



Relevance of Gandhism Today

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This article is based on “**Thinking of Gandhi Today**” which was published in the Economic and Political weekly on 19/09/2020. It talks about the relevance of Gandhism in present times.

2nd October every year is a great day for India as well as for the world. On this day India celebrates the birth anniversary of the father of the nation Mohan Das Karamchand Gandhi and **International day for non-violence** is observed to pay respect and acceptance to the true spirit of non- violence promoted by Gandhiji throughout his life.

Gandhianism starts with the famous line – ‘ Simple living and high thinking’ and its objective is to transform the individual and society. Therefore, in the turbulent times where the world is grappled with so many problems, it is imperative to strive to inculcate Gandhian philosophy in various facets of life and governance.

Major Gandhian Ideologies

- **Truth and Non-violence:** They are the twin cardinal principles of Gandhian thoughts.
 - For Gandhi ji, truth is the relative truth of truthfulness in word and deed, and the absolute truth - the ultimate reality. This ultimate truth is God (as God is also Truth) and morality - the moral laws and code - its basis.
 - Nonviolence, far from meaning mere peacefulness or the absence of overt violence, is understood by Mahatma Gandhi to denote active love - the pole opposite of violence, in every sense.
- **Satyagraha:** Gandhi ji called his overall method of nonviolent action Satyagraha. It means the exercise of the purest soul-force against all injustice, oppression and exploitation.
 - It is a method of securing rights by personal suffering and not inflicting injury on others.
- **Sarvodaya:** Sarvodaya is a term meaning 'Universal Uplift' or 'Progress of All'. The term was first coined by Gandhi ji as the title of his translation of John Ruskin's tract on political economy, "Unto This Last".

- **Swaraj:** Although the word swaraj means self-rule, Gandhi ji gave it the content of an integral revolution that encompasses all spheres of life.
For Gandhi ji, swaraj of people meant the sum total of the swaraj (self-rule) of individuals and so he clarified that for him swaraj meant freedom for the meanest of his countrymen. And in its fullest sense, swaraj is much more than freedom from all restraints, it is self-rule, self-restraint and could be equated with moksha or salvation.
- **Trusteeship:** Trusteeship is a socio-economic philosophy that was propounded by Gandhi ji.
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.
- **Swadeshi:** The word swadeshi derives from Sanskrit and is a conjunction of two Sanskrit words. 'Swa' means self or own and 'desh' means country. So swadesh means one's own country. Swadeshi, the adjectival form, means of one's own country, but can be loosely translated in most contexts as self-sufficiency.
 - Swadeshi is the focus on acting within and from one's own community, both politically and economically.
 - It is the interdependence of community and self-sufficiency.

Application of Various Facets of Gandhian Ideology

- **Civil Services:** Truth lies at the core of Gandhian philosophy as he himself has tried to remain truthful throughout his life. Gandhian view of truth was irreversible in different contexts irrespective of the urgency of the situation.
 - This was why Gandhiji cancelled the Non-Cooperation movement after the satyagrahis deviated from the path of truth and a violent incident of Chaurichaura took place.
 - This principle of truthfulness to self and to the public is essential for civil servants in the current context to rampant corruption.
- **Peace And Stability in the World:** Non-Violence is a key component of Gandhianism, which was the great weapon used by Gandhiji during the freedom movement of India against British Raj.
 - Gandhiji believed non-violence and tolerance require a great level of courage and patience.
 - In a world that is moving through the phases of war marred by violence and terrorism, there is a significant requirement of Gandhian idea of Non- violence more and more today than the past days.
- **Secularism:** Gandhianism was tolerant towards all religions and the world today needs more and more religiously and faith wise tolerant people in societies where violence is committed in the name of religion.
Tolerance in the society will help in neutralizing the ethnocentric bias in the globe that is taking place day by day on the basis of religion, caste, ethnicity and region etc.

- **Creation of Casteless Society:** Gandhiji was against the caste system and coined the term Harijan to pay respect to the lower caste people.
As the Caste system is still prevalent in the Indian society, the Gandhian philosophy is useful to create a casteless society where everyone is treated equally irrespective of their caste.
- **Gandhian Socialism:** Gandhian view of socialism is not political but more social in its approach, as Gandhiji thought of a society with no poverty, no hunger, no unemployment and education and health for all.
 - These Gandhian ideologies will continue to act as the lighthouse for Indian policy makers.
 - From poverty alleviation to Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and universal health care (Ayushman Bharat) to skill India programs everywhere the core inspiration comes from Gandhianism.
- **Decentralization:** Gandhian idea of decentralization of power can be implemented in democracies through empowered local self governments at grass root level.
Indian government, for instance, has implemented local self government by adopting the Panchayati Raj and Municipality system in rural and urban areas respectively.
- **Cleanliness:** Gandhiji laid great emphasis upon cleanliness or Swacchta, as he used to say- 'Swacchta Hin Seva'.
 - The recent Swacchta Bharat Abhiyaan, the biggest cleanliness drive of India, is to fulfill the dream of Bapu by making India clean.
 - However, this cleanliness drive is more than physical cleanliness and the need to lay more emphasis upon the internal cleanliness of the individual.
 - Thus, along with clean roads, toilets for a clean India we require a corruption free society with greater levels of transparency and accountability too.
- **Sustainable Environment:** Gandhiji held that "Earth has enough for Human needs, But not for Human greed's".
 - These lines of Mahatma Gandhi reflect upon how human behaviour destroys nature and how a sustainable way of living is the need of the hour.
 - The world is whirling under the burden of global warming, climate change and resource crunch and all environmental conservation treaties and sustainable development efforts must implement this Gandhian philosophy.
- **Ethical Importance:** On the ethical and behavioural part Gandhianism has much significance today because society is witnessing the degradation of values.
 - Societal values have degraded to such an extent that people don't hesitate to kill someone for the gratification of their own needs.
 - Respect for women is one of the major ideas of Gandhian philosophy and the world is witnessing the increased level of violence, subjugation women face nowadays in society.
 - Thus, Gandhian dream of a safe country necessitates social consciousness and women emancipation.

Conclusion

Gandhiji's political contributions offered us Independence but his ideologies enlightened India as well as the world even today after so many years. Every individual, thus, should follow the key Gandhian ideologies in their day to day life for a happy, prosperous, healthy, harmonious and sustainable future.



Drishti Mains Question

It seems Gandhian philosophy is more relevant today than yesterday. Discuss.



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<https://youtu.be/QR9o1xu3xcY>

This editorial is based on the “Armenia and Azerbaijan fight over Nagorno-Karabakh again” which was published in The Economist on September 28th, 2020. Now watch this on our Youtube Channel.