



**Department of History
&**



**School of International Relations and Strategic Studies,
University of Mumbai**

CELEBRATING AZADI KA AMRIT MAHOTSAV

**The Polaks And Mahatma Gandhi:
A Unique Association**

By

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On

27th January, 2022

Time :- 02.00 pm onwards

On google meet : <https://meet.google.com/etx-dbwc-rpo>

You are cordially invited to join us

Dr. Prakash Masram

I/c Head
Department of History
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Dr. Rajesh Kharat

I/c Director, School of
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Strategic Studies,
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Dr. Manjiri Kamat

Professor,
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Abstract

South Africa was the crucible that forged Gandhi's identity as a political activist. It was an important prelude to his return to motherland in 1915 where he became the undisputed leader of the national movement for more than three decades. Amongst the early and close friends of Gandhi in South Africa, now largely forgotten, were the English couple Henry and Millie Polak; Henry, a radical Jew and Gandhi's closest disciple and fellow-seeker and Millie, a Christian Feminist. For a 'coloured' couple and a white couple to live together in 1905 would have been rather unusual in London or in Bombay; in the context of South Africa, it was revolutionary; for Gandhi to befriend the Polaks was an act of bravery; for them to befriend Gandhi was an act of defiance. The couple developed not only close association with Gandhi but also actively participated in the Indian struggle in South Africa. Even after the Polaks returned to England in 1916, they continued to take much interest in India's freedom and humanitarian work for more than four decades. It is high time that the valuable services rendered by the Polaks to India in general and to Gandhi in particular, is recognized in modern historiography.