

REMEMBERING MAHATMA AT 150th GANDHI JAYANTHI

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Abstract: *Gandhi Jayanti is a way of commemorating and remembering the teachings of Gandhi and spreading his message of peace and harmony forward. Popularly known as the Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi was one of the most prominent leaders of the Indian Independence movement against the British rule. Gandhism ushered a new era in the history of political thought. It made the world believe that even the greatest political problems could be solved only by making personal sacrifices and making the opponent realise the excesses and mistakes committed by him. Gandhi is one of the most inspiring figures of our time. Employing non-violent civil disobedience, Gandhi led India to independence and inspired movements for non-violence, civil rights and freedom across the world. For Gandhi, Non violence was the most suitable reply for violence and force. He wanted to establish an ideal society in which panchayathi raj based on real democratic principles was to flourish. The purpose of this paper is intended towards remembering and explaining the relevance of Gandhian life and principles in the 150th birthday anniversary.*

Key Words: *Gandhism, Truth, Non violence, satyagraha, Decentralisation, villagae republic, Swaraj.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

The 150th birth anniversary of Gandhi is an ideal time to remember his principles of truth and non-violence and his uncompromising commitment to them. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi is called as “Mahatma” (the title was given by Rabindranath Tagore) was born on the 2nd October 1869, at Porbandar in Kathiawad. Gandhi is universally known as the most renowned theorist, philosopher and also the practitioner of truth, love, non-violence, tolerance freedom and peace. In South Africa, he started his first non-violent civil disobedience movement in protest of the Asiatic Act and Transvaal Immigration Act. Gandhi is one of the most inspiring figures of our time. He was the preeminent leader of Indian nationalism in British-ruled India. Employing non-violent civil disobedience, Gandhi led India to independence and inspired movements for non-violence, civil rights and freedom across the world. For Gandhi, Non violence was the most suitable reply for violence and force. He wanted to establish an ideal society in which panchayathi raj based on real democratic principles was to flourish. He employed moral means to attain political ends. Gandhi was a prolific writer. Gandhi was influenced by almost all religions of the world and prominent leaders.

2. CONTRIBUTION TO INDIAN NATIONALISM:

The Indian Freedom Struggle was one of the largest democratic movements against imperialism and colonialism. It is widely accepted that Gandhi was the back bone of the non-violent struggle for freedom of India. The three local experiences (Champaran satyagraha, Ahmedabad Mill Strike and Kheda Struggle) brought Gandhiji in close contact with the masses whose interests he actively exposed all his life. It was Gandhi’s first attempt of Civil Disobedience in India and it was successful. Mahatma Gandhi founded the Satyagraha Sabha and declared 6th April 1919 as Satyagraha day, a day of Hartals and protests against the Rowlatt Bill. It was a unique success. The people responded magnificently to Gandhi’s call and witnessed a remarkable political awakening in India. During Khilafat movement, Gandhiji decided to extend their support to the Khilafat movement for uniting the Hindu and Muslim. The leaders of the Khilafat movement also endorsed the Non-cooperation movement led by Gandhi. Gandhi was deeply hurt and called out Satyagraha movement in connection with Chauri Chaura incident. After the Chauri Chaura incident, Gandhi decided to withdraw the Non-Cooperation Movement. In the Lahore session, the Congress session announced the launching of a civil disobedience movement for “purna swaraj”. That was left to Mahatma Gandhi (Sittaramayya, 1969). The Civil Disobedience Movement was started by Gandhi on 12 March 1930 with his famous Dandi March. Gandhiji reacted strongly to the proposal of granting the right of separate electorate to the depressed classes and regarded them as an integral part of the Hindu society. Gandhiji vehemently criticised the Cripps Mission and termed as a ‘post dated cheque on a crashing bank’. In August 1942, Gandhiji launched the Quit India Movement, a demand for an immediate end of British rule. Gandhiji’s slogan of ‘Do or Die’ inspired the nation. Gandhi was unhappy with the settlement of division. *Gandhi's* reputation as the *Indian* spiritual and political leader who coordinated and led a successful *national struggle for independence* against British imperial rule on the strength of a non-violent *movement* survives largely intact (Zachariah, 2011).

3. Significant Socio- Political Ideas of Mahatma Gandhi :

Truth: Truth is the most cardinal principle of Gandhism. Mahatma Gandhi was a worshipper of truth. He believed that there is no good higher than truth. "Truth is God and God is Truth." He searched for truth throughout his life. He named his auto-biography, 'My Experiments with Truth'. He achieved many successes by following the path of truth. According to Gandhi, and where there is Truth, there is also is knowledge which is true. Where there is no Truth, there can be no true knowledge. He had to bear many sufferings for truth. He firmly believed that only a society based on truth can become an ideal society.

Ahimsa/Non Violence: Ahimsa is the central concept of the Gandhian ideals. In fact, non-violence and truth were to him two sides of the same coin. Gandhiji was against the propagation of violence in one's thought, words, actions and deeds. Gandhi took Truth as the supreme virtue and for him truth without non-violence is no truth. Truth is the highest law of our life and Ahimsa is the highest duty. Gandhi's ultimate aim of non violence is even to love the so called enemies (Ramchiary, 2013). To him 'non violence is the law of our species as violence is the law of brute'. Gandhi's technique of non violence was aimed at promoting social change. To Gandhi Non violence is the soul force or truth force or truth seeking force'. Now the United Nations has decided to celebrate each year 2nd October (Birthday of Mahatma Gandhi) as World Non-violence Day. It is a tribute to Mahatma Gandhi's love for Non-violence.

Decentralization and Socialism: Gandhian socialism is based on the ideas of non-possession and trusteeship. To Gandhi, "My concept of socialism implies that people should be self-reliant. Decentralization is a concept of power sharing at all levels. Gandhi's greatest contribution to the social thought of this century is perhaps his insistence on decentralization of the means of production. According to Gandhi, men should do their actual living and working in communities. The concept of decentralization occupies paramount importance in Gandhian scheme of rebuilding India from below upwards. Non-violence was understood to be the basic tenets of Gandhiji's concept of decentralization. Gandhiji's concept of decentralization was not an isolated concept but the outcome of his religio-ethical, socio-political and economic concepts and ideas (Bisha, 2009). Village Swaraj was an essential component of decentralized polity or decentralized governance. Gandhiji had evolved a three-tier system of Panchayat Raj linking up the village Panchayat with the Block and District levels. In Panchayat Raj system envisaged by Gandhiji people's independence begins from the village level. The individual has complete freedom to manage his own affairs. Gandhiji put emphasis on duty rather than rights. If one becomes cautious for his duties, then rights will automatically be taken due care by the State.

Education: In *Hind Swaraj*, Gandhi examines the English educational system introduced in India and describes it as 'false education'. For him the basic aim of education should be to bring our senses under our control and to help imbibe ethical behaviour in our life. He attacks the newly emerged elite, a by-product of the Macaulay system of education, as they have enslaved India. Gandhiji laid emphasis on basic education. By that he wanted to spread vocational education in the nook and corner of the country. Gandhi had realized that this will improve small-scale industry, which in turn, will bring a self-sufficient economy for every country (Hazra, 2018).

Swaraj: The idea of 'Swaraj' or self-rule is one of the philosophical principles of Gandhian teachings, which stimulate man in conquering complete individuality and also reorganization of the society. Gandhi used the term swaraj both at the individual and national levels. By Real Swaraj Gandhi meant the 'welfare and happiness of the masses'. To Gandhi, swaraj is to be attained by educating the masses to a sense of their capacity to regulate and control authority. Gram Swaraj or village self-rule is an essential thought in Gandhi's thinking. Gandhi promoted Khadi for rural self employment. Promoting Khadi was one of the greatest weapons in Swadeshi Movement as it disobeys the British rules and one of the greatest steps to ruin British economy. For the masses to participate in the freedom struggle Khadi was used by Gandhi as a symbol of independence (Aseem, 2019).

Satyagraha : Mahatma Gandhi is famous in the history of the world as a prophet of Satyagraha. By Real Swaraj Gandhi meant the 'welfare and happiness of the masses'. The concept of satyagraha and its practice in socio-political front constitute the essence of Gandhi's philosophy. Satyagraha abstains from evil activities stimulate and encourage everyone in peace making through love, compassion, benevolence and doing good to others even our opponents. Satyagraha considered as the method for reconstructing, remoulding, and reshaping human nature through moralize human activities. Gandhi employed different methods of satyagraha. Those that were most commonly employed during the freedom struggle in India under Gandhi's leadership were passive resistance, civil disobedience and non-cooperation. Non-cooperation may include strike, boycott and resignation from offices. Passive resistance, according to Gandhi, is an all sided sword. It can be used in any way. According to Gandhi, the method of passive

resistance is the clearest and the safest, because it is the resisters alone who suffer if the cause is not true. According to Gandhi, disobedience to be civil must be sincere, respectful, restrained and never defiant. It must be based upon well-understood principles. Gandhian Satyagraha means truth-force, love-force or soul-force. It means to correct the opponent's error by self-suffering. Gandhi had applied this technique for over fifty years in every walk of life-domestic, institutional, economic, and political (Abdul, 2006).

Sarvodaya : The term was first coined by Mohandas Gandhi as the title of his 1908 translation of John Ruskin's tract on political economy, *"Unto This Last"*, and Gandhi came to use the term for the ideal of his own political philosophy.

The Sarvodaya Movement makes a sincere and bold attempt to create the necessary atmosphere to bring together such individuals with an unwavering faith in the Welfare of All. Gandhian Sarvodaya Movement is based on Truth, Non-violence and Self-denial (Naidu, 2006).

Economic Theory: Trusteeship was Gandhiji's peculiar contribution to the technique of social change. The concept of Trusteeship flows from the ideals of aparigraha and ahimsa. Trusteeship provides a means of transforming the present capitalist order of society into an egalitarian one. 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. The State should guide the rich how to utilize the wealth for the benefit of the State. Under the Gandhian economic order the character of production will be determined by social necessity and not by personal whim or greed. Gandhi's trusteeship was based on brotherhood of men marked by co-sharing and cooperation.

4. Relevance of Gandhi in the 150th Birth Anniversary :

Gandhiji not only gave freedom to India but also gave the world and us a new thought on nonviolence and sustainable living. His teachings and experiments are more valid today than ever before. Barack Obama (former US President), commented *"In my life, I have always looked to Mahatma Gandhi as an inspiration, because he embodies the kind of transformational change that can be made when ordinary people come together to do extraordinary things."* The fundamental precepts of *Gandhism* are more *relevant* today when caste, class and religious differences are so pronounced. In this world torn by violence and corruption, Gandhi's philosophy is the only hope that keeps the human race going. He is best known as the matchless political leader who evolved the new technique of "satyagraha". His fight against untouchability and the notions of superiority and inferiority by birth are also fairly well known. For India, his greatest service was, perhaps, the emancipation of Indians (Sharma, 2014).

Philosophy of non violence has great relevance in the 21st century. In India most of the conflict and extremist revolutions already settled & some are going to settle by non violence and peaceful means. The central concepts of Gandhi's philosophy is 'Satyagraha'. It is itself a whole philosophy of non violence. A Satyagraha campaign is undertaken only after all other peaceful means have proven ineffective. For extent of some period it was known as Gandhi's method of Satyagraha have no any relevancy but with the passing of time he proved how it was important of protection of life, Liberty and property. Even know also all those strategies are highly relevant in India. His political ideal based on ethical and spiritual grounds rising democratic values. At present, we see that politics is routed deceit and dishonesty and is bound to create greater deceit and greater dishonesty. Gandhian economy is still relevant to our time. He was not against machinery as such. He was afraid that use of machinery on large scale would result in technological unemployment. He extended Ruskin's concepts of the equality of wages to all kinds of labour and equal distribution. The mad race in industrialization and urbanization has resulted in pollution of environment and Gandhi abundant of luxurious life. The concept of Decentralization occupies paramount importance in Gandhian Philosophy. Gandhi wanted political power to be distributed among the villages in India. He preferred the term 'swaraj' to describe what he called true democracy. Gandhian Democracy is still relevant in India. It is clear from the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments of Indian constitution that is related only with rural administration of India. One significant provision of this amendments is decentralization of power upto the rural level. It has already been implemented in India in 1992. Gandhi promoted an educational curriculum called 'Basic Education'. His much emphasis was on women education (The Times of India, 29 Sep 2019).

Gandhi influences a number of leaders and political movements across the world. Leaders of civil rights movements in the United States, including Martin Luther King Jr., James Lawson, and James Bevel, drew from the writings of Gandhi in the development of their own theories about nonviolence. According to Martin Luther King, "Christ gave us the goals and Mahatma Gandhi the tactics," and would even refer to Gandhi as the "little brown saint." Former President of South Africa Nelson Mandela, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, Steve Biko, and Aung San Suu Kyi all are believed to have been influenced by Mahatma Gandhi. Einstein regarded Gandhi as a role model for future generations. Gandhi's influence was even seen in the works of Lanza del Vasto who arrived in India in 1936 intending to live with Gandhi and later returned to Europe to spread the Gandhian philosophy and start the Community of the Ark, modelled on Gandhi's ashrams (news18).

We are today passing through an extremely critical and controversial phase of terrorism. Terrorism is being used everywhere, either with enthusiasm or with fear. In recent years, we have witnessed terrorist violence affecting almost all countries. Mahatma Gandhi was unique in this modern world to advocate non-violent methods for solving social, economic, political and religious problems. Therefore, non-violence was an alternative to violence in resolving conflict. The importance of avoiding such disasters in future the importance of Gandhiji's insistence on nonviolence as one of the most basic precepts of life became even more important (Bharat , 2018). Every year on 2 October, the birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi is observed with prayer services and tributes across the nation. In 2018, the Government of India has decided to commemorate the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, Father of the Nation, at national and international level to propagate his message. On this occasion various programs were held all over the world. The Prime minister of India remarked that, "It is our social responsibility as citizens of India to help fulfill Gandhiji's vision of Clean India, by his 150th birth anniversary in 2019."

5. CONCLUSION:

To conclude, Gandhian philosophy is not only simultaneously political, moral and religious, it is also traditional and modern simple and complex. Gandhi is universally known as the most renowned theorist, philosopher and also the practitioner of truth, love, non-violence, tolerance freedom and peace. He was a leader of his people, unsupported by any authority. He was very much concerned with the nature, poor deprived and the downtrodden and he has intended to alter the evil, political, social, and economic system of the people. His mission was to reconstruct India from below upwards a decentralized socio-political and economic order with India's myriad villages as its base. He fought the freedom struggle by non violence and satyagraha and encouraged everybody to follow the same path of non-violence.

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