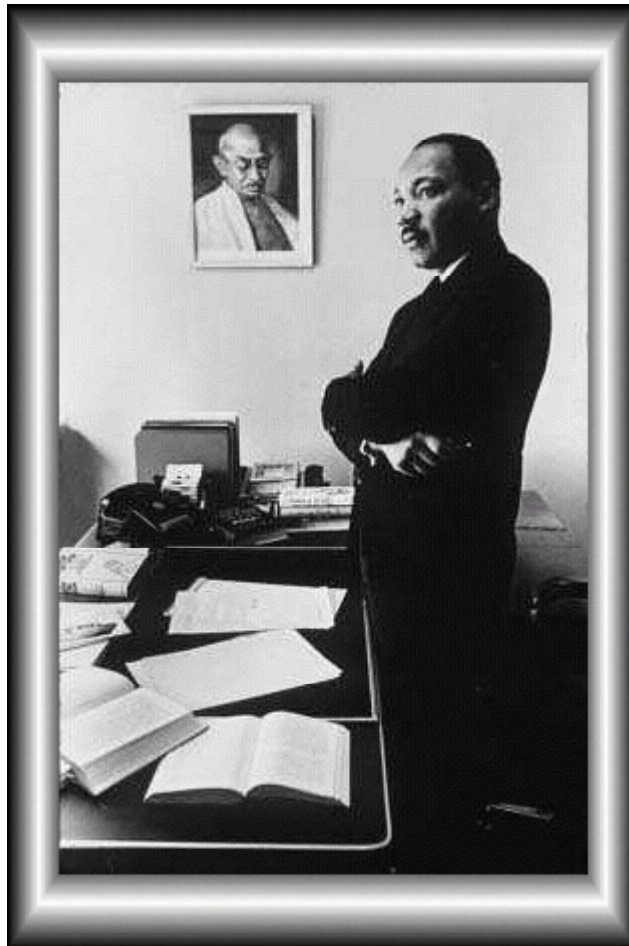
In spite of completely different circumstances I think one can state that Gandhi led a more simple life and was more humble than King. He publicly stressed his identification with the Indian people when he always wore self-spun "khadi" – thereupon Churchill defamed him as a half-naked fakir – to mobilize the poor and to give them a voice. He only travelled third class like all the others and went barefooted to the villages to hold his speeches there. In my opinion he was more spiritually advanced than King and by people who had met him he was acknowledged as a man of immaculate sincerity with an infinite patience.

All in all, the indefatigable efforts that both of them had made during decades deserve highest appreciation and are, of course, still relevant today. The principle of Satyagraha uncovers the inconsistency of a war when it says that the real enemy is not the man who does the evil but the evil itself is the subject that must be destroyed. Therefore, a superior arsenal of weapons can never win the real battle and can never achieve reconciliation. True superiority is a superiority of the own mind which is tested in non-violent action. In regard of a personal God King said that God also loves your enemy which makes him important for you.

To transfer this to the topical issue about the war in Afghanistan, there is to say that violence and terror itself are our enemies which the USA, in fact, oppose with violence and terror, too. Therefore, the United States show the same evil characteristics that won't cause a profound inner change.

By looking at President Bush for example it becomes obvious that no "Home-Rule" exists. His vengeful remarks and his patriotic arrogance reveal that there's scarcely a reflection so that self-control doesn't even seem necessary.

The only current head of a state that I can think of related to non-violence is the Dalai Lama but otherwise this principle that is, in fact, the only one that makes sense gains absolute no recognition in policy. Weapons play a very dominant role instead and the cycle of hate and revenge can't be broken. A period of peace is not in sight and, therefore, we can ignore Satyagraha and its implementation through Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King on our own fault. What remains is the hope with which Gandhi said: "Truth transcends history." ¹⁾



http://www.heiligenlexikon.de/BiographienM/Martin_Luther_King.htm

¹⁾ <http://www.mkgandhi.org/epigrams/t.htm>

6. Appendix

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6.2. Solemn declaration

I assure that the whole work is written by myself with reference to the sources listed above.

Signature