

Mahatma Gandhi's Typology

By

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Based on my readings of the life and work of Mahatma Gandhi, it is my working hypothesis that Gandhiji was an introverted feeling/intuitive – an Oceanic umwelt based on the typology umwelt constructs of Osmond et al. (Osmond, Siegler, & Smoke, 1977)

His feeling function is manifest in his deep sense of value he placed on his feelings about his mother, wife and mother India. This feeling function informed his teleological engagement with the destiny of India as well as the British Raj. Intuitively, he grasped the scope and depth of possibilities for win-win collaboration with the just and soulful sector of the British elite and Indian intelligentsia.

He had struggled with his anima function because of his ambivalence about the feminine, which led him to repress his Eros with his wife and vows of celibacy in the vessel of his marriage – the practice of Brahmacharya. This repressed Eros was then projected onto the positive Dynamic mother archetype incarnate in his relationship with “Bharat Mata” or Mother India. This engagement of the feminine perspective was his potent tool to counter the demonic aspects of the negative, static, masculine order of the apartheid in South Africa and the British colonization of India. Gareth Hill has elegantly discussed this system of the masculine and feminine archetypes. (Hill, 1992)

It is my personal and clinical experience that crisis, trauma, developmental need and adaptational challenges usher in attention to the inferior umwelt of our typology as the unharnessed repertoire of our response potential to novel stimuli. This challenge came to Mohandas Gandhi in his momentous train ride in South Africa as a newly minted, Britain trained Barrister at Law. He had secured first class train tickets via mail order and was travelling to his destination, when the white train conductor tried to move him to the third class economy train compartment. The non-white passengers were not permitted to travel in the first class in the apartheid era.

He protested and cited his credentials. He was mocked, insulted and was thrown off the train at the next stop, his belongings strewn all over the train platform. He was the laughing stock of all the white passengers. This narcissistic wound ushered in his attention to his low sensate function. Later, coupled with his thinking function, he mounted the momentous non-violent civil disobedience movement and resistance that made Attorney Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi into Mahatma Gandhi, the beacon for the mankind and the collective.

All his subsequent strategy for the freedom of India and sublimation of human consciousness was guided by the Oceanic Umwelt and constructed via his inferior Structural (Sensate/Thinking) Umwelt. His attention to detail guided his logic and is best exemplified in his Dandi Kuch or the Dandi March from Gandhi Ashram in Ahmadabad to the salt mines of the coastal town of Dandi. There he harvested the salt from the sea and protested the "Salt Tax", imposed by the British colonizers on even the poor Indians. They were taxing Indian workers, for collecting salt from the Indian Ocean! This was the beginning of the end of the British Empire. Even the average Englishmen thought this was unconscionable.

If one puts an analytical lens on it, every one of his subsequent strategies was grounded in his Oceanic Umwelt and the response paradigm was constructed via his inferior Structural Umwelt.

This example is an opportunity for each one of us. When we are faced with life's challenges, it is worth our while to go outside of our box; our usual lens with which we look at ourselves, others and the world. This is an opportunity to go to the Archimedean point in our psyche and respond from this habitual modes of being and doing. The maximum personal growth comes from contra habit enterprise.

References

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