



The Spiritual Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi & Its Impact on Indian freedom Struggle

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Abstract

Mahatma Gandhi was a spiritual messenger of ultimate truth & ahimsa. He is renowned for his principles of spirituality across the world. His values were always measured as universal collective thoughts. He is considered as a major spiritual leader for his spiritual philosophy & viewpoints besides being an organized leader par excellence. He pioneered Indian freedom movement towards Independence through these simple spiritual ideals. He persuaded the nation convincingly to follow the path of spiritual accomplishment by surrendering deadly violence, bloodshed, aggression & antagonism. This was a huge assignment considering the period where world wars & political tribulations ruled the roost. This paper argues about the influences proceeding to the emergence of spiritual philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi & its reflections on Indian National Movement in particular & world in general. This paper highlights the affirmative impact of Gandhian spiritual Philosophy as a proactive force in attaining Swaraj in 1947.

Key words: Inner strength, non violence, Spirituality, peace, Philosophy

"Keep your thoughts positive because your thoughts become your words. Keep your words positive because your words become your behaviors. Keep your behaviors positive because your behaviors become your habits. Keep your habits positive because your habits become your values. Keep your values positive because your values become your destiny." Mahatma Gandhi

Introduction

Mahatma Gandhi was a messenger of ultimate truth & ahimsa & is renowned for his philosophy of spirituality world over. His ideologies were always considered as universal collective thoughts. He is considered as a major political & spiritual leader of India. He pioneered Indian freedom movement towards Independence. As a lawyer, Mahatma Gandhi first employed his thoughts of peaceful civil disobedience in

the struggle for civil rights in South Africa. His experiments were a great success. After his return to India, he organized several such movements. Accordingly several poor farmers and laborers were motivated to protest against oppressive taxation and widespread discrimination under colonial government. Assuming leadership of the Indian National movement, Mahatma Gandhi led nationwide campaigns.

1. For the alleviation of poverty,



2. For the liberation of women,
3. For brotherhood amongst differing religions and ethnicities,
4. For an end to untouchability and caste discrimination,
5. For the economic self-sufficiency of the nation,
6. For Swaraj the independence of India from British colonial domination.

Spirituality through Brahmacharya

Mahatma Gandhi was significantly influenced by the philosophy of Brahmacharya as advocated through Vedic texts. Brahmacharya is related to spiritual and practical purity, and his vegetarianism helped him to stand firm in his belief and practice of complete self-control. (Gandhi, Mohandas Karamchand -The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi (1994). Brahmacharya was a path towards self-realization for him. He practiced, and tested, celibacy when he was about 36 years. This prompted him to follow his mind & contemplate on purity both mental & physical. He suggested people to practice spirituality willingly as this would lead one to meditate & know the bliss of supreme almighty.

Spirituality through Simplicity

Mahatma Gandhi also believed in simplicity. He felt that anyone who was in public service should also lead a life of simplicity. He spent one day per week in complete silence, and refused to read the newspaper for three and one-half years to

preserve his inner peace. (Gandhi, Mohandas Karamchand (1994). The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi).He wore simple & limited clothes. He lived on simple food , spoke gently & shared his time between prayer & reading. All these habits supported him in practicing spirituality.

Spirituality through Non Violence

Throughout his life, Mahatma Gandhi remained committed to non-violence and truth even in the most extreme situations. A student of Hindu philosophy, Mahatma Gandhi lived simply, organizing an ashram that was self-sufficient in its needs. (Andrews, C. F. (2008) [1930]. "VII – The Teaching of Ahimsa".) His used natural resources in a limited manner, he adored the reserves of nature, he supported himself with little daily needs, his clothing was less, and all these were his way of practicing a simple life.

Spirituality through Khadi

Mahatma Gandhi was very particular about his clothing. He wore cloth which was homemade, and he encouraged others to make their own clothing through spinning through Charaka. This initiative caught on gradually & Charaka became the symbol of Indian flag. He spun his clothes- the traditional Indian dhoti and shawl woven with a charkha. He believed that of people of India could weave their cloth , then India would not be burdened through imports from England.



Spirituality through Food & Diet

Mahatma Gandhi lived on a simple vegetarian diet. He used rigorous fasts, for long periods, for both self-purification and protest. Gandhiji fasted on a number of occasions, and one of his most memorable one was in Delhi which carried on for 21 days for the unity of Hindus and Muslims. He always believed that 'The body was never meant to be treated as a refuse bin, holding all the foods that the palate demands,' His *Brahmacharyaway* of life led him to believe that our diet should be healthy and was also a key part of learning self-restraint. He experimented with a variety of diets throughout his life and went completely vegetarian for six years refusing to even touch milk products. Finally, he gave in to his doctor's demands and started consuming goat's milk which he found strengthening.

Spirituality through inner Strength

Mahatma Gandhi's moderate approach to life was a demonstration to the actuality that inner strength is always superior. His life story has demonstrated time & again that it's possible to remain gentle in spirit, yet simultaneously command a massive respect. (Dadage M S -Science and Spirituality -Gandhi Sarvodaya society website). He called for projection of inner strength as opposed to aggression & violence. He suggested women to join the freedom struggle because he thought that women always expounded inner strengths such as patience , tolerance ,sacrifice , persistence & determination.

Spirituality through Prayer

Mahatma Gandhi could gather inner strength from his regular prayer habits as well. The followers of ashrams sung songs keethansbhajana regularly. 14th century Bhakti poet saint Meerabai's songs were mahatma's favorite. He never stepped out of his room without prayer. As a strict Hindu sectarian he believed that regular praying supports inner thoughts & facilitates him to become stronger & prepares one for good deeds. The purity of thoughts, pristinely deeds, clarity of activities all emerge from prayer. Prayer is nothing but confession of the bad & impure thoughts. Hence Gandhi suggested prayer would keep one gentle in his activities & cautious about his moves.

Gandhian Spiritual Followers

Mahatma Gandhi has been seen on par with many stalwart leaders as a spiritual philosopher. Dalai Lama of Tibet, Dr. Martin Luther king (Jr) of America. Lech Walesa of Poland, Aung san suuki of Myanmar, Nelson Mandela of South Africa, Benogi Aquino of Philippines Desmond Tutu of South Africa all were influenced by Gandhian ideals of simplicity, spirituality, & individuality. Besides these there have been several other countless number of people who have been influenced by Gandhian ideologies. Vinobha Bhave continued his legacy of modeling peace, love, nonviolent resistance to injustice and transforming village life through self-reliance, hard work, and an attitude of self-surrender to supreme divinity. (Dadage M S -Science



and Spirituality -Gandhi Sarvodaya society website).

Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy was not purely based on theory; instead he lived by rules of practicality. (Dadage M S - Science and Spirituality -Gandhi Sarvodaya society website). John Dear, a Jesuit priest, author, and longtime advocate of nonviolence said "Gandhi's primary contribution to spirituality and the world itself is nonviolence.... Gandhi challenges people of faith to recognize the hypocrisy in their lives. He argued that we cannot go to church, synagogue and mosque one day, and the next day sanction war, support executions, foster racism, or pay for nuclear weapons.... For Gandhi, the only authentic spirituality is a spirituality of nonviolence....". He always practiced what he preached. For him morality & religion were synonymous. He was influenced by Hindu Puranic studies, BhagavadGeetha, Upanishads influenced him to acquire spiritual bliss. His ideological links with Annie Besant connected him to theosophy. He was a religious pluralist who supported Islamic religious concepts as well as Christian concept of religion

Conclusion:

Mahatma Gandhi remains not only a universal icon, but in many ways an icon

of universalism as well. He is admired by people from across the world for a multitude of reasons ranging from the spiritual to the political, but he also stands adorable as a philosopher for his universal idea of truth, honesty, morality, simplicity, integrity and self less love. These days' people lack all these ideals. They lack the very comprehension of life & nature. Hence these ideal of Gandhi have been relevant today people should support themselves by understanding their inner strength through spiritual habits. Like this they can contribute to forwarding Indian heritage frontward.

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