

## GANDHIAN PHILOSOPHY WITH PROSPECT TO THE WORLD PEACE

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### ABSTRACT

*Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948) is a father of our nation. Ethical teachings are the central philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi. Mahatma Gandhi is a universally accepted as an exemplary model of ethical and moral life, with a rare blending of personal and public life, the principles and practices, the immediate and the eternal. He considered life to be an integrated whole, growing from truth to truth every day in moral and spiritual status. He believed in a single standard of conduct founded on dharma of truth and nonviolence. Mahatma Gandhi is a great ethical values philosopher. Let us sum up this unit with brief essence of ethical teachings of Mahatma Gandhi. Mahatma Gandhi expresses that non-violence is free from physical and psychological violence in living. Violence is hurting killing damaging physical and psychological sense. Non-violence develops vegetarianism and respect for all life. Non-violence prevents wars murders, exploitations, inequalities and injustices in the world. Non-violence is a discovery of truth. Non-violence is the means to truth. Therefore, in order to practice truth one must constantly endeavor to oneself from these evils, one must cultivate moral purity and courage and must not allow these enemies to cloud his vision. Non-stealing is not to take by thought, word and action anything to which one is not entitled. Non-stealing is a good moral quality. Mahatma Gandhi expresses that Celibacy is abstention from self-indulgence by thought, speech and action. Self-indulgence means indulging one's desires excessively.*

**Key words:** Non-violence, Truth, Non-stealing, Celibacy, Non-possessiveness and Character.

### INTRODUCTION:

Gandhi was a good man in a world where few resist the corroding influence of power, wealth and vanity. Among the vital messages of Gandhi's leadership are: even one person can make a difference; strength comes not from physical capacity but from an indomitable will. Mahatma Gandhi was not an armchair academician or a cloistered visionary. He was deeply concerned with the world around him. He disclaimed being a visionary. Gandhi spoke in a low tone and was a hesitant public speaker. Yet people of all classes were drawn to him and instinctively felt him to be a leader of deeply spiritual and moral perceptions, which he sought to realize through the pursuit of Truth. Over 54 years of Gandhi's public life were lived as an open book. He lived in South Africa for 21 years and then in India from 1915. All through his life he remained a seeker after Truth. A central quality of his leadership was its natural evolution through intense interaction with the people and the events. Gandhi single-handedly made nonviolence a universal

substitute for violence and the bed-rock of his leadership. His nonviolence was the way to counter injustice and exploitation, and not run away from a righteous battle. He associated the qualities of humility, compassion, forgiveness and tolerance as corollaries of nonviolence. To Gandhi the spirit of service and sacrifice was the key to leadership. For the spirit of service to materialize we must lay stress on our responsibilities and duties and not on rights. He illustrated it through the example of concentric circles: one starts with service of those nearest to one and expands the circle of service until it covers the universe, no circle thriving at the cost of the circles beyond. Service to him implied self-sacrifice. He said that Sacrifice is the law of life. It runs through and governs every walk of life. We can do nothing or get nothing without paying a price for it, in other words, without sacrifice.

Mahatma Gandhi is universally accepted as an exemplary model of ethical and moral life, with a rare blending of personal and public life, the principles and practices, the immediate and the eternal. He considered life to be an integrated whole, growing from ‘truth to truth’ every day in moral and spiritual status. He believed in a single standard of conduct founded on dharma of truth and nonviolence. He successfully led nonviolent struggles against racial discrimination, colonial rule, economic and social exploitation and moral degradation. So long as these manifestations of violence remain, Gandhi will remain relevant. Gandhi was “a good man in a world where few resist the corroding influence of power, wealth and vanity”.<sup>1</sup>

#### NON-VIOLENCE

Mahatma Gandhi says that Non-violence means to keep oneself completely away from such action which may hurt others physically or mentally. Violence is a behavior involving physical force intending to hurting, damaging or killing. Nonviolence is to bear distresses by oneself to make others happy. Non-violence is the most effective means to fight against discrimination and falsehood. Nonviolence is not the outward strength. Non-violence is the internal power. Nonviolence promotes vegetarianism and reverence for all life. Non-violence prevents murder, war, capital punishment in the world. Non-violence avoids abortion, mercy killing, suicide and infanticide in human society. Non-violence creates freedom from physical and psychological violence, exploitation, injustice, inequality and discrimination. Non-violence develops love, co-

operation, forgiving, help, and kindness in humanity. Non-violence is fundamental to the discovery of truth. Truth is God and non-violence is God's love. Truth is the ultimate goal of human life and non-violence is the means to achieve ultimate goal. Without violence it is not possible to seek and find truth. Non-violence and truth are so intertwined that it is practically impossible to disintegrate and separate them. They are like the two sides of the same coin. Mahatma Gandhi expresses that the first step in non-violence is that we cultivate in our daily life, as between ourselves, truthfulness, humility, tolerance, loving, and kindness. Honesty, they say in English, is the best policy. But in terms of non-violence is an unchangeable creed. It has to be pursued in face of violence raging around you. Non-violence with a non-violent man is no merit. In fact, it is become difficult to say whether it is non-violent at all. But when it is pitted against violence, then one realizes the difference between the two. This we cannot do unless we are ever wakeful, ever vigilant and striving.

The power of non-violence is the power of internal force. According to Mahatma Gandhi It is no non-violence if we merely love those who love us. It is nonviolence only when we love those who hate us. Non-violence to be a potent force must begin with the mind. Non-violence of the body without co-operation of mind is the non-violence of the weak or the cowardly, and has therefore, no potency. It is a degrading performance. If we bear the malice and hatred in our bosoms and pretend not to retaliate it must recoil upon us and to destruction. It follows, therefore, that if non-violence becomes successfully established in one place, its influence will spread everywhere. The basic principle on which nonviolence rests is that holds good in respect of oneself equally applies to the whole universe.

Mahatma Gandhi tells that the non-violence of my conception is a more active and more real fighting against wickedness than retaliation whose very nature is to increase wickedness. Non-violence is one of the major moral qualities of human being. Non-violence is a power force than violence because it is linked with the bravery of mind. Non-violence is a powerful weapon of the strong. Mahatma Gandhi used non-violence not only for the purification of his soul, but to purify the conduct of the human society. He practiced non-violence in mass action and devised means to fight out injustice.

## TRUTH

Mahatma Gandhi says that truth is the law of our being. Truth is God. Truth is which is. Truth and non-violence are as old as the hills. Truth is a virtue. Truth is in fact self-revealing, but that we have become blind on account of our ignorance. Ignorance, according to Mahatma Gandhi, is not necessary or natural to the self. Mahatma Gandhi says that moral degradation or perversion of one kind or cause ignorance. He explicitly mentions the six deadly enemies which cause prejudice, malice and ill-will to arise, on account of which the person is unable to see or feel the truth. These deadly enemies are desire, anger, greed, attachment, pride and jealousy. Therefore, in order to practice truth one must constantly endeavor to oneself from these evils, one must cultivate moral purity and courage and must not allow these enemies to cloud his vision.

Mahatma Gandhi is also aware that in the present day world falsehood appears to be more paying and beneficial. By speaking lies people do get success. Mahatma Gandhi is aware of it, but very logically he demonstrates the superiority of truth over falsehood. There is one condition regarding the speaking of the truth which Mahatma Gandhi accepts because of its pragmatic value. Even in accepting this Mahatma Gandhi is trying to be faithful to the ancient Indian teaching. The condition is that the truth should be spoken in a pleasant way. If the truth is expressed in an unpleasant, blunt and rough manner, it may be socially injurious as it might give rise to anger and quarrels. In fact, in the ancient Indian philosophy there is a maxim which says, 'speak the truth, and speak the pleasant; but do not speak the unpleasant truth'. Mahatma Gandhi seems to be influenced by the element of practically contained in this maxim. Therefore, he says that truthfulness has to be practiced, that it is an art which has to be developed by rigorous and constant discipline and practice.

## NON-STEALING

Mahatma Gandhi tells that Non-stealing is not to steal. Non-stealing is not to take by thought, word and action anything to which one is not entitled. There are two senses of the word non-stealing; it popularly means the observance of the rule of not taking away the belonging or the property of anybody unless it is given by that person. But, there is a more rigorous meaning of the word nonstealing; it forbids the keeping or holding in possession of such things that are not

needed. Mahatma Gandhi uses the non-stealing in both these senses. In fact, in conceiving the nature of this virtue he is influenced by Jainism which believes that stealing is also a kind of violence. Property is, in fact, outer life, because bodily existence depends upon property. Therefore, to rob one of his properties is to take away his outer life. Non-stealing is a virtue also because stealing is not compatible with the highest virtue of love. Therefore Mahatma Gandhi recommends that a truly moral individual has to take a solemn vow to cultivate the virtue of non-stealing.

### CELIBACY

Mahatma Gandhi expresses that Celibacy is abstention from self-indulgence by thought, speech and action. Self-indulgence means indulging one's desires excessively. Celibacy is restricted to chastity. Celibacy means abstinence from sexual relations or at least physical control over the organ of generation. Mahatma Gandhi uses the celibacy both in its popular sense, and in its traditional sense. He emphasizes the importance of sexual control. Celibacy is putting a check and restraint over all the senses and the mind. Senses often delude us and misguide us. Immorality is basically born out of a desire to satisfy the demands of the senses. Therefore, we must cultivate a discipline by which we, instead of being led astray by the senses, may be able to keep the senses under control. In fact, even sexual control cannot be practiced unless senses are put in check. For example, Mahatma Gandhi feels that our food habits have to be changed. The palate is responsible for our taking delicious and rich food, which, in its turn, causes sexual urge to arise. Therefore, Mahatma Gandhi experimented with different kinds of food, just in order to evolve a food pattern, which, without reducing the health value of food, would not allow amorous and undesirable urges to arise. The name celibacy is given to a discipline of this kind.

### NON-POSSESSIVENESS

Mahatma Gandhi says that Non-possessiveness is renunciation of possessions by thought, word and deed. Non-possessiveness is restricted to contentment. Non-possessiveness is non-acceptance. Possessiveness is unwilling to share one's possessions. Mahatma Gandhi feels that the tendency to possess things is the cause of all evils. Therefore, one must cultivate the discipline of living with what one has. Mahatma Gandhi is aware that it is not possible to

practice this virtue in the absolute way, because absolute non-possession is impossible in life; even the body is a possession- the things needed for the preservation of the body are also possessions, and therefore, so long as we are alive we cannot completely do away with possessions. Even so, non-possessiveness has to be practiced to the best of one's capacity because this does away with the cause of rift in social life and provides a solid foundation for a universal love to flourish.

### CHARACTER

Mahatma Gandhi expresses that Character is moral and ethical strength. Character comes from within. Character is the key to success. A man of character will make himself worthy of any position he is given. Character, not brains, will count at the crucial moment. Character is any day more eloquent than speech. Character must be above suspicion and truthful and self-controlled. What will tell in the end will be character and not a knowledge of letters. What we start receiving education through our own language, our relations in the home will take on a different character. The real property that a parent can transmit to all equally is his or her character and educational facilities. The truest test of civilization, culture and dignity is character and not clothing. Success is the certain result of suffering of the extremist character voluntarily undergone. Sorrow and suffering make for character if they are voluntarily borne, but not if they are imposed. Men of stainless character and self-purification will easily inspire confidence and automatically purify the atmosphere around them. In the times to come the people will not judge us by the creed we profess or the label we wear or the slogans we shout but by our work, industry, sacrifice, honesty and purity of character. If you express the requisite purity of character in action, you cannot do it better than through the spinning wheel. If you have no character to lose, people will have no faith in you. Character alone will have real effect on masses.

Mahatma Gandhi tells that all your scholarship, all your study of Shakespeare and Wordsworth would be vain if at the same time you do not build your character and attain mastery over your thoughts and your actions. A vow imparts stability, ballast and firmness to one's character. A language is an exact reflection of the character and growth of its speakers. A dissolute character is more dissolute in thought than in deed, and the same is true of violence.



Literary training by itself adds not an inch to one's moral height and character building is independent of literary training. Character cannot be built with mortar and stone. It cannot be built by other hands than your own. The principal and professors cannot give you character from the pages of books. Character building comes from their very lives and really speaking it must come from within you. Mahatma says that if wealth is lost nothing is lost; if health is lost something is lost; if character is lost everything is lost.

### LIFE MORAL TEACHINGS

Mahatma Gandhi expressed life moral teachings in his writings and speeches. Life moral teachings presented here are drawn from Gandhi's writings and speeches. Perhaps in our time there will be even greater opportunities to put them to good use. They are:

- Our aim is the establishment of the kingdom of Righteousness on earth.
- Peace has its victories more glorious than those of war.
- Real disarmament cannot come unless the nations of the world cease to exploit one another.
- No matter how insignificant the thing you have to do, do it as well as you can, give it as much of your care and attention as you would give to the thing you regard as most important.
- Nonviolence, in the very nature of things, is of no assistance in the defense of ill-gotten gains and immoral acts.
- Nonviolence is never a method of coercion, it is one of conversion.  
Nonviolent struggle is impossible without capital in the form of character.
- Recall the face of the poorest and the most helpless man whom you may have seen and ask yourself, if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him. Will he be able to gain anything by it? Will it restore him to a control over his own life and destiny?
- Religions are different roads converging on the same point.
- Religion which takes no account of practical affairs and does not help to solve them is no religion.
- Rights that do not flow directly from duty well performed are not worth having.
- Satisfaction lies in the effort, not in the attainment. Full effort is full victory.
- No human being is so bad as to be beyond redemption.

- Silence becomes cowardice when occasion demands speaking out the whole truth and acting accordingly.
- Strength of numbers is the delight of the timid. The valiant in spirit glories in fighting alone.
- Terrorism and deception are weapons not of the strong but of the weak.
- That line of action is alone justice which does not harm either party to a dispute.
- The acquisition of the spirit of nonresistance changes one's outlook upon life. It puts different values upon things and upsets previous calculations. And when it is set in motion, its effect can overtake the whole world. It is the greatest force because it is the highest expression of the soul.
- The best politics is right action. The danger is greatest when victory seems nearest.
- The fabled godly Elephant King was saved only when he thought he was at his last gasp.
- The first principle of nonviolent action is that of noncooperation with everything humiliating.
- The fullest life is impossible without an immovable belief in a Living Law in obedience to which the whole universe moves.
- The highest moral law is that we should unremittingly work for the good of mankind.
- The movement of noncooperation, if it may be considered a revolution, is not an armed revolt; it is an evolutionary revolution, it is a bloodless revolution. The movement is a revolution of thought, or spirit.
- The problem is a world problem. No nation can find its own salvation by breaking away from others. We must all be saved or we must all perish together.
- There is a power now slumbering within us, which if awakened would do to evil what light does to darkness.
- The right to err, which means the freedom to try experiments, is the universal condition of all progress.
- To believe that what has not occurred in history will not occur at all is to argue disbelief in the dignity of man.
- To benefit by others' killing and delude oneself into the belief that one is being very religious and nonviolent is sheer self-deception.



- True morality consists not in following the beaten track, but in finding out the true path for us and fearlessly following it.
- Truth never damages a cause that is just.
- Violence is suicide.
- We are all children of one and the same God and, therefore, absolutely equal.
- We hug the chains that bind us.
- We leave things to Fate after exhausting all the remedies.
- We may attack measures and systems. We may not, we must not, attack people. Imperfect ourselves, we must be tender toward others and slow to impute their motives.
- We may not be God but we are of God — even as a little drop of water is of the ocean.
- We must combat the wrong by ceasing to assist the wrongdoer, directly or indirectly.
- Western democracy as it functions today is diluted Nazism or fascism. At best it is merely a cloak to hide the Nazi and fascist tendencies of imperialism.
- What is possible for one is possible for all.
- When we disobey a law, it is not for want of respect for lawful authority, but in obedience to the higher law of our being, the voice of conscience.
- Where Love is, there God is also.
- Where there is only a choice between cowardice and violence, I would advise violence.
- Conscience is a good guide for individual conduct, imposition of that conduct upon others would be an insufferable interference with their freedom of conscience.
- Whomsoever you follow, howsoever great he might be, see to it that you follow the spirit of the master and not imitate him mechanically.
- You should be pioneers in presenting a living faith to the world and not the dry bones of a traditional faith which the world will not grasp.
- A Government that is evil has no room for good men and women except in its prisons.
- All faiths constitute a revelation of Truth, but all are imperfect.
- All fear is a want of faith.

- All other pleasures and possessions pale into nothingness before service which is rendered in a spirit of joy.
- A nonviolent resister cannot wait or delay action till perfect conditions are forthcoming.
- A nonviolent revolution is not a program for the seizure of power. It is a program for the transformation of relationships ending in a peaceful transfer of power.
- A small body of determined spirits fired by an unquenchable faith in their mission can alter the course of history.
- By our actions we mean to show that physical force is nothing compared (to) moral force.
- Capital as such is not evil; it is its wrong use that is evil.
- Civil disobedience without constructive programs is bound to fail.
- Cooperation with good is as much a duty as noncooperation with evil.
- Do not undertake anything beyond your capacity, and at the same time do not harbor the wish to do less than you can. One who takes up tasks beyond his powers is proud and attached. On the other hand, one who does less than he can is a thief.
- Do not worry about what others are doing. Each of us should turn the searchlight inward and purify our own hearts as much as possible.
- Each step upward makes me feel stronger and fit for the next step.
- Every one of my failures has been a steppingstone.
- Every right carries with it a corresponding duty.
- Everything is done openly and aboveboard, for truth hates secrecy.
- Evil can only be sustained by violence.
- Exploitation is the essence of violence.
- Faith does not admit of telling. It has to be lived and then it becomes selfpropagating.
- Faith is nothing but a living, wide-awake consciousness of God within.
- Fearlessness is the first requisite of spirituality. Cowards can never be moral.
- For a nonviolent person the whole world is one family. He will thus fear none, nor will others fear him.

- Freedom won through bloodshed or fraud is no freedom.
- Given the opportunity, every human being has the same possibility for spiritual growth.
- God is conscience.
- God reveals Himself daily to every human being but we shut our ears to “the still small voice.”
- Good government is no substitute for self-government.
- He who is ever brooding over results often loses nerve in the performance of duty.
- I am a Christian and a Hindu and a Moslem and a Jew.
- I am an uncompromising opponent of violent methods even to serve the noblest of causes.
- I believe in the essential unity of man and, for that matter, all that lives. Therefore, I believe that if one man gains spiritually, the whole world gains with him; and, if one man falls, the whole world falls to that extent.
- I believe that no government can exist for a single moment without the cooperation of the people, willing or forced, and if people suddenly withdraw their cooperation in every detail, the government will come to a standstill.
- I can retain neither respect nor affection for a government which has been moving from wrong to wrong in order to defend its immorality.
- I did not move a muscle when I first heard that the atom bomb had wiped out Hiroshima. On the contrary, I said to me, “unless now the world adopts non-violence, it will spell certain suicide for mankind.” If a father does an injustice, it is the duty of his children to leave the parental roof. If the headmaster of a school conducts his institution on an immoral basis, the pupils must leave the school. If the chairman of a corporation is corrupt, the members thereof must wash their hands clean of his corruption by withdrawing from it; even so, if a Government does a grave injustice, the subjects must withdraw cooperation wholly or partially, sufficiently to wean the ruler from his wickedness.
- If one takes care of the means, the end will take care of itself.
- I hate privilege and monopoly. Whatever cannot be shared with the masses is taboo to me.

- Individuals or nations, who would practice nonviolence, must be prepared to sacrifice [everything] except honor.
- In matters of conscience, the law of majority has no place.
- In nonviolent resistance, success is possible even if there is only one nonviolent resister of the proper stamp.
- In the secret of my heart I am in perpetual quarrel with God that He should allow such to go on (Written in September 1939 at the start of World War II).
- Intolerance betrays want of faith in one's cause.
- It has always been a mystery to me how men can feel themselves by humiliation of their fellow beings.
- It is a million times better to appear untrue before the world than to be untrue to ourselves.
- It is not nonviolence if we love merely those who love us. It is nonviolence only when we love those who hate us.

It is sinful to buy and use articles made by sweated labor.

- I want freedom for the full expression of my personality.
- A civilization is to be judged by its treatment of minorities.
- Love is the law of life.
- Love never claims it ever gives.
- Nothing enduring can be built on violence.

## CONCLUSION

Mahatma Gandhi is a great ethical values philosopher. Let us sum up this unit with brief essence of ethical teachings of Mahatma Gandhi. Mahatma Gandhi expresses that non-violence is free from physical and psychological violence in living. Violence is hurting killing damaging physical and psychological sense. Non-violence develops vegetarianism and respect for all life. Non-violence prevents wars murders, exploitations, inequalities and injustices in the world. Non-violence is a discovery of truth. Non-violence is the means to truth. Truth is the law of our being. Truth is God. Truth is which is. Truth and non-violence are as old as the hills. Truth is a virtue.

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