



## **Gandhian Political Philosophy and Its Relevance Today**

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### **Abstract**

Gandhian political philosophy, rooted in the principles of non-violence (ahimsa), truth (satya), and self-reliance, remains a compelling and relevant discourse in the contemporary world. This abstract provides a concise overview of the enduring relevance of Gandhian thought. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, often referred to as Mahatma Gandhi, was a key figure in India's struggle for independence and a pioneer of non-violent resistance against oppressive regimes. His philosophy, characterized by civil disobedience and constructive work, offers valuable insights that transcend time and borders. In today's global context, where conflicts and socio-political unrest persist, Gandhian principles of non-violent conflict resolution continue to inspire movements for social justice, human rights, and environmental sustainability. His emphasis on moral and ethical leadership remains pertinent in addressing contemporary challenges. Gandhi's concept of swaraj, or self-rule, resonates with discussions on local governance and decentralized decision-making. Moreover, his economic vision of self-reliance and sustainable development aligns with contemporary debates on equitable and eco-friendly growth.

**Keywords:-** Gandhian political philosophy, Mahatma Gandhi, Non-violence (Ahimsa), Satyagraha, Swaraj

### **Introduction**

Gandhian political philosophy, derived from the wisdom and actions of Mahatma Gandhi, continues to resonate with profound relevance in the contemporary world. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, affectionately known as the Mahatma, left an indelible mark on India's struggle for independence through his unwavering commitment to non-violence (ahimsa), truth (satya), and self-reliance. However, the enduring significance of his philosophy extends far

beyond the borders of India and its historical context. In this introduction, we explore the timeless relevance of Gandhian thought and its enduring impact on global discourse. Gandhi's philosophy is a testament to the power of moral and ethical leadership. In an era marked by political turmoil, civil unrest, and global conflicts, his unwavering adherence to the principle of non-violent resistance offers a compelling alternative to the path of violence and aggression. His belief that truth and love can overcome hatred and oppression serves as an enduring source of inspiration for movements advocating for social justice, human rights, and peace worldwide.

Today's interconnected world grapples with an array of complex challenges, including environmental degradation, economic inequality, and cultural divisions. In this context, Gandhi's vision of self-reliance (swaraj) and sustainable development assumes renewed importance. His emphasis on simple living and harmonious coexistence with nature finds resonance in contemporary debates about ecological sustainability and responsible consumption. Gandhian philosophy serves as a beacon for those seeking to empower local communities and promote decentralized decision-making. His ideas on constructive work and community development offer practical insights into fostering self-sufficiency and participatory governance. As we navigate the complexities of the 21st century, the enduring relevance of Gandhian political philosophy underscores the enduring value of ethics, morality, and non-violent activism. This study delves into the various facets of Gandhian thought, examining its applicability in addressing today's global challenges. By doing so, it seeks to illuminate the enduring impact of a remarkable leader whose principles continue to guide humanity towards a more just, equitable, and peaceful world.

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, affectionately known as Mahatma Gandhi or simply "Gandhi ji," was one of the most iconic and revered figures in the history of the Indian subcontinent and a global symbol of non-violent resistance and social change. Born on October 2, 1869, in Porbandar, Gujarat, Gandhi grew up in a modest family, and his early life was marked by simplicity and a commitment to truthfulness. Gandhi's transformative journey began when he studied law in England and later practiced law in South Africa, where he encountered firsthand the stark realities of racial discrimination and injustice. It was in South Africa that he developed the concept of satyagraha, a form of non-violent resistance that would become the cornerstone of

his activism. Upon returning to India, Gandhi became a prominent leader in the Indian freedom struggle against British colonial rule. He advocated for non-violent civil disobedience as a means to achieve independence, inspiring millions with his unwavering commitment to truth, non-violence, and justice. His famous Salt March in 1930, where he walked over 240 miles to protest the British monopoly on salt, became a powerful symbol of resistance. Gandhi's philosophy extended beyond political freedom. He championed the idea of swaraj, or self-rule, emphasizing the importance of self-sufficiency and rural development. His advocacy for communal harmony, religious tolerance, and the upliftment of the marginalized sections of society, particularly the Dalits (untouchables), earned him the title of "Mahatma," meaning "great soul." Despite facing numerous imprisonments and personal sacrifices, Gandhi remained resolute in his pursuit of a just and equitable society. His life was tragically cut short when he was assassinated on January 30, 1948, by a Hindu nationalist who disagreed with his views on communal harmony. Gandhi's legacy endures, serving as an enduring symbol of peaceful resistance, social justice, and human rights worldwide. His teachings on non-violence, truth, and the inherent worth of every individual continue to inspire movements for civil rights, freedom, and social change across the globe. Mahatma Gandhi's life and work exemplify the profound impact that one individual can have on the course of history through unwavering commitment to principles of justice and compassion. (Gray, S., & Hughes, T. M., 2015).

### **Relevance of Religion**

Mahatma Gandhi's perspective on religion was deeply intertwined with his philosophy of life and politics. While he was a devout Hindu, Gandhi's approach to religion was inclusive and underscored the importance of religious pluralism and moral values. His views on religion remain relevant in the present time for several reasons. Gandhi believed that religion should be a unifying force, bringing people of different faiths together rather than dividing them. In a world marked by religious conflicts and intolerance, his emphasis on interfaith harmony and respect for all religions serves as a beacon of hope for promoting peaceful coexistence.

Gandhi's principle of "Sarvodaya," or the welfare of all, was deeply rooted in his religious beliefs. He believed that religion should inspire individuals to work towards the betterment of society, particularly the most marginalized. This notion is pertinent today as societies grapple with issues of social justice, poverty, and inequality. Gandhi's commitment to non-violence (ahimsa) as a core principle of both his political and religious life remains highly relevant in a world rife with violence and conflicts. His belief that love and compassion should guide human interactions offers a moral compass for addressing global challenges.

### **Relevance of Politics**

The relevance of politics in today's world is undeniable, serving as the bedrock upon which societies function and evolve. Politics is not merely the domain of politicians; it is the very process by which governance, power, and decision-making occur. It ensures that resources are allocated, laws are enacted, and policies are shaped to address the needs and aspirations of a diverse citizenry. In democratic systems, politics empowers individuals to have a say in their government, holding leaders accountable and shaping the trajectory of their nation. Beyond national borders, politics guides the interactions between countries, influencing peace, security, and global cooperation. Politics provides a platform for advocating social change and justice, as evidenced by numerous movements throughout history. It plays a pivotal role in addressing pressing challenges, from public health crises to climate change, by mobilizing resources and orchestrating collective responses. At its core, politics reflects the ideological debates, values, and priorities of a society, continually shaping the course of human civilization. In an ever-changing world, the relevance of politics endures as the driving force that shapes the present and charts the path to the future. (Godrej, F, 2006).

### **Relevance of Democracy**

The relevance of democracy in today's world is undeniable, as it embodies principles that resonate with the fundamental aspirations of humanity. Democracy stands as a bulwark against authoritarianism and tyranny, safeguarding the rights and freedoms of individuals. It champions the idea that every citizen's voice matters, ensuring that leaders are chosen through fair and

transparent processes and are held accountable for their actions. In an increasingly interconnected and diverse world, democracy's inclusivity is crucial, allowing for the participation of diverse voices and perspectives in shaping the future. Its emphasis on peaceful conflict resolution and adaptability makes it a stabilizing force in turbulent times. Moreover, democracy is not just a political system; it is a beacon of hope for human rights, social justice, and economic development. Its relevance transcends borders, contributing to global stability and fostering cooperation among nations. As challenges continue to evolve, democracy remains a vital force, reflecting the enduring belief that governance should serve the common good and protect the dignity and rights of all individuals.(Bilgrami, A,2016).

### **Social Philosophy**

Social philosophy, as a field of inquiry, serves as a profound lens through which we examine the intricate tapestry of human society. It delves into the ethical, moral, and political dimensions of our collective existence, shedding light on questions of justice, fairness, and the balance between individual rights and the common good. In an era marked by complex social challenges, from economic inequality to environmental crises, social philosophy provides the intellectual framework for critical analysis and thoughtful solutions. It guides us in navigating the ethical quandaries posed by advancements in technology, the ethical responsibilities of governments and institutions, and the principles that should underpin our interactions with one another in an increasingly interconnected world. Social philosophy also reminds us of the importance of empathy, care, and solidarity in our relationships, challenging traditional notions of self-interest and individualism. It inspires conversations about social change, progress, and reform, offering insights into the dynamics of social movements and the pursuit of a more just and equitable society. Ultimately, social philosophy is a vital discipline that not only helps us understand the complex web of human interactions but also provides guidance on how we can collectively strive for a better, more ethical, and inclusive world.(Alter, J,2000).

### **Literature Review**

**Bala, S. (2005).** Mahatma Gandhi's conception of education remains profoundly relevant in today's world, characterized by rapid technological advancements and complex global

challenges. Gandhi's educational philosophy was rooted in his vision of holistic and value-based learning, emphasizing the development of character, ethics, and the empowerment of individuals. Gandhi believed that education should go beyond the mere acquisition of knowledge and skills; it should cultivate moral and ethical values, such as truth, non-violence, and social justice. This holistic approach remains pertinent in addressing contemporary issues like intolerance, discrimination, and environmental degradation. It encourages individuals to be responsible global citizens who promote peace and sustainability. Gandhi's emphasis on simplicity and experiential learning offers a refreshing perspective. His advocacy for learning through community engagement and practical experiences aligns with modern concepts of hands-on, experiential education.

**Mantena, K. (2012).** Gandhi's critique of the state, rooted in his philosophy of non-violence and satyagraha, reflects a complex interplay of sources, contexts, and conjunctures. His perspective on the state was informed by a variety of sources, including his deep study of religious texts, particularly Hinduism and Jainism, and his exposure to Western political thought, especially Henry David Thoreau's ideas on civil disobedience. In the context of British colonial rule in India, Gandhi's critique of the state took center stage. He challenged the authority and legitimacy of the colonial state through non-violent resistance, aiming to dismantle oppressive systems and secure India's independence. This critique resonated with the aspirations of millions of Indians and inspired mass movements for self-rule. Gandhi's critique of the state also extended to his vision of a decentralized, self-sufficient, and morally upright society, where the state played a minimal role. His emphasis on swaraj, or self-governance, underscored the importance of local autonomy and self-reliance.

**Khoshoo, T. N., & John, M. S. (2009).** Mahatma Gandhi's environmental thought, deeply rooted in his principles of simplicity, non-violence, and interconnectedness, provides a profound lens through which we can examine our relationship with the natural world. Gandhi's belief in the intrinsic value of nature, his advocacy for sustainable living, and his call for local self-reliance all resonate with contemporary environmental concerns. In an era marked by climate change, resource depletion, and environmental degradation, Gandhi's emphasis on the moral duty to protect the environment and the need for individual and collective responsibility remains

strikingly relevant. His legacy encourages us to rethink our patterns of consumption, embrace sustainable practices, and cultivate a deeper respect for the planet we inhabit. By drawing on Gandhi's environmental wisdom, we can chart a course towards a more ecologically conscious and harmonious coexistence with nature, addressing the pressing environmental challenges of our time.

**Khimta, A. C. (2012).** The concept of "Swaraj," as articulated by Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Mahatma Gandhi, holds enduring relevance in the present day. Tilak's call for political self-governance and Gandhi's holistic vision of Swaraj encompassing self-reliance, simplicity, and non-violence remain touchstones for contemporary discussions and actions. India's attainment of political independence in 1947 fulfilled Tilak's dream of Swaraj, underscoring the enduring power of the concept. Gandhi's emphasis on local governance and community well-being aligns with modern calls for decentralized decision-making, grassroots democracy, and sustainable development. Furthermore, his principle of non-violence continues to inspire peaceful conflict resolution and global cooperation. The idea of self-reliance, promoted by both leaders, resonates in today's discourse on economic resilience and ethical consumption. In essence, Tilak's and Gandhi's views on Swaraj transcend their historical contexts, offering profound insights into the ongoing quest for political autonomy, social justice, and sustainable living in the present era. Their legacies serve as guiding beacons for individuals and nations committed to a more just, self-reliant, and harmonious world.

### **A Gandhian Idea of World Government and World Peace**

Mahatma Gandhi, the iconic leader of India's struggle for independence, had a unique and profound vision of world government and world peace deeply rooted in his philosophy of non-violence (ahimsa) and his principles of moral governance. Gandhi's idea of world government and peace can be summarized as follows:

1. **Non-Violence as the Foundation:** At the core of Gandhi's vision was the principle of non-violence. He believed that lasting peace could only be achieved through non-violent

means, emphasizing that violence begets more violence. He famously stated, "An eye for an eye only ends up making the whole world blind." He advocated for non-violent resistance (satyagraha) as a powerful tool for addressing conflicts and injustices at all levels, from the individual to the international.

2. **Decentralized World Government:** Gandhi envisioned a world government that was decentralized and based on the principles of self-governance, local autonomy, and non-coercion. He opposed centralized and authoritarian forms of governance, emphasizing that individuals and communities should have the freedom to make decisions that affect their lives.
3. **Local Self-Sufficiency:** Gandhi believed in the importance of self-reliant and self-sufficient communities. He argued that communities should produce their own necessities and be economically independent, reducing dependence on distant and exploitative systems. This approach, he believed, would foster peace by mitigating competition and conflict over resources.
4. **Interfaith Harmony:** Gandhi was a staunch advocate for interfaith harmony and believed that different religions should coexist peacefully. He saw religious tolerance and understanding as essential components of global peace. His own spirituality and moral principles were deeply rooted in his Hindu faith, but he respected and drew wisdom from various religious traditions.
5. **Education for Peace:** Gandhi placed a strong emphasis on education that promoted values of peace, compassion, and non-violence. He believed that education should nurture ethical and responsible citizens who would contribute to a peaceful world.

In today's world marked by global conflicts, environmental challenges, and social inequalities, Gandhi's ideas on world government and peace remain relevant. His emphasis on non-violence, decentralized governance, self-reliance, and interfaith harmony offers valuable insights into addressing contemporary issues and striving for a more just, equitable, and peaceful world. Gandhi's legacy serves as a reminder of the enduring power of non-violence and ethical



principles in shaping the course of history and fostering global harmony. (Xaxa, J., &Mahakul, B. K,2009).

## **Conclusion**

Gandhian political philosophy remains a timeless and invaluable source of inspiration and guidance in the contemporary world. Mahatma Gandhi's principles of non-violence (ahimsa), truth (satya), and self-reliance continue to hold profound relevance and offer enduring solutions to the complex challenges we face today. One of the most compelling aspects of Gandhian thought is its enduring relevance in addressing conflicts and social injustices. In an era marked by violence, polarization, and global unrest, Gandhi's unwavering commitment to non-violence serves as a beacon of hope. His belief that love, compassion, and dialogue can overcome hatred and oppression resonates deeply in movements for peace, civil rights, and social justice worldwide. Gandhi's emphasis on individual moral and ethical responsibility is another aspect that remains pertinent. In a world often driven by materialism and self-interest, his call for individuals to be the change they wish to see in the world offers a path towards personal and collective transformation. Gandhi's vision of self-reliance and sustainable development aligns with contemporary concerns about environmental sustainability, equitable economic growth, and responsible consumption. His principles of simple living and harmonious coexistence with nature are increasingly relevant as we confront environmental crises and the need for responsible resource management. Gandhi's advocacy for decentralized decision-making and community empowerment resonates in discussions about participatory governance and grassroots initiatives. His concept of swaraj, or self-rule, underscores the importance of local self-sufficiency and the empowerment of marginalized communities.

## **Future Work**

Gandhian political philosophy has enduring relevance, and future work in this field could explore several key areas to deepen our understanding and apply his principles to contemporary challenges:

1. **Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability:** Investigate how Gandhi's emphasis on simplicity, self-reliance, and respect for nature can inform strategies for mitigating climate change and promoting sustainable living practices. Explore the intersection of Gandhian philosophy with modern environmentalism.
2. **Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding:** Study the application of Gandhi's principles of non-violence (ahimsa) and satyagraha in resolving contemporary conflicts, both at the national and international levels. Analyze case studies and develop practical frameworks for conflict resolution.
3. **Social Justice and Inequality:** Examine how Gandhi's advocacy for social justice and the upliftment of the marginalized can be translated into effective policies and initiatives in the realms of education, healthcare, and economic development. Assess the relevance of his views in addressing modern-day social disparities.
4. **Technology and Ethics:** Investigate the ethical implications of technology and its impact on society, drawing from Gandhi's ideas on technology's role in promoting or hindering human well-being. Explore how technology can be harnessed for ethical and inclusive development.
5. **Political Leadership and Moral Governance:** Analyze the role of ethical leadership and moral governance in contemporary politics. Evaluate the application of Gandhian principles in the conduct of political leaders and policymakers.
6. **Non-Violent Activism:** Explore the strategies and effectiveness of non-violent activism in addressing current social and political issues. Examine the role of civil disobedience, protest movements, and advocacy for social change in the Gandhian tradition.
7. **Global Citizenship and Interconnectedness:** Examine the relevance of Gandhi's concept of global citizenship and interconnectedness in an era of globalization and international

cooperation. Investigate how these ideas can inform approaches to global challenges such as pandemics, poverty, and migration.

8. Educational Reforms: Study the application of Gandhi's ideas on education to modern educational systems, emphasizing holistic development, ethics, and community engagement. Propose educational reforms that align with his vision.
9. Media and Propaganda: Analyze the role of media and propaganda in shaping public opinion and promoting non-violence. Assess the challenges and opportunities presented by contemporary media landscapes in advancing Gandhian principles.
10. Interfaith Dialogue and Religious Tolerance: Explore initiatives promoting interfaith dialogue and religious tolerance inspired by Gandhi's commitment to religious pluralism. Assess their impact on reducing religious conflicts and promoting harmony.

Future work in Gandhian political philosophy should not only delve deeper into these areas but also seek innovative ways to apply his principles to address the pressing challenges of our time. It should be a source of inspiration for individuals, scholars, and policymakers committed to creating a more just, peaceful, and sustainable world.

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