



# INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

## Mahatma Gandhi's Views on State And its Relevance in 21<sup>st</sup> Century

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**Abstract:** Mohandas karamchand Gandhi was not a political philosopher. He described his thought on India's current situation. After focusing the western or European countries, he had critiqued the state system. Gandhi's notions are influenced by several factors such as Hinduism, experience of colonial state, some western philosophers. His attitude on state is critique. A soulless machine, well organized form of violence etc are harmful for society. State plays a role as a interventionist: it can damage individual personality.

**Keywords:** Gandhi, Gandhi's conception of state, Gandhian political thought, modern civilization, Gandhian ideal society. Philosophical anarchist.

Gandhiji was not a political philosopher. He developed his thought in various perspectives while facing the real situation in present India. His thought was not only abstract in real sense, but also have lots of importance. We may say he was a famous Indian political leader. He led the anti-colonial nationalist movement. His involvement in various campaign was crucial in India.

Gandhi's concept of state is regarded as a new notion. He described in his own attitude to develop the political thought. Liberalism, idealism, individualism and philosophical anarchism- all are included in his thought. In a conventional way, Gandhiji was not a political philosopher such as Plato and Aristotle. After focusing the real problematic area of human beings, he has been giving his thought that we can apply in our society. He applied the universal truth in every human beings. The notion of state has been widely explained in different way by Gandhiji. The universal truth of Gandhi to describe the notion of state, it represents violence in concentrated and organized form. Gandhiji was one of the important scholars in Indian modern political era. His social and political thoughts played significant roles in Indian politics, Indian social reformation & Indian developmental process. He considered himself as a humanitarian. He was influenced by spiritual notion. He thought state will be harmful institution when state's power is growing. State can reduce the personality of human beings. According to him, man has soul, but state is a soulless machine. So state can apply the power of violence. State damages individual responsibility and personality. Natural human behavior is also damaged due to the increasing role of state. Due to the complex structure of State and its functions state can't develop human morality. Every individual has own thinking power, this institution damages individual's freedom. According to Gandhi state is an interventionist to the take the decision of Individual. Individual is more depended on state, because state is higher decision making body. Individual is dependent to state's functions. Thus individual is not capable to imagine his life without state. Mechanical functions are conducted by state in a systematic way, state can not tolerate individual's own view. State acts as ruler to govern the whole society as a soulless institution. State denies emotion and motivation of individual. State can apply the power of threat to require the loyalty. Thus state is a well-organized form of violence. The existence of state depends on violence. State not only applies physical force but also wants a repression in terms of socio-economic sphere of society. Gandhi's whole philosophy is the struggle of non-violence and to focus on how every individual enjoys their rights and dignity. So he was unable to support the state.

State is abstract institution. It has the direct involvement to use the force. State can use the violence through the implementation of law, rules and regulations. State does not use of force continuously. State can apply the force, as any person does not claim directly. According to Gandhiji the formation of state is to implement force. Gandhiji had opposed the power of state-sovereignty. He believed that well organized form is power.

State can apply violence through various perspectives:

1. through the declaration of war.
2. through the punishment system
3. through the exploitative economic system

Gandhiji was facing aggressive role from the western countries. He denied the importance of parliamentary form of government. The spoil of wealth, apply of power and formation of ideology were the main reasons behind the war. From the ancient period man has been following this policy. So Gandhiji considered both terms modern civilization and violence are complementary to each other. He strongly argued that these two terms should be repealed. Punishment or threat of punishment may apply the state to the individuals, but natural or congenital loyalty does not come from the individual.

Gandhiji criticized the notion of state. Individuals generally are self-conscious and ethical conscious. So they are unable to adjust such as unethical institution like state. Man has to image alternative social structure system instead of state. Generally Gandhiji admitted the positive role of state before 1920s, after 1920s he totally denied the state roles. From the philosophy of Non-violence and History, Gandhiji was led to conceive of stateless non-violence democracy. He held that the state is rooted in violence and so is essentially an instrument of oppression and exploitation. The state employs force, and its existence cannot be morally justified, by the use of violence the state hinders progress by destroying individuality of the individual. (Bhattacharyya, 412,2010). Gandhiji had clearly differentiate state and society. Actually he embodied absolute personal freedom. After concerning the necessity of social control, he emphasized on personal liberty to reach in peak level of state. He condemned the absolute power and responsibility of state. Though state has a legal power, but people possess the de-facto sovereign power. Gandhiji has been giving more importance to individual freedom but he concerned on necessity of social control. He supported the interdependence on individual and state relations.

The two opposite tendencies have been focusing in his political thought. Mixture of idealism and realism can be described in Gandhi's political thought. He was a political anarchist in a sense of idealism, in other sense he was a realist. He was a anarchist from the idealism perspective. He was supported by enlightened anarchy. Everyone is ruler to each other. Individual knows what is wrong or right. Gandhiji propounded there is no any political power in ideal state, because there is no any existence of state. When we consider Gandhiji was a realist theorist.- he consciously indicated individual's ideal life is not implemented totally. His absolute goal was to create a stateless society, but he does not totally neglect political power like other anarchist theorist. He believed there are few matters in society which is implemented without the influence of political power. He supported the limited government. He supported Thoreau's views- the best government is, who govern the least. He handed over the power to government is limited. He opposed the centralization process of government. He correctly supported the views on decentralization of government. Decentralization process should be geographical, territorial and technological. He supported the self-rule at panchayat level. Gandhiji does not totally deny the existence of state system. He viewed that it is a symbol of violence. State is the main obstacle to the development process of Individuals. He wanted to form a state-less society in future in India, where there will be no any existence of violence.

Gandhiji's views on ideal political system- there is neither any use of violence, nor of any oppression policy, only has non-violence method which will be applied in society. Contemporary social and political thoughts were described by Gandhiji as injustice, opposing the centralized power but did not want to abolish total state-system.

We get some similarities between Marx's and Gandhiji's perceptions:

1. Gandhi and Marx both described state as repression institution.
2. Both were focusing on hate as an institution.
3. Gandhiji agree to abolish of state to create stateless system, other side Marx said state is a well organized form of violence.
4. Both discuss state as an irreconcilable institution.

Some dissimilarities between the two political thinkers:

1. Marx discussed on interest of class. There are two classes-capitalist and bourgeoisie. Gandhiji opposed the institution of state.
2. Marx was materialist, in other words, Gandhiji was a spiritualist.
3. Non-violence, satya, trusteeship, are some important principles of Gandhiji: class struggle, historical materialism, dialectical materialism, theory of surplus value, dictatorship of proletariat are the basic tenets of Karl Marx.

Gandhian concept of state is very important in 21<sup>st</sup> century. Actually he is the worshipper of non-violence and personal freedom. He proposed the limited rule and stateless society. Gandhiji believes in pluralistic society. He focusses on religious harmony. He knows how to people get unite. He follows rationalism. His Ramrajya is an Ideal not is a symbol. Ram is the symbol of peace and morality. Everyone respects to each other and loves to each other. But it is a question how is it possible? Sometimes we may say he is a utopian thinker, but his thought is superior. He has amazing personality. Every individual enjoys his/her rights- these rights based on morality, ethics and norms. He does not mean state's role as an interventionist. We see the how political parties are influencing to citizens or governmental policies to impose the rules to the people. Gandhian concept of state has been discussed by academicians, political thinkers, research scholars. There are various conflicts like religious groups, class, ethnic, tribal - these all may unite after the influence of Gandhian views. His idea of communal unity, removal of untouchability, creation of village industries, basic education, overall development of women, economic equality among the peoples – all are not only given the priority in India but also must be needed in all over world. Opposing the use of mass destruction weapons, experiment relating the nuclear weapons, are very important ideas of Gandhiji. He claims to use of limited natural resource and then upcoming generation will be benefited. That is why, he is the supporter of sustainable development. Excessive use of machine industries, gorgeous life style of man- he opposed this type of behavior. He is supporter of anti-pollution environment. No doubt M.K. Gandhi, one of the valuable thinkers and well-known personalities in the world. He focuses the creation of ideal society -based on love, truth, non violence, self rule, individual's rights. Quoting Bhikhu Parekh's word 'although he was profoundly influenced by Hinduism, Christianity and Jainism, his religious thought cut across all of them and was in a class by itself, belief in God was obviously its basis.' (92, szenkovics). Basically Gandhi's views on contemporary social, political and economic issues were focused on liberal term where individual get their privileges from the state-less society.

Both Gandji and Marx wanted the abolition of the state apparatus. According to Karl Marx, the state is the executive committee of the bourgeois. According to Gandhi, state is a satan for the embodiment of brute force. (Chattopadhyay, 73)

Gandhiji said in Harijan- "(as to whether in an ideal society, there should be any or no government.) i do not think, we need worry ourselves about this at the moment. If we continue to work for such a society, it will slowly come into being to an extent, such that the people can benefit by it. Euclid's line is one without breadth but no one has so far been able to draw it and never will. All the same it is only by keeping the ideal line in mind that we have made progress in geometry. What is true here is true of every ideal" (Harijan, 15-09-46). Gandhiji belief in the primacy of the individual led him to conceptualise a truly non-violent state composed of self-governing and self-sufficient village communities based on majority rule.

In Hind Swaraj (1909) he maintains that true freedom would be possible only when modern civilization is completely destroyed and a new society created without governments, parliaments, railways and other fast means of transportation, machinery, doctors, lawyers and armed forces, in which violence is completely abjured by the people and authority is resisted by them through passive resistance. (bandhyopadhyay, 123-124). After his return to India in 1915 Gandhi consistently expressed his dislike for all forms of government on several occasions, thus Gandhiji rejection of the state is based on two classical anarchistic arguments: the state represents an authority that poses a threat to the liberty of the Individual who is above all institutions, and the state represents violence (obviously perpetrated on the people) in an organised form.

Gandhiji does not mean civilization as a mixture of advanced technology, use of arms, use of materialism etc. He indicates materialism used for mechanical reason. Civilization has believed in scientific and technological progress, comprehensive process of production, development of communication system. Thus man changed into mechanical from the humane and ethics which is claimed as natural form of human being. He strictly condemned the process of civilization. Gandhiji borrowed the idea of modern civilization from various western theorists, as for as example Rousseau, Tolstoy, Ruskin. Generally we have been accepting the positive role of modernization, but Gandhiji disagreed with the view. Gandhiji focussed the use of modern technology is not the process of development of human beings.

Gandhiji behold the European civilization. He considered European civilization is a modern civilization. He criticized the modern civilization. His attention was critical towards the industrial revolution of United Kingdom and political revolution of France. He argued that, the development of capitalism was the direct effect of industrial revolution. In Gandhiji's own opinion, he opposed the modern civilization. He criticized the adaptation of modern civilization process in several European countries. His attitude of modern western civilization was perverted, violent, self-centric, full of self-interest and lack of objectivity. He clearly mentioned in his auto-biography 'The Story of My Experiment with Truth', how western civilization badly effects in human process of development. His approach towards the modern civilization was critique. Modern civilization was de-humane, irrelevant.

The concept of modern civilization is one of the basic parts of Gandhiji's view. He mentioned the modern civilization as called European civilization. We generally accept the positive impacts of right, equality and liberal democracy. But Gandhiji ignored the positive impact of those terms. The definition of modern industrial civilization is in fact a contentious issue since it embodies often conflicting arguments and counter arguments regarding its various features such as rationalism, secularization, industrialization, the scientific culture, individualism, technological mastery of nature, the drive towards globalization and liberal democracy. Irrespective of its merits and demerits, indeed much of the modern civilization that we have inherited through ages is a western construct both ideologically and structurally and therefore stands for a serious scrutiny regarding its unalloyed utility and relevance in non-western societies where the focus of life through centuries has always been one of renunciation and salvation rather than getting embroiled in power and aggression. And it is in this context that Gandhiji emerged as an ardent

critique of 'modernity' as he visualized the danger of following western ethos and model of development for bringing solution to the ills and evils suffered by the Indian society for ages. (Chattopadhyay, 51-52, 2012)

Gandhiji was against the capitalism, and industrial society. These are the effect of modern civilization. For the proper understanding of Gandhi's case against the west, we have to judge critically both Gandhi and Habermas's reaction to the untruth of the legitimacy, claims of the late capitalist state, whose imperialist and fascist manifestations revealed to them the false foundations of western liberal democracy. Looked at from the bottom up, the contradictions of the late capitalist state were seen earlier in the periphery than at the centre of the world capitalist system. (Pantham, 326, 2015.)

Gandhiji's was a supporter of faith on truth, non-violence, freedom, equality, ethics and morality of the Man. He denied aggressiveness or any type of oppression. He recognised a ideal state, where every individual would be live in peacefully, there is no any form of violence. He described the ideal state as 'Ramrajya' where religious groups are same. He criticised the western form of Democracy due to lack of humanity and value. He observed communism and fascism, and directly criticised such as form of authoritarian. We have already discussed he was a supporter of anarchism. His ideal society is full of balance and harmony, every people live with self-reliance, and in clean and hygienic environment. Individual interest is less important than collective interest. He also focused on rural development and rural self-sufficient economy.

Gandhiji was a great thinker, he has lot of uniqueness in his thought. His preach of peace is very popular in modern state system. Empowerment of women, decentralization for development, all important tenets of Gandhian theory. Though his idea was explain deeply by the Indian context, but some tenets are very popular in 21<sup>st</sup> century. Humanity, loyalty, individual freedom, all are the important within a state system.

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