

Gandhian Philosophy In a Turbulent World

Maj Gen BK Sharma, AVSM, SM**

Introduction

India's journey towards freedom and nation-building is marked by countless sacrifices and unwavering determination. Order of Government of India on 18 Jan 2021 stated that, occasion of Mahatma Gandhi's Martyrdom Day, 30 Jan shall be observed as Marty's day. This is a day to remember not only Gandhi's contributions but also the sacrifices of countless freedom fighters who laid down their lives for India's independence. This day serves as a solemn reminder of the values of peace, unity, and non-violence that Gandhi and others advocated for throughout their lives. The occasion is not merely about remembrance but also a solemn moment for reflection, gratitude, and a renewed commitment to the ideals for which the sung and unsung heroes of India, who made the ultimate sacrifice.

India's freedom and nation-building journey is deeply etched with stories of valour and sacrifice. From the indomitable spirit of Bhagat Singh, Rajguru, and Sukhdev to the unwavering resolve of Mahatma Gandhi—whose assassination in 1948 marked a profound moment in India's history. Each of these individuals envisioned an India where justice, equality, and freedom were not mere aspirations but the foundation of our national identity. No wonder then India has emerged as a voice of reason and hope in these turbulent times.

Viksit Bharat 2047: A Vision for the Future

As India moves toward its centenary of independence in 2047, the vision of *Viksit Bharat* (Developed India) shines brightly. This vision extends beyond economic growth; it encompasses holistic development, sustainability, and equity for all citizens. The citizens envision a future where poverty, illiteracy, and inequality are relics of the past, replaced by sustainable development, robust infrastructure, and an economy that ensures prosperity for every Indian. In a vibrant India industries will thrive alongside innovations in renewable energy, space exploration, artificial intelligence, and healthcare, positioning India as a global leader. However, this journey will require enduring peace and harmony.

Universality of Gandhian Philosophy

The global citizens live in perilous times—an era marked by contested multipolarity, multiple conflicts, and dysfunctional multilateralism. Growing trends of historical animosities, hyper-nationalism, ethno-religious strife, environmental degradation, disruptive technologies, nuclear sabre rattling, and militarisation of cyber, outer and information spaces threaten global stability. Amidst this evolving scenario of gloom and doom, India, as a *Vishwamitr* (Friend of the World), must embody the ideals of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* (the world is one family), leading with compassion and collaboration.

The Power of Non-Violence (Ahimsa)

Gandhi's philosophy of *Ahimsa* proved that true strength lies not in physical force but in moral courage. His non-violent resistance led to India's independence and remains a guiding principle for peaceful movements worldwide. Gandhi's unwavering commitment to *Satya* (truth) underscores the need for honesty and integrity in all aspects of life. In a world dominated by misinformation and fake news, his principle of *Satyagraha* (Insistence on truth) is more relevant than ever. Political and constitutional morality need to be upheld, or else India would be consumed by Zero sum vote bank politics.

Simplicity and Self-Discipline

Gandhi's minimalist lifestyle reminds everyone that material wealth does not define happiness or success. Self-discipline and inner strength are more important than external comforts, a lesson especially relevant in today's age of consumerism. Gandhiji advocated a spartan lifestyle that is hygienic and environmentally friendly has profound relevance as humankind is facing challenges of climate change, pollution and water stress.

Perseverance in the Face of Adversity

Gandhiji faced imprisonment, opposition, and immense personal sacrifice. His life teaches all that unwavering belief in one's values can overcome even the greatest obstacles. This lesson holds good for millions of Indian youths who aspire to break the shackles of relative deprivation to build their careers and contribute towards nation-building.

Unity in Diversity

Gandhi practised *Sarva Dharma Sambhava* (equal respect for all religions). His belief that 'God is Truth' transcended religious barriers and emphasised universal spirituality. His concepts of *Sarvodaya* (welfare of all) and *Ram Rajya* (ideal society) envisioned a just, equal, and dignified world for all. A nation built on these precepts can become a role model in today's world polarised on civilisational and ethno-religious fault lines.

Principle of Swadeshi

In a global economy marred by inequality and overdependence on monopolistic systems, Gandhi Ji's principle of *Swadeshi* (promoting local production and self-reliance) serves as a guide for fostering *Atmannirbhar Bharat* (Self-reliant India).

Gandhi's Influence on Global Leaders

Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence, truth, and peaceful resistance has profoundly shaped the leadership and activism of influential figures across the world. Martin Luther King Jr in the United States (US) drew inspiration from Gandhi's principles to lead the Civil Rights Movement through non-violent resistance, while Nelson Mandela applied similar strategies to dismantle apartheid in South Africa.

Cesar Chavez in the US championed farm workers' rights using peaceful protests, and the Dalai Lama adopted non-violence in advocating for Tibetan autonomy. Former US President Barack Obama frequently acknowledged Gandhi's impact on his leadership approach, emphasising ethical governance and peacebuilding. Similarly, Aung San Suu Kyi led a peaceful democratic movement in Myanmar, while Lech Walesa in Poland spearheaded the Solidarity Movement to challenge communism. Desmond Tutu in South Africa promoted non-violent resistance against apartheid, and in the Indian subcontinent, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, known as the 'Frontier Gandh', led a non-violent independence movement in present-day Pakistan. Beyond politics, Gandhi's ideals resonated with cultural figures like John Lennon, who used music as a tool for promoting peace and non-violence. His legacy continues to inspire leaders, activists, and changemakers across the globe, proving that the power of non-violence and truth transcends generations and geographical boundaries.

Relevance of Gandhian Philosophy Today

The ideals of Gandhi are relevant even today in a Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, Ambiguous and Hyper-connected (VUCAH) world.

Mahatma Gandhi's principles remain timeless and universally relevant, offering solutions to some of the most pressing challenges of the modern world. His advocacy for human rights protection continues to inspire movements for justice and equality, while his emphasis on peacebuilding and conflict resolution serves as a guiding light in resolving global disputes through dialogue and non-violence. Gandhi's fight against racial and social discrimination laid the foundation for civil rights movements worldwide, reinforcing the need for inclusivity and justice. In an era dominated by misinformation and divisive narratives, his commitment to truth and ethical leadership is more crucial than ever. His philosophy also extends to environmental protection and sustainable development, advocating for a harmonious coexistence with nature through simplicity and self-sufficiency. The principles of grassroots democracy and inclusive governance emphasise the importance of decentralisation and people-centric policies, fostering true participatory democracy. Moreover, in a world increasingly divided along religious lines, Gandhi's vision of interfaith harmony remains a powerful message, urging societies to embrace unity in diversity. His ideology continues to shape ethical leadership, inspire activism, and provide a moral compass for individuals and nations striving for a just, peaceful, and sustainable world.

Conclusion

The relevance of Gandhi's philosophy transcends time, geography, and political ideologies. His unwavering commitment to truth, non-violence, and self-discipline has not only influenced world leaders but also provided solutions to contemporary global challenges. Whether in the fight for human rights, environmental sustainability, or conflict resolution, his principles remain indispensable. As India strives towards Viksit Bharat 2047, embracing Gandhi's values will be instrumental in ensuring

holistic development, ethical governance, and social harmony. His teachings remind all that the pursuit of justice and peace are not passive ideals but an active responsibility—one that requires continuous commitment at every level of society.

In Gandhi's own words, "Be the change you wish to see in the world". If peace is desired, it must begin at home, in the communities, and in the schools. Let Gandhi's legacy be honoured by embracing his principles in the daily lives and working collectively towards a peaceful, just, and prosperous India and the world.