



## Relevance of Gandhism today

V.Venkata Ramana H.O.D, Dept. of Economics, Sir. C.R.Reddy (A) College, Eluru.

**Abstract:** *The clean India movement is one such good teaching that should be emphasized for good. Changes are necessary for the betterment of a developing nation. Had Gandhiji been living in the present era, his teachings would have been different from what is inscribed into the books written years back. Mahatma Gandhi is like a candle as he enlightened the world and scarified his own life, the Governor of Bali has said, underlining that the peace icon's teachings are still relevant in modern society. The teachings of Mahatma Gandhi for maintaining peace, harmony and non-violence are extremely relevant and important in the modern-day society, where we are seeing a rising trend of people resorting to violence in addressing their issues and conflicts are seen," he said. Amidst the atmosphere of tension, violence, differences of opinion, unemployment and inflation globally, the question is being raised again and again about the relevance of Gandhian philosophy which is based on truth and non-violence. Today, all over the world, wherever there are peace marches, there is a remembrance of Gandhi.*

**Key words:** *Abhyudaya', 'Gyan Shakti', local dailies, pamphlets*

### Introduction

One of the most popularly discussed and yet many-a-time controversial figure of Indian politics is Mahatma Gandhi. There is hardly any area in the pre or post-independence era that he had left untrammled for the sake of Indian development and independence. He is such a socio-political figure who is barely impossible for someone to forget or ignore. He has influenced every aspect of human consciousness and there is hardly any discipline that he has left uncommented. He is an immense source of writing himself and has influenced different disciplines and very many writers from different fields like history, politics, philosophy, literature, sociology and so on, have him as their central themes. While musing on different books on Gandhiji, especially the then Gandhian Indian English Literature, one can easily sense that the then time was grossly occupied by a 'Gandhian

consciousness' socially, culturally and politically, at least in the period from 1918-1922 in the anti-colonial against the British.

**Gandhi's influence on Literature:** Gandhiji's influence on Indian English writing. But it is a very interesting fact that even Gandhiji was one of the supreme communicators who could bring innocents out of doors; make illiterates sing one song, gather all women at a venue and make children chant his name as God, at his single call. That Gandhiji was a classic media-man, is proved by his journalistic activities and his use of journalistic writings throughout his life. He very aptly exploited the nationalist press, and his own journals, 'Young India', 'Navijivan', 'Indian Opinion' and 'Harijan', though were restricted to the literary urban of India, yet he well knew the secret of reaching out to the hearts of the millions in the rural areas by means of 'Padayatra' or mass procession and



motivating speech. He was much an advanced social worker and was well aware of the power of communication. He weighed and measured the Indian colonial situation and the existing psychological and physical state of Indians and thus concluded that the accurate means to reach them was by the folk media and group communication. He achieved identification with the masses through "Sadharanikaran" or simplification of his message, through common religious symbols, Vedas, myths, and of course making his life very simple to establish an easy identification. Whatever Gandhiji's influence may have been on political and economic spheres of the country, there is hardly any doubt that he has left a deep impression on our literatures? He is a mine of themes for writers and commentators though he himself never worked on any literary topic or genre. Dramatic reconstructions of Gandhiji's life in film and fiction range from Richard Attenborough's academy award winning film, Gandhi, in 1982 to Indian English novels like Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and R.K Narayan. Gandhiji gave new strength and new confidence to Indian languages that suffered contempt, neglect, indifference, and disgrace for a long time. Gandhiji insisted on high thinking and simple living which was reflected and highlighted by the literary English authors of the time, who in their novels and short stories, portrayed the real picture of the the-then society from various sides, thereby presenting the influence of Gandhi on Indian villages and towns, letting us a scope to probe how Gandhiji's ways of developmental communication created effects on human lives bringing a sea change in their thoughts, views and living. Almost all of their novels represent events, which

distinctly correspond to the examples of actual incidents, and teachings that Gandhiji in real life encoded during his visits at various places. In most of the cases, the Gandhian writers, especially the novelists and short story writers, made Bapu an important, guest character or they made a local Gandhi replica and presented him in the light of Mahatma. Not only did the Indians turn Gandhiji into a veritable cult but also a flesh & blood Rama or Krishna who could change the society by his single finger touch. P. Rama Moorthy in 'Gandhi's letters to the West' quotes: "For me there were only two God & Bapu, and now they have become one."

**Gandhian philosophy:** Gandhiji had a multi-faceted personality. He has been the only Indian after the Buddha to attain worldwide fame. It would not be an exaggeration to say that he had performed many miracles during his lifetime and his message was a source of inspiration and strength to the people for all times. Gandhiji was a psychologist in one sense and an idealist on the other as he could feel the pulse of India and its people on whom he could exert a tremendous influence and preach his Gandhian ideology. He realized that India being a religion-oriented country with a majority of half-literate and non-literate population can only be motivated and mobilized through a traditional mode of communication and in addition, Gandhian philosophy was mainly based on traditional and labour oriented technologies. The folk or traditional arts of India have from the ancient times been used for moral, religious socio-political purposes. It is a classic communicative medium which appeals to the personal and emotional level of the people, avoiding any cross-cultural hurdles,



expensive entertainment programmes and above all, the message is dispersed in a familiar format and content in local and colloquial dialects to a homogeneous group, surpassing all literacy and socio-economic barriers. Gandhiji though not in-person but in ideologies, teaching, views, had reached the stage and in hearts of people through various forms of Tamasha, Jatra, Keertan, Nautanki, Pala, Yakshagana, Ramlila, Raslila, Puppetry, and Street Theatre, to name a few folk forms, at all corners of rural and urban India and of course the literary artists and art directors were behind to provide a firm support in popularizing Gandhiji. He was the one who could clearly mention that our India is our Sita 'maiya' (mother) and we are the Ramas who would drive the red-faced Ravana (British) away and bring back our mother. This very use of the Ramayana concept deep-rooted in the religious tradition of India ignited the dormant national consciousness and deeply founded the concept of freedom movement in the illiterates and by dint of this religious proforma, he could bring about a united upheaval in the country for its development. Moreover, his mission was backed by the messages that could remove social evils and vices from the country. Shahid Amin in his essay "Gandhi as Mahatma: Gorakhpur District, Eastern UP", says, "The 1910's movements and organizations of Hindi, Hindu Culture and social reform 'nagri sabhas', pathshalas (vernacular schools), 'gaushalas' (asylums for cattle), 'sewa samithis' (social service leagues) and 'sudrak sabhas' (reform associations) of various sorts provided the support and cover for nationalist activity all backed by popular Gandhi belief even in the rural villages and undeveloped regions.

**Relevance of Gandhi on Languages:** The inspiration and influence which our literatures of all languages have imbibed from him is well noted in the theater, folk activities and literary writings based on his life, preachings, and ideologies and of course his welfare activities nationwide. Such a medium produced an immediate feedback from the audience from all parts of the country, as things got well assimilated into their hearts and minds, and the whole of India could respond united at his call. The anti-Gandhians might feel the above view as biased and unreal but it is a veritable truth that Gandhiji was represented as a sage by the Indian Congress in its political campaigns, policy wise and his accessories esp. the loin cloth, his stick and very nominal life style were modes that themselves spoke for the Mahatma and helped in establishing him as a saintly preacher and a sincere freedom worker. This worked havoc in the Indian minds especially in the village folk, who were basically religion bound and not at all conscious about the then political and economic domination of the country.

The literary writers of the period were also no exceptions to the above phenomenon. The writers working in different languages in those days were mostly persons who had come either directly under Gandhiji's influence and many had taken part in the freedom movements, or they were highly influenced by his ideals. Their writings were immensely burdened with Gandhian idealism, lifestyle, his teachings and anti-colonial stands. Bhabani Bhattacharya specifically sums up the elements that the then writers incorporated from Gandhiji: "In every Indian literature a new thinking emerged. There was to be shift of emphasis from the rich to the



poor, from the intellectual to the man of character and inner culture, from the educated to the illiterate and the voiceless, and deep rooted in these revaluations was social reform."<sup>4</sup>

The 'Father of the nation', Mahatma Gandhiji, well-known not just in India but in the whole world for his non-violent fight for India's freedom, is put to question on the relevance of his teachings in today's world. Things sure have undergone tremendous changes since independence but his teachings are still taught in schools to incur good morality amid the future of the nation. Gandhism is a way of living with simplicity and non-violence. Great leaders around the world take inspiration from the teachings and life of Gandhiji while the natives of the land, India, where he was born are ignoring his teachings as something not relevant in present times. His teachings are of honesty, integrity and kindness which can never go old or irrelevant. Gandhiji been living in the present era, his teachings would have been different from what is inscribed into the books written years back. Mahatma Gandhi is like a candle as he enlightened the world and scarified his own life, the [Governor of Bali](#) has said, underlining that the peace icon's teachings are still relevant in modern society. The teachings of Mahatma Gandhi for maintaining peace, harmony and non-violence are extremely relevant and important in the modern-day society, where we are seeing a rising trend of people resorting to violence in addressing their issues and conflicts are seen," he said. Amidst the atmosphere of tension, violence, differences of opinion, unemployment and inflation globally, the question is being raised again and again about the relevance of Gandhian philosophy which is based on truth and

non-violence. Today, all over the world, wherever there are peace marches, there is a remembrance of Gandhi. There is no doubt that the thoughts of Gandhi are relevant even in the present day, and will remain forever. "It is important that all of us, including the young children and students, follow the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi, and become a good citizen and a good human being," hence this paper attempts to discuss the ideals of Gandhiji in the modern world today.

**Gandhi's Influence on society:** Gandhiteachings became so popular that they were pronounced as everyday bread and butter facts and the more they got discussed the more did they gain in importance, magnitude, and matter. As a result of this many new things got assimilated in the name of the Mahatma and rumors made room in accordingly, thereby increasing his popularity by leaps and bounds, that neither the Mahatma nor the Congress circulated. Stories like Mahatma walking through the fire unhurt, the Mahatma bringing independence in 1921, Mahatma insisting vegetarianism and condemning fish and meat in people etc. were some common subversions made in Gandhi's name. Gandhiji insisted on high thinking and simple living which was also reflected and highlighted by the literary English authors of the time, mainly Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayanan, who in their novels and stories portrayed the real picture of the the-then society from various perspectives, thereby presenting the influence of Gandhi on Indian villages and towns, letting us a scope to probe how Gandhiji's ways of developmental communication created effects on human lives bringing a sea change in their thoughts, views and living. Almost all of their novels represent events which



distinctly correspond to the examples of actual incidents and teachings that Gandhiji in real life encoded during his visits at various places. The crux of the morale or bottom spread of Gandhism, which the novels often portray by vicarious means and events are:

1. Unity among all religions especially Hindu-Muslim Unity.
2. People should not adhere to extremist means of protest, i.e. they should be non-violent and not use domestic arms like lathis, sharp weapons, and stop picketing and looting places.
3. Stop the evil practices of untouchability, castism, enmity among classes, hatred, lying, swearing but spreading of brotherhood, love and unity among all races instead.
4. Stop consumption of tobacco, ganja-smoking, gambling, stop swearing, using slang, whoring, and beating the womenfolk at home, sex-crimes and the like.
5. Boycotting foreign goods, educational, economic and legal institution.
6. Take up the initiative to spin, weave, cultivate, study, learn and teach, control sex, family planning, lead a simple living, self-sacrifice and self-purification.
7. People will not betray their help-seeker; they should be honest, progressive and self-confident about their country, resources and abilities.
8. Believe in the truth, face the truth and apply it in life,

realization of Swaraj, grace of God, strength of the united people when motivated towards one goal peacefully.

**Gandhi and Society:** Gandhiji's social activities were development oriented and his idealism was democratic, rural and homogeneous in nature. It was not only the literary writers who played an active role in reflecting the then Gandhi-mania of the entire country but also the nationalist Press and local newspapers and journals which portrayed the bhakti cult of the Mahatma through different anecdotes, feature articles, soft news and of course, snippets, thereby proving the immense popularity of the political figure who was slowly turned into a divine entity, a messiah who was sure to bring a revolution in human history as Buddha or Christ could. Newspapers like the 'Swadesh', 'Aaj', 'Abhyudaya', 'Gyan Shakti' and local dailies, pamphlets etc all contributed accordingly and respectively in portraying the local reactions in favour of Gandhiji and thereby popularizing him. The myth of the Mahatma was a result of the projections of the existing patterns of popular beliefs about the worship of the holy miraculous sages in rural India. Gandhi-teachings became so popular that they were pronounced as everyday bread and butter facts and the more they got discussed the more did they gain in importance, magnitude, and matter. As a result of this many new things got assimilated in the name of the Mahatma and rumors made room in accordingly, thereby increasing his popularity by leaps and bounds, that neither the Mahatma nor the Congress circulated. Stories like Mahatma walking through the fire unhurt, the Mahatma bringing independence in 1921, Mahatma insisting





vegetarianism and condemning fish and meat in people etc. were some common subversions made in Gandhi's name.

**Gandhi- Rural Development:** Gandhian approach to rural development may be labelled as 'idealist'. It attaches supreme importance to moral values and gives primacy to moral values over material conditions. The Gandhians believe that the source of moral values in general lies in religion and Hindu scriptures like the Upanishads and the Gita, in particular.

According to Gandhiji, this federation will be brought about not by coercion or compulsion but by the voluntary offer of every village republic to join such a federation. The work of the central authority will only be to coordinate the work of different village republics and to supervise and manage things of common interest, as education, basic industries, health, currency, banking etc. 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 ruralites are concerned. Apart from creating a new socio-economic order, it Endeavour's to transform man; otherwise the changes in the socio-economic order will be short-lived.

#### Works Cited

- Agarwal Virbala and Gupta V. S. A Handbook of Journalism and Mass Communication, Concept Publishing Company; New Delhi, 2001.
- Amin Shahid, "Gandhi as Mahatma: Gorakhpur District, Eastern UP", Subaltern Studies III. Writings on South Asian History and Society, ed. by Ranagit Guha, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1984.
- Bhatnagar M.K, The Insights into The Novels of R.K. Narayanan; Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, Nice Printing Press, New Delhi, India, 2002.
- Dalton Dennis Nonviolence in Action Gandhi's Power; Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1998.
- Ghosh Avik, 'Communication, Technology and Human Development: Recent experience in Indian social Sector'; Sage Publication, New Delhi, India, 2005.
- Gowda D. Javare, "Inaugural Address" National Seminar on Gandhiji in Indian Literature, Mysore, 1970, University of Karnataka Press, Karnataka.1971.
- Kumar J. Keval, Mass Communication in India; Jaico Publishing House, Sneheshe Printers, Mumbai, India, 2004.
- Naik Dr. M. K, "English" National Seminar on Gandhiji in Indian Literature, Mysore, 1970, University of Karnataka Press, Karnataka.1971.
- Naik Dr. M. K, "A History of Indian English Literature", Sahitya Academy, New Delhi, 1982.
- Nayak H. M, 'Welcome Speech" National Seminar on Gandhiji in Indian Literature, Mysore, 1970, University of Karnataka Press, Karnataka.1971.