

Role Of Gandhiji In Today's Indian Society

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Abstract-This study investigates the lasting significance of Mahatma Gandhi in modern day India, examining the ways in which his ideas still influence the country's political and socio-economic climate. Gandhi's fundamental beliefs of social justice, truth that is satyagraha and non-violence that is ahimsa is served as the cornerstones of India's independence movement and ensuring attempts to establish the country. His emphasis on self sufficiency through khadi production village industries and decentralised development is still relevant in light of today's issues with sustainable growth and economic inequality. The study looks at Gandhi's contributions to social change, such as his opposition to untouchability, support of women's rights and encouragement of educational reform through Nai Talem. Gandhi belief in "enough rather than more" provides important insights for tackling modern problems like environmental degradation, intercommunal strife and rural empowerment despite the pressures of modernisation and globalisation. His legacy still shapes India's constitution and offers helpful advice for creating a welcoming nonviolent society based on the truth.

I. Introduction

Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of the Nation, is an iconic figure in Indian history, revered for his unwavering commitment to non-violence, truth, and social justice. Born on October 2, 1869, in Porbandar, Gujarat, Gandhi's life was a testament to the power of simplicity, compassion, and courage. Through his leadership, India gained independence from British colonial rule, and his influence extended far beyond the nation's borders, inspiring civil rights movements and freedom struggles worldwide. Even decades after his passing, his teachings and legacy continue to shape Indian society and inspire positive change. From promoting social equality and women's rights to advocating for sustainable development and self-reliance, Gandhi's ideals remain profoundly relevant in contemporary India.

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Beyond politics, Gandhi's vision for India was deeply rooted in social justice and human development. He fought tirelessly against social evils like untouchability, advocating for the rights and dignity of the marginalized and oppressed. His emphasis on self-reliance, simplicity, and community service reflected his commitment to building a society that valued human relationships and the well-being of all its members. Today, as India navigates the complexities of modernization, globalization, and social change, Gandhi's relevance endures. His ideas and principles offer valuable insights and guidance for addressing the nation's most pressing challenges, from environmental degradation and economic inequality to social injustice and communal discord. Gandhi's legacy reminds us that true progress and development must be grounded in the principles of justice, equality, and compassion.

II. Historical Context

Gandhiji envisioned a society which is free from violence and based on equality, humanitarianism and moral values. Mahatma Gandhi adhered to the idealism principle. He consistently held that God, whose soul that individual possesses, exists in an absolute and immortal manner. In this context, Satyagraha had been established which mentioned that the term is an application of both practical life and action. Misra (2020) stated that Gandhi himself mentioned that satyagraha requires a lot of sacrifice. Making the nation ready for sacrifice has been seen as extremely challenging because it calls for a lot of pressure. Through the process of satyagraha, a practitioner's soul is purified by satyagraha. Since satyagraha means "holding on to the truth", the satyagraha comes into contact with the truth. In a broader sense, satyagraha encompasses civil disobedience to the establishment of alternative political parties. The idea of ahimsa served as the foundation for satyagraha. Gandhiji drew inspiration for the concept of satyagraha from the ideas of Leo Tolstoy and Bhagwat Gita.

Research by Misra (2020) stated that Gandhi believed in the course of idealism where he considered the spirituality of human beings. On the other hand, Acharya (2018) stated that Gandhism contains the ideas and the body of work of the father of the nation. Gandhian philosophy is the religious and social ideas that Gandhi first adopted during his tenure in South Africa from 1893 to 1914 and later in India. These ideas were further developed by later "Gandhians", particularly in India, by Vinoba Bhave and Jayaprakash Narayan (Sahu and Behera, 2022). The fundamental principles of Gandhi's are truth, nonviolence, satyagraha, Sarvodaya, directive principles of state policies etc. The basic principle of Gandhi's ideology is non-violence. In general, non-violence

means not doing violence to others. According to Gandhiji, non-violence means being completely selfless. In his view, non-violence is 'positive love.' Non-violence is not a weakness, but a moral strength, a positive idea.

III. Gandhi's Freedom Movement and Nation-Building

III.1 Relationship between the Freedom Movement and Gandhian Ideologies

Mahatma Gandhi's freedom movement and nation-building efforts were instrumental in India's struggle for independence from British rule. His philosophy of non-violence and civil disobedience inspired a nation and paved the way for India's freedom. Mahatma Gandhi was an undisputed leader of India's struggle for Independence, yet his vision for post-colonial India was completely marginalised at the moment of decolonisation. Research by Singh (2018) stated that Mahatma Gandhi started leading from below and then worked his way up. He never imposed his leadership upon the people or their leaders. That was the main difference between Gandhi's vision and the early nationalists. As a result, he continued the ideas of both the moderate and the extreme movements. At the same time, he tried to apply their thinking in a way that could change with circumstances. Swaraj, in Gandhi's view, was a system ruled by God or by the principles of 'Ram Rajya' for the good of everyone.

Gandhi's approach to freedom fighting was rooted in non-violence, which he believed could bring about lasting change without perpetuating a cycle of brutality. The findings of Ulafor (2020) claimed that Gandhi disagreed with the usual idea that ahimsa meant something only negative. In some ways, "non-killing or non-injury" simply means no violence is involved. Unlike the usual idea, Gandhi said that ahimsa's positive aspects matter most compared to its negative ones. Since ahimsa in Gandhi's view means more than simply not injuring others and includes love and compassion, his ideas are not the same as those of Jaina philosophy, where ahimsa means only abstaining from injury. Gandhi's belief in non-violence involves not leaving your loved ones without protection. At times, acting with strength is better than just accepting abuse. Gandhi believes that being vengeful is always better than showing helpless, weak and submissive behaviour.

Gandhi's concept of Satyagraha, or insistence on truth, was a powerful tool in the freedom movement, emphasizing the importance of standing up for what is right. Rao (2018) stated that Gandhi saw fasting as an effective means for Satyagraha. Gandhi believed that a person leading a nonviolent movement needed enormous patience, strong determination, single-mindedness, absolute peace calm and no anger. Since nobody can master

these qualities right away, a person should only attempt a Satyagrahi fast if they have been following the laws of ahimsa. Gandhi encouraged people to take part in Satyagraha by working in silence but actively to make changes in society. It was mentioned that those practising satyagraha are expected to accumulate sufficient non-violent strength. Adopting peace will not happen for them unless they first remove corruption. All this they can manage only by joining in on an organized plan which requires working together to benefit everyone. Misra (2020) noted that the Constructive program aims to establish harmony among communities, stop untouchability, provide education to adults, improve village life, boost upliftment programs for villagers, create peaceful labour organizations, achieve equality, oppose piecing industries and end several social ills. Overall, Gandhi's all-encompassing philosophy of Satyagraha combined strategic non-violent resistance, positive social action and individual spiritual discipline to bring about long-lasting, truth-based and compassionate social change.

Gandhi's leadership helped mobilize millions of Indians from all walks of life, including peasants, workers, women, and students, to participate in the nationalist struggle. The findings of Kumar (2024) claimed that Gandhiji oversaw the Indian National Congress (INC) transformation from a comparatively elite political organisation to a mass-based party that now represents a broad spectrum of Indian society. Gandhi's focus on independence, non-violence and inclusivity encouraged millions of people, particularly women, workers and peasants, to join the fight for freedom. His steadfast commitment towards eliminating caste prejudice, empowering the oppressed and granting women a voice allowed the INC to connect with a sizable portion of the Indian populace. Gandhiji's political guidance promoted a shared understanding of Indian nationalism by bringing disparate linguistic, religious and ethnic groups together.

III.2 Nation-Building Efforts

III.2.1 Social Justice

Gandhi advocated for social justice, women's rights, and the eradication of untouchability, working to build a more equitable society. Mahatma Gandhi's non-violent and mass mobilisation philosophies were crucial in spearheading the Indian National Movement. The findings of Aslam (2024) stated that In 1950, the Indian Constitution was introduced as the highest law in the country and reflects the principles of justice, liberty, equality and fraternity. This system aims to uphold Gandhian ideals of inclusivity, equal rights for all and redressing historical wrongs. According to Gandhi, the constitution has a firm goal to eliminate untouchability,

develop rural areas and look after the interests of those considered socially marginalized. Even though the Directive Principles cannot be enforced by the courts, they guide the government to act justly and help the less fortunate, according to Gandhi's idea of a fair society. Additionally, Because of the constitution, India is committed to social justice, but it remains a great challenge to achieve. Efforts to create a better India are hindered due to problems like caste discrimination, inequality in finances and corruption in politics. Yet, with new laws, policies and actions from ordinary people, India continues to work towards realizing these goals.

Furthermore, Mahmoud (2025) stated that Gandhiji's educational ideas revolutionised education and served as the initial model for the current national education system in India. The ideas he promoted in education were revolutionary and served as the basis for building India's national school system. Gandhi made sure that the educational system he formed reflected the values of truth and nonviolence. This paper aims to highlight Mahatma Gandhi, who played an important role in adult education in India and deserves respect for both his accomplishments and his educational perspective. It also reviews Gandhi's views on teacher training, vocational and women's education, as well as the part devoted to how relevant Gandhi's views and measures are today, as shown by the latest national education policy including various Gandhian strategies. For Gandhi, the ideas about adult education he called education for all were always linked to his ideas on education in general. The approach also emphasizes helping students become better people and financially independent from work. Gandhi wanted women to be educated since he opposed early marriage, the requirement of dowries and the purdah system. He asked women and other minority groups to focus on improving their living situation by pursuing self-improvement.

Overall, in the aspect of nation-building in a social context, Gandhiji has had a lasting influence on modern India's educational reform, social justice and constitutional ideals. Even though there are still many obstacles in the way of completely achieving his principles of equality, nonviolence and inclusive development in modern society, they continue to inform India's political and educational structures.

III.2.2. Economic Self-Sufficiency

Gandhi promoted economic self-sufficiency through the use of khadi (homespun cloth) and the boycott of British goods, encouraging Indians to rely on themselves rather than foreign powers. Gandhi advocated the use of Khadi, that is the handspun cloth, as a representation of Indian Independence and self-reliance. In a non-

violent protest against British rule, he started a national khadi movement in which Indians began spinning cloth by hand and burning foreign-made fabric. Gandhi believed that khadi was essential for decentralising the economy and creating jobs in rural regions. To support the handloom sector and aid the most vulnerable members of society, he promoted choosing khadi over even Indian mill-made textiles (MK Gandhi, 2024b). This in the long run helped the country to become better and economically self-sufficient.

Gandhi was a strong supporter of maintaining India's rich handicraft tradition in addition to being a proponent of khadi. He understood that these traditional crafts were vital to India's rural economy and that millions of people's livelihoods were at risk due to their decline. He promoted the support of rural artisans and the resuscitation of traditional weaving methods as solutions to this problem. Several khadi and village industries were founded under his direction to support and empower craftspeople. This boosted the handicraft industry and helped improve the economic situation in rural India (Beekaylon, 2023). Gandhi's influence on Indian textiles extends beyond his lifetime, his emphasis on eco-friendliness, sustainability and ethical production methods was well ahead of his time. The Khadi movement, with its emphasis on handwoven and handspun fabrics, is a sustainable alternative to mass-produced textiles. This promotes the use of natural fibres, low energy consumption and support for local communities, principles that are in line with contemporary ideas of sustainability and ethical fashion.

Gandhi worked tirelessly to build unity among India's diverse population, promoting religious and ethnic harmony. Gandhi worked to unite humanity because he believed in the Vedanta philosophy found in Hinduism. According to him, his Hinduism was open to all beliefs. It is not against any Muslim, Christian or other religious groups. However, it stands firmly behind Muslims, Christians and all other religions out there (MK Gandhi, 2024a). Other than achieving freedom for India, Gandhi promoted kindness between different communities, stood for the rights of Indians in South Africa and created ashrams focused on self-sustenance, truth and non-violence. Because of his peaceful way of protesting, many people and organizations have been inspired such as Martin Luther King Jr. in the United States and Nelson Mandela in South Africa (Kabir, 2016). In today's discourse, Gandhi's theories on communal harmony remain extremely pertinent. Gandhi's vision of communal harmony reflects his unwavering belief that it is crucial to maintain unity in the face of diversity. His life and work offer valuable perspectives on the necessity of cooperation, communication and understanding to attain

social coherence. Gandhi's idea of communal harmony is not just a historical anecdote; it is a workable plan for encouraging respect and cooperation between various groups. Today's most diverse communities still benefit from its emphasis on collaboration, empathy and mutual respect (Alam, 2024). Gandhi advocated principle; es that may teach us valuable lessons about promoting harmony and overcoming differences, making them still very relevant in today's discussion of interpersonal relationships. Overall, Gandhi's economic philosophy which was based on traditional handicrafts and khadi, established a foundation for ethical production, rural empowerment and sustainable development that went beyond simple political opposition. Gandhi's self-reliance philosophy and dedication to religious harmony show how social cohesion and economic independence are intertwined pillars of genuine national sovereignty and enduring peace.

IV. Gandhi's Economic Vision in Modern India

Mahatma Gandhi's economic vision for India remains highly relevant in modern times, with its focus on self-reliance, social justice, and sustainability. Gandhi advocated for decentralizing economic functions and industries, promoting self-sufficient villages, and empowering local communities. This approach would help reduce dependence on external factors and promote economic autonomy. Gandhi believed that an economy of enough should replace an economy of more. Gandhi believed that rather than aiming for unrestricted economic growth and goods, economic activities must focus on providing basic needs and ensuring equitable distribution. Gandhi urged people to rely on products and skills from their community. Gandhi suggested allowing each local community to handle their economy and business activities. He argued that local industries in villages would create work and help people move away from relying on big factories (Global Gandhi, 2024)

In keeping with Gandhi's wish to encourage village industries, the industrial policy resolutions of 1948, 1956 and 1977 provided extra incentives for their development. Many people in India get employment and escape poverty thanks to the village and small-scale industry sectors. This is because both industries rely heavily on people and not much on investment. Based on the Economic Survey, 2000-2001, the number of people employed in the cottage and small-scale sector went up to 17850000 again. Between 1991-92 and 1999-2000, the sector's growth rate was 4 per cent. Rs. 36,470 crores were contributed to exports by this sector, an increase from the earlier Rs. 9,100 crores. There was a more than 300 per cent growth in the number of transactions. Khadi and village industries have become key to helping disadvantaged people find jobs in the post-reform period

(Sarvodaya, 2025). Therefore, it can be concluded that the smooth development of the nation's economy depends on the concurrent development of all of its regions. When every region develops equally, the economy depends on the concurrent development of all of its regions. When every region develops equally, the economy grows at its fastest rate.

Gandhi emphasized the importance of rural development, agricultural growth, and village industries like khadi and handlooms. This would help create employment opportunities and improve living standards in rural areas. Research by Nand & Kakati (2024) stated that Gandhi's way of thinking about Khadi was a core part of his vision for the socio-economic future of India. He discovered that following fashion trends by creating textiles, instead of artisan work, eliminated the source of small businesses and increased foreign influence on Pakistan's economy. Although it was both pricey and usually not very good, hand-spun yarn was an important issue for Gandhi. Gandhian Khadi is guided by the main principles of self-sufficiency, autonomy, native knowledge and the removal of untouchability. For him, Khadi stood for nationalism, social equality and self-reliance, much more than the material itself. He was sure that the growth of reconstruction in India and Satyagraha would depend on the increasing use of Khadi. In the economic framework of what Gandhi taught, Khadi went beyond just a product; it became a means of obtaining political and economic independence. He considered that Khadi, as handmade, stands for human values, whereas machine-produced textiles focused on only their worth to buyers. Gandhi said that Khadi production provided independent work for rural people, allowing them to make money while remaining independent from outside help. Such style was created so that poverty could be minimized and captivating pride and agency could be given to rural communities. Overall, the concept of Gandhian thought assessed that by empowering people to create better things on their own, the Khadi production would then result in economic independence.

V. Gandhi's Legacy in Contemporary Politics

Mahatma Gandhi's legacy continues to influence contemporary politics in various ways. Mahatma Gandhi strongly influenced Indian independence because his philosophy and way of acting were shaped by a particular set of ideas. For Gandhi, Ahimsa or non-violence, was the strongest principle for bringing about needed social and political change. Shukla (2024) explained that Gandhi considered Sarvodaya, which promoted the growth and support of the weakest in society, to be central to his vision. Gandhi believed in Swadeshi which mentioned

that we should use and produce things ourselves to help the local community. According to Gandhi, bringing about social reform required positive change in education, sanitation and the economy. Gandhi recommended using Khadi and village industries to give power to rural people and encourage them to be self-sufficient. Mahmoud (2025) asserted that Gandhi introduced Nai Talim, a program that people have called "education for life." At the beginning of this educational program, Gandhi wanted to educate adults about laws related to health, hygiene, happiness and self-reliance. Besides, Gandhi expected teachers to guide students like role models, reflect on the society around them and show the importance of simple living and high-mindedness. So, learning about the pride of manual labour and crafts was emphasized in his program, so that students could earn money to cover both the training cost and the cost of their teacher and the production materials incurred.

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi firmly promoted the use of natural cures. He supported using earth, air, sunlight, water and diet to both cure diseases and be central to overall health reform that helped the public. For this reason, Gandhi viewed healthcare as a wide-ranging, ethically-based program meant to help bring Swaraj to everyone. Alter points out that incorporating nature cure into its activities was essential to understanding Sarvodaya as praxis (2019). Building on Eurocentric theories common to Indian intellectuals, Gandhi gave this scene new meaning, calling it "Indian political thought", by merging different perspectives from across India but always centring it on native Indian wisdom. Parel's view should be considered as part of Gandhi's objection to modernity and the essentialist respect for traditional Indian culture (Khundrakpam & Sarmah, 2024). According to Gandhi, the influence of Western culture and its mass-produced ideas centred on universal characters and stories from Europe, kept causing wide-scale hardship and disillusionment around the world, most seriously in the Global South, where people began to believe that the West must be civilized and they should copy western traditions.

VI. Conclusion

Even in the present day, Mahatma Gandhi remains a towering figure whose legacy holds timeless relevance for India and the rest of the world. The core concepts of nonviolence, truthfulness, and social justice espoused by him echo in subsequent reform movements across the globe. Furthermore, Gandhi's vision of a self-reliant, decentralized, and economically empowered Indian village may shed light on modern issues of economic disparity and environmental degradation. His philosophy of "enough" instead of "more" poses a direct challenge to the current dogma of constant limitless growth that is leading humanity to a socioeconomic abyss. Similarly,

his advocacy of khadi and village industries fits coherently with the modern focus on ethical production and the socially equitable development of resources. Finally, his concept of a nation built on a spiritual-affective, economic, and political triad provides a comprehensive theoretical basis for human dignity and social cohesion-oriented progress. Modern India is founded on Gandhian principles of justice, liberty, equality and fraternity. Gathering the complete fruits of Gandhi's work remains a task yet to be fully accomplished, but his thought enriches and inspires to this day, offering directions for building a more just, peaceful and sustainable world. As India manoeuvres 21st-century challenges, Gandhi's legacy provides not only historical inspiration but practical lessons on how to forge a future that is more inclusive and peaceful, rooted in truth and nonviolence.

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