

# **Gandhi's Message of Spirituality, Love, Truth and Non-Violence**

## **Or**

### **Gandhi May Die but Gandhism will Live For Ever**

Gandhiji gave the practical message of spirituality, love, truth and non-violence, but he did not enunciate any system of philosophy in the academic sense of the term. He led a life of action and sacrificed himself for the welfare of humanity. Indeed there is a concord between his philosophy and his daily conduct. Not only his high ideals elevated him to the sublime spiritual status of Mahatma, but his unique and unrivalled greatness lies in giving the shape of action and practice to these sublime ideals in his everyday life. Gandhiji's autobiography, his voluminous writings and speeches contain imperishable values which for the sake of convenience may be called 'Gandhism' or 'Gandhian philosophy'. Gandhism or Gandhian philosophy means that philosophy which shaped Gandhiji's life, character, work, achievements and teachings. Once he himself had remarked. "Gandhi may die but Gandhism will live for ever," which is true till today.

### **Views on Truth and Non-Violence**

Truth was Gandhi's pole star. His life and his ideas are always studied in relation to his religion of truth. From his early childhood he loved truth and as he grew up, truth became his sole object and ultimately he became the apostle of Truth, Ahimsa and Peace. In other words, he perfected the art and science of Ahimsa.



According to Gandhiji Ahimsa and Truth are correlated and can never be disentangled and separated. He believed that Ahimsa is the means and Truth is the end. If we take care of the means, we are bound to reach the end sooner or later. Since Ahimsa is the means for the attainment of Truth, we should firmly observe it in our daily life. He writes: "Ahimsa is not the goal. Truth is the goal. But we have no means of realizing Truth in human relationship except through the practice of Ahimsa. A steadfast pursuit of Ahimsa is inevitably bound to truth—not to violence. That is why I swear by Ahimsa. Truth came naturally to me. Ahimsa I acquired after a struggle." Everyone should consciously recognise and adopt non-violence in order to realize Truth, i.e., God.

Ahimsa is love infinite. None should be regarded as an enemy. We should love the evil-doer but should fight the poison of evil in his heart. "Hate the sin and not the sinner". Without the observance of Ahimsa in thought, word and deed Truth cannot be realized. He writes: "This Ahimsa is the basis of the search for truth. I am realizing everyday that the search is vain unless it is founded on Ahimsa as the basis." Truth, harmony, brotherhood and justice are the attributes of Ahimsa. It is soul force, ahimsa is physical force: "Man as animal is violent, but as spirit he is non-violent; the moment he wakes to the spirit within, he cannot remain violent." The vow of non possession and the allied abstinences are essential for the practice of Ahimsa. Humility, consciousness of the living presence of God within one's heart, complete abstention from exploitation in any form and sound moral character are the pre-requisites for the practice of Ahimsa.

Non-violence does not encourage passivity. It is an active force of the highest order. Ahimsa does not mean resignation from all real fighting against wickedness.

Non-violence cannot be preached. It has to be practised. Coward people cannot practise it because it requires much of physical and moral courage in order to control the violent instinct in man. According to Gandhiji non-violence is not a negative policy or doctrine, but it is a positive and honourable method of meeting violence, injustice, repression, tyranny and cruelty. It brings about harmony, peace and amity. Mahatma Gandhi was a practical idealist who practised Ahimsa in his own life. He had his first object lesson in Ahimsa when he made a written confession to his father about his habit of stealing money for smoking. His father wept and forgave him. Recalling this incident Gandhiji writes: "This was, for me, an object-lesson in Ahimsa. Then I could read in it nothing more than a father's love, but to-day I know that in Africa and in India in the political, social, economic and all other walks of life. His non-violent agitation and inquiry in Champaran "was a bold experiment with Truth and Ahimsa....." Ahimsa can be practised through "great study, tremendous perseverance, and through cleansing of one's self of all the impurities.



## Views on Religion

Gandhiji was a man of religion and a humanist, more than a nationalist and patriot. Although he was a devout Hindu, he stood for religious homogeneity of mankind. He always preached the truth of the universality of all religions and practised and proved this truth in his life. By religion, he did not mean the customary religion, 'but that religion which underlies all religion which brings us face to face with our maker'. To him religion meant *Dharma* or the sincere performance of duty.

Although Gandhiji remained essentially a Hindu, He also studied the scriptures of other religions. He found divinity not only in *Ramayana*, *Bhagavad Gita* or *Vedas*, but also in the scriptures of all religions of the world. The very thought of religious conversion was spurious to him. He said, "Every religion is as precious to me as my own Hinduism.....No thought of conversion is permissible to me at all. We must help a Hindu to become a better Hindu, a Musalman to become a better Musalman and a Christian to become a better Christian."

Gandhiji was dedicated to morality and spirituality but his devotion to social and political work was no less. To him politics devoid of religion is immoral. He became a political leader due to his devotion to truth. Truth, non-violence and righteousness were the supreme manifestation of religion to him and he wanted this religion of Truth, Ahimsa and righteousness to govern all spheres of life including politics. He wrote in his autobiography, "that those who say that religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion means."

According to Mahatma Gandhi prayer is the soul and essence of religion. He believed that prayer brings order and peace in our day to day activities. If there is no discipline in one's life, he is ultimately shattered. Prayer is an unailing means of cleansing the heart of passions.

## Views on Education

Gandhiji's aim of education is the complete development of physical, spiritual and moral faculties of man. He laid great stress on moral and spiritual education and also emphasised the need of manual or vocational training. He saw education as an instrument of fulfilling the social purpose and did not approve the western system of education. He felt that one of the most undesirable consequence of the Western system of education is the creation of 'educated middle class', This 'class' was segregated from the hard realities of life and has an aversion to all forms of manual work. Gandhiji placed main emphasis upon manual education than upon literary theoretical education, because he knew that man has to earn his bread by the exercise of his hands. He believed in 'Do and learn'.

Gandhiji aimed at evolving a pattern of education which suited the genius of India. He was of the opinion that literacy was essential but he did



not put emphasis on literal education. The existing English educational system did not inculcate the spirit of liberty and national welfare in the youths of India. It developed slave mentality. It is wrong to think that the fullest development of man is impossible without the art of reading and writing. Literal education adds 'grace to life' but is in no way indispensable for man's moral, physical or material growth. Natural training is far greater as it is responsive and therefore, the quickest and cheapest in the world.

According to Gandhiji, the supreme aim of education is "to make men who can see clearly and imagine vividly, think soundly and will nobly plan quickly and act faithfully for their country's service." This ideal of education aims at the perfect development of intellectual faculties, but intellectual knowledge without moral and spiritual development cannot give sound results. Therefore, he regarded character building as proper foundation of education, but training of spirit was equally important. Just as physical training is imparted through physical exercise, intellectual training through intellectual exercise, even so the training of the spirit is possible only through the exercise of the spirit.

### **Views on Politics**

Gandhiji's arrival on the Indian political scene was not only a displacement of one leader with the other, but it brought a revolution in the ways of life and thoughts of the Indians. Gandhiji was not only the politician, he was the liberator, the Messiah. He was a man speaking to men and everybody's friend and mentor. He asked not for votes, but for sacrifices.

Gandhiji believed that Freedom will not be 'given' as a free gift; it has to be deserved and 'taken'. He himself forged the weapons of Satyagraha and civil disobedience, hartal and bonfire of foreign cloth. He felt that fear makes the slave, not the prison or poverty or physical debility and when fear will leave the people they will become automatically free—potentially free. He himself was candid, brave, uncompromising, truthful and above all prophetic. When he launched the non-cooperation movement, he clashed with many, including Rabindranath Tagore himself, but he was unrepentant and adamant.

For a brief period of about five years in late twenties, Gandhiji stood aloof from politics, but with the Dandi march and the inauguration of salt satyagraha, he had to assume effective leadership again. Two or three years later, he again withdrew from active politics, but the Second World War called him back and he was compelled to launch the 'Quit India' movement in 1942, which was his third and the last of his major campaigns in India.

Gandhiji came into politics not because he intended to, but his devotion to Truth drew him into the field of politics. He had neither the lust for power nor he had the mania to dominate other men. He wanted peace and



non-violence and was of the belief that the use of violence should be given up once and for all and disputes and problems should be resolved through the ways of peaceful negotiations.

### Views on Untouchability and Women

Gandhiji fought for the human rights of untouchables and women, non-violently and vehemently. He unceasingly worked for them both. He aimed at establishing a classless egalitarian society in which all citizens would contribute their mite to social and national well being.

Gandhiji believed in the fundamental equality of all persons. The degrading and inhuman condition of women and untouchables, whom he called *Harijans*, appealed him. He laboured all through his life for the welfare of *Harijans*. He condemned Hinduism for the induction of untouchability. He called untouchability 'a sin against God and man' and a blot upon Hinduism. He hoped that *Harijans* should be granted religious, economic, social and educational equality. According to him independence would have no meaning if the most useful section of the community is deprived of its essential rights.

The eradication of untouchability was not a new idea but to bring it into the political programme was a new feature. Gandhiji admitted *Harijans* in his Sabarmati Ashram and granted to them equality of status. He refused to enter those temples to which *harijans* were not allowed to enter. By his efforts the resolution about the removal of untouchability was passed by the All India Congress Committee at its Nagpur session.

Mahatma Gandhi also strove for the human rights of women. He condemned the exploitation of women. He criticised Hindu culture for giving a subordinate position to wife. Woman is the companion of man endowed with equal mental capacities and she is entitled to a supreme place in her own sphere of activity as man is in his. She is the mother and maker of man. He regarded women as 'an incarnation to tolerance' and also as 'the incarnation of *Ahimsa*,' which means infinite capacity for suffering. "He objected to treat women as the object of man's lust. He admitted that the practice of dowry, the bonds of caste in marriage and forced widowhood are social crimes perpetrated on women in India. He also advised women 'to resort to civil rebellion against all undesirable and unworthy restraints'.