

**THE ESSENCE, IMPACT OF GANDHI IN INDEPENDENCE OF INDIA**

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Mohandas karamchand Gandhi was an eminent freedom activist and an influential political leader who played a dominant role in India's struggle for independence. Gandhi is known by different names, such as Mahatma, Bapuji and father of the nation. His birthday is celebrated as Gandhi Jayanthi every year. It is declared as a red letter day in India. Gandhi with his unusual, powerful political tools of Satyagraha and Non-Violence was inspired by several other political leaders all over the world including Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther king Jr. And Aung San Suuki. Apart from triumph of India against the English, he also led a simple and righteous life, for which he is often revered. Indeed he became a great man during the course of his life. This is one of the main reasons why Gandhi is followed by millions, for he proved that one can become a great soul during the course of one's life.

**Keywords:** *Gandhiji, Philosophy, Non-violence, Truth, Satyagraha.*

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**GANDHI'S BIRTH, CHILDHOOD AND LIFE STYLE**

M.K.Gandhi was born on 2<sup>nd</sup> October ,1869 in the princely state of Porbandar which is located in modern-day Gujarat. He was born into a Hindu merchant caste family to Karamchand Gandhi, diwan of Porbandar and his fourth wife, Putlibai. Gandhi's mother belonged to an affluent Pranami Vaishnava family. Indeed he was a mischievous kid. During the course of his childhood Gandhi befriended sheikh Mehtab who introduced to him by his older brother. It is said that Gandhi, who was raised by a vegetarian family, started eating meat because of the

accompaniment of sheik. It is also said that Gandhi cultivated the habit of smoking cigarettes which were thrown away (leftover cigarettes) by his uncle.

**IDEOLOGY OF MAHATMA GANDHI**

M.K.Gandhi believed that Indian civilization is far superior to British civilization. Gandhi was not against Britishers but he was against the British exploitation. Britishers were free to live in India not as rulers but as normal citizens of this country.

"I want the winds of all cultures to blow by my house, but I refuse my house to be blown off by any such wind". ---Gandhi



He understood that Britishers are not ruling India. It is Indians who are encouraging Britishers indirectly to exploit India. If we Indians who are in love with British Institutions, British ideas, their clothes, their industries, then how can we expect to be free. That is why he adopted "Charkha" to emphasize that every Indian should spin his own cloth.

#### **VIEWS OF GANDHI ON ENGLISH EDUCATION**

He believed that modern education propagated by Britishers was a symbol of slavery of India. It was of no use to Indians. A farmer who knows how to till his farm and cultivate the crop has no gain of western learning. A child who keeps his love towards mother in the core of his heart, can't show off openly by learning western culture.

#### **GANDHI'S APPROACH ON SOCIAL ASPECTS**

According to Gandhi, for a real swaraj to be established, it is not that one class rule be substituted by the other. It is much more than that. The villages have to be strengthened. He further believed that it is much easier to change an institution than a man. Though Gandhi had great faith in institutions and their functioning, he had greater faith in the perfectibility of the individual. Gandhi strongly believed that western socialism had a strong sense of selfishness.

Gandhi wanted the capitalists and the landlords act as trustees holding their wealth for the good of their villages, workers and the peasants. His theory of trusteeship where in the economically powerful people would surrender their power voluntarily was severely criticized. Scholars like M.N.Roy stated that such a theory would benefit only the propertied class and that the exploited could win their rights only through violence and expropriation. However, Gandhi opined that violence might destroy one or two bad rulers, two capitalists but such capitalists always crop up. So, the only solution, according to Gandhi was to change men and not destroy them. Further, Gandhi stated that rich cannot accumulate wealth without the cooperation of the poor, and therefore, if the poor doesnot cooperate with the rich they naturally mend their ways.

Gandhi also gave his own definition to the word socialism. According to him, it doesnot refer to nationalization of the means of production,

distribution, exchange, but faith in God, truth, non-violence and equality. So, in simple terms Gandhian socialism is based on the ideas of non-possession and trusteeship.

It was thus not an ideology of industrialization, planning or state action and, therefore, it doesnot appeal to the intelligentsia. Further Gandhian socialism was humanitarian in nature. It cared for the poor and it was a moral code of personal conduct than an economic ideology. It did not envisage that expropriation of the rich through violence or state action.

#### **NON-COOPERATION MOVEMENT AND GANDHI**

Non-Cooperation Movement was one of Gandhi's most important movements against the British. Gandhi urged his fellow countrymen to stop co-operation with the British. He believed that the Britisher succeeded in India only because of the co-operation of the Indians. He had cautioned the British not to pass the Rowlatt Act, but they didnot pay any attention to his words and passed the Act. As announced, Gandhiji asked everyone to start civil disobedience movement by force and opened fire on a peaceful crowd in Delhi. Gandhi urged people to show unity, non-violence and respect for human life. But the British responded aggressively to this and arrested many protesters. On 13 April 1919, a British officer, Dyer, ordered his forces to open fire on a peaceful gathering, including women and children, in Amritsar's Jallianwala Bagh. As a result of this, hundreds of innocent Hindu and Sikh civilians were killed. The incident is known as "Jallianwala Bagh Massacre".

#### **NON- VIOLENCE AND ITS UNDERLYING FORCES**

There is now increasing realization that peace is not merely the absence of overt forms of violence, but is intimately linked up with questions of justice, as reflected in the several struggles for justice waged in different parts of the world, often by adopting violent methods. The challenge is to transform violent struggles into non-violent actions aimed at stirring society wide dialogue on fundamental and ethical questions, there is no doubt about the democratic credentials of such attempts.

Coming to Gandhian approach of non-violence, Mohandas Gandhi, often considered a founder of the non-violence movement, spread the



concept of ahimsa through his movement and writings, which then inspired other non-violent activists, Shrimad Rajchandra, a revered philosopher, writer and poet, well known as the spiritual guru of Mahatma Gandhi who sowed the qualities of 'satya and ahimsa' in him.

Non-Violence is the personal practice of being harmless to self and others under every condition. It comes from the belief that hurting people, animals or the environment is unnecessary to achieve an outcome and refers to a general philosophy of abstention from violence.

In modern times, non-violent methods of action have been a powerful tool for social protest and revolutionary social and political change. There are many examples of use. Fuller surveys may be found in the entries on civil resistance, non-violent resistance and non-violent revolution. Here certain movements particularly influenced by including Mahatma Gandhi leading a successful decades-long nonviolent struggle against British rule in India, Martin Luther King's and James Bevel's adoption of Gandhi's non-violent methods in their campaigns to win rights for African Americans.

The term 'non-violence' is often linked with or used as a synonym for peace, and despite being frequently equated with passivity and pacifism, this is rejected by non-violent advocates and activists. Non-violence refers specifically to the absence of violence and is always the choice to do no harm or the least harm, and passivity is the choice to do nothing.

"Non-violence is a powerful and just weapon. Indeed, it is a weapon unique in history, which cuts without wounding and ennoble the man who wields it".

Martin Luther King Jr.

### GAHNDHI AND SWARAJ

The twentieth century has been characterised as a century of widespread democratic upsurge. The first half of the century witnessed the overthrow of colonialism in Asia and Africa because of the liberation struggles. The Indian freedom movement led by Mahatma Gandhi which used non-violent direct action satyagraha as a technique of struggle, has won general acclaim for the pioneering role it played in sharpening and hastening the

process of dismantling the classical forms of colonialism and imperialism. The next two decades witnessed massive attempts at post-colonial transformation in the newly independent colonies initiated by the state. There has been a deeply entrenched presumption that the state was an effective mediator in ameliorating the conditions of the weaker and poorer sections of people, for the purpose of ensuring social justice and equality, the liberator of the oppressed and "an engine of growth and development that would usher in a new civil order based on progress and prosperity and confer rights to life and liberty, equality and dignity, on the people at large.

The third decade of independence was period of disillusionment and demystification. One can say without being seriously contested that the major non-violent or peaceful struggles of the post Gandhian period in India are organic extensions of satyagraha campaigns carried out by Gandhiji in his anti-racial and anti-colonial struggles in South Africa and India. In fact, there is hardly any significant non-violent struggle in any part of the world during the last 50 years that does bear the impress and impact of Gandhian non-violence in a substantial way.

A brief explanation of what Gandhi meant by Swaraj is called for here. Although the word Swaraj means self-rule, Gandhi gave it the content of an integral revolution that encompasses all spheres of life. "At the individual level Swaraj is vitally connected with the capacity for dispassionate self-assessment, ceaseless self-purification and growing swadeshi and self-reliance". Politically swaraj is self-government and not good government (for Gandhi, good government is no substitute for self-government) and it means continuous effort to be independent of government control, whether it is foreign government or whether it is national. In the other words, it is sovereignty of the people based on pure moral authority. Economically, purna swaraj means full economic freedom for the toiling millions. For Gandhi, swaraj of the 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.

### **STATUS OF WOMEN IN PRE-INDEPENDENT INDIA AND GANDHI'S PERCEPTION**

To understand in depth the role that Gandhi played in improving the position of women in society, it is essential to look at women's status, prevalent at that time. When Gandhi emerged on to the political scenario, social evils like child marriage and dowry system were rampant. Indian women had an average life span of only twenty seven years. Death of women in labour was a common phenomenon. The percentage of women with basic education was a low as two percent. The patriarchal nature of the society confined women to the status of an inferior sex subordinate to their male counterparts. The Purdah system was in full vogue in Northern India . Unless accompanied by their male guardians, the women were not permitted to venture out on their own. Only a handful few could avail dismal milieu that Gandhi took the responsibility of shouldering a social crusade that led to a major reorientation of the common notion of women in the Indian society.

There was a marked departure of Gandhi's perception of women from that of other reformers. The stance taken by other social reformers and leaders, prior to Gandhi created a helpless image of the Indian women. With the emergence of Gandhi, a new conception of women gradually gained currency . For Gandhi, women were not mere toys in the hands if men, neither their competitors. Men and Women are essentially endowed with the same spirit and therefore have similar problems. Women are at par with men, one complementing the other. According to Gandhi, education for women was the need of the time that would ensure their moral development and make them capable of occupying the same platform as that of men.

### **POLITICAL REVIEW OF GANDHI'S CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE MOVEMENT**

The prevalent political and social circumstances played a vital role in the launching of the civil Disobedience Movement. M.K Gandhi was urged by the congress to render his much needed leadership to the civil Disobedience Movement. On the historic day of 12 march 1930, Gandhi inaugurated 'The Civil Disobedience Movement by

conducting the historic "Dandi Salt March " where he broke the salt laws imposed by the British Government. Followed by an entourage of 79 ashramites, Gandhi embarked on his march from his Sabarmati Ashram to Dandi that is located on the shores of the Arabian Sea. On 6 April 1930, Gandhi with the accompaniment of 79 Satyagrahis, violated he salt law by picking up a fistful of salt lying on the sea shore. They manually made salt on the shores of Dandi.

Dandi Salt March had an immense impact on the entire nation. Each and every corner of the country was gripped in a unique fervor of nationalism. The entire nation amalgamated under the call of a single man, Mahatma Gandhi. The program of the Civil Disobedience Movement incorporated besides the breaking of the salt laws, picketing of shops selling foreign goods and liquor, bonfire of cloth, refusal to pay taxes and avoidance of offices by the public officers and schools by the students. Perturbed by the growing popularity of the movement, the British Government imprisoned 'Gandhi' and 'Nehru', in a bid to thwart it. Thus, the second struggle attaining swaraj launched by the congress, under able guidance of Mahatma, served the critical function of mobilizing the masses on a large scale against the British.

### **IDEALISTIC APPROACH OF GANDHI ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

The village is the basic unit of the Gandhian ideal social order. Gandhi succinctly pointed out, "If the village perishes India will perish too... We have to make a choice between India of the villages that is as ancient as herself and India of the cities which are a creation of foreign domination." Gandhi's ideal villages belongs to the British period, when Indian villages were supposed to constitute the federation of self-governing autonomous republics.

In the Indian context rural development may be defined as maximising production in agriculture and allied activities in the rural areas including development of rural industries with emphasis on village and cottage industries.

It attaches importance to the generation of maximum possible employment opportunities in rural areas, especially for the weaker sections of the



community so as to enable them to improve their standard of living.

Provisions of certain basic amenities like drinking water, electricity, especially for the productive purpose, link roads connecting villages to market centers and facilities for health and education etc., figure prominently in the scheme of rural development.

In fine Gandhian approach to rural development strives to reconstruct village republics which would be Non-violent, self-governed and self-sufficient so far as the basic necessities of ruralities are concerned. Apart from creating a new socio-economic order, it endeavours to transform man; otherwise the changes in the socio-economic order will be short-lived.

#### **GANDHI'S BELIEF IN SATYAMEVA JAYATE**

In his early years, Gandhi was deeply influenced by the studies of Shrivana and Harish chandra that reflected the importance of truth. Through these stories and from his personal experiences, he realised the truth and love are among the supreme values. With this we can say that he was a seeker of Truth. He claimed to have found a way to it. He also quoted God's word. "He who strives never perishes". Gandhiji says he was in the world feeling his way to light 'amid the encircling gloom'. He will not be a traitor to God to please the whole world. Whatever striking things he has done alone in life, he has not done prompted by reason but prompted by instinct. He would say "I am a man of faith. My reliance is solely divine. One step is enough for me".

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