

# Relevance of Gandhi Today



**Meenakshi Sharma**

Associate Professor,  
Dept. of Political Science,  
Gokul Das Girls Degree College,  
Moradabad.

## Abstract

The thought, philosophy and the message of Gandhi are very much relevant today. We must say they alone constitute the only positive factor which can save the modern civilization which is heading for a disaster. We witness a sure and certain dilution of higher values of life in the scheme of our lives. Permanent values of service before self, sacrifice before hoarding and concern for others are fast dwindling and their place is being taken by selfishness, greed, opportunism, deceit, cunning and falsehood. Gross materialism is eating into the vitals of society and certain agnistic attitude is in evidence almost everywhere. Even family ties are being broken; love is losing ground to hatred, distrust and suspicion. Mahatma Gandhi was a seeker after truth. And, he pursued his seeking within the all-encompassing fold of the sanatana dharma, the timeless discipline, which the Indians believe is inherent in creation. His seeking and the discipline of his pursuit thus place him amongst the great divine personages of Indian tradition, whose life and teachings transcend the constraints of time and space, and remain perpetually relevant for mankind, though especially so for the Indians.

The present civilization is growing more and more mechanized and materialized and the old innocence born of simplicity stands at bay. All human values are being sacrificed at the altar of mammon. All this has given birth to conflicts and confrontations and has led to the erosion of the noble standards of tolerance and fellow-feeling. To complete this grim picture has come the unending race for armaments. Destructive weapons of war are waiting in the nuclear arsenals of the super powers to be delivered one day on the innocent humanity. They menace the very existence of mankind efforts for bringing about disarmament have never succeeded; on the contrary, they have always led to further and more and more armament. The dropping of two atom bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the total devastation of these cities thereby should serve a constant reminder to everybody that a nuclear war whenever fought would bring about the extinction of mankind.

No doubt mankind has been struggling since times of yore to find solutions to the problems humanity is faced with. But the remedies have been far worse than the disease. The fact is that we have been tinkering with the branches and ignoring the roots. In fact, we have allowed ourselves, almost always, to adopt an ostrich attitude to problems. All the systems of laws, contracts, treaties and alliances have failed to bring about human harmony and peace.

In such a climate Gandhism alone provides a ray of hope. The values and principles, ideals and precepts which Gandhi stood for, propagated and preached, can give a right direction to human to humanity to reach to reach a destination of perpetual peace both internal and external.

**Keywords:** Violence and Welfare, relevance

## Introduction

The thoughts and Ideas of Mahatma Gandhi have spread throughout the world since they were first evolved by the Mahatma. Based on the noble and sustainable ideals of love, brotherhood, truth, non-violence and welfare of all, his thoughts along with the path devised by him for realizing them have gained admiration and popularity on in many parts of the world. They have been recognized as the views and ways of great man, which carry the mark of greatness in them. Nevertheless a serious question that has been raised is, are such great thoughts still relevant in the present time? No doubt, Gandhi's ideas were crucial in boosting the morale of the masses and awakening them and making them fight for independence from British rule. And they played no mean part in forcing the British to leave the country. But are they significant in the India and the world of today, to the man today?

There is no dearth of people who doubt the continuing relevance of his thoughts. From their point of view, the foremost reason for this is the utopian nature of his ideas. On the face of it, they seem impractical musings that cannot be of much relevance in a world that has lost its moral and ethical values and has set itself on the track of crass materialism and intellectualism; in a society that shows marks of continuing on the road to selfishness, exploitation and degeneration. Actually, Gandhi and his ways have been considered irrelevant from time to time since the early twentieth century. Such doubts have been largely inspired in independent India by the fact that India since independence has never really adopted any of his thoughts and practiced Gandhism even in a limited sense. It is only lip service that has been offered to Gandhi and Gandhism. It is as if Gandhi died in 1948, and was easily forgotten by the very India which, he helped to liberate with his views and which, he was eager, should become a leading light of the world by adopting the spiritual and noble ideals he preached.

An understanding of the depth and intrinsic value of his message, its eternal and universal significance, and that it operates at various levels through a myriad techniques show us the relevance of Gandhism. His thoughts operate at various levels – the individual, society, state and the global level – and they concern themselves with various fields. It is true that they often appear intractable, too perfect for use in real – life situations. And, in many cases his ideas may not provide a direct answer to our present day problems. But they definitely indicate a direction. That they can do much more than that is attested to by the fact that Gandhi lived by what he preached, and successfully too! And once Gandhi himself stated that he was an “ordinary” mortal preaching and living by views that were most noble and good for mankind. Today, people from world over agree and admire many facets of his thoughts such as non-violence, the non-exploitative growth of economy and environment, etc. for their message and relevance, which only makes us wonder whether there is not anything in them.

However, there is need to mention one thing. Gandhi propagated his ideas at least 50 years back. Since then, the world has undergone a lot of change especially in the political and economic sense, and so has India. Many of his views may thus need to be modified in order that they are applied to present conditions while their essence is kept intact. There is no reason to doubt whether such a step would have been approved by the Mahatma were he alive to this day. It would also not be wrong to study his ideas in combination with others from varied sources and produce an amalgamation of thoughts that would serve as a relevant framework for addressing present-day problems and concerns.

#### **The Essence of His Views**

The great relevance of Gandhian thoughts and ideas especially to modern man lies in their very essence. All his concepts and techniques for moral and spiritual regeneration are aimed at man's realization of self-which was for him the attainment of

God – so that man could become parmatma. Gandhi's vision opens the way to better and superior life, a 'higher' man devoted to love, justice and truth. But such glory could be achieved only by serving mankind for the welfare of the common people especially the downtrodden, as only in the service of people can the soul's qualities of truth, humility and justice be demonstrated. What can be of greater relevance to us than understanding how such self-realization may be possible, how man can achieve a higher state of being! All the operational techniques preached and followed by the Gandhi ultimately aim at the attainment of this goal. Once man's inner transformation takes place, all other changes would automatically occur. The need for this is all the more-urgent today as spiritual and moral values are only on the decline and progress is largely gauged on material terms. What follows is a discussion of the significance and feasibility of some major facets of Gandhian thought and practice in the present time.

#### **Non-violence and Satyagraha**

Through non-violence as defined by him, Gandhi sought to effect bloodless revaluation that would pave way for peace in the world society. He saw non-violence as the soul force or the truth – force that would work as the underlying principle in the transformation of societies into communities residing in love and universal brotherhood. Once adopted as the tenet that would guide all thought and action, it could bring about change in every sense-not just socio-politically but also economically. The technique of non-violence is expressed through satyagraha, fighting non-violently by adherence to truth through fasting, courting suffering and imprisonment, and non-cooperation with the unjust authority by refusing to obey its dictates. Non-violence is a means of achieving one's goal in the individual as well as the collective sense.

In contemporary society where violence where violence has became the rule rather than the exception, only non-violence can save man from total destruction. Violence everywhere, even on the streets, has unfortunately come to be accepted as a part and parcel of daily life. Violence has even become a means of entertainment. It has ultimately moulded our psyche into a violence-prone one. What we need to do essentially is rid ourselves of the violent mentality in us. This is only possible by reorienting ourselves to the message and relevance of non-violence by infusing its spirit into our hearts and minds. Since the earliest of times, non-violence has been advocated for this purpose by many preachers and messengers from different concerns of the world. In India too, message of non-violence was preached by Mahavira, Buddha, Nanak, and others. The same non-violence was advocated by Gandhi but in a different form: he propounded its technique as it could be used in practice and in daily life by 20<sup>th</sup> century man.

It is often argued that non-violence can be actually practiced only in a very limited sense – by an individual, and that too with exceptions- and Gandhi would perhaps be the only one to do it. Further, that non-violence as state policy is impossible for

implementation and it succeeded against the British only because the British were a 'civilized' power. Non-violence would be relevant and possible in the world scenario only when all nations adopt non-violence as an article of faith and eschew the present race of armaments. We can refute such arguments by pointing out that only individuals make up a society, state and nation; in other words, if all individuals in a society adopt by it in all situations, the society or the state would become the epitome of non-violence. Of course, this would be a Herculean task. But it is not impossible if men are trained to develop qualities such as self-resistance and discipline which are paramount to developing a non-violent outlook towards life. The age we live in is one of violence. And here, violence begets violence. It is imperative that non-violence is 'made' relevant to the atomic age. Reducing state or government violence is all the more necessary as this has been growing over the years to become a source of major concern today. State – inspired and state supported terrorism, authoritarianism and dictatorship, corrupt state administrative machinery are perhaps some of the worst forms of violence. A check on government violence would go a long way in reducing violence of wars and contributing to social and environmental progress. It would contribute to equalizing wealth among the population as there will be no forceful government support to guarantee ownership and concentration of power and money. It is true more often than we realize that the violent actions of the state to check crime and social ills only make matters worse.

Gandhi well understood the relevance of non-violence and satyagraha for not just the society that existed in his time but for all times to come and in all cortexes'. He did not intend to limit the adoption of his broad-based satyagraha to our country. His beliefs in its effectiveness was such that he advocated it to the suffering Jews, the Abyssinians and the Czech during the Second World War. He believed that offering of Satyagraha would effectively work against the might of dictators such as Mussolini and Hitler. The greatest asset of the non-violent mode of functioning is its universal application and the fact that it can be easily organized even in the open. It is difficult to crush provided it has adequate leadership. In contrast, violence especially against the State, which is a mighty institution in modern times, cannot hope to succeed unless it is underground; therefore, it is not easy to organize. The Satyagraha method rescues a struggle from degenerating into massive violence through entrenchment of divisive forces, persuasive hatred and corruption and lies in politics. Non-violence's superiority over violence also bears scientific testimony. Konrad Z. Lorenz in King Solomon's Ring explains how of two opponents when one stops violence and fights only with his inner strength in a non- violent manner, the aggressor begins developing an inner obstruction towards violence and finally is unable to kill his enemy. This is ample proof that the giving up and not the use of deadly weapons and violence is prescribed by human nature for the survival of man.

That the major problems of today have their origins in the depth of individual and social life means that only a basic or revolutionary change can change the dismal scenario. Non-violence is such a revolution; it aims at altering the fundamental outlook away from violence for good. It is an inner revaluation, a rebirth. We can use non- violence to fight all kinds of ills that are rampant in our country – be it black marketing, nepotism, corruption, red tapism. If India could use non- violence successfully against the foreigners in the early half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, why cannot it be used 50 years later with equal success against our own countrymen. Unfortunately, India since its independence, has failed to emphasise the relevance of the non-violent principle and create a precedent to other nations by adopting it. In post – independent India, institutions left behind by Gandhi to pursue and practice his ideals became institutions of government patronage. Centers of non-violent revolution such as the Sabarmati ad Sevagram from where Gandhi started the Gandhi March and the Quit India campaign were converted to relief centers. The khadi and village industries organized by Gandhi to develop people's power of self-reliance as an integral part of the non-violent revolution came under government control. The Gandhi Smarak Nidhi was organized after Gandhi's death to lend finance to non-violent programmes across the country. But ultimately its resources of more than 10 crore rupees was spent in raising museums and isolated relief work activities. At the international level, the Gandhian technique could be used by peace – loving, non-violent people from different nations to fight against global terrorism, nuclear ills, the during menace in the world, civil wars and even issues such as the link – up of trade with matters unrelated to trade by the rich nations of the world.

As human situations are varied and demand different responses at different times, we cannot hope for a readymade mode of non-violent struggle to suit every situation. One just needs to remember that the basic principles of non-violence remaining the same, a type of non-cooperation and passive resistance that suits the situation most should be adopted.

#### **Politics and Society**

Gandhi envisaged a socio-political regeneration through his ideas and practices based on truth and love. For him, the "greatest of all" in a socio-political set-up could be realized only through the classless, stateless democracy of autonomous village communities based on non-violence and not coercion, on service and not exploitation and on the largest measure of all local and individual initiatives. Welfare of all and social harmony could only be achieved through development of self-governing village communities, decision of local issues by near unanimity if not consensus, limitation of wants and development of people's capacity to look after their affairs without government control. This ideal society was the Sarvodaya society characterised by equal treatment of all castes all creeds, absence of exploitation and the scope for development of individuals and groups. His ideal society or Sarvodaya society of stateless democracy could only be realized

by first cleaning the society of all its ills. He, thus, called for 'clean' politics and a higher state of morality in society. In this, as in his other ideas and concepts, the essence is in cultivating spiritual and moral values which would build a strong character given to the quest for truth and self-realisation. The above-mentioned aspects will have to be borne in mind to understand how his views on politics and society can help us in modern times.

Today politics has become a dirty game. In India, it is characterised by every major social ill. There is corruption and hypocrisy and double standards of the so-called political leaders. It is only money power that runs the wheel of politics. As a result, goondaism has become rampant disease. To complicate the scene, there is the mixing of politics with religion merely to win votes. The remedy to this depressing state of affairs is in understanding the Gandhian message and putting it into practice. Gandhi wanted politics to be combined with moral principles and a programme of social reform, and this is urgently needed today. We must infuse the spirit of religion in politics as recommended by Gandhi in order to rescue politics from the low depths to which it has fallen. But spiritualization of politics does not mean communalizing it; religion's incorporation in politics only means communalizing it; religion's incorporation in politics only means a progressive movement towards justice and truth. For Gandhi, changing society without the instrument of politics was no solution. And in today's context, this will be impossibility, what with politics being the centre-point of the life of a nation and its people. Finally, only good men will be able to establish a good political system. So all said and done, there is the need for men to build up their individual moral fibre on the principle of goodness and truth.

Gandhi pleaded for simple living and restricting materialism in society so that its maladies such as corruption, violence, etc. could be tackled successfully. Gandhi also stressed that simple living worked against the psychology of possession, which ultimately resulted in degeneration of values in society. For Gandhi, every coin not earned by dint of labour for earning things in life need special attention today what with the problem of black money and corrupt ways of acquiring easy money.

#### **Education**

It is in the field of education that we can borrow much from the Gandhian framework of values to emerge with ideas in education that would replace defects in the present-day set-up. Gandhi himself realized the utmost relevance of his ideas on education for independent India. That is why he said in The Problem of Education. "I have given many things to India. But this system of education together with its technology is, I feel, the best of them. I do not think I will have anything better to offer the country". Our educational system as it is today derives from the one established by the British, which Gandhi termed as defective and monstrous. Gandhi offered his system as an alternative to the British system that served the interests of a few and was unrelated to the environment and concerns for development. For him it

was the most concentrated from all alienation that generated superficial elitism. Our present-day system is not free from such charges.

Our educational system as it exists does not educate man in the real sense. No doubt it informs and teaches but that is done only in a superficial sense. There is no attempt to strengthen the mind to improve its power to create and be innovative and to enlarge its scope of vision beyond the day-to-day. Real education must aim to build the moral and spiritual values of man so that he can aim at greater things in life while building a society and a world that would be an epitome of the best of human values. Adopting the Gandhian ideas on education would mean providing education aimed at developing a spiritual man dedicated to truth and non-violence for the "highest development of mind and soul". It would inculcate a national consciousness and an obligation to meet social necessities in the individual. Thus, the education that would be provided would look beyond classrooms and schools or universities: it would address problems like poverty, create a productive base in villages by reviving village industries to remove disparities between villages and cities, etc. In contrast, compare the education of today that lacks a broad vision, which is of no direct use in looking into the socio-economics problems that our country faces now.

It is shocking to realize that the so-called education of today does not even prove useful in daily practical life. Whatever is learnt in the school or college does not practically equip the students with the means necessary to make a living in the world. What is needed is not merely theoretical education but practical education as well. Realising this need, Gandhi called for an education that would integrate self-activity with life, as in spinning, or education through craft. The philosophy behind education through craft is very much relevant today. Gandhi wanted the crafts medium to be village handicrafts at least at the basic primary education level as (i) that would be in keeping with the concept of bread-labour, (ii) education could then provide a link with various human activities through medicine, electronics, commerce which were also crafts.

We definitely need to reorient education to link it with activities which would make it useful and productive in daily life though we may not necessarily rely on village handicrafts. Gandhi said, only economics crafts can make education self-financing; and making available adequate resources especially financial for spreading education is the biggest hurdle in the field of education in present times. Gandhi was of the view that the crafts must always reflect a change in educational methodology. We must bear in this mind at a time when technology has exerted its impact in almost every area, including education. That is to say, for instance, that as the computer slowly replaces traditional means of teaching in some aspects, the crafts taught must rely more and more on the use of computers or computer activities.

Gandhi wanted education institutions to be something more than merely that; they should be like communities that integrate people closer to one

another in mind and spirit. He wanted such communities to be linked with other social communities through social and cultural endeavours. All this bears great relevance in these times when the classroom, school and college breeds feelings of alienation among our youth and encourage a whole range of social ills. Also, Gandhi stated, for the school and college to become a house of true knowledge and learning the 'teacher' must raise himself in character to provide right example to his students. Gandhi felt that education must inculcate a strength in men and women that would teach them to labour and become self-reliant. In other words, education must be free and self supporting, that is relying upon oneself individually and collectively rather than depending upon the charity of others. Unfortunately this principle is now where to be found now-a-days. Education is subsidized to such a great extent that for the sake of the few who are to be educated, all people are required to contribute financially.

Gandhi's idea on primary and adult education is of immense value to us and we ought to take them up seriously. We find that children are nowadays unnecessarily burdened with bookish learning at a very young age which not only strains their mind extremely but blunts their minds. The need at the earliest stage is not for theoretical but activity-based education that would make education interesting as well as help the mind thinks innovatively. Gandhi's call for vocal rather than alphabetical training at the primary level is worth taking note of. At this level, Gandhi wanted an education that would build the foundations for satisfying the preconditions of a moral system. So he voiced the need for dissipating ethical ideas to students, as ethics is the distillation of different religious concepts upon which children would not differ. Coming to adult education, does education of adults mean simple making them 'literate', which is what our adult education programmes are aiming at? Adult education, for Gandhi was continuous mass education, an education in work service and self discipline that would be a continuation of that education imparted in their younger days.

#### **Gandhi's Economics Ideas**

Gandhi's views on economic matters are of as much relevance today as are his thoughts on socio-political issues. He was not an economist in the professional sense and he did the thoughts of revered economists such as Adam Smith and David Ricardo. Gandhi evolved his economic ideas from the very moral and spiritual principles that he espoused and which he let influence his thoughts on all other matters. He said, "true economics stands for social justice and moral values", and true economics was to "manufacture souls". The basis of his economics ideas, thus, are truth, bread-labour, non-possession, satyagraha, non-violence. And the major intention behind his ideas is to benefit the common people, the large population of India that comprises many poor. Unfortunately, Gandhi's economic ideas have been misunderstood by many. Some have argued, some continue to feel, that Gandhian economics is irrelevant today. It is felt that Gandhi was totally

against the modernization of economy and machine-based industrialization. Rajendra Prasad and C. Rajgopalachari, long time interpreters of Gandhian economics, finally gave it up when they were inducted as cabinet ministers. But the fact that the economic framework- with little reverence to Gandhian ideas- adopted by the country since its independence has yet to benefit the common masses – especially the poverty ridden – is a good enough reason to take up Gandhi's economic thoughts seriously for study. The gist of his ideas and thoughts, directly or indirectly, can prove relevant to present-day India. In his article, "core of Gandhian Economics" in the book, The Relevance of Gandhi to our Times, G. Ramachandran is of the opinion that Gandhian economics will be studied more and more with the passing decades "because he (Gandhi) thought and planned not only in terms of the present but even more of the future."

**Development of Industries:** India is an agricultural country where most of the population resides in villages. It is for this reason that Gandhi wanted the country's socio-economic structure to be built on agricultural economy. For large-scale agricultural development though it will be now difficult to use Gandhi's methods of limited wants and use of simple tools. We must remember his basic message in this context-that the capital and consumer needs must be produced from the land and this should be the foundation of the economy. Nowadays, it is only consumerism based industrialization that is on the ascent. Those who cannot afford even the most necessary things in life continue to be denied of these things. As a result, the gap between the well-off and the poor is only increasing with each day.

An agricultural country like India must pursue agriculture-oriented industrialization to a greater extent. This would also ensure that people are not uprooted from their agricultural livelihoods. Gandhi, who revered labour, saw that large-scale use of machines in industries and mass production was only making people idle. In other words, unemployment was becoming a major problem-as it is today. He said this was because the rural people were thrown at the receiving rather than the producing end by rampant industrialization: they are forced to share a product in the production in the production of which they have not played a part. In a country where a large number of people are based in rural areas, this kind of industrialization is self defeating. A large agriculture-oriented industry, on the other hand, would mean more employment opportunities for making roads, rural electrification, transport, etc. People would not leave their villages and towns and migrate to cities in search of jobs that are not there for the asking.

Gandhi aimed at evolving a decentralized economic system based on small machines and labour-intensive industries. The beneficial results of a decentralized system that the nature of decentralization as advocated by Gandhi would lead to are many. It would (i) lead to continuous rise in the efficiency and productivity of the industry as it would require planned and constant efforts at improving the technique of production; (ii) satisfy local and regional needs by making full use of local/regional resources;

## Innovation The Research Concept

(iii) lead to the development of every village or small village groups as an agro-industrial community; (iv) not be exploitative or bureaucracy-ridden; (v) ultimately lay the foundations of economic democracy. However, complete decentralization of this kind may not be possible all of a sudden as the base for such development has not been laid all these years. Moreover, the feasibility of the Gandhian manner of decentralization would rest on getting technology that is suited to the development pattern aimed at. But no such technology, which would boost productivity significantly, has been evolved so far. What can be done to study Gandhi's approach to reconciliation of big, centralized industries in urban India with a vast chain of decentralized industries spread through rural India. As he said all the big industries then can be run solely under community management and all small-scale industries in a manner that the producers will themselves own the tools of production. People can convert raw materials into consumer goods for consumption as well as daily profitable employment. Only wise planning can bring about a synthesis of the two industries for maximum employment and production in economy with an attempt to put people as masters of both the types of industries. It is also necessary to bring the human element in industrialization to the forefront. As Gandhi said, large industries under community management must not only give industrial labour fair play but also full participation.

Gandhi, time and again, stressed the importance of promoting khadi and village industries. In the set-up amalgamating big industries and small ones that are discussed above, khadi and village industries can be made part of the decentralized sector that will contain cottage, village and small scale industries. But a crucial thing is that like other aspects of the sector, even pottery, hand-made paper and other village industries will need to be modernized in the light of advancing technology. Only then can they become vital to the overall socio-economic prosperity. Technology Development – Technology has advanced at a rapid pace in the last 40 to 50 years with the result that today technology is the buzzword in every area of activity. It has led to a major problem though its rampant and indiscriminate use and misuse. Even developing countries, many of which are poor and bear a severe resource crunch, are opting for all kinds of sophisticated technologies at large financial costs. Not only that, imported technology – based industries are being set up. Many of them produce luxurious goods that are not useful for more than a handful of the population.

There is a cry is for becoming self-reliant in technology without realizing what kind of technology are we talking about and whom does it benefit. Thoughtless and wasteful technological use has resulted in a number of socio-economic problems such as rising poverty and unemployment, environmental degradation and loss of ethical values. Our country is also in the snare of the so-called technological advancement. A solution to the technological advancement. A solution to the technological problem of today can be found in

Gandhian views on technology development. Until now, we have only unheeded and even flouted Gandhi's warnings on this subject. For instance, more than 50 years ago Gandhi had warned that the growing gap between the most advanced and the least advanced technologies would result in two different technological cultures-one advanced borrowed and totally foreign – oriented and another less developed indigenous and transmitted through local media and languages- that would polarize societies.

One of Gandhi's basic postulates was that human wants must be curtailed and those human wants rejected that are repugnant to human consciousness. Now, lack of any such principles in the course of technological development has resulted in the poor state of societies in the nations of the West where excess of material progress has deteriorated society so that it is falling apart. A fruitful lesson from such a disaster is that technological and scale choices, that is, on what scale technology should be implemented, cannot be solely determined by economic considerations – as, Gandhi said, economics cannot remain inseparable from ethics. What is needed is appropriate technology which, for Gandhi, was nothing but appropriate industrialization – not western industrialization that "induced a dangerous acquisitive lust and also became an instrument of imperialism", a fetishism of consumerism. He wanted labour – intensive technology, one that would be biased towards the quality of labour rather than the quality of equipment. And the importance of this kind of technology is now slowly being accepted abroad by scientists and economists. It is being realized that capital intensive technology can be pushed too far and to a point when not merely the balance man, machine and nature is destroyed but also the very existence of human life on earth.

Once again- it is time to sincerely lead, like Gandhi did, for technological development that would be matched by appropriate human, organizational and cultural development. We need to first see whether we have the socio-economic pre-requisites for an imported technology. It is recognizing the structural and organizational constraints in developing societies- which suffer from the same even now- that Gandhi discouraged the use of any technology which stultified changes in the organizational set-ups.

### **Trusteeship**

Gandhi presented an alternative to the prevailing economic organizations in his concept of trusteeship. Trusteeship is based upon the principle of non-possession and it condemns the instinct of acquisition. Gandhi wanted that all property should be considered as a trust to be used for the welfare of all people. For this, it would be necessary for owners of private property, who were only trustees, to give up their ownership rights. His concept of trusteeship recognizes that it is man's acquisitive tendency that creates doubts and insecurities in the mind. Gandhi also wanted to thus uplift the morale of the people. Gandhi's principle addresses the moral grounds of the institution of non-possession in a revolutionary

departure from the traditional capitalistic way of looking at things.

The idea of trusteeship may not seem very practicable for any time leave alone the present period. However, it is not entirely 'baseless' in these modern times that are characterized by a keenness to understand new lines of development and progress and adopt them if necessary. With new and widely spread education new levels of understanding have been reached by the people that leave a large scope for giving new life to ideas of the past that can be usefully adapted to the present times. Coming to Gandhian concept itself, it would prove useful in doing away with economic disparities, unjust distribution of wealth and problems of maladjustments between employers and employees, and easing the conflicts between the being established and the already established in society. It also aims to narrow the class gap- a concern that the democratic nations have been preoccupied with for long, and that which our country has aimed at through her cooperative policies, the community development projects, and ih her taxation policy. Thus the concept of trusteeship is relevant. It can be made practicable once it is seen in the context of the changed conditions on modern times. Some critics have noted that partial trusteeship is already being introduced in some developed countries. In some capitalist nations, people have started gradually accepting workers' control of and share in management, note an easy in Essays in Gandhian Economics edited by Ramesh Diwan and Mark Lutz. Gandhi outlines a revolutionary economic programme that put a great deal of emphasis on self – sufficiency of economics has come to be dictated by wealth and power.

It is an economic criterion that forces less developed nation to show subservience to developed countries on the international front every now and then. For freedom from economic subjection, self-sufficiency of economy is extremely important- and this is what Gandhi pleaded for.

According to Gandhi, such self – sufficiency could also allow voluntary mutual dependence among nations. Most economic theories today are of domination and rejection. Gandhi's economic programme, in contrast, is a non- violence based programme, in contrast, is a non- violence based programme whose goal and relevance for modern times cannot be doubted. The Chinese, for one, have already accepted Gandhi's emphasis on village as the unit of the Indian economic system.

Gandhian economics was an attempt to reconcile science and spirituality, Production and character, goods and culture. One can only venture to say that without any hope of such reconciliation, the future of mankind is not bright. The pressing need is for studying the methods of application of Gandhian economics in changing conditions and situations in India and the world.

Gandhi's View on Environment - Addressing the environment-related problems in order to save our natural surroundings and our planet form degradation and destruction has become a great concern in our times. And not without reason Man, since his

beginning, has been careless to his natural surroundings and continues to be so. And the realisation today is that soon he may have to pay a heavy price for exploiting nature perseveringly and ruthlessly. Problems such as rising environmental pollution, shrinking of habitats and the fast-depleting natural resources, the depletion of the ozone layer are disturbing the ecological balance and creating problems for man himself. Gandhi was aware that man's activities vis-à-vis his surroundings would soon ring the alarm bells so that man would be forced to revised his attitude towards his environment. But because he wanted man to awake to the problem at the earliest, he pleaded for a sensible approach and greater awareness in use of nature and in environment related matters as such. He also called for greater diligence in addressing the problems that emerged. Many environmentalists today adopt an approach that clearly recognizes. Gandhi's own approach in some sense or the other but Gandhi's views on environment as whole deserve greater merit and understanding as Gandhi's thoughts deal with more than one problem and keep in mind all aspects of man's surroundings. Actually, Gandhian thoughts in their entirety are very significant in this context. For they aim at creating a non- exploitative world order which can address all problems including environment exploitation and the resulting complications between nations on the international scene.

Gandhi warned of some factors that play a major role in creating environmental degradation, these being unlimited urbanization, massive industrialization in which raw materials are exploited without a thought for the consequence on the balance of nature, and spread of industrialization through profit motive alone. No one can deny that the above-mentioned factors have played the largest role in degrading our environment over the last two centuries. Gandhi suggested ways to address ecology related problems which, once adopted in their spirit and content, can serve to solve many of the problems. Today, men ecology-related problems include (i) shrinkage of natural resources base available to the ecosystem people owing to over-grazing, etc. (ii) inefficient building –up of man-made capital and meeting it out to the people in an unfair manner, as a result that there is a negative impact on the natural capital and a few people end up with control of natural and man-made capital, and (iii) drain of India's natural capital to the outside world. The cores of Gandhian prescriptions are suitable for these concerns. The Gandian view sees environmental degradation as mainly a result of materialistic greed on the part of people. Material consumption must be maintained with limits and it must allow equitable sharing of natural products and those of the economy among all sections of the people at large and especially the elite should and especially the elite should not desire more and more of material comfort, the ecosystem people must also learn to be contented with subsistence. Ultimately, Gandhi was insistent that the build – up of man-made capital. The ecosystem people should have greater access to the natural resource base in their localities. Gandhi wanted all people, those in as

well as out of power, to voluntarily adopt these principles as moral imperative. And the present day environmental scene suggests that what he pleaded for may soon become necessary for our happy existence on earth.

The present – day environmentalists and their programmes reflects and approach which is not very different from approach Gandhian thoughts to our environment and ecology. The environmental movement of today holds that environment protection is man – created. And man, as an individual as well as a social being, has always been central to the Gandhian system. Gandhi wanted that the link between man and man should, through non-violence make the social fabric. One more feature of the environment degradation to its effect on human sensitivity and the today general balance between man, economy and nature. This approach is in keeping with Gandhian concerns. But Gandhi went a step further still. He wanted attention to be given to the cultural and spiritual needs of man in this context. This issue is, however, yet to come to the fore front.

### **Conclusion**

We have discussed several aspects of Mahatma Gandhi's thought and action, and indicated how these remain relevant in the modern times. All times aspects of his thought, as we have tried to emphasise, arise from the anchorage Mahatma Gandhi has in the sanatana dharma. In sanatana dharma, India has been taught the truth about Brahman's creation and the way of living properly in this world that is not only imbued with divinity but is in fact a manifestation of the divine. Mahatma Gandhi arrived in India at a time when India had lost faith in this fundamental truth of her heritage and forgotten herself. He restored the faith of India in sanatana dharma and brought her back to the right path. And India, under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, not only recovered hope for herself; she became a source of hope for the rest of the world. After Mahatma Gandhi, India has once again strayed from the path. It is primarily for India and Indians now to be true to the Mahatma, to recover their faith and return to the path of sanatana dharma. By being thus true to herself, India shall also be true to the world and fulfill her destined role. This is the lesson that Mahatma Gandhi

has taught India. And, his lesson remains perpetually relevant.

Thus, we find that Gandhi has much relevance today. Rather we have to accept the fact that the propagation and practice of Gandhism alone may rid our present civilization of the so many blemishes and negative points which forebode to crush humanity and the sound values. It may survive on, under their steel heels. It is good that we have been able to enshrine a number of Gandhian principles and ideas in the constitution of free India and must endeavour to see them installed on the rightful place. We should aim at material prosperity and equality so as to 'wipe tears from every eye' but should not imitate the foreign models. Communism of the Soviet type and capitalism of the Western type, neither of them finds a congenial soil in India.

### **References**

1. *Bhavan's Journal, June 3, 1956; reprinted Vol. XXI, No. 16, March 2, 1975, p.45-48.*
2. *The collected work of Mahatma Gandhi, cited above, Vol. 4, p. 408.*
3. *Gandhi 1915-1948, A Detailed Chronology, cited above.*
4. *M.K. Gandhi, "Hind Swaraj", in the collected works of Mahatma Gandhi, cited above, Vol. 10, p.6-68.*
5. *The collected works of Mahatma Gandhi, cited above, Vol. 85, p. 32-33.*
6. *James Mill, Evidence to the House of Commons Committee, House of Commons Papers, 1831-32, Vol. XIV, p.6-7.*
7. *Quoted from Dharampal, 1971, cited above, p. 249-250. this petition is not found in the collection of original documents in Dharampal, 1971, cited above, though extracts from the petition are quoted in the introduction, see, p. XXXII.*
8. *Quoted from Richard Heiter, 1971, cited above, p. 253.*
9. *The collected works of Mahatma Gandhi, cited above, vol. 34. p.458.*
10. *The sage of Kanchi, Madras 1991, p. 143-44.*
11. *Panchtantra, edited with Hindi translation by Sudhakar Malaviya, Chowkhamba, Varanasi, 1993, p. 734-737.*