



# Need of Gandhi in the Present Era

**Krisn Pratap Meena**

Assistant Professor, Dept. of Mathematics, S.B.D. Govt. P.G. College, Sardarshahar, Rajasthan, India

**ABSTRACT:** 2<sup>nd</sup> October every year is a great day for India as well as for the world. On this day India celebrates the birth anniversary of the father of the nation Mohan Das Karamchand Gandhi and International day for non-violence is observed to pay respect and acceptance to the true spirit of non-violence promoted by Gandhiji throughout his life. Gandhianism starts with the famous line – ‘Simple living and high thinking’ and its objective is to transform the individual and society. Therefore, in the turbulent times where the world is grappled with so many problems, it is imperative to strive to inculcate Gandhian philosophy in various facets of life and governance.

**KEYWORDS:** Gandhi, non-violence, simple, high, governance, father, nation, philosophy

## I.INTRODUCTION

### Major Gandhian Ideologies

**Truth and Non-violence:** They are the twin cardinal principles of Gandhian thoughts. For Gandhi ji, truth is the relative truth of truthfulness in word and deed, and the absolute truth - the ultimate reality. This ultimate truth is God (as God is also Truth) and morality - the moral laws and code - its basis. Nonviolence, far from meaning mere peacefulness or the absence of overt violence, is understood by Mahatma Gandhi to denote active love - the pole opposite of violence, in every sense. Satyagraha: Gandhi ji called his overall method of nonviolent action Satyagraha. It means the exercise of the purest soul-force against all injustice, oppression and exploitation. It is a method of securing rights by personal suffering and not inflicting injury on others. Sarvodaya: Sarvodaya is a term meaning 'Universal Uplift' or 'Progress of All'. The term was first coined by Gandhi ji as the title of his translation of John Ruskin's tract on political economy, "Unto This Last". [1,2]

**Swaraj:** Although the word swaraj means self-rule, Gandhi ji gave it the content of an integral revolution that encompasses all spheres of life. For Gandhi ji, swaraj of people meant the sum total of the swaraj (self-rule) of individuals and so he clarified that for him swaraj meant freedom for the meanest of his countrymen. And in its fullest sense, swaraj is much more than freedom from all restraints, it is self-rule, self-restraint and could be equated with moksha or salvation. Trusteeship: Trusteeship is a socio-economic philosophy that was propounded by Gandhi ji. It provides a means by which the wealthy people would be the trustees of trusts that looked after the welfare of the people in general. Swadeshi: The word swadeshi derives from Sanskrit and is a conjunction of two Sanskrit words. 'Swa' means self or own and 'desh' means country. So swadesh means one's own country. Swadeshi, the adjectival form, means of one's own country, but can be loosely translated in most contexts as self-sufficiency. Swadeshi is the focus on acting within and from one's own community, both politically and economically. It is the interdependence of community and self-sufficiency. [3,4]

### Application of Various Facets of Gandhian Ideology

**Civil Services:** Truth lies at the core of Gandhian philosophy as he himself has tried to remain truthful throughout his life. Gandhian view of truth was irreversible in different contexts irrespective of the urgency of the situation. This was why Gandhiji cancelled the Non-Cooperation movement after the satyagrahis deviated from the path of truth and a violent incident of Chaurichaura took place. This principle of truthfulness to self and to the public is essential for civil servants in the current context to rampant corruption. Peace And Stability in the World: Non-Violence is a key component of Gandhianism, which was the great weapon used by Gandhiji during the freedom movement of India against British Raj. Gandhiji believed non-violence and tolerance require a great level of courage and patience. In a world that is moving through the phases of war marred by violence and terrorism, there is a significant requirement of Gandhian idea of Non-violence more and more today than the past days. Secularism: Gandhianism was tolerant towards all religions and the world today needs more and more religiously and faith wise tolerant people in societies where violence is committed in the name of religion. Tolerance in the society will help in neutralizing the ethnocentric bias in the globe that is taking place day by day on the basis of religion, caste, ethnicity and region etc. [5,6] Creation of Casteless Society: Gandhiji was against the caste system and coined the term Harijan to pay respect to the lower caste people. As the Caste system is still prevalent in the Indian society, the Gandhian philosophy is useful to create a



casteless society where everyone is treated equally irrespective of their caste. Gandhian Socialism: Gandhian view of socialism is not political but more social in its approach, as Gandhiji thought of a society with no poverty, no hunger, no unemployment and education and health for all. These Gandhian ideologies will continue to act as the lighthouse for Indian policy makers. From poverty alleviation to Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and universal health care (Ayushman Bharat) to skill India programs everywhere the core inspiration comes from Gandhianism. Decentralization: Gandhian idea of decentralization of power can be implemented in democracies through empowered local self governments at grass root level. Indian government, for instance, has implemented local self government by adopting the Panchayati Raj and Municipality system in rural and urban areas respectively. Cleanliness: Gandhiji laid great emphasis upon cleanliness or Swacchta, as he used to say- 'Swacchta Hin Seva'. The recent Swacchta Bharat Abhiyaan, the biggest cleanliness drive of India, is to fulfill the dream of Bapu by making India clean. However, this cleanliness drive is more than physical cleanliness and the need to lay more emphasis upon the internal cleanliness of the individual. [7,8] Thus, along with clean roads, toilets for a clean India we require a corruption free society with greater levels of transparency and accountability too. Sustainable Environment: Gandhiji held that "Earth has enough for Human needs, But not for Human greed's". These lines of Mahatma Gandhi reflect upon how human behaviour destroys nature and how a sustainable way of living is the need of the hour. The world is whirling under the burden of global warming, climate change and resource crunch and all environmental conservation treaties and sustainable development efforts must implement this Gandhian philosophy. Ethical Importance: On the ethical and behavioural part Gandhianism has much significance today because society is witnessing the degradation of values. Societal values have degraded to such an extent that people don't hesitate to kill someone for the gratification of their own needs. Respect for women is one of the major ideas of Gandhian philosophy and the world is witnessing the increased level of violence, subjugation women face nowadays in society. Thus, Gandhian dream of a safe country necessitates social consciousness and women emancipation. [9,10]

## II. DISCUSSION

Gandhiji's political contributions offered us Independence but his ideologies enlightened India as well as the world even today after so many years. Every individual, thus, should follow the key Gandhian ideologies in their day to day life for a happy, prosperous, healthy, harmonious and sustainable future. "Generations to come, it may well be, will scarce believe that such a man as this one ever in flesh and blood walked upon this Earth." Albert Einstein This famous quote by Albert Einstein on Mahatma Gandhi was said on Gandhiji's 70th birthday. Indeed, he inspired millions of lives, and his contribution to the 20th century is very well known. He not only contributed to the struggle against colonialism but blazed a new trail that insists that struggles for justice and truth should be based on non-violence.

In addition, it proved to be an inspiration for many others including Martin Luther King Jr. and Nelson Mandela for the struggles against injustice in other parts of the world.

Mandela while the unveiling of Gandhi Memorial in South Africa once said, "The Mahatma is an integral part of our history because it is here that he first experimented with truth; here that he demonstrated his characteristic firmness in pursuit of justice; here that he developed Satyagraha as a philosophy and a method of struggle." [11,12]

Gandhi was a staunch believer in truth. In fact, the very naming of his autobiography, "My Experiments with Truth" reflects his life-long observance and experimentation with the truth. Another important philosophy he promoted was that of Non-violence. His full political strategy was based on this. He was completely against the use of violence in achieving one's goal. This is an important principle put forward by Gandhi as it helped to avoid bloodshed in various pursuits. Mahatma Gandhi's five pillars of nonviolence: respect, understanding, acceptance, appreciation, and compassion are basic to our existence.

But coming to the present times, does the Gandhian message still has or could have the actuality in managing our century's real-life challenges?

Today, world problems are not limited to internal conflicts and matters. Issues like border management, environmental problems, nuclear issues, or the deepening moral crisis of humanity, etc. We are living in a world that is divided increasingly day by day by global unrest, fear, anger, hatred, discontent, despair, immorality, etc., and the number and intensity of ethnic and religious conflicts seem to grow, gaining higher and higher intensity all around the world. Past examples have proved that war and violent ways to resolve such conflicts are not always a good idea. It will lead to bloodshed and a loss of human life and resources and slow down the process of our development.

During the Second World War, Gandhi declared that Hitler, Stalin, and Mussolini will demonstrate once again the emptiness of violence, which means in his perception that all the violence used by the above-mentioned people has an



immediate effect, which is, as a matter of fact, transitory and will leave behind hatred and devastation. From his point of view, only the “effects of Buddha’s non-violent action persist and are likely to grow with age.”

There will always be conflicts, great and small, in human affairs. Total war can no longer settle conflicts. And clearly, no conflict can be ended in its inner reality by the alleged deterrence from the possession of nuclear weapons. [13,14] In such a stalemate the possibility of using nonviolent resistance might be worth examining. At first mention, the term “nonviolent resistance” seems self-contradictory. How can any resistance be effective in this modern world unless it has in it and backing it up, great strength, power, and if need be, weapons?

Prof. N. Radhakrishnan (Non-violence activist, Educator) explained it well–

Since Gandhi was assassinated and there are all kinds of discussions both in India and abroad on what Gandhi left for humanity and whether his teachings would survive the test of time.

What even the passionate critic of Gandhi cannot miss is the string of activities along Gandhian lines one can see in almost all countries of the world now. If not in very significant measure, there are very few countries in the world where something or other in the name of Gandhi is not being organized. In short, there is a global nonviolent awakening after Gandhi.

It is widely accepted now that the core of the legacy Gandhi left for humanity, is that he taught us that truth is greater than all worldly possessions, and that slavery, violence, injustice, and disparities are inconsistent with truth.

Though, quite a large number of people believe that the new social order Gandhi envisioned is too idealistic and an unattainable utopia only fit enough for academic and semantic interpretations. But what Gandhi left is not a set of theoretical formulations, on the contrary, a carefully evolved vision of an organically sound and mutually supportive and respecting independent world order.[15,16]

Gandhi warned humanity of this dangerous situation as early as 1909 when he pointed out in the seminal work ‘Hind Swaraj’, that unprincipled growth will land humans on the brink of disaster. Even his own close disciples raised their eyebrows of disagreement when he said this.

The evil that we are to fight is within us and that we are ignorant of it is the basic problem. Motifs such as give and take, live and let live, love and to be loved have become clichés in the new dictionary compiled by the champions of unlimited growth. This can be possible only if we adopt a holistic vision of life and ensure equality and justice which presupposes the simple truth that each individual is unique and we should respect his/her individuality and let him/her maintain each one’s uniqueness and what applies to an individual should apply to a nation or at a global level.

Gandhi further warned humanity against a series of social and political turmoil, ecological devastation, and other human misery that might arise unless modern civilization takes care of nature and man tries to live in harmony with nature and strives to reduce his wants. Unlimited-consumerist tendencies and callous indifference to values will not help humanity to progress towards peace, he warned. Hatred of all forms, exploitation in whichever manner it exists, is the negation of humanity’s basic right to exist.

The Gandhian legacy of simple living in conformity with the basic rhythm of life typifies the age-old wisdom of humanity.

Gandhi also tries to convince humanity that wars never solved any problem. On the contrary, reconciliation should help humanity sort out the various problems. Thus, in Gandhi, as has been pointed out by many thinkers in different parts of the world, we have a world leader who dreamt of a warless world and promoter of a social order where exploitation and injustice will not become the dominant tendencies.[17,18]

Therefore, Gandhi’s political and social philosophy in general and his approach to the concepts of Truth, non-violence, and satyagraha in particular, could be the starting point of the regeneration or rebirth of non-violent or less violent cultures and societies.

The whole non-violent philosophy of the Mahatma, based on the two core concepts of the Gandhian heritage, is not a new proposition. Gandhi himself says that “I have nothing new to teach the World. Truth and non-violence are as old as the hills. All I have done is to try experiments in both on as vast scale as I could.” In other words, we can say that the Mahatma just tried to revive and to make much more understandable those old teachings for the whole world, to make them usable in the new social and political context. There are various dynamics associated with his teachings that could be analyzed and adopted according to the requisites of the situation.



Hence while his contribution during the century of his life was great indeed, his contribution in the next century where the world is threatened by a man-made survival crisis could be even higher as a well-thought-out application of his ideas to resolving present-day serious existential crisis could be of great value.

The Gandhian vision of society does not recognize man-made barriers but at the same time as Gandhi often insisted while we should welcome all that is best in other traditions when we allow the winds of other cultures to blow in, we should refuse to be swept off our feet. This indicates that one cannot be an internationalist without being a nationalist.[19]

### III.RESULTS

Gandhi once said,

“My mission is not merely the brotherhood of Indian humanity. My mission is not merely the freedom of India, though today it undoubtedly engrosses practically the whole of my life and the whole of my time. The true realization of freedom of India, I hope, would realize and carry on the mission of the brotherhood of man. My patriotism is not an exclusive thing. It is all-embracing and I should reject patriotism which sought to mount upon the distress or the exploitation of other nationalities. I want to realize brotherhood or identity not merely with the beings called human, but I want to realize identity with all life, even with such thing as that crawl on earth”.

After, all these being said, the only question that comes to my mind, whether we, the people of the 21st century, are moral, open-minded, and wise enough to understand the Gandhian teaching.

I could only hope that the answer is yes.

Today, Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy is looked at as a live experience with potential for transformation leading to a Global Awakening. Irrespective of time, geographical space, and cultural background, his values such as truth (Satya), nonviolence (Ahimsa), human dignity and respect, and the love of our fellow beings are more relevant today.

People still remember and cherish the person who was incredibly responsible for achieving this freedom. Often quoted, Mahatma Gandhi is remembered for his teachings. His ideas still resonate in people's minds. However, how relevant are these ideas of non-violence and truth that give us freedom today? Mahatma Gandhi is considered the most splendid Statesman of India. His ideas and views still hold a significant position in the country's policies and governance and underline the most humane way to resolve many of the problems that plague our society.

Born in Porbandar, Gujarat, Gandhi played a significant role in India's struggle for freedom. His thoughts of ahimsa and truth, swadeshi and swaraj, helped India free itself from colonial rule. However, the central question is whether this policy is still relevant at present times or not. Let us compare the Gandhian policy with its present scenario.[20]

*Gandhi's Policy Still Relevant:*

#### *1. Ahimsa:*

Mahatma Gandhi's principle of non-violence is very relevant as the world faces terrorism and other forms of violence. Mahatma Gandhi's policy of non-violence was based on the concept of non-violence and compassion. Against colonial violence, he proposed a nonviolent response. In his view, a calm, nonviolent response reduces the attacker's wrath and frustration and is a more potent weapon than violence. The Salt March of 1930 was one of the most famous acts of Gandhi's peaceful resistance. In present times, the ideal of non-violence needs to guide the approach of individuals and nations, and world organizations, like violence, initiate a vicious circle of repression and injustice.

India at present faces a threat from Chinese expansionist policies, but it is Gandhi's philosophy that is helping India not wage any China war. In the west, India constantly is facing the belligerent attitude of Pakistan, but the ahimsa policy of the country holds its respect in International forums. Still, after 74 years of Independence, Gandhi's ahimsa policy holds ground.

#### *2. Satyagraha:*

Gandhiji called the general method of nonviolent action 'Satyagraha'. It is the expression of the purest spiritual power against all injustice, oppression, and exploitation. Satyagraha was thought of as the moral alternative to war.

Gandhi has shown us how to solve problems and conflicts from the micro to the macro level and has proved to be an effective remedy. Many contemporary challenges related to human rights, sustainable development, climate change, socio-political unrest, war and peace, terrorism, and politico-administrative corruption can be corrected using Gandhian Ideology. The critical aspect of satyagraha is standing for truth using non-violent means, and this ideology needs to be implemented in all spheres of society.



The farmers protesting against the Farm Law have also resorted to non-violence at present to reveal their interest in the Law passed by the Government.[18]

### 3. *Swaraj:*

According to Mahatma Gandhi “Real Swaraj will come, not by the acquisition of authority by a few, but by the acquisition of the capacity by all to resist authority when it is abused“. Swaraj holds a significant position in today’s society. In the age of markets laden with products based on generating and gratifying instant of social approval, and when public imagination is becoming increasingly vulnerable to demagogues, the economic, social, spiritual, and political connotations of swaraj still continue to be significant.

### 4. *Swadeshi:*

Indigenous peoples focus on political and economic action inside and outside their communities. It is the interdependence of community and self-reliance. Gandhi’s thought of swadeshi is still prevalent in our society, by taking steps towards making India self-reliant.

During the Covid times, when India was witnessing a severe economic crisis, Prime Minister Narendra Modi called ‘Atma Nirbhar Bharat’, the second version of Swadeshi. This swadeshi form aims to make the country self-reliant. In order to free the country from the shackles of hunger, unemployment, poverty, swadeshi is the best path to unshackle these.

### 5. *Secularism:*

Gandhism was tolerant of all religions. Today, the world needs more and more religious and intelligently tolerant people in societies where violence is perpetrated in the name of religion. In society, tolerance helps to neutralize religion, caste, ethnicity, region, etc. in the world, based on day-to-day ethnic-Centered prejudices.

There are still different events held to inculcate the principles of secularism and equality in society. Though we witness different religion-based differences, i.e. Hindu and Muslim, it is the secularism ideology that is protecting the country from another partition.

### 6. *Communal Harmony:*

Gandhi always made an effort for Hindu-Muslim unity. At the present time, this ideology is equally significant. If Hindus and Muslims are united, the country can reach the heights of becoming a world power. A person should always respect others’ faith. Cases of mob lynching are also violating the Gandhian ideology of communal harmony, so steps should be taken in this direction

### 7. *Decentralization:*

The Gandhian idea of decentralization was implemented in democracies through the 73rd and 74th amendments, which empowered local self-governments at the grassroots level. Indian Government, for instance, has implemented local self-government by adopting the Panchayati Raj and Municipality system in rural and urban areas, respectively, and providing them with some subjects under the state list. This ideology of Gandhi is still relevant and plays a vital role in India’s grass root development.

### 8. *Cleanliness:*

Gandhi paid great attention to purity, or cleanliness and was a staunch advocate of ‘Swachhata’. He used to say, “Cleanliness hi Seva.” India’s most significant cleanliness initiative, the recently implemented Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, fulfills Babu’s dream of making India clean.[19]

However, this quest for purity goes beyond physical purity and requires more attention to inner purity. Therefore, for a clean India, with clean roads and toilets, we need a corruption-free society with a high degree of transparency and accountability, which is the need of the hour.

### 9. *Sustainable Environment:*

Gandhi always spoke of minimization of wants and advocated a nature-friendly idea. Gandhi believed that “there is enough on earth for human needs but not enough for human greed.” These lines from Mahatma Gandhi show how human behavior destroys nature, and there is a need for a sustainable lifestyle in our times.

The world revolves around global warming, climate change, and resource depletion, and all environmental covenants and sustainable development efforts must implement Gandhi’s philosophy. The recent coal crisis also compels us to follow the Gandhian philosophy of sustainable growth. Due to the increased consumption of resources like land, water, air, the carbon footprints are accelerating.





#### 10. Women Emancipation:

Gandhi played a vital role in bringing women out of their domestic work and involved them in public life. He was against the patriarchal form of society. With glass ceilings still far from being shattered in the public sphere, the Gandhian thought of women's emancipation remains relevant.

Gandhi's thought was an inspiration for the society. Ultimately, all ideas and thoughts of the Mahatma were reached by him via lifelong experimentation with truths, which makes Gandhian thoughts more significant in the present era. In order to become a superpower, India should pay homage to Gandhian ideology and walk in the assigned path.[20]

### IV.CONCLUSIONS

Although it is widely believed that Gandhism is a challenge to pursue in the 21st century; that is not the case. Gandhi's principles can be applied in the following ways:

1. Concept of Society: The contemporary society is a complex whole which is neither value-oriented nor purely speculative. Tradition and authority which were once revered are now utterly disregarded. The whole of humanity is steered by jealousy, distrust, suspicion and hatred. Violence, poverty and intolerance are on the rise. The outer homogeneity brought by science and civilization doesn't emanate with the inner unity of our souls. So, there is a dire need to reform our minds. He says that adherence to truthfulness should be our only purpose of existence. The ultimate end of the individual is the realization of truth and justice through consistent endeavours, not only for ourselves but for the entire humanity.
2. Economy: While it is generally recognized that socialism can't be established without the use of force, Mahatma Gandhi's idea of socialism involves the use of non-violence. He didn't believe in extremes and neither appreciated complete liberty, as in a capitalist democracy, nor regimentation as in communist dictatorships. His idea was that power is to be as decentralized as possible. Globalization means integration of world economies through cross-country exchange of goods, ideas, information, and many services. Dominant economies with the aid of Multinational Companies and International Organizations are serving their interests to the extent that often the interest of the poor countries is compromised.
3. Education: Mahatma Gandhi thought that humanization of knowledge can lead us to immunization of ideas against communal distrust. He was critical of traditional education and said that being literate doesn't mean being educated.
4. Swaraj: Swaraj meant to be free from external influences and foreign control. Now the country is independent and free from any external control. In today's competitive and fast-paced world, there must be control over our inner conscience. Self-empowerment is the need of the hour. Every person should search for their own identity, and shouldn't try to fit themselves in the moulds created by society.
5. Technology: The Gandhian principles are still relevant and technology can be used to enhance their effectiveness. The main tenet that he propagated was Satya.

It would include truth with respect to speech, reality as it exists and good as opposed to immoral, evil, and bad. As opposed to this, in contemporary times, people are not truthful and they are not presented with the existing reality of the system.

Here, technology plays its part. Technology can help bring the reality and truth out of the systems. It can curb our main evil, corruption. Information and Communications Technology plays a significant role in this. It facilitates the movement of data among governmental institutions, among citizens and between citizens and government as well. It helps bring transparency, answerability, and public participation.[21]

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