

## Mahatma Gandhis Doctorian Of Ahimsa

R.Prakash, Ph.D., Part-Time Research Scholars.

Reg No.20122101081004

PG & Research Department of History , Kamaraj College – Thoothukudi 03.

Affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University

Tirunelveli.

Guide & Supervisor

**Dr. A.Devaraj**

Head & Assistant Professor , PG & Research Department of History , Kamaraj College –

Thoothukudi -03. Affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University

Tirunelveli.

### ABSTRACT

This study generally aimed to analyze Mahatma Gandhis doctrine of ahimsa. This paper employed the qualitative philosophical methods of research in analyzing the tenets of ahimsa in the representative literary work chosen. Ahimsa refers to the principle of nonviolence based on the sacredness of all living creatures and an important tenet of ancient Indian religious specifically Jainism Buddhism and Hinduism. Gandhi is one of the writer thinkers who philosophizes that ahimsa is the ontological core of existence .

The salient points of the doctrine find their noblest expressions and exemplifications his life and works. While leading nationwide campaigns to ease the humanitarian issues of poverty women rights religious and ethnic harmony and injustices of the cast4r syst3em which are quite evident in his works Gandhi applied the principles on nonviolent civil disobedience playing a key role in freeing India from foreign domination.

### INTRODUCTION :

The 20<sup>th</sup> century was a century of war , a century in which hundreds of millions of people died violent deaths according to daisaku Ikeda, a Buddhist leader educator and peace builder. Ikeda has pondered over this thought have men leaned anything from those horrifying tragedies in the new era of the 21 century , he stressed that mankind must be guided by the overruling principle that killing is never acceptable or justified under any circumstance. Unless men fully recognize, widely ;promote an deeply imbed the understanding that violence can over be used to advocate ones beliefs they will have learned nothing from the bitter lessons of the

20<sup>th</sup> century according to Since its foundation over 60 years ago the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) took over a mission in consonance with its Constitution which avers that, “since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed.” Relative to this, the same Constitution highlights that “a peace b a s e d exclusively upon the political and economic arrangements of governments would not be a peace which could secure the unanimous, lasting and sincere support of the peoples of the world, and that the peace must therefore be founded, if it is not to fail, upon the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind”. This mandate has provided UNESCO with a time-honored

experience in promoting mutual understanding while fighting the humanitarian issues on discrimination, intolerance and violence. Indeed, the world today has an extraordinary and unprecedented opportunity and men have the chance to open a new page in human history. Heffron (2003) declares that “The belief in non-violence, if it is ever to achieve its object, must seek a deeper anchorage than our fleeting convictions would allow it. It must begin, not with specific projects (although it must ultimately move to them) but with a profound inner revolution, a truly existential determination to seek one’s fundamental, inherent humanity and to transform one’s entire being.”

The aforementioned pronouncement, once put into action, would positively be achieved with generous commendations from future generations, state leaders, educators, peace builders, literati, and many others.

More than half a century ago, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi sought to break the cycles of violence and retaliation. What distinguishes men from brute beasts, he said, “is man’s continuous striving for moral self-improvement. Humanity is at a crossroads and must choose, he asserted, violence (the law of the jungle) or nonviolence (the law of humanity).”

Much has been written about Gandhi as the apostle of nonviolence and how he pondered on this life principle called ahimsa-the nonviolence. However, he never wrote a treatise on nonviolence.

Gandhi’s thinking was ahead of his own time and alive even today. And underlying all this, as an available source of inspiration for each new generation, is Gandhi’s indomitable faith in the possibility of a radically better human future if only men will learn to trust the power of nonviolent openness to others and to the deeper humanity, and indeed divinity, within all men (Hick, 2006). To most people this seems impossible. But Gandhi’s great legacy, according to Hick (2006) is that his life has definitively shown that, given true dedication, it is possible in the world as it is. The wisdom embodied in the selected works of Mahatma Gandhi is one of the motivating factors that could help the Filipino students re-examine their lives and values when they become aware of their genuine philosophical dimension. His writings could describe habits that define the Filipino attitude towards life in general and towards specific actions in particular. They may rightly be regarded as modifiers of human acts, influencing their deep motivations. They are intertwined in the raw materials of the social development of a Filipino student as a person existing in a community of persons. They lend support certainly to the efforts of nation building.

With this thought in mind, the researcher was deeply motivated to explore and undertake an analysis of how ahimsa-the nonviolence is reflected in the selected works of the Mahatma Gandhi and gain honest implications on the influences noted and dominant in the Filipino students’ values. Specifically, the study aims to trace the historical root of nonviolence in India; to determine how is ahimsa dealt with in selected

works of Mahatma Gandhi; to show how the literary pieces manifest the salient points of the said doctrine with reference to the: subtle forms of himsa; quality of the strong; gradational practice; benefits of the practice; power of ahimsa; limitation to the practice; and universal vow; to identify the humanitarian issues given focus on the selections; and the implication of Gandhi's doctrine of ahimsa.

### **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

Every research promises to serve a purpose or significance for the readers to experience and enjoy. In this case, the most important element is the value centered on the knowledge of ahimsa provided for by Mahatma Gandhi, whom researchers consider to be among the greatest writer-philosopher in the recent years. Gandhi is a political and religious man of India who wrote dialogues, telegrams, notes and numerous letters to show his feelings against killing and ahimsa - or nonviolence. He chose these literary forms because they are popular in India and Indian readers would be comfortable with them. These forms also allowed him an opportunity to critique his own ideas as thoroughly as possible by acting as his own antagonist. A study of his works, therefore, would hopefully introduce him to a wider literary reading public in any part of the world.

Another relative value of the study is the lesson related to the meaning of human existence as derived and presented from the analysis and interpretation of the selected works. So substantial are the citations of Gandhi's works to illustrate his phenomenology of life. Thus, after serious handling of the values in this study, the readers are expected to catch the breadth and depth of Gandhi's works. The knowledge and experience they may gain from the study will be fully crystallized and reflected in his deeds and ways.

The study features the interplay of literature with philosophy. The intertwine of these two disciplines will guide the readers, particularly the teachers and students, to broaden their perspective of love among human circle. As readers of researches, it is their responsibility to live among human circle. As readers of researches, it is their responsibility to live by the values this study offers. The true essence is love, which is the quintessence of human existence. And this will provide the explanation why love is inherently and justifiably part and parcel of man's being.

Likewise, this study may serve as an instructional material in the teaching of humanities specifically Asian Literature in English and inspire further literary research. Reading the selected works shared by this study will certainly widen the teachers' horizon on spirituality and human existence and thus transform them to persons and teachers who treasure literature and meaningful life.

This study in the areas of research and humanities will provide a bridge to explore the rich literature of contemporary times and further inspire them to explore other unheard and read literary studies. In one's exploration, literature readers will build bridges of strong connection to literature and life as it is. This study hopes to contribute to the body of Asian prose in English, which needs urgent support from people in the literary field. Finally, the

real development and appreciation of philosophical and literary enrichment can best be found in the rich thoughts of Gandhi, ahimsa and eventual reality.

### **Scope and Limitations of the Study :**

This study is an analysis of the selected works from The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi pointing out events and situations on how ahimsa is reflected in his works. Likewise, the study aims to trace the historical root of nonviolence in India; to determine how is ahimsa dealt with in selected works of Gandhi; to show how the literary pieces manifest the salient points of the said doctrine with reference to the: subtle forms of himsa; quality of the strong; gradational practice; benefits of the practice; power of ahimsa . This research was guided by the idea that literature can be a writer's channel for conveying the philosophical dimension of ahimsa. In the conduct of this study, the qualitative philosophical method of research was used. This involved the science of textual criticism and hermeneutics supported by the researcher's own analysis and insights with reference to the content of the selected texts.

### **METHODS :**

This study employed the qualitative philosophical method of research in analyzing the tenets of ahimsa in the representative literary works chosen. This involved the science of textual criticism and hermeneutics supported by the researcher's own analysis and insights with reference to the content of the selected texts to bring about the philosophical treatment of the identified works.

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION :**

#### **The Historical Root of Ahimsa in India:**

With regard to the etymological origin of the word, the term ahimsa is formed by adding the negative prefix a to the word himsa which is derived from the Sanskrit root 'han', i.e. 'to kill', 'to harm', or 'to injure', and means not killing, not harming, not injuring. The commonly used English equivalent 'non-violence' is inadequate as it seems to give a false impression that ahimsa is just a negative virtue. Ahimsa is not mere abstention from the use of force, not just abstention from killing and injuring. It also implies the positive virtues of compassion and benevolence because not killing and not injuring a living being implicitly amounts to protecting and preserving it and treating it with mercy. The ahimsa is an important spiritual doctrine shared by Buddhism, Jainism and

Hinduism In the said religions, this doctrine has a much wider spiritual connotation and forms an integral aspect of their principles, philosophies and practices. The Buddha practiced it and actively applied it to resolve differences among rulers of his times and to prevent wars. He advised people to practice right living on the Eightfold Path and to avoid hurting or harming others. He preached against cruelty. The Jains practiced extreme forms of nonviolence as they did not want to injure even the minutest organisms.

They made it part of their vows. The Hindus practiced nonviolence toward all by refraining from hurtful thoughts, words and actions (Jayaram, 2014). The selected prose works of Mahatma Gandhi considers the direct union of the human soul with the Divine through letters, essays and personal notes and interviews as the end of his philosophy. For in these selected prose works emerge his ideal that 'all life is one'. He believes in the unity of human life - this unity is a synthetic whole and can neither be divided in spheres like social, religious, political, moral or ethical nor can it be distinguished in levels like individual or collective. What seem to men to be separate segments are, in fact, different facets of human life; they are related to each other and act, react upon one another. Gandhi believes that it's manifestation in humanity is strengthened by ahimsa

### **1. The subtle forms of Ahimsa:**

It can be gleaned from the selected works of Gandhi that the use of harsh and rude speech is considered as subtle forms of ahimsa (violence or injury). Same thing holds true by wounding the feelings of others through gestures, expressions, tone of voice and unkind words.

### **2. The quality of the strong:**

In his literary works, Gandhi advised people that they should put on with insults, rebukes, criticism and assaults. All people get hit by life's slings and arrows from time to time. They may not be able to stop someone's harsh words or careless actions but they can change how they deal with those negativities. He reminded people that these negative things do not have to take them down or tempt them to retaliate nor wish to offend anybody even under extreme provocation.

### **3. The benefits of the practice :**

According to Gandhi, if people are established in ahimsa, they have attained all virtues. Ahimsa is the pivot and all the virtues revolve around it. It is the soul-force. Hate melts in the presence of love. Hate dissolves in the presence of ahimsa. There is no power greater than ahimsa. Its practice will make one fearless. One can do and undo things.

### **4. The power of ahimsa :**

Many people think that love is just a sentiment good for prose or poetry. How easy it is to forget that ahimsa is a law as inescapable in the world of human relations. It is an inescapable law of thought and emotion. The violation of which can bring about broken hearts and broken lives. Being a law, its operation involves energy transformation. The energy of love is the most powerful and unique kind of energy in the universe. Its transformation is the very expression of the Divine Master Himself. It fills the entire universe, but its mightiest seat of operation is in the hearts of men. The power of ahimsa is greater than the power of the intellect. Gandhi said that it is easy to develop the intellect, but it is difficult to purify and develop the heart.

**5. The limitation to the practice:**

Absolute ahimsa is impossible. To practice that, one must avoid killing countless creatures while walking, sitting, eating, breathing, sleeping and drinking. One cannot find a single non-injurer in the world. One has to destroy life in order to live. In the selected works, Gandhi stressed that it is physically impossible for men to obey the law of non-destruction of life.

**CONCLUSIONS :**

Ahimsa is a Sanskrit term which refers to the principle of nonviolence based on the belief in the sacredness of all living creatures. It is a rule of conduct that bars the killing or injuring of living beings. It is an important tenet of the religions that originated in ancient India specifically Jainism, Buddhism and Hinduism.

Gandhi has pondered deeply on the predicament of human existence. He is one of the thinkers who philosophizes that ahimsa also called truth or love is the ontological core and the self cannot genuinely encounter reality unless man assumes the existential attitude of love. The salient features of Gandhi's doctrine of ahimsa with reference to the subtle forms of himsa, the quality of the strong, the gradational practice, the benefits of the practice, the power of ahimsa, the limitation of the practice, and the universal vow find his noblest expressions and exemplifications on his life.

**REFERENCES :**

1. Ahimsa. Wikipedia the free encyclopedia January 5, 2014
2. Champions of Human Rights Mahatma Gandhi (1869–1948) January 5, 2014.
3. Jayaram V. (2014) Ahimsa or Non-violence in Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism, January 5, 2014.
4. Swami Sivananda. (2005) Ahimsa (Non Violence). New Delhi: The Divine Life Society, Government of India Publications January 5, 2014.
5. M. K. Gandhi, The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi New Delhi: Government of India Publications, 1959), vol. 19, p. 12.
6. UNESCO'S Culture of Peace and Non-Violence, January 5, 2014.