

## MAHATMA GANDHI'S POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY ON FREEDOM STRUGGLE IN INDIA

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### ABSTRACT

*This paper focused at Gandhi's political philosophy. Following his return from South Africa, Gandhi's first Satyagraha in India took place at Champaran. Gandhi made a daring effort at truth and non-violence with his research into the tenants of Champaran's indigo production. The Champaran Satyagraha technique was an important experiment in India. Gandhi began his amazing endeavour in India with the Champaran Satyagraha after his return from South Africa. The article also examined Gandhi's political contributions to the Indian Constitution, including secularism, panchayats, the elimination of untouchability, freedom of expression, etc., and its applicability today. Last but not least, I had gained a basic awareness of the current social issues that had recently emerged, and I hoped to address them in the context of Gandhian ideals so that real democracy would triumph. Therefore, the primary emphasis of this essay was on Gandhiji's political accomplishments and ideals, as well as their current applicability. His political beliefs included secularism, decentralisation, freedom of expression, the elimination of untouchability, moral politics, and stateless and partyless democracy. Gandhian political principles or ideals are very relevant in today's world of rising intolerance and violence. This essay analyses Gandhi's strategies and tactics during the Non-Cooperation Movement and the Indian national liberation fight.*

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**Keywords:** Political Philosophy, Secularism, Panchayats, Non-Cooperation Movement.

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### Introduction

It is widely acknowledged that Gandhiji, the proponent of non-violence, was a great revolutionary leader who helped his nation gain its independence and establish equality with the rest of the world via the implementation of his method of non-violence and self-suffering. The traditional, western definition of the word "political philosopher" did not apply to Mahatma Gandhi. He never claimed or pretended to have the ability to advance a novel political ideology. He kept the old ideas in place while guiding people toward a more just society by using certain basic concepts and methods based on reality. Due to his evident virtues and uncomplicated way of living, he became popular throughout India. The personification of humanism on our planet was Mahatma Gandhi. In his aspirations of India, Mahatma Gandhi portrayed it as a country where all people, regardless of caste, creed, gender, or anything else, shall happily coexist. Gandhi never asserted that his views were infallible. He framed his pursuits as experiments or searches for the truth (Chatterjee, 1984).

### Gandhian Republic or Gandhi's Vision for India

India was established as a "secular, democratic republic" upon its independence. India was further structured into an independent, socialist secular democratic republic by the 42nd Constitutional Amendment of 1975. However, rather than being an issue of renown, it is a matter of shame that the principles outlined in our preamble and Constitution continue to be illusive. It was reportedly said by Mahatma Gandhi, "We should wipe away tears from every eye." In addition to working and dying for our nation, we should be peace ambassadors. These concepts were combined into a single concept and ideology known as "Gandhian Republic" by Gandhiji.

Following is a list of some of the Gandhian republic's goals or Methods:

- The government of the state or country should be decentralised, with equal authority granted to each area.

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- The Election Commission should be in charge of the elections at every stage. The issues of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches should be handled by the Vigilance.
- The cornerstones of democracy should include the Election Commission, Vigilance, Legislative, Executive, and Judicial branches, as well as a Free Press.
- The economic strategy should be designed to foster the holistic development of the Indian people and to be equitably disseminated across society for the benefit of everyone.

Gandhiji saw an India where all social classes might coexist, including the wealthy and the impoverished, Brahmins and Shudras. Discrimination shouldn't exist anywhere. India should feel like a nation to every Indian. He had visions of an India without political unrest, gender inequality, restrictions on women's freedom to go about at night, the sale of intoxicating substances, etc. He had an image of an India that would be the centre of interest for every society on world (Gandhi, 1947).

### **Political Ideas of Gandhi**

I have focused on Gandhiji's philosophy of the state, politics, leadership, liberty, obligations, democracy, and decentralisation in this section. Gandhiji is essentially a philosophical anarchist and decentralist in terms of his political thought. Politics was not a nasty power struggle for the Mahatma, as it has sadly come to be in the hands of many who swore allegiance to him but have utterly turned their backs on him. For him, politics represented the moral tools and ethical standards that should and could be used to organise people's lives. The rules for how society should function were not established by legal experts but rather were a part of the timeless principles that the world's major religious and moral systems had established for the sake of everyone. He turned to the human conscience for legitimacy of power rather than to laws and constitutions, to parliaments and courts. Only physical force and the force of law have been used in the world so far, but Gandhi carved out the Third Force, or the self-reliant moral strength of the people (Dhawan, 1948). Gandhi is an advocate for grassroots politics rather than party politics. In actuality, all levels of authority and initiative must be transferred to the people. He calls for a democracy without parties. A new age of democratic decentralisation will begin with the emergence of people's democracy, which means that the Swaraj (Self Rule) is required from below. In Gandhian politics, democracy is transformed into the rule of the people and is more dependent on popular power rather than that of the military or the police. Therefore, democracy and violence are incompatible (Kumar, 2004). Gandhi thus calls for the "Moralization of Wishes" and stresses that the foundation of democratic culture and existence must continue to be "Voluntary Action." His political theory of nonviolence should be examined in light of the development of the intellectual tradition and nonviolence's long history of use in India and beyond. Additionally, it's important to remember Gandhiji's upbringing, which affected his political ideology but in no way defined it. This environment encompasses Gandhi's early years' intellectual temperament and the social, economic, and political circumstances in India, England, and South Africa. Gandhiji was impacted by institutions, as well as by people, books, and other media. However, due to a limitation of space, it is difficult to provide even a cursory overview of this tradition of non-violence or of his surroundings in this essay. His philosophy of life, which includes his metaphysical convictions, views on the media of knowledge, psychological presumptions, and ethical principles, is a corollary of his political theory of anti-statism or indifferentism to the state and his non-violent technique of revolution and resistance. With a brief account of his philosophy of life, we can introduce his political theory of anarchism. The ultimacy of spirit, or Satya, is the cornerstone of his philosophy of life. Gandhi associates Satya, which is etymologically defined as "that which is," with God, the Soul Force, the Moral Law, etc. The creation is shown by this self-acting power, which gives it a fundamental oneness. Classlessness and statelessness are requirements for achieving the highest benefit of everyone. Gandhiji's resistance to the state stems from its obsessive and explorative character, which has never befriended the underprivileged and is destructive of individuality, as well as the historical difficulty of weaning the state away from the violence that gave rise to it. The state and the class structure go hand in hand. In Gandhi's ideal world, there would be no states and a federation of satyagrahi village communities that operated on the principles of voluntary cooperation and respectful coexistence. The state of enlightened democracy known as the stateless democracy is one in which social order becomes so flawless as to self-regulate. This democracy would be made up of voluntarily organised Satyagrahi village communities that are almost self-sufficient. Gandhiji is opposed to centralism because it suggests a concentration of power with the potential for misuse, because it makes life more complicated and that gets in the way of all morally constructive endeavours, and because it reduces chances for self-government and for fighting injustice. The state should exercise the least amount of coercion possible while reducing the scope of its mandate. Gandhi really argued that the more the state intervenes, the

less democracy exists. During the non-violent revolution, voluntary groups should expand - in number and significance and take over the majority of governmental activities. Because the people should develop the ability to participate voluntarily and cooperatively throughout this revolution. As far as feasible, the state should respond to both domestic unrest and foreign aggression without resorting to violence. Panchayats should take up judicial duties (Dhawan, 1948). Decentralization must be true and efficient in order to turn every village, or group of villages, into a democratically organised hub of administrative, political, and economic control, not just a window-dressing effort. Gandhiji had been emphasising the need to revive village Panchayats and establish village Swaraj ever since he returned to India in 1915. He was of the firm belief that the real India is found in its seven hundred thousand or so villages, and that India will not have a future deserving of the name unless these villages play their proper role in the life of the nation. His plan for such a village Swaraj included every aspect of rural life that went towards making each village self-governing and self-sufficient in terms of the basic needs of its residents, so that on the solid foundation of a vast network of these little "republics," peacefully cooperating with one another for mutual benefit, the life of the nation as a whole could be broadbased and it could advance smoothly towards its intended goal (Gandhi, 1959).

Gandhi valued obligations far more highly than rights. The chances for self-realization are rights. Serving others and carrying out one's obligations to them is the path to realising one's spiritual connection with them. Every right, therefore, is the right to carry out one's obligations. Gandhi made the point that in a society founded on ahimsa, individuals are not required to know their rights, but are required to know their obligations. Since no obligation can exist without resulting in a commensurate right. Only those who give back to the state to which they belong are granted the rights of real citizenship. Swaraj only arises when people fulfil their civic obligations (Chatterjee, 1984).

#### **The Rowlatt Act and M. K. Gandhi: Satyagraha as a Means of Mobilisation**

Champaran was the scene of Gandhi's first battle in India, which served as a lesson for the whole nation. From there, three years later, Gandhi climbed to the forefront of the Indian liberation fight, and the strategy he used in Champaran was known as Satyagraha (Verma, 1922, p. 8). A commission to investigate the revolutionary movement and legislative changes was established as a result of the pursuit of reform and the fight against repression (Majumdar, 1963, Vol. III, p. 1). Under pressure from reformers, the Governor-General consented to create a committee with the Secretary of State's approval. Two Indians and two British officers stationed in India made up the other four members of this committee. (Report of the Sedition Committee, 1918, page II). The report of this committee included a comprehensive assessment of the Indian revolutionary movement as well as rules to deal with various schemes (Majumdar, 1963, Vol. III, p. 2). The committee had its inaugural meeting in Calcutta in January 1918. (Sedition Committee Report 1918, p. II).

#### **Gandhi's Political Achievements**

The guiding ideas of the Indian constitution were supported by Gandhian ideals. These clauses' ideas have some similarities with those of a Gandhian state. Gandhi had a lifetime ideal of creating socioeconomic justice on a wide scale, and some of these clauses are aimed at realising that dream, while others deal with specific concerns like prohibition, cottage industry, decentralisation, the ban on cow slaughter, etc. "The State would endeavour to form Panchayats in villages and will empower them with such powers to allow them to serve as units of self government," states Article 40 of the Indian Constitution. To encourage cottage industry, see Article 43. Article 46: To advance the economic and educational interests of SCs, STs, and other socially disadvantaged groups. Article 47: To enact the ban of alcoholic beverages. Cows, calves, and other milch and draught animals may not be slaughtered in accordance with Article 48, which organises agriculture and animal husbandry on modern, scientific principles (Chatterjee, 1984).

Gandhi greatly influenced the inclusion of the freedom of speech and expression in the Indian Constitution, as Professor P.K. Tripathy noted in his 1972 book *Spotlights on Constitutional Interpretation*. Without a doubt, this freedom would have been included in the Constitution. Gandhi, though, made a considerable contribution. Gandhi's nonviolence ethos included words and ideas as well. And it was anticipated that these ideas and phrases would be embellished with reality. Gandhi urged people to use their words and ideas in a non-violent manner as well. His attempt to promote tolerance via free speech is brilliantly portrayed in his remark, which occurs in several of Mahatma Gandhi's works. "Despite such unwavering dedication to the Truth, what may seem true to one person may often look false to another, but the seeker should not be concerned by this. Where there is sincere effort, it will become clear that seemingly disparate facts are really just many, varied leaves of the same tree. Doesn't

God manifest in various ways in various people? There is nothing wrong with everyone pursuing the Truth in accordance with their own lights as long as we are aware that He is one. Indeed, doing so is required of one. Gandhi believed that the return of free press, free speech, and free association was akin to complete Swaraj. Gandhi's principles encouraged Indians to defend their right to free speech, assembly, association, and other forms of thought formation. Gandhi's beliefs encouraged individuals to exert themselves both individually and collectively via tolerance and democratic self-expression without using force, violence, or ill intent (Chatterjee, 1984). Untouchability is outlawed under Article 17 and its practise is rendered illegal in all forms. The phrase "Mahatma Gandhi ki Jai" was shouted when this article was approved. Although this article does not provide any rights, it offers the 1/6th of Indians a way out of centuries of oppression, humiliation, and shame. The greatest method to end this atrocity was to include the item in the constitution as one of the clearest parts of the constitution (Chatterjee, 1984).

The Advisory Committee's Report on Fundamental Rights gave voice to Gandhi's "non-violent state," which included the idea of secularism as a fundamental component. Gandhi believed that religion had no role in politics. Politics and religion have distinct boundaries. I don't anticipate the India of my dreams to adopt a single religion that is exclusively Hindu, exclusively Christian, or exclusively Muslim; instead, I want it to be completely accepting, with its many faiths coexisting together. Gandhi, M.K. 1947: 257 By my faith, I swear. If I have to die for it. But that is a private matter for me. The State is unrelated to it. Your secular welfare would be looked after by the State, but neither my faith nor yours would be. Everyone's own worry is that. Gandhi, M.K. 1947: 278

The idea of secularism developed over the course of the country's fight for political independence, and it was eventually absorbed and reflected in the Constitution of the independent republic of India. It is evident that unlike in the West, India's secularism did not develop via direct contact and conflict with religion. Secularism developed in India as an integrative idea that, while transcending faiths, also tapped the uniting forces fostered by the secularisation process inside India's own religions. In the context of India, Religious Reformation and Modern Enlightenment together produced Indian secularism (Vijayam, 2004).

#### **Gandhi's Political Ideas are Still Relevant Today**

We will now examine how Gandhi's political beliefs and accomplishments fit into the modern era in light of the aforementioned political ideals and achievements. Are modern governments and society following in Gandhi's footsteps? India's government is democratic in nature. India is a large nation, hence it has to be administered properly and successfully. Up to this point, no country in the world has completely realised Mahatma Gandhi's vision of a democratic society surrounded by nonviolence. In the framework of Indian democracy, his vision is a stateless democracy in which there is a federation of satyagrahi village communities that operate on the basis of voluntary collaboration and dignified and peaceful coexistence. The ideal nonviolent society of Gandhiji, which is unachievable owing to human frailty, symbolises the path rather than the destination, the process rather than the completion, according to G. N. Dhawan. Gandhi's ideas were geared toward the development of a mostly non-violent state since the ultimate objective of a stateless society was unattainable. He wasn't just a dreamer. Gandhi was a practical idealist who thought that the ideal society of his conception could never be established in real life right away. As a result, he believed that it was necessary to maintain the current state while modifying and purifying it with the higher and more moral Sarvodaya ideals until the people were ready and deserving of being free of the state and government (Chatterjee, 1984). Therefore, Gandhiji was not advocating the abolition of all types of state; rather, he was in favour of a non-violent state (Srivastava, 1968).

Politics today are clearly steeped in deception and dishonesty and are destined to breed more deceit and dishonesty. Hatred must breed hatred, and violence must increase violence. Therefore, it is urgently necessary to "moralise politics." "The strongest political structures and constitutions will fail if the people lack the necessary moral and spiritual traits." Morality promotes development. The important role of our time's social revolutions is served by morality. Gandhi emphasised that "there is no politics absent of faith" in his prophetic speech. Gandhi and Gandhi alone were the only ones who really conducted politics on religious principles during the Indian Freedom Movement, as he constantly emphasised his oft-repeated adage, "Politics devoid of religion is a death trap" (Das, 2012). The important point to keep in mind, however, is that Gandhi believed that "politics without morality is a thing to shun," and that "religion is nothing but a worldwide religion of toleration." Only physical force and the force of law have been used in the world thus far, but Gandhi carved out the Third Force, or the self-reliant moral strength of the people. Gandhi is an advocate for grassroots politics rather than party politics. In actuality, all levels of authority and initiative must be transferred to the people. He calls for a democracy without

parties. A new age of democratic decentralisation will begin with the emergence of people's democracy, which means that the Swaraj (Self Rule) is required from below. In Gandhian politics, democracy is transformed into the rule of the people and is more dependent on popular power rather than that of the military or the police. Violence and democracy thus cannot coexist. Gandhi thus calls for the "Moralization of Wishes" and that "Voluntary Action must continue to be the bedrock of democratic life and culture." Gandhi cleanses politics by opposing injustice and exploitation via Satyagrah (Non-Violent Resistance). Gandhian politics thus have a significant and positive role to play. He opposed extreme nationalism. His political philosophy advocated for greater ideals (Gandhi, 1928).

In addition, Mahatma Gandhi discussed the rights of people. These include the freedoms of speech, the freedom of the press, the freedom to associate, the freedom of conscience, the freedom of religion, the freedom of culture and language, the right to equality, the freedom to practise one's profession or public service, the freedom to use public transportation, and the freedom to attend public schools and other institutions. All of these rights were stated by Gandhi before the Indian Constitution was written. But finally, the Indian Constitution has recognised these rights. There are certainly certain limitations on these rights, but they cannot deter us from following the Gandhian road. For the sake of the nation's integrity and sovereignty, Gandhiji personally agreed to these limitations. From that vantage point, it is evident that the rights Gandhiji spoke about many years ago are still pertinent in modern-day India (Das, 2012).

His criticisms of contemporary science and his proposal for an alternative lifestyle modelled after ancient Indian village communities have long been well-liked among numerous action groups, nongovernmental voluntary organisations (NGOs), and environmentalists both within and outside of India (Jodhka, 2002). Gandhi refused to give in to the allure of contemporary civilization's assertion of progress. Gandhi's conception of civilisation was defined by "good behaviour," which enables us to govern our thoughts and our passions. As more commodities and services are produced, new patterns of global warming begin to emerge, it has become urgently necessary to restrict development as a need for world existence. 2015 (Rudolph and Rudolph).

In India, Gandhian democracy is still vital. The 73rd amendment to the Indian Constitution makes it plain. This modification solely affects India's rural administration. The decentralisation of authority up to the rural level is a key clause in that amendment. India has already put such modification into effect. However, the Panchayati Raj as it is now looks to be considerably different from both traditional and Gandhian points of view in terms of its contents and operations. We may not end up on the Gandhian path because of this Panchayati Raj. It is mostly used as a political tool or as a means of carrying out developmental initiatives. The Panchayati Raj has been identified by the government as a useful tool for attempting to communicate ideas to the villages in order to ensure that the plans created for them are adequately carried out. Panchayati Raj would have likely been used in a Gandhian system in opposition to the political course they should be taking, or to inform them of the true needs and priorities of the village population so that national resource assessments and subsequent planning could be done from below rather than imposing them from above, as is the current practise (Chatterjee, 1984).

Gandhi demonstrated to Indians and the rest of the world that political legitimacy does not ultimately derive from force of arms, the power of the state, or even through systems of political participation, electoral choice, or representative self-government. These are all constrained and susceptible to error. Hitler's public support did not entitle the Nazis to govern with legitimacy. Colonialism was not justified by the British Empire's benevolent dictatorship in India. Imperialism that appears bent over with the self-inflicted burden of freeing benighted natives from their ignorance and backwardness, or totalitarianism that enters riding on the coat-tails of democracy, neither of these forms achieve legitimacy simply because it is successful in capturing power on the basis of professed good intentions. True political legitimacy must unquestionably be predicated on public will, the yearning for self-determination, and a government's competencies and capabilities. However, it ultimately outweighs and transcends all of these elements and is found elsewhere in a more nuanced character that is related to the morality of any system of government that claims to rule a people in their name and for their own welfare (The Hindu, 2014).

Gandhi's focus on the Constructive Programme and movement-based strategy brought about a fundamental shift in Indian politics. The upbeat, innovative, and constructive curriculum highlighted the people's intrinsic abilities. It helped develop issue-based, unselfish, and service-oriented leadership. The Congress evolved into a movement and captured the public's attention during the Gandhian period. In contrast, the rise of political parties in India and many other nations during the post-Independent era introduced a partisan mindset and a limited perspective. Instead of offering a viable alternative with

vision and originality, political parties attempt to capitalise on the flaws of their rivals. In every movement, the problem of political parties seeking to gain control at any costs takes precedence. Instead of having an intellectual foundation, politics has become a game of needed numbers thanks to the power-hungry political parties, which have poisoned the whole political milieu. As a consequence, morality is ignored in politics. It turns into a trickery and illusion game. Politics has evolved into a game about gaining control and maintaining it at any costs. No holdbacks. Instead than using politics to eliminate poverty, it is time to address the poverty of politics (Vijayam, 2004).

As was already noted, the basic rights granted to Indian people were based on Gandhian ideals. In which, with certain logical limitations, Article 19 safeguarded the inhabitants' six essential liberties. These liberties include the right to free speech and expression, to assemble peacefully, to organise organisations, etc (Chatterjee, 1984). Contrarily, the major source of concern now is intolerance and hate that result in violence, and it is here that the principles of Gandhi need to be upheld with greater fervour, as this essay discusses. His views are timeless, not just today or yesterday. Gandhi's theories addressed a number of significant topics, including some that are still contentious in contemporary India, such as tolerance, freedom of speech, and expression.

### Conclusion

Gandhi therefore had the chance to popularise Satyagraha in India thanks to the Rowlatt Act. Through the Satyagraha Sabha, satyagraha was pledged to the Indians. Gandhi's civil resistance campaign was put on hold after the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre, but he continued Satyagraha as a form of civil disobedience. Due to his South African upbringing, Gandhi Ji was aware of the significance of Muslims at this point in the struggle and was motivated to put the 1916 Hindu-Muslim unity into action. The Khilafat Movement provided this chance, and Gandhi used non-cooperation as a key instrument to achieve Swaraj. The Princes of Wales' journey to India, among other events, helped the Non-Cooperation Movement expand and made the general public aware of the country's ongoing political crisis in addition to the Khilafat movement. Gandhi was one of those thinkers who advocated non-cooperation, Satyagraha, or self-sacrifice. He thinks that although non-violence poses no such risk, violence breeds resentment and the need for retribution. Gandhi's ideology is so all-encompassing that it touches every facet of human existence. He has a thorough understanding of politics, taking into account the socio-economic and political character of India. He comes to the conclusion that politics is the finest tool for governing the nation's life and that its authority should be distributed fairly. According to him, the state is a more coercive force than an individual when it is a concentrated form of authority. He thus advises that in a democracy, political authority be decentralised. Because public engagement and representation have more room in a decentralised democracy. In its wide application of the welfare world, it guarantees that the freedom and autonomy of the individual, community, and country will be achievable.

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