

# RELEVANCE OF GANDHIAN THOUGHTS

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Mr. Shashank Kumar

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## Gandhi As Protagonist For Global Peace

Sunita S. Bhosle and Smita G. Basole  
Department of Botany, Balbhim College, Beed.

**Introduction :** All over the world, in different ways and in different fields, several developments are taking place that indicate a growing interest in a non-materialistic, nonviolent alternative to present modes of thinking. Whether or not those involved in these developments use or are even aware of Mahatma Gandhi's name and message, they are nevertheless promoting the values and principles he stood for. Mahatma Gandhi inspired the world with his faith in truth and justice for all Mankind. He was a great soul who loved even those who fought against his ideals to bring about peace with non-violence.

How could a meek and fragile person of small physical stature inspire millions to bring about a profound change in a way the mightiest had never achieved before? His achievements were nothing less than miracles — his creed was to bring peace to not only those who suffered injustice and sorrow but to espouse a new way of life for Mankind, with peace and harmony. His life was a message — a message of peace over power, of finding ways to reconcile our differences, and of living in harmony with respect and love even for our enemy. The force of power never wins against the power of love. At this hour of greatest unrest and turmoil in our world, the greatest force to be reckoned with lies within our hearts — a force of love and tolerance for all. Throughout his life, Mahatma Gandhi fought against the power of force during the heyday of British rein over the world. He transformed the minds of millions, including my father, to fight against injustice with peaceful means and non-violence. His message was as transparent to his enemy as it was to his followers. He believed that, if we fight for the cause of humanity and greater justice, it should include even those who do not conform to our cause. History attests to his power as he proved that we can bring about world peace by seeking and pursuing truth for the benefit of Mankind. We can resolve the greatest of our differences if we dare to have a constructive conversation with our enemy.

**Gandhian Philosophy for global peace:** Gandhi defined non-violence as refraining from “from root of the pain to, or assassination any life out of anger, or for a selfish intention, or with the purpose of

injuring it." Gandhian jurisprudence of non-violence has two aspects— non violence in thought and non-violence in action.

Over many centuries, world civilization has witnessed countless instances of warfare, battles, and conflicts duly capable of emptying the power of transmitting the human kind into forms what the emperors and rulers had never thought of. There existed unrivaled and rarest men among the human species who preached and practiced theories of peace that made the human race to evolve into a more progressive genus living of what he is today on this planet. Mahatma Gandhi is the greatest disciple of peace the world has seen after Buddha and Christ. His belief of peace is centered on nonviolence, eccentricity, soul force and amnesty. At first peek, global peace initiatives might be believed as extreme methodologies that have entirely deviated from his principles. Many modern researchers and philosophers feel that today's conflict are far more composite, so as their solutions. Global peace, global citizen, neo-modern trends and global issues have placed Gandhi at the backseat of the global forum. The practice of non-violence needs vast moral courage. It has no place for cowardice or weakness. It is the supreme asset of the audacious. True non-violence, for Gandhi, takes as fact the possession of unadulterated boldness. He contends the use of violence by those who do not know how to defend themselves, or the honor of their families in a non-violent way. He states that physical violence accompanied by mental good-will, is better than physical non-violence accompanied by mental violence.<sup>3</sup> Thus, Gandhian jurisprudence of non-violence contains some element of violence than feeble assent to civil.

**Satyagraha or Non-Violent Direct Action:** Satyagraha literally means holding swifly to truth, or devotion to truth, or firmness on truth. The noteworthy feature of Satyagraha is apprehending truth through non-violence and love. The canon of Satyagraha is based on the metaphysical faith that the oppressor may have power over the body and material possessions of a Satyagrahi, but not over his soul. Hence "the core can remain unconquered and unconquerable even when the body is imprisoned."<sup>9</sup> A Satyagrahi should overcome iniquity by good, untruth by truth, anger by love, and violence by non-violence.

Gandhi is much concerned to develop a innovative approach to political action and social change. The exceptional input of Gandhi to the modern world is the method of Satyagraha for social action. Gandhi believes that Satyagraha is an reliable means for determining all social, economic and political evils. The values of Satyagraha are based on the following assumptions.

(i) Man's nature is not beyond redemption, and it can be perfectible.

(ii) Human nature is one in its essence and responds to love.

(iii) What is possible to do for one man is equally possible for all.

**Panicles of Satyagraha.**

- The core principle of Satyagraha is not to destroy or injure the opponent, but to convert or prevail him by sympathy, patience and self-suffering.
- Satyagraha, as a tool of social action, is based on a strong moral content. Self-suffering is its distinctive character which discriminate it from all other forms of violent methods of action. Self-suffering is markedly more superior and powerful than the law of jungle for converting the opponent and opening his ears to the voice of reason.
- Self-sacrifice of one innocent person, in a Satyagraha movement, is a million times more potent than the sacrifice of a million men who die in the act of killing others.
- The basic objective of Satyagraha is to change the hearts of persons, or to reform the individual at the moral level.
- The multi-class or non-class character of Satyagraha movement is distinct from other methods of change, which mainly consists of the same class of persons.
- The scope of Satyagraha is much wider as it can be applied against our dearest and nearest since there is no hatred or anger or violence in it.
- Satyagraha is based on truth, works through non-violence, and achieves its end by converting or compelling the opponent through self-suffering.
- The significant feature of Satyagraha method lies in arousing consciousness of the masses, continuing education, maintaining the unity of the sufferers and makes them as fearless soldiers, providing them with a powerful organization, and throws them into heroic battles.

**Contribution of Gandhi's Non-violence to World Civilization:** Gandhi's concept of non-violence is not an absolute or a static idea, but a relative concept. He never tried of advocating absolute non-violence, because he thought that neither human life nor human institutions can

survive on the basis of pure non-violence. However, he is of the opinion that we can reduce violence to the maximum extent, because most destruction is unnecessary and avoidable. He suggests that we should commit to least violence that is inevitable for the survival of human life. Violence, when it is unavoidable, must be employed in an ethical spirit, that is, for the sake of creating a more suitable environment for the growth of non-violence. The practice of non-violence requires immense moral courage. It has no room for cowardice or weakness. It is the supreme virtue of the brave. True non-violence, for Gandhi, presupposes the possession of unadulterated fearlessness. He justified the use of violence by those who does not know how to defend themselves, or the honor of their families in a non-violent way. He regards that physical violence accompanied by mental good-will, is better than physical non-violence accompanied by mental violence. Thus, Gandhi's concept of non-violence accommodates some element of violence than helpless submission to evil.

Violence, for Gandhi, means "a violent intention behind a thought, word, or deed, that is, an intention to harm." He never prepared to sacrifice human life in order to save sub-human life, or to sacrifice all other social values for the sake of non-violence. Gandhi says that when a woman is assaulted, self protection is her immediate duty. She should not think in terms of violence or non-violence. She should resist the evil with all her might to defend her honor. He categorically declared that he is prepared to sacrifice non-violence for the sake of truth. Unlike Tolstoy and many other pacifists, Gandhi is not an absolute pacifist because he considers that some sort of violence is an unavoidable aspect of human life. It is a fallacy to believe that violence and non-violence are opposites, one canceling the other. In fact, they are both instruments of social change. It is unhistorical to presume that violence achieves nothing because there is much achievement to its credit. All that Gandhi asserts is that, in the long run, non-violence is likely to be more productive than violence. The practice of non-violence, for Gandhi, is an exercise in the art of possible.

Non-Violence, as Gandhi conceived it, is not a negative virtue. It is not merely abstaining from violence or harmlessness, but a positive state of love, or doing good even to the evil-doer. Doing good to the evil-doer does not mean to support his evil acts, but it means to resist his evil acts without hatred or harm to him. Thus the underlying principle of non-violence is "hate the sin, but not the sinner." Gandhi's concept of non-violence should not be equated with inaction or non-action. It is neither a resignation from fighting against wickedness nor a meek submission to the will of the evil-doer. It is an active condemnation of untruth,

without violence, anger or malice. It is an active fight against all wickedness or putting one's soul against the will of the tyrant to win over him by love. Non-violence in its positive sense implies sacrificing one's own life for the sake of truth. Thus, the philosophy of non-violence is aimed at reconstructing, remodeling and reshaping human nature. Gandhi believes that man is a part of God, or the same divine spark resides in all men. Hence every man is potentially divine in his nature. Human beings are fundamentally same and they share common origin and common destiny. Since the same spirit or divinity resides in all men, the possibility of reforming the meanest of men cannot be ruled out. Gandhi holds that what one man is capable of achieving is possible for all men to attain it. Therefore, instead of seeking to convert the opponent through non-violent means, to destroy him by violent means, is to deny the possibility of human perfection.

**Conclusion:** Violence and non-violence are the two natural impulses of all cerebral beings. These two distinct instincts have been inherited from nature. When compared to human species, the violent impulse is dominant and pervasive in beasts than in men. Thus man has his animal nature as well as the power of reason and judgment, which no other animal possesses. In the course of evolution, man has made continuous progress in the cultivation of non-violent tendencies in him.

Man, as a social being, understands that mutual assistance and cooperation with his fellow beings may render his life more easy and happy. So he has been able to build up his civilization and culture with the cooperation of his fellow beings. Human species, by applying reason and judgment, have been able to make astonishing progress. When the beastly qualities of human nature are suppressed, the scope of non-violence in man increases, and human society will be elevated to a higher plane. A civilization may be said to have advanced if it succeeds in controlling the animal passions of man. Violence is counter-productive, resulting in anger, hatred, jealousy, revenge and bloodshed. Therefore, non-violent means is the only alternative to eradicate the beastly and anti-social tendencies from the human mind, and to elevate human society to a superior plane wherein the entire humanity can live in peace and harmony.

In the history of humanity there has always been a desire for peace in the human mind. In spite of many wars man has endeavored to establish peace in the world, and accepted peace as a necessary condition for the progress of human civilization. Whenever constructive value war had in the past, of righting wrongs and establishing justice and equality, today it is only a destructive force. The nuclear war has lost its essential characteristic of being a specific

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means of resolving conflicts between nations because it destroys all, and there are no victors or defeated in it. Unless we know the art of living at the personal and social level, and imbibe and practice uniform moral standards on international plane there is no scope to achieve peace in the world.

The present crisis of civilization is the direct result of the loosening hold of moral values and ethical ideals. Unless man grows in his spiritual character in proportion to his gigantic technological stature the future will be in danger. We have devised different sets of moral values and often these values conflict with one another. The affairs of the world must be based on uniform moral principles rather than mere economic planning or political arrangement for ensuring peace. The primitive morality of "an eye for an eye" is impractical because it ends up leaving every one blind, and therefore it should be replaced by "return good for evil", or "bless those that curse you."

### References

- M.K. Gandhi, *Young India*, 21-10-1926, p. 363.
- Gandhi asserts: "I do believe that, where there is only a choice between cowardice and violence, I would advice violence." M.K. Gandhi, *Young India*, 11-08-1920, p3.
- Cf. Raghavan N. IYER, *The Moral and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi* (Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 331.
- Gandhi observes: "Strictly speaking no activity and no industry is possible without a certain amount of violence, no matter how little. Even the very process of living is impossible without a certain amount of violence. What we have to do is to minimize it to the greatest extent possible."
- M.K.Gandhi, "*Harijan*", 28-07-1960, pp-271-72.
- Gandhi asserts: "I do believe that, where there is only a choice between cowardice and violence, I would advice violence."
- M.K.Gandhi, "*Young Inida*", 11-08-1920, p-3.
- 6Cf. Raghavan N. IYER, "*The Moral and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi*" (Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1973), p.331.
- M.K.Gandhi, "*Harijan*" 19-12-1936, P.362.
- Gandhi says: "I am not able to accept in its entirety the doctrine of non-killing of animals ... who devour or cause hurt to man ... I will never sacrifice a man's life in order to save theirs."
- M.K.Gandhi, "*Non-Violence in peace and War*", Vol.II (Ahmedabad, Navajivan Publishing House, 1957), p.63.
- Gandhi argues: "If non-violence fails to defend the honour of a women, it is not at all non-violence."
- M.K.Gandhi, "*Non-Violence in peace and War*", Vol.II, (Ahmedabad, Navajivan Publishing House, 1957), p-7

