

Gandhi – A Proponent of Non-Violence in Current Scenario

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ABSTRACT

Mahatma Gandhi, the father of the Indian nation, is considered one of the most convincing advocates of non-violence (Ahimsa) in world history. His philosophy of Satyagraha and non-violent resistance stimulated global movements for civil rights, freedom, and social justice. In modern times, where border conflicts, wars, terrorism, and political unrest are widespread, Gandhi's principles of non-violence offer a sustainable route toward peace and justice. This research paper discusses the relevance of Gandhian non-violence in contemporary society, analyzing its application in modern socio-political movements, conflict resolution, and ethical leadership. The paper argues that Gandhi's teachings are still indispensable in fostering global harmony and human dignity.

Keywords: Ahimsa; Satyagraha; Sarvodaya; Swadeshi

INTRODUCTION

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, popularly known as Mahatma Gandhi, pioneered the use of non-violent resistance to lead India to independence from British rule. His philosophy was rooted in the principles of Ahimsa, Satyagraha, Swaraj, and Swadeshi. In an era dominated by violence whether in wars, terrorism, or systemic oppression, Gandhi's ideas present an alternative approach to conflict resolution.

Gandhi's greatest contribution to human right thought and practice is his conception of truth and non-violence. He never claimed that he was trying to teach something new. He said "*Truth and Non-violence are as old as hills*". He was only trying to appreciate and understand the marvel and majesty of both. They are meant not only for individual practice by groups, communities and nationalities. Gandhi proved the strength of non-violence in India. He showed how a whole nation could be liberated without army. It was a triumph of human will over oppression and injustice. It was an indication that human revolution is possible through dynamic leadership and that a true revolution needs not to be violent. This is the first time in the history of the world, when a huge nation achieved independence by non-violence.

The notion of 'non-violence' has been defined and explained by numerous scholars, thinkers and philosophers from time to time. It is a state of just opposed to violence. Non-violence practitioners use a variety of methods in their campaigns for social change, and civil disobedience. Gandhian concept of 'Ahimsa' not only exemplifies a fine synchronization among the various concepts of non-violence of India and the rest of Asia, but it also creates different perceptions of the East and the West, furthermore, besides retaining its own exclusive uniqueness of the ancient, medieval and contemporary periods, and also the modern time.

There is an integral vigor in his concept. It has the practicability in its roots. Besides, it provides for its improvement as per the needs of time. The concept of Ahimsa elucidates the undisputed relevance and adaptability of concept of non-violence in the current perspective. In modern times, non-violence is a powerful tool for social protest. There are countless instances of its use in non-violent resistance and non-violent

revolution, including Mahatma Gandhi leading a decade's long non-violent struggle against British Rule in India, which in due course helped India win its independence in 1947, Martin Luther King's adoption of Gandhi's Non-violent method in the struggle to win civil rights for African-American and Cesar Chavez's campaigns of non-violence in the 1960's to protest the treatment of Farm workers in California.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The major objectives of this study are:

- 1) To study the Gandhian concept of non-violence
- 2) To understand the relevance of non-violence in contemporary times
- 3) To explore how his principles can be applied in the present scenario to address global challenges.

METHODOLOGY

This study is analytical and descriptive in nature. After collecting relevant information, there is analysis of data about the basic realities of Gandhian non-violence in global politics. Relevant material has been collected from articles and books.

DISCUSSION

Gandhian non-violence is a philosophy and strategy for social change that rejects the use of violence; thus, non-violence is an alternative to passive acceptance of oppression or of armed struggle against it. Non-violence is constituted by the two words i.e. 'non' and 'violence'. The former 'non' is a prefix which after its use with a word simply explains negative or opposite state of the word concerned. The term violence is derived from the Latin word '*violare*'. Its root may be traced to the Latin words '*vis*' means a force and '*fero*' means '*to carry*'. So, *vis* and *fero* could be interpreted as '*to do something by force*'. The currently prevalent English word violence is itself observed in terms of expression of physical or verbal force against self or others. It is synonym to a compelling action against one's will.

Gandhi's Philosophy of Non-Violence

Gandhi's concept of non-violence was not merely the absence of physical violence but a comprehensive ethical framework that included:

1) Ahimsa

The doctrine of Ahimsa is a fundamental ethical principle which advocates non-violence and compassion toward all living being. The term Ahimsa is a Sanskrit word which means '*no-injury*' or '*no-harm*' in thought, word, and deed.

2) Satyagraha

Satyagraha is again a Sanskrit word which means '*holding onto truth*'. It combines Satya (truth) and Agraaha (firmness or insistence) to create a moral force against injustice. It is a method of nonviolent resistance against injustice through peaceful means. The core principles of Satyagraha include non-violence, truth, self-suffering and fearlessness. Various methods adopted for Satyagraha are civil disobedience, non-cooperation, fasting and strikes etc. Gandhi called Satyagraha '*the weapon of the strong*' emphasizing that true strength lies in moral courage, not brute force.

3) Sarvodaya

In Sanskrit, Sarvodaya means '*Universal welfare*' or '*Progress for all*'. It was socio-economic vision of universal uplift., inspired by John Ruskin's book '*Unto This Last*'. It advocates a just and equitable

society where every individual's well-being is prioritized. The core principles of Sarvodaya are antyodaya i.e. 'uplift of the last person', trusteeship, decentralized and self-reliant economy, local empowerment etc. It was a radical call for progress without exploitation. Vinoba Bhave persuaded landlords to donate land to landless peasants. Villages collectively managed resources for equality.

4) **Swadeshi**

Swadeshi means economic and political independence through local empowerment. It encompasses the core principle of Indian self-reliance i.e. '*Atmanirbhar Bharat*' and promotes local production, indigenous industries, and economic decentralization as tools for political and moral independence. Boycott of British Goods, Khadi Movement, Salt March were some of the key movements which were inspired by Swadeshi. In post-Independence, focus on small-scale industries in early Five-Year Plans of India was the result of Swadeshi.

Gandhi demonstrated the effectiveness of non-violence through various movements, proving that moral courage could dismantle oppressive systems without bloodshed. The concept of Ahimsa epitomizes a fine coordination among the various other concepts. Mahatma Gandhi has accorded a wonderful dimension to the theory and practice of Ahimsa. After Gautama Buddha, it is perhaps only Mahatma Gandhi who effectively and successfully adopted Ahimsa according to demand of the time. He brought the concept of Ahimsa completely out of the domain of extremism and uniquely in the political sphere. Moreover, he remains the source of inspiration for so many others around the world even after he passed away, particularly for those who desire success through non-violence in socio-political spheres.

In one of his articles on non-violence, Mahatma Gandhi wrote, non-violence is not a rough thing as it has been enunciated. Undoubtedly, it is a part of non-violence to abstain from hurting some living being, but it is only an iota pertaining to its identity. The principle on non-violence is also shattered by every evil thought, false utterance, hatred or wishing something bad unto someone. It is also shattered per possession of necessary worldly things.

Gandhi's example transcended colour and politics. Leaders like Martin Luther King, Dalai Lama, Nelson Mandel, Aung San Suu Kyi saw that Ahimsa is powerful than armed protest. Ahimsa literally means no injury. In view of Gandhi, the doctrine of Ahimsa means to offend anyone, to harbor an uncharitable thought even of one's enemy. The practice of Ahimsa calls forth the greatest courage. **Martin Luther King**, who fought for the cause of Blacks in America, explains "*True non-violent resistance is not unrealistic submission to evil power. It is rather courageous confrontation of evil by the power of love*".

Aung San Suu Kyi, the symbol of non-violent protest in Myanmar and even considered as the '*Burma Gandhi*' once said "*The ideas of Gandhi demonstrated to the world, the supremacy of moral force over force based on the might of arms or empire.*" His holiness, 14th **Dalai Lama** aptly remarked "*to me Gandhi was and is the consummate politician, a man who put belief in altruism above any personal consideration*". Gandhi was a great man with deep understanding of human nature. He made every effort to encourage full development of positive aspects of human potential and to reduce or restrain the negative. Consequently, he showed by example that personal liberation is integral to the successful achievement of national liberation. In the words of **Albert Einstein**, "*Generation to come will scarce believe that such a one as this ever in flesh and blood walked upon this earth*".

Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is the minds of men that defenses of peace must be constructed. Mahatma Gandhi asserted that the world either progresses with non-violence or perished with violence. He always searched for ways and means to lessen tension and promote harmony in various spheres of human behavior. **Martin Luther King** said "*If humanity is to progress, Gandhi is inescapable. His life, thought and*

actions are inspired by the vision of a humanity evolving towards a world of peace and harmony. We may ignore him at our own risks”.

Relevance of Gandhian Non-violence in the Present Scenario

1) Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding

Modern conflicts such as the Russia-Ukraine war, India-Pakistan war, Israel-Palestine tensions, Israel-Iran conflict and civil wars in Africa demonstrate the failure of militaristic solutions. Gandhi's approach of dialogue, empathy, and reconciliation offers a sustainable alternative. Organizations like the United Nations and peace activists increasingly emphasize non-violent mediation, reflecting Gandhian principles.

2) Social Justice Movements

Movements like Black Lives Matter (BLM), climate activism, and farmers' protests have adopted non-violent resistance inspired by Gandhi. Figures like Martin Luther King Jr. and Nelson Mandela applied Gandhian methods to fight racial injustice, proving that non-violence can challenge systemic oppression effectively.

3) Environmental Sustainability

Gandhi's principle of simple living and sustainable consumption aligns with modern environmental movements. His advocacy for minimalism and respect for nature resonates with today's fight against climate change, urging societies to adopt eco-friendly lifestyles.

4) Political and Ethical Leadership

In an age of authoritarianism and corruption, Gandhi's emphasis on moral integrity in leadership is crucial. Leaders who prioritize truth, transparency, and public welfare over power embody Gandhian values, fostering trust in governance.

Challenges to Gandhian Non-Violence Today

Despite its relevance, Gandhi's philosophy faces significant challenges in the modern complex geopolitical and socio-economic world:

1) Rise of Extremism

Terrorism and radical ideologies reject dialogue in favour of violence. Groups like ISIS, Boko Haram, and militant extremists reject dialogue, forcing military responses.

2) Militarization

Governments use surveillance, internet shutdowns, and brute force against non-violent protests, making resistance harder.

3) Political Repression

Governments often suppress non-violent protests with force.

4) Media Manipulation

Misinformation can undermine peaceful movements. Fake news and AI-driven propaganda fuel hatred, weakening trust in truth.

5) Corporate Power & Economic Inequality

Multinational corporations (e.g., fast fashion, Big Pharma) exploit labor and resources, making ethical boycotts (Swadeshi) difficult. Strikes and labor movements are crushed by corporate lobbying and automation.

6) Short-termism

Societies often prefer quick, aggressive solutions over long-term peaceful strategies.

Gandhian non-violence remains a powerful moral force, but modern challenges demand innovative strategies, combining digital activism, legal battles, and global solidarity while staying rooted in Ahimsa.

Alternatives to Gandhian Philosophy in Modern Resistance & Governance

While Gandhi's principles of Ahimsa, Swadeshi, and Satyagraha remain influential, several alternative philosophies have emerged to address contemporary challenges. These alternatives either modify, reject, or supplement Gandhian thought based on different ideological frameworks.

1) Marxist & Revolutionary Socialism

Marxists argue oppressed people have the right to armed revolution. For example, Naxalite movement in India can only be controlled by armed struggle.

2) Ambedkar & Radical Dalit Resistance

Ambedkar believed oppressed communities must fight aggressively for rights. He preferred legal safeguards for harijan upliftment.

3) Eco-anarchism

It prefers decentralized, anti-capitalist ecological resistance beyond Gandhian simplicity by using civil disobedience more aggressively than Gandhi.

4) Feminist & Intersectional resistance

Feminists challenge patriarchy, caste, and capitalism, demands accountability and emphasizes MeToo and non-tolerance policy.

5) Digital Resistance

It uses technology as a tool to expose corruption. It is a faster tool who reaches to grassroots level more promptly.

Though Gandhi emphasis on truth, non-violence, and self-reliance inspires many but this method is very slow, whereas Marxist, Ambedkar, feminist, or eco-radical approaches gain traction. The questions are, "*Can Gandhi's ideals evolve to include armed resistance in extreme cases?*" or "*Is pure non-violence the only ethical path?*"

CONCLUSION

Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence remains a beacon of hope in a turbulent world. While contemporary challenges test its applicability, history has shown that non-violent resistance can achieve lasting change. From civil rights to climate justice, Gandhian principles continue to inspire movements that seek justice without hatred or destruction. In an interconnected world facing existential threats, embracing non-violence is not just an ethical choice but a necessity for survival. As Gandhi famously said, "*An eye for an eye will only*

make the whole world blind.” The present scenario demands a renewed commitment to his vision of peace, justice, and human dignity.

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