

GANDHI'S NONVIOLENT RESISTANCE: UNRAVELING THE PHILOSOPHY, STRATEGIES, AND IMPACT OF MAHATMA GANDHI IN INDIA'S STRUGGLE FOR INDEPENDENCE"

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Abstract

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi's influence is inextricably linked to nonviolence, peace, and justice. Gandhi's principles of nonviolence and civil disobedience had a profound impact not only on the Indian independence movement but also on various liberation movements worldwide. His ideas inspired leaders like Martin Luther King Jr. and Nelson Mandela, who applied nonviolent strategies in their respective struggles for civil rights and against apartheid. While Gandhi was influential in political and social movements, his focus on integrating Eastern and Western perspectives into educational approaches may not be as well-documented. However, his emphasis on education and self-reliance was part of his broader vision for empowering individuals and communities. Gandhi believed in holistic education that nurtured not only the intellect but also the character and morality of individuals. Gandhi's influence extended beyond political activism, encompassing social, economic, and educational dimensions. His ideas on self-sufficiency, simplicity, and nonviolent coexistence continue to resonate with many people around the world. Gandhi's nonviolent approach is still relevant and necessary in today's world, especially as weapons of mass destruction cause havoc and raise fears of another world war. Mohandas K. Gandhi is known as the Father of Independent India as well as the Father of Modern Nonviolence.

Introduction

Mahatma Gandhi embedded a strong emphasis on truth and nonviolence. Gandhi believed that truth (Satya) and nonviolence (Ahimsa) were the highest ideals and powerful tools for personal and social transformation. According to him, embracing truth and nonviolence could lead to personal purity and virtues such as piety, sympathy, and cooperation.

Gandhi applied these principles not only in the political arena but also in various aspects of human life. He conducted numerous social experiments to demonstrate the effectiveness of nonviolent resistance in achieving social and political change. His philosophy had a significant impact on India's struggle for independence, inspiring many to resist oppression through peaceful means.

Gandhi emphasized the invisible strength of nonviolence, stating that while violence is visible and has immediate effects, nonviolence operates on a deeper level and may take time

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to manifest its impact. He believed in the transformative power of nonviolence to bring about positive change in individuals and societies.

Furthermore, Gandhi envisioned a decentralized and self-sufficient society based on nonviolence and truth. He advocated for the establishment of a perfect democracy where each village would be self-sufficient, independent, and free. This vision aligned with his belief in Swaraj, or self-rule, and his emphasis on empowering local communities.

Gandhi's principles of truth and nonviolence continue to inspire movements for justice, peace, and civil rights around the world. His legacy is remembered not only in India but globally as a symbol of the transformative power of nonviolent resistance in the face of oppression.

Humans understand the essence of both violence and nonviolence because they are rational. According to Gandhi's philosophy, violence is brute, rude, cruel, and finite, whereas nonviolence teaches the values of gentleness, mildness, and infinity. Nonviolence has infinite room, whereas violence has limited and finite room and space. Nonviolent fruit is preferable to brutal fruit. The edge of nonviolence protects self-esteem and a sense of humour. Nonviolence does not support ill-tempered, immoral, or unfair behaviour. It also gives us the inner, mental, and physical strength to face violent armed men.

Keywords: Ahimsa, Satyagraha, Non-violence, Freedom Movement

Objectives of the Study

- To gain insights into the philosophical foundations of nonviolence as propagated by Gandhi.
- To evaluate the impact of nonviolence in challenging oppressive regimes and achieving social justice.
- Study the various strategies employed by Gandhi in his nonviolent campaigns.
- Encourage critical thinking and analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of nonviolent movements.
- Apply the lessons learned from Gandhi's non-violence movement to address current social, political, and environmental challenges.

Literature Review

- Gandhi's legacy in education, particularly in peace education, remains significant and unfinished (Dey, 2021).
- Gandhian education emphasises experiential learning and teachers as co-learners (Pandey, 2020), rather than simply imparting knowledge.

- Gandhi believed that nonviolence, or ahimsa, was the only path to truth. He saw satya (truth) and ahimsa (nonviolence) as two sides of the same coin, leading to "the ultimate destination of life" (Adjei, 2013; Behera, 2016; Ghosh, 2020).
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Inception of Non-Violence

After completing his legal studies in England and being accepted into the Inner Temple, Mahatma Gandhi encountered difficulties while practising law in India. His early attempts in India were not very successful, and he encountered legal challenges. But it was in South Africa, Gandhi's life took a turn for the worse and ultimately led him to adopt a nonviolent resistance strategy. When Gandhi moved to South Africa in 1893 to practise law, he encountered racial prejudice there. It did happen that he was thrown off a Pietermaritzburg train for refusing to leave the first-class compartment because of the colour of his skin. Gandhi saw this incident as a turning point in his life, which inspired him to launch a nonviolent campaign for social justice and civil rights. Gandhi's nonviolent resistance philosophy, known as Satyagraha, was influenced by his experiences in South Africa and later applied to the Indian independence movement. He started to formulate and hone the ideas that would form the cornerstone of his activism throughout his life in South Africa.

Non-violence from Gandhi's Perspective

Gandhi, according to his granddaughter Ela Gandhi, began to comprehend the world from the perspective of a peasant in impoverished circumstances, in contrast to the perspective of a middle-class oligarchy. His dedication to social justice and nonviolent resistance was probably impacted by this shift in perspective. On September 11, 1906, Gandhi launched his first nonviolent campaign against the new pass law implemented by the South African regime. This law gave the police the right to enter Indian homes without a warrant and mandated that all Indians carry passes that identify their race. Gandhi's advocacy for using civil disobedience to achieve social and political change began when he launched a nonviolent protest in response to this oppressive law. Gandhi came home as a hero in 1915, having led a victorious campaign in South Africa. He had learned the fundamentals of nonviolent resistance techniques in South Africa, which he would later apply to his fight against caste discrimination, colonial rule, and gender inequality in India. Gandhi's innovative protest techniques and unwavering commitment to nonviolence were instrumental in India's struggle for independence, and they continue to serve as an inspiration for justice and equality movements globally.

The idea of satyagraha, as articulated by Mahatma Gandhi, marks a substantial shift from the traditional interpretation of passive resistance. He intended to communicate a more profound and dynamic approach to nonviolent resistance by coining the term, which has Sanskrit roots. The terms "satya," which means truth, and "agraha," which means grasping or holding, combine to form satyagraha. Translations of the combination include "truth force" and "soul force." Gandhi's satyagraha entails actively and assertively clinging to the truth and opposing injustice without resorting to violence; it is not just a passive form of resistance. This idea stresses the transformational power of truth and the moral strength that arises from aligning oneself with it, going beyond simple opposition to an opposing force. Truth Force or Soul Force implies that Satyagraha has a spiritual and moral dimension. It implies that the power of truth is not only a compelling ethical force, but also a source of strength with the potential to effect global change.

Gandhi's insights were based on various spiritual traditions, including Hinduism, Jainism, and Christianity, and he applied them to practical political dynamics. Satyagraha's transformative power stems from its ability to change people's hearts and minds, fostering a deeper understanding and empathy, in addition to achieving specific political goals. Gandhi's development of satyagraha as a conflict paradigm had a long-term impact on the philosophy of nonviolent resistance. Scholars regard it as a transformative approach that goes beyond simple opposition, providing a path to social and political change through the pursuit of truth and moral strength.

Impact of Non-Violence on Indian Freedom Movement

Gandhi returned to India in 1915 after spending more than two decades fighting racial discrimination in South Africa. Gopal Krishna Gokhale, a prominent political leader and key member of the Indian National Congress, was instrumental in introducing Gandhi to the Indian political scene.

Gokhale recognised Gandhi's leadership potential and supported his philosophy of nonviolent resistance. He arranged for Gandhi to travel across the country to gain a better understanding of the socioeconomic and political conditions in various regions. This journey, known as "Gandhi's Bharat Yatra," allowed him to connect with the masses, understand their issues, and witness the various challenges they face. Gokhale's mentorship and guidance helped shape Gandhi's approach to the Indian independence movement. Gandhi gradually became deeply involved in the freedom struggle, advocating for Indian rights and promoting nonviolent civil disobedience as an effective tool for social and political change. His leadership and nonviolent philosophy, known as Satyagraha, were critical in India's struggle for independence from British colonial rule.

Overview of Gandhi Strategies

Nonviolent Direct-Action Strategies:

Gandhi used nonviolent direct-action strategies to achieve independence. He believed in the power of peaceful protest and civil disobedience to effect social and political change. This philosophy, known as satyagraha, became a cornerstone of the Indian independence movement.

Mobilization of the Poor and Appeal to Middle and Upper Classes:

Gandhi effectively mobilised people from various socio-economic backgrounds. He rallied not only millions of poor Indians, but also the middle and upper classes, encouraging them to contribute their resources and talents to the struggle for independence. This widespread support strengthened the movement.

Boycott of British Cloth (1920):

In 1920, Gandhi launched a significant satyagraha campaign, encouraging Indians to boycott imported British clothing. Instead, he pushed for the revival of the indigenous spinning and weaving industry. This boycott was a direct challenge to the economic foundations of British colonialism, specifically its reliance on raw materials and foreign markets. The spinning wheel became a symbol of resistance to British rule while also tapping into India's vast labor pool, resulting in an alternative institution that has become a hallmark of nonviolent action around the world, combining boycotts, alternative production, and markets. Congress provided a spinning wheel to anyone who requested it in exchange for a donation of homespun thread. This enabled the movement to purchase additional equipment and recruit more freedom fighters. The act of spinning was simultaneously a symbol of defiance, spiritual meditation, and economic production.

Salt March to Dandi:

Gandhi's emphasised the Salt March to Dandi, which occurred in 1930. In protest of the British monopoly on salt production and distribution, Gandhi and his supporters marched to the Arabian Sea to make their own salt. This act of civil disobedience represented the rejection of unjust British laws and taxes. The Salt March has both symbolic and practical significance. He organised a 400-kilometre march from Ahmedabad to the seashore at Dandi to make salt for himself, defying a British tax on this essential component of life in a hot climate. Lord Edward Irwin, the Viceroy, negotiated a settlement in 1931 that ended civil disobedience, freed the prisoners, and resulted in the Round Table Conference in London, to which Gandhi was invited as a representative. Thousands of people joined the march and established a parallel salt-making industry to oppose British control over Indian economics.

The Salt March is portrayed as a powerful demonstration of Gandhi's commitment to nonviolence. The movement included civil disobedience, widespread participation, and a

significant cultural impact. The march not only challenged the existing British colonial regime but also encouraged people to consider alternative forms of protest. It served as a means of organising and mobilising additional resistance. The Salt March served as a means to an end, rather than an end in itself. It demonstrated how nonviolent resistance could be used strategically to challenge oppressive regimes and effect positive change. The Salt March's success was helped by the attention it received from the Indian and international media. The march's timing, which coincided with the anniversary of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, gave the movement additional symbolic weight.

The reference to the Jallianwala Bagh massacre of 1919 emphasises the historical context and the impact of past events on the collective memory of Indians. The tragedy served as a catalyst for increased resistance. Gandhi's response to repression, which transformed it into an opportunity for mobilisation, demonstrates his ability to handle and leverage tragic events to advance the cause of independence. It demonstrates a strategic approach to nonviolent resistance.

Non-Violence and its Importance

Gandhiji inspired and mobilised the masses using the principle of nonviolence. This became a powerful arrow in his quiver, which he used against British authority in India and was successful. Gandhiji opposes both a blind rejection of modern Western civilization and an uncritical acceptance of classical Indian civilization.

Mahatma Gandhi's approach to enticing the Indian Freedom Movement and advocating for radical social change relied exclusively on his ability to connect with people through an appeal to tradition. Gandhi's unique strategy involved framing his revolutionary goals in terms of traditional values and practices, making them more accessible and relatable to the masses. This approach was more than just a tactical manoeuvre; it reflected his perception of the world and the challenges that society faced. Gandhi's life and philosophical outlook was heavily influenced by his deep spirituality. While he grew up with a Hindu foundation, his spiritual journey evolved as he encountered different religious traditions. Jainism and Buddhism greatly influenced his understanding of nonviolence (ahimsa) and self-discipline. Gandhi also drew inspiration from Islam and Christianity, incorporating aspects of their teachings into his overall philosophy.

Gandhi's spirituality proceeded beyond religious dogma and embraced a broader set of moral and ethical principles. He believed in the unity of all religions and sought common ground with diverse communities. This inclusive approach enabled him to bridge religious divides and mobilize a diverse population in support of India's independence and social justice. The Gandhian paradox is his ability to use traditional values to promote radical and revolutionary ideas. Gandhi was able to gain the support of a broad cross-section of Indian society by framing his goals within the context of familiar cultural and religious norms. His emphasis on nonviolent resistance, civil disobedience, and self-reliance resonated with people from all backgrounds, resulting in a powerful force for change.

Gandhi saw nonviolence as more than a political tactic; it was a way of life based on love, compassion, and respect for all beings. He envisioned a society in which individuals, communities, and nations would resolve conflicts through dialogue, understanding, and empathy rather than using violence. He saw nonviolence as a transformative force capable of bringing about personal and societal change. Gandhi defined compassion as treating those who disagree with us with kindness and respect. It requires acknowledging each individual's inherent dignity and worth, regardless of their opinions or beliefs. This approach is based on the belief that true power is found not in the use of force but in the strength of one's convictions and the courage to defend them. Gandhi's commitment to nonviolence went beyond political struggles to include the empowerment of the marginalised and oppressed. He worked tirelessly to protect the rights and dignity of India's poor, untouchables, and other marginalised groups. His efforts were directed towards establishing a more just and equitable society in which everyone had equal opportunities and access to resources.

Gandhi believed that nonviolence had a spiritual dimension, which provided inner strength to face and overcome challenges. This spiritual power illuminates the darkest thoughts and inspires people to fight against injustice, oppression, and tyranny. A Satyagraha practitioner is motivated by a willingness to compromise and understand others. The goal is to achieve objectives without using violence, emphasizing the power of persuasion and moral force. In that fight, he never gives up or becomes weak; rather, success kisses his feet. Thus, nonviolence strengthens man's spiritual power and prepares him to achieve his goals. Ahimsa has held a prominent position in ethics and religion. Gandhiji delivered the people with examples of Buddha, Mahavir, and Christ, convincing them that Ahimsa is emphasised in all religions.

CONCLUSION

Furthermore, we can conclude that Mahatma Gandhi's Satyagraha philosophy is based on the relationship between truth and nonviolence. Gandhi believed that truth and nonviolence were inextricably linked and represented two sides of the same moral coin. His commitment to nonviolence was founded on his understanding of truth, righteousness, and the interconnectedness of all life. Critical analysis of Gandhi's concept of nonviolence raises an intriguing point about his awareness of innate human aggressiveness. Critics argue that Gandhi's approach does not fully account for the complexities of human nature, such as innate aggression. Psychosocial considerations, as you mentioned, are important in understanding human behaviour, and modern psychology does investigate the interplay of various instincts and drives. However, it is important to note that Gandhi's philosophy was not intended to be a complete psychological theory. Instead, it was a moral and political framework for effecting social and political change through nonviolent means. Gandhi believed that nonviolence could transform lives, even in the face of aggression.

As a result, we can conclude that Gandhi was an influential thinker who valued truth and nonviolence in the pursuit of self-realization. So, in order to achieve salvation, one must be a lover of truth and nonviolence. Gandhi employs truth and nonviolence as social and political tools in the fight against evil and injustice. Gandhi used the ethical tools of truth and nonviolence to resolve domestic, social, political, economic, religious, and cultural conflicts. The social, economic, and political goals of this great weapon included the abolition of untouchability, communal harmony, the eradication of unemployment and illiteracy, and economic and religious equality. His philosophy of truth and nonviolence cuts across regional, religious, and cultural boundaries. It is global in scope, affecting all living things, not just humans.

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