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The Relevance Of Gandhian Philosophy In Contemporary Politics

Mr. Moni kumar Pegu,

Assistant Professor

Department of Philosophy

Jonai Girls' College

Abstract:

The philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi is most powerful and relevant in Indian context. Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy of truth, non-violence, and moral politics continues to hold significance in the present-day political arena. In an era marked by rising authoritarianism, corruption, identity-based conflicts, and environmental crises, Gandhian principles offer an ethical alternative that emphasizes decentralization, participatory governance, communal harmony, and sustainable development. This paper explores the relevance of Gandhian thought in modern democratic politics, analyses its application in movements across the globe, and examines how it can shape ethical governance and people-centered leadership today. As long as there is strife, hostilities, ethnic cleansing, religious unrest, internal conflicts and threats of military occupation, people will turn to Gandhi. His usefulness will not end unless conflict ceases.

Keywords: Non-Violence, Truth, Moral politics, Sustainable development & Gandhian philosophy.

Introduction:

Every year, October 2nd is a wonderful day for both India and the rest of the globe. Mohan Das Karamchand Gandhi, the father of the nation, was born on this day, and it is also recognized as the International Day for Non-violence to honor Gandhiji's lifelong promotion of the real spirit of non-violence. Gandhism begins with the well-known phrase, "Simple living and high thinking," and seeks to improve both the individual and the community.

The political philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi emerged as a moral and practical response to colonial oppression. His ideas of ahimsa (non-violence), satyagraha (truth-force), trusteeship, and Sarvodaya (welfare of all) laid the foundation for India's freedom struggle and inspired global movements for justice and equality. While political systems worldwide have changed drastically since the early 20th century, the essence of Gandhian philosophy retains universal relevance. In contemporary times, marked by growing intolerance, political polarization, and materialism-driven governance, Gandhian values provide an alternative framework of ethics, sustainability, and people's participation.

This article attempts to study the continued importance of Gandhian thought in modern politics, examining its application in areas such as governance, social justice, conflict resolution, and sustainable development. While M.K. Gandhi lived, most of the people thought that his ideas were relevant only to win freedom for India from British rule. So many persons were not convinced by his faith in Truth and nonviolence; they agreed that this was the only strategy to turn British out of India. There is great relevance of Gandhian political philosophy.

Objectives

1. To examine the core elements of Gandhian philosophy and their political implications.
2. To analyze the relevance of these principles in the context of contemporary political challenges.

Methodology

A thorough and historical strategy has been adopted in this work to attain its goal. Both original sources and secondary sources were used for this. The works of Mahatma Gandhi, his speeches, and his essays in periodicals and newspapers were used as primary sources. In addition, the research method has examined and reviewed the secondary sources, which include books, regional, national, and worldwide publications, and research papers

Significance of the study:

In the last two centuries have been the most blood-stained in human history. In the 20th century alone almost a hundred million people have been killed in the two world wars, the atom bomb drops on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Arab-Israeli, India-Pakistan, Iran-Iraq, Korean Vietnamese and Afghan wars, Tibetan, Algerian. Angolan. The "9/11" spectacular terrorist attack on New York's World Trade Centre, has dramatically changed the nature of armed conflict. It has ushered in the era of asymmetric warfare where the enemy is not a foreign state but a few suicidal terrorists, who strike from within rather than from outside the country and cause enormous devastation by using the host country's own assets such as its airplanes and

airports. Martin Luther King's words “the choice is either non-violence or non-existence” are far truer today than when he spoke them.

Discussion:

The Gandhi ideas were not only relevant during his times but have universal epistemology relevant for all the times. Admiring Gandhi, Einstein wrote in 1931 “I believe that Gandhi views were most enlightened of all the political men of our time. We should strive to do things in his spirit: not to use violence in fighting for our cause, but by non participation in anything you believe’

Gandhi’s principle of non-violence continues to guide peace-building efforts worldwide. In modern democracies plagued with violent protests, terrorism, and communal riots, non-violent dialogue and reconciliation offer sustainable solutions. For instance, movements led by Martin Luther King Jr. and Nelson Mandela showcased the power of non-violent resistance in dismantling systems of injustice.

Gandhi emphasized truth as the foundation of politics. In an age of fake news, corruption, and unethical leadership, Gandhian insistence on honesty and transparency becomes crucial. Political accountability and freedom of information laws resonate strongly with this idea.

Gandhi’s vision of Gram Swaraj emphasized self-reliant villages and participatory governance. Today, this finds expression in Panchayati Raj institutions in India and the global push for local governance models that empower communities.

Gandhi’s concept of trusteeship promoted ethical ownership of wealth for the welfare of all. In the context of extreme income inequalities, corporate monopolies, and exploitative capitalism, this principle provides a moral framework for inclusive economic policies and corporate social responsibility. Gandhi paraphrased John Ruskin’s book ‘Unto This Last’ into Gujarati with the title ‘Sarvodaya’. Literally, sarvodaya means the rise of all human beings. The society should function as an organic whole rather than being disjointed into economic classes or social castes. Gandhi’s concept of trusteeship was that “those who own money now is asked to behave like Trustees, holding their riches on behalf of the poor” sought to establish a link between ethics and economics. During Gandhi’s lifetime this concept evoked poor response. However, now Indian capitalists, Jamnalal Bajaj, J.R.D Tata, Narayan Murthy of Infosys and Azim Premji of Wipro adopted it.

Gandhi’s lifestyle of simplicity and his call to “live simply so that others may simply live” resonate with the current global challenge of climate change. Environmental movements in India and abroad draw heavily from Gandhian ethics of harmony with nature.

Gandhian thought continues to inspire international struggles for justice—from civil rights movements in the US to contemporary climate justice movements. His universal message transcends political boundaries.

Conclusion

The political philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi is not a relic of the past but a living framework of ethics and governance. In an age where politics is increasingly dominated by materialism, authoritarianism, and divisive ideologies, Gandhian values of non-violence, truth, decentralization, and trusteeship offer a path toward sustainable, just, and humane governance. To remain relevant, modern democracies must revisit and adapt Gandhian thought to contemporary realities. By integrating his principles into political practice, societies can foster peace, justice, and equality in a deeply inter connected and turbulent world.

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