



## Gandhi and his Moral Values: An Indication to the Present World

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**Abstract:** Gandhiji was a social and political reformer and gave a strong fight for the eradication of social evils. He played a vital role to remove the social evils committed against the downtrodden and women of the country through ages. He did not preach anything that he did not practice himself. Other principles followed by him were emancipation and empowerment of women, and the welfare of poorer sections of the society. These principles, those Gandhiji adopted ultimately gave him an internationally acclaimed acceptance of a great pacifist, a democrat, a defender of rights and privileges of downtrodden and of women and last but not the least, a social and economic environment.

**Key words:** trusteeship, decentralization, environment, swadeshi

### Introduction:

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, the foremost person in the freedom struggle of India, who is the father of India, is the "The Nation Maker". Gandhiji put, his views about truth, non-violence, freedom, equality, full employment, bread labour, trusteeship, decentralization, environment, swadeshi and sanitation were perceived as cardinal principles for making self-sufficient India. Gandhiji was a social and political reformer and gave a strong fight for the eradication of social evils. He played a vital role to remove the social evils committed against the downtrodden and women of the country through ages. He strongly believed that a society can develop rapidly if it takes all sections of the people together into its fold; rich and poor, high society people and low caste people and both men and women. To Gandhiji, social freedom was as crucial as political freedom. Gandhian philosophy and his thoughts relating to the moral values was very strong

**Values:** The first four principles are the universal or core values, i.e. Truth, Non-

violence, Freedom, Equality; the remaining, flowing mostly from them and are linked with his economic ideas. They were formulated by Gandhi to regulate initially the conducts of inmates of Satyagraha Ashram in 1930 and latter extended to the work for rural reconstruction. These were not intended to be mechanical formulae, but as practical aids to moral and spiritual growth. A brief elaboration of some of these principles like truth, no-violence, freedom and equality will be useful to understand them and their importance in the context of initiating action for rural reconstruction.

**Truth:** He regarded truth is God as the source of Dharma. Hence there should be truth in thought, speech and action. The man who has realized truth completely has nothing else to know, because all knowledge is necessarily included in it. And that is why truth is perhaps the most important name of God. In fact it is better to say that truth is God, than to say God is truth.

His concept of truth involves complete



tolerance to those who differ. According to him the aim of human life is to attain truth and non-violence. Truth is of two types, Ultimate and Relative. It is comparatively easy to achieve relative truth. However the endeavor should be to know the ultimate truth, because this results in realization of God.

**Non-violence:** Gandhi considered non-violence, besides truth synonymous with God. He believed that non-violence has its own relevance in resolving conflict and is also related to reconstruction of society. Non-violent resolution of conflict is in accordance with the dignity of man's spirit. He can save his spirit by observing non-violence, which is in tune with his spirituality. Another aspect of non-violence is progress. It binds people together, promoting cooperation, harmony and unity and preventing destruction, contributes to development. Practice of absolute non-violence is not possible so long one exists physically. It is not the same as non-killing, nor it is non-resistance borne out of cowardice. It implies absence of hatred or ill will, love for wrong doer, courage in the face of violence, bread labour, truthfulness and freedom from possession.

**Freedom:** Closely linked with truth and non-violence is freedom; without the freedom of body, mind and soul, the individual can not attain perfection. It is used to indicate freedom to make a choice and to take a decision without which development of individual is not possible. This perfection can be achieved by acquisition of the capacity by all to resist authority, when it is misused. It makes people tolerant to other ideas.

**Equality :** It flows logically from the concept of non-violence, since non-

violence and non-exploitation is impossible without equality.

**Philosophy:**

A unique person or perhaps the greatest figure of the last nineteen hundred years as characteristically assessed by *Louis Fisture*, Mahatma Gandhi always insisted on Truth and Non-violence as the inseparable part of humanism.

I have nothing to teach this world, "*Truth and Non-violence as old as hills*". With present phase of globalization, which cannot be stopped, the third world need to look into the evil effects of globalization. We cannot allow our fellow citizens to starve, to lose their employment and to become destitute.

The force of his words reminds us that we should not rest till we are able to internalize in ourselves the twin principles of Truth and Non-violence in our thought and action. We should be optimistic and hope that we would be able to overcome the present crisis facing the world.

Gandhiji is believed to have greater relevance in the present world of modern science and technology that produced geographical neighborhood but become highly individualistic. We feel no longer concerned with each other's welfare, except in commercial and business terms. Cooperation has been replaced by competition and consumerism. Much intelligence and much energy are going in this effort.

Yet it seems more important than ever that an even greater effort be made to achieve positive and mutually helpful human relationship. This cannot be accomplished by harnessing technical forces but only through himself, working with other men based on Gandhian ideals. Nobel laureate Rabindhranath Tagore has put it beautifully : "Every



child brings proof that God has not lost faith in man."

The whole song expresses the truth that God dwells in everyone and in everything. This had touched Mahatma Gandhi deeply. The way to happiness and prosperity has never been through despair. Only the one who never despairs can have hope and enthusiasm in work. Just as we cannot live without the 'Sun' we can not live in 'peace' in the world without Gandhi's twin ideals of Truth and Non-violence.

The non-violent behaviour on the part of humanity requires the highest form of civilization. Civilization is an act of the spirit. Our legal system has made life too easy for criminals and too difficult for law abiding citizens. The country has forgotten that crime is not a problem to be handled by the police only but by the whole society. The two basic lessons which we are to learn from Indian history are Indian people have always taken their moral standards from their rulers and have risen to great heights whenever they have followed in the glow of noble kings or leaders, and Religions and kingdoms have been destroyed not by adversity but by abasement and corruption is the greatest solvent of public institutions and that poverty possess a far smaller threat. Politicians should give moral leadership for which people are yearning and waiting, instead of maintaining a system which is poisoned by collective bad faith and polluted by individual self interest.

People are served by deception and craftiness instead of vision and imagination. The duty of a citizen is not merely to vote, but to vote wisely. He must be guided by reason and by reason alone. He must vote for the best man, irrespective of any other consideration and irrespective of the party label.

#### **Environment protection:**

Now we lead for a disaster, in this blind race of development. Amidst all sort of problems such as rapid population growth, production and consumption pattern causing stress and strain on natural systems, degradation and depletion of natural resources affecting the life support system (air, water, soil, and bio-diversity), unpredictable global climate change, ozone layer depletion and sea-level-rise, unemployment, poverty, economic inequality, social injustice, poor conditions of villages, big polluted cities, rivers and polluting industries etc. In the course of development we have to think of these problems and try to find out the solution best suited to our needs.

Gandhiji's entire life and deeds, indeed is an environmental bequest for whole mankind. This is not because he wrote big volumes of books on environment, led a people's movement to oppose the construction of large scale-dam project or spent his life-time for cleaning Ganga or whatsoever; rather because he was a true practitioner of environmentally sustainable development in the real sense, by his personal life-style, he has adopted in his day-to-day life. Here is a being, who is in harmony and peace with environment and himself, although his all life was spent locked in an unequal battle with the mighty British Empire. His strength came to him on account of his spirituality and practice of non-violence and truth. In wider sense, these are the critical elements for the success of practicing sustainable development in true spirit. In brief, his whole life, was his message and a lesson on "protecting and conserving Environment along with the development process," not only for Indians, but also for the whole world to follow at large.



Gandhiji felt industrialization is going to be a curse for mankind. It can not provide jobs for its millions of citizen and in addition it would be creating pollution problems, where as, developing thousands of cottage and village industries would provide an outlet for the creative facilities and resourcefulness of the people. It would also usefully employ many persons, who are in need of employment, which in return in fact would add to the national wealth too. The big industries can never overtake the unemployed millions. Their aim is primarily to make money for the few owners. Dead machinery must not be pitched against the millions of living machines. If we compare between the Gandhian model of bottom up rural development and Nehruvian model of top-down industrial development; we can visualize that Gandhian models lead to an economy of permanence and based largely on renewable, where damage to the environment is minimum and manageable, while the latter is based largely on non-renewable and causes environmental pollution. And depollution is far more expensive. Moreover in reality what we find today even after 69 years of independence is the rich have become richer and the poor have become poorer.

Gandhiji's theory of economic equality went hand in hand with his theory of equal distribution of wealth. The real implication of equal distribution is that each man shall have the means to supply all his natural needs and nothing more beyond this. To bring this ideal into being, the entire social order has to be reconstructed. We must always bear the goal in mind and work continuously to achieve it. Gandhiji has suggested the practical way and means, how to bring this theory of equal distribution into

reality. *One should reduce one's want to a minimum, bearing the poverty of others in mind.*

His earnings should be free of dishonesty, there should be no desire for speculative earnings. Gandhiji was of the firm belief that work and culture, should not be separated. Really there is enough hands and feet, God has given everyone the capacity to work and earn more than his daily bread. No labour is too mean for one who wants to earn an honest penny. To be honest to oneself is to be like pro in protecting nature.

#### **Against the social evils:**

From Gandhiji's point of view, although he had great respect for the traditions of the country, he realized that certain customs and traditions of the Indian society were anti-ethical to the spirit of development of the women of the nation. Gandhiji quoted, *"It is good to swim in the waters of tradition; but to sink in them is suicide"*. Thus, he was completely against many social customs, traditions, norms and values and social evils like child-marriage, widowhood, the dowry system, the pardah system and prostitution, the witch-hunting, etc. which threat the development of the society.

#### **Sanitation:**

Gandhi addressed himself to the problems of sanitation and told "Sanitation should occupy the foremost place". A Latin proverb says that a *'healthy mind is possible only in a healthy body'*. He also said Ahmadabad can not evade the responsibility of sanitation by pleading poverty. Anyone who fouls the air by spitting about carelessly, throwing refuse or rubbish



otherwise dirtying the grounds; sins against man and nature. Man's body is the temple of god. Any one who fouls the air that enter that temple desecrates it, his taking the name of lord Ram is in vain... *"we like to have an enjoyable bath, but don't mind dirtying the well tanks and river, by whose side of in which we perform ablutions. These practices should be considered as a great vice, which is responsible for the disgraceful state of our villages and the sacred bank of sacred rivers and for the diseases those spring due to the lack of sanitation"*.

Keeping the Gandhian ideology in the mind our Honorable Prime Minister of India is introduced "Swacha Bharath Missiom" for 'Clean India and Green India' the programme is successfully implementing in the entire country.

#### Conclusion:

Gandhiji's life, was based on various ethical principles such as : non-violence, practicing and preventing truth, shunning the use of materials obtained by illegitimate means, celibacy- as a means of population control, neither coveting or amassing materials and wealth beyond one's need, sanitation of body, mind and surrounding, contentment with available resources austerly, introspection and meditation and even fasting for self purification and any dereliction of duties towards nature including human beings. In this process he controlled himself by himself, because, being a yogi, he had complete control over his body and mind. It is high time we have to remember and follow the golden words of wisdom of Gandhiji relating moral values and following it to really become meaningful. The principle of non-violence is his greatest

contribution to world civilization and if this principle is strictly followed by all nations, in every society and family then there will be no discrimination against each and every one; automatically there will be a best society based on equality and justice. There lies the relevance of Gandhian ideas and thoughts.

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