

## Relevance of Gandhian Writing and Ideology

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### Introduction

Mahatma Gandhi emerged as an exceptionally great personality in the twentieth century. On account of his multidimensional approach to human life, his ideas have proved convincing to any intellectual, rational human being, but his ideas have become inevitable in a modern context. Gandhiji has been very properly understood and very suitably expressed by G.S. Balarama Gupta as he writes, "In the entire human history, Gandhi was a unique phenomenon. It is because Gandhiji was a transparent figure and very frank and straight forward in expressing his experience and the inner world of ideas without any observation" (P. 51).

It is simply our fortune that such a great man was born in India, and today the entire world is searching for gems of Gandhian thoughts. Therefore, it has been felt necessary to make humble efforts in discovering what Gandhiji said, how did he say. And yet, in the whole world, attempts are being made by a genuinely interested person in finding out Gandhiji's thought in whatever forms are available. Gandhiji's greatness lies in his practical contribution to the entire human society.

### Major Writings

Gandhiji's epitomizing writings like *Hind Swaraj* (1909), *An Autobiography or The Story of My Experiments with Truth* (1927), and innumerable articles published by him continuously for a pretty long period in his journal *Indian Opinion* and his diaries are most motivating and liberalizing. His *Hind Swaraj*, only a booklet, has become the world's most debatable book. This book is very significant in revealing hidden layers of Gandhian thought on most serious topics like politics, economy, and real freedom from several angles.

### *Hind Swaraj*

*Hind Swaraj* is originally written in Gujarati in 1908 during a return journey from London to South Africa. The basic purpose behind the book was to dissuade a group of Indian patriots who committed violence. It was published serially in the journal *Indian Opinion*, which Gandhi was editing. Later on, Gandhiji himself translated it into English to benefit one of his South African associates Mr Kallenbach. *Hind Swaraj* is a unique book or a small booklet that has captured the sensitivity of modern man. However, the book has raised a big storm among the intellectuals and scholars of modern times. *Hind Swaraj* means "Indian Own Rule". This small book has motivated and stimulated intellectual discussions and debates among the high-ranking scholars of the world. It has brought a wave of surprising change in tone and tempo

of current thought. John Middleton Murry's observes that "*Hind Swaraj* is the greatest book that has been written in modern times" (P. 423).

Gandhiji wrote this book intending to awake the Indian mind from the misconception of real freedom. He warned that this book is not a utopia. In the post-colonial Era, Gandhiji's influence is failed almost in all fields. An entire community of the intellectual involved in a thinking process concerning Gandhiji's Writing in general and his *Hind Swaraj* particular. Gandhian thought in India inspired Vinobha Bhave's *Bhudan* Movement–Land Gift and Jaiprakash Narayan's resistance movement. It also inspired and yet continues to inspire numerable volunteers' organization dedicated to India's population's economic and social improvement.

### **The Idea of Self-Rule**

Swaraj as self-rule means under freedom or positive freedom. Gandhiji's argument that without Swaraj as self-rule, Swaraj as self-government could degenerate into a negative aspect of state operation. The whole book is written in a dialogue between the editor and reader in the best highlighting form. Western civilization has been condemned for its devastating programme. And the message in the book is given that love alone has power and can fight against evil; evil weapons cannot work. It must be resisted with the stronger weapons of personal sufferings, self-sacrifice and soul force. The purpose of *Hind Swaraj* is to save India, not from British rulers but modern civilization, the bone of the west. And this article is deeply concerned with Gandhiji's denunciation of the machine. Though this firm faith of Gandhi against the misuse of machine has been objected to by many modern minds, Gandhi believed in the sovereignty of the spirit. Mahadev Desai quotes from Miss Irene Rathbone, who calls *Hind Swaraj* "an enormously powerful book" (P.13)

### **The Concept of Civilization**

The whole book is written in the liveliest form of dialogues. This book is very rational in approach and very liberal in Gandhiji's attitude. In the sixth chapter entitled "Civilization", Gandhiji writes: "This civilization is irreligion, and it has taken such a hold on the people in Europe that those in it appear to be half-mad. They lack real physical strength or courage. They keep up their energy by intoxication. They can hardly be happy in solitude. Women should be the queens of households, wander in the streets or slave away in factories. For the sake of a pittance, half a million women in England alone are labouring under trying circumstances in factories or similar institutions. The awful fact is one of the causes of the daily growing suffragette movements".

### **Concept of Satyagraha**

Gandhiji's one of the most important and eternal significance is Satyagraha. The essence of the entire content of Gandhian thought may be summed in a single word: Satyagraha, truth – force. In a very strange manner, its coinage came into existence about which Gandhiji himself was not aware. The birth of Satyagraha is the most central principle of Gandhian

philosophy. The concept of Satyagraha is not only in this autobiography but also in other writings Gandhiji had paid enough attention to the search for truth.

Gandhiji's utterance about Satyagraha is: 'The principle called Satyagraha came into being before that name was invented' (P. 275). So, this principle mysteriously came to Gandhi. He was exactly aware of what it was. Even in Gujarati, the English phrase 'Passive resistance' was used to describe this principle of Satyagraha. In a meeting of Europeans, he found that the term 'passive resistance' was too narrowly construed, which means it was not a good term. 'Passive Resistance' so indicated that it could be characterized by hatred and manifest itself as violence. Therefore, Gandhiji attempted to go beyond all these statements and explain the real nature of the Indian movement. Maganlal Gandhi coined the word 'Sadagraha' (sat = truth, Agraaha = firmness) and won the prize. To clarify, Gandhi changed the word to 'Satyagraha', which has become current in Gujarati as a designation for the struggle.

Gandhiji described Satyagraha as late as 1938 as science still in the making. He believed that there was truth in Satyagraha, 'as ancient as the hills. This truth-force depends on two essential composites: infinite capacity for suffering, and complete non-violence, not only in deed alone but also in thought and word. It emphasizes the fairness of means and ends. There should be fair harmony between means and ends. It suggests that anything fair cannot be achieved by unfair means. Therefore, Gandhiji emphasizes that to make the struggle of Satyagraha powerful, its standards, i.e., suffering and non-violence, should be taken care of self-suffering should not provoke you for inflicting on others. The principle of Satyagraha is based on the principle of truth. The sovereign code includes numerous other regulations, which include every worship. Mahatma Gandhi says: 'I worship God as truth only' (P.28).

### **Truth Is God**

This thing has been repeatedly emphasized in his essays and editorial. It is beneficial for us to know the literal / utterance of Gandhiji expressed in Young India: 'Rather than say that God is Truth, I should say that Truth is God... It is the living embodiment of God, it is the only life, and I identify truth with the fullest life'. Gandhiji perceived God not in the manner of traditional religious belief, but he talks of God. Gandhiji writes, 'I know that I cannot find him apart from the rest of humanity.'<sup>9</sup>

Further, Gandhiji writes in Harijan, 'I recognize no God except the God that is to be found in the nearest of the dumb millions... And I worship the God that is Truth of Truth which is God through the service of these millions'.<sup>10</sup>

In this respect, Gandhiji's total mission of life has been endorsed in the above-cited quotations. Therefore, his attachment with the suffering of people and his untiring efforts to seek solutions are peace, preoccupations with his personal life. It is reasonable to quote here because of the endless suffering of the dumb downtrodden millions, whom he was to build up into Satyagrahis, to whom he has trained in the perfect discipline and technique of Satyagraha.

For example, he laid it down that the first condition of Civil resistance would be 'surely against an outbreak of violence. Because Satyagraha excludes every form of violence, direct or indirect or in any other state, Satyagraha emphasizes that you cannot ill-treat or even disbelieve your opponent. As discussed in *The Mind of Mahatma Gandhi*, "Satyagraha teaches us the art of living as dying. It credits fearlessness. It is not the weapon of the weak but the strong". Here Gandhiji does not recommend creating a fearing opponent but awakening his conscience.

### **His Idea of Non-violence**

An opponent has to be converted, not coerced. Throughout his writing to bring the point home, Gandhiji uses simple analogies from day-to-day experience. In this respect, to explain the meanings of non-violence, he gives us an example - The mouse that yielded itself to the cat was not committing an act of non-violence. Satyagraha has a positive approach to the most acute problems of life. It is also an end in itself. It is the end and the means combined. Gandhiji never cheapens the significance of suffering and its role in human life. Because self-suffering leads to self – purification, and in this respect, the follower of the principle of Satyagraha must overcome every type of fear because cowardice cannot practice Ahimsa to perfection. There can be no non-violence without fearlessness. This fearlessness in the eyes of Gandhiji is a vast term, including mental boldness and physical courage. The power of Satyagraha which is a miraculous combination of the word, has shown to the world. India's political and spiritual victory under the pressure and guidance of great soul Mahatma Gandhi.

### ***The Story of My Experiments with Truth***

The autobiography of Mahatma Gandhi titled *The Story of My Experiments with Truth* [1927] is one of the supreme creations. It has become almost a book of practical wisdom. It is a matchless piece of authentic personal revelation. It is an immortal work. It is a classic in world literature. Gandhi's whole life revolves around the two words "Truth and Ahimsa". These two words, "Truth and Ahimsa", gave a new direction to Gandhiji's autobiography and new hope to humanity. Gandhiji wrote this autobiography in Gujarati titled 'Atmakatha' for his paper *Navajivan*.

Autobiography as a genre is not a popular form of writing. But this autobiography is free from the author's ego. Gandhiji's sole concern was to recount numerous experiments with 'Truth'. Gandhiji focuses his full attention on spiritual values. It comprises varieties of experience from sundry to daily social activities, childhood memories, political events and yet at its bottom, the book remains extraordinary. Gandhiji keeps himself away from self-praise pieces and writes in the 'Introduction' to his *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, "Far be it from me, to claim any degree of perfection for these experiments I claim for them nothing more than does a scientist who though he conducts his experiments with the utmost accuracy, forethought and minuteness, never claims any finality about his conclusion. I have gone through self-introspection, searched myself through and through, yet I am far from claiming any finality or infallibility about my conclusions" (P. XIII).

The book, after its publication, became so popular that one can say that no other book published in India has had a comparable sale. Its pattern reveals the fact of its origin as serial. The book reveals total Gandhi. The economy of words is the chief characteristic of Gandhi because Gandhiji was an action-oriented man. The book reveals to us with unparalleled candour each dark area in the author's life. The book hides nothing. His autobiography, so to say, encompassed all shades of human life experiences, a variety of topics, almost to the extent of an endless list have been very perfectly but in an enlightening manner being written by him right from the most private to the extent of international level. Gandhiji is judiciously sensitive even in the trivial matters of life like taking diet, using the medicine, significance of exercise and maintaining a personal diary of everyday expenses of pie to pie including a bus fair; he was extremely meticulous. His experiment in dietetics explains to us that the range of reading of his many books on the subject discussion with scholars in the matter is surprisingly drafted. It simply shows his strong will power right from his childhood. Gandhiji left his indelible impressions on the sand of time. Albert Einstein says, "I believe that Gandhi's view was the most enlightened of all the political men of our time".

### **Unto the Last and Civil Disobedience**

Gandhiji's contacts with greater books and greater minds have paid him a good dividend. The book that influenced him to the core of his heart, *Unto the Last* [1860] by John Ruskin, impressed his total personality. Gandhiji has practically followed Thoreau's *Civil Disobedience* in his freedom struggle. Equal important is Tolstoy's philosophy and ideology, his humanitarian approach and independent spirit that Tolstoy himself considers, a year before his death that Gandhi is his spiritual heir. All these things, autobiography, communicate that Gandhi was lucky enough to experience all types of ups and downs in life at a broad international level.

### **Conclusion**

It is concluded that the life, works and principles of Gandhiji have deeply influenced globally known powerful persons. Not least among those influenced by Gandhiji's personality was Martin Luther King, who had adopted Gandhiji's non-violent, civil disobedience methods in his leadership of the civil rights movements in the United States. Bob Dylan, in his song "They Killed Him", writes:

"There was a man named Mahatma Gandhi.  
He would not bow down; he would not fight;  
he knew the deal was down and dirty.  
And nothing wrong could make it right away.  
But he knew his duty and the prize he had to pay.  
Just another holy man who tried to be a friend.  
My God, they killed him."

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