

MUMBAI

# The Mahatma and the metropolis

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**

JANUARY 09, 2017 23:52 IST

UPDATED: JANUARY 09, 2017 23:52 IST

Mumbai: In 1919 in Bombay, a certain M.K. Gandhi initiated the first protest which gave him national importance: the satyagraha against the Rowlatt Act. It was also here that the Non-Cooperation Movement of 1920 was launched, and in 1942, the city became one of the centres of the Quit India movement. There was an energy in the city that Gandhi tapped into that also changed him. The story of Gandhi and India's freedom struggle took place on a national scale but it was also intimately connected with certain places. These connections have not been explored in detail yet, but A new book, *Gandhi in Bombay*, by Usha Thakker and Sandhya Mehta — released on Monday at the Mani Bhavan Gandhi Sangrahalaya, where both authors work — attempts to change that by exploring the Gandhi's special relationship with the city.

“Bombay was a vibrant centre of industry and had a strong culture of social reform,” said Ms. Thakkar, who is president of the Sangrahalaya. “Gandhi was magnetic and the city's response to him was magnificent.” She says the first Khadi Bhandar was inaugurated by Gandhi in this city, and that Bombay was also a great centre for raising funds for the independence movement. As far back as 1921, it was here that Gandhi managed to raise over ₹30 lakh for the Tilak Swaraj fund.

Speaking at the launch, Satish Sahney, chief executive of the Nehru Centre, said that while the salt law was broken by Gandhi in Dandi, the greatest celebration of that exercise was at the Girgaum chowpatty, where women sold little packets of salt, and that when bonfires were organised to burn British cloth, one of the major centres was the Elphinstone Mill compound. Naresh Fernandes, editor of Scroll.in, said that besides one book, written in 1969 by K. Gopaldaswamy, the relationship between Gandhi and Bombay had not been properly explored. He quoted historian Ram Guha on how Gandhi had twice tried to set up a law practice in Bombay and had it worked, he may never have gone to South Africa. He says that Gandhi was on record telling somebody that he did not like Bombay but later said that it was the home of his dreams. Mr. Fernandes noted that aside from the Swadeshi, and Non-Cooperation movements, Gandhi also kicked off the much less popular prohibition movement in Bombay. Gandhi also recognised, he said, that the industrialists of Bombay were key to funding many of the major movements of the independence struggle.

Giving the keynote address, Bhikhu Parekh, Emeritus Professor at the Universities of Hull and Westminster, said that Gandhi had always said that Bombay was beautiful and one of the main reasons was that it had a long tradition of philanthropy and that no other city shared its wealth like Bombay or had the same public-spirited civic culture.

x

Printable version | Jan 10, 2017 9:43:56 PM |

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/mumbai/The-Mahatma-and-the-metropolis/article17014395.ece>

© The Hindu