



HAS GANDHIJI AHIMSA PHILOSOPHY STOOD THE TEST OF TIME

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Mohandas Karam Chand Gandhi reverentially known as Mahatma Gandhi or simply Gandhiji is truly the father of the nation for it was his charisma that united the nation against the British. Gandhiji studied Law in London and was working in South Africa when he was pained by the racial discrimination that was shown there against all non-whites. He fought for the rights of Indians in South Africa, using not arms and ammunition, but truth and non violence as his weapons. He used satyagraha as a tool to get many of his demands accepted by the government of South Africa. He taught the world the importance and effectiveness of Ahimsa or non violence and that everyman, woman and child had a right to freedom equality and justice. By doing to Gandhiji inspired other great leaders like Martin Luther King and other countries to fight for these noble causes.

In the evolution of his thoughts Gandhiji was primarily influenced by the great religions of the world particularly the classics of Hinduism. Hindu ethics ever since the time of the Upanishads had always laid stress on the value of Ahimsa or non-injury to all living beings human or otherwise. This tradition was further developed in the epics of India which also wielded great influence on Gandhi. Non violence had also been the leading tenet of the jain philosophy like wise, Buddhism laid great emphasis on Ahimsa. In a broadly defined sense, it is not merely avoidance of injury but expression of love. To Gandhiji all other religions also essentially preached love and peace. Islam which is usually associated in the mind of the common man with violence was regarded by Gandhiji as a religion of peace. It is

the concept of the brotherhood of man in Islam which appealed to Gandhiji the most Christianity has of course, had these ideals as integral parts of the conception of a ;virtuous life according to Gandhiji, it was the new testament of the Bible which awakened him to the rightness and value of satyagraha.

In a short Islam and Christianity along the with Hinduism, moulded the evolution of Gandhiji's thought. There was also the impact of the great philosopher of the west. Tolstoy for example had a great influence on Gandhiji and it is his work. The kingdom of god is within you which gave a permanent firm to Gandhiji's ideas. He was also influenced by Ruskin, Thoreau and the passive resistance movement in England. Out of his emphasis on ends and means came Gandhiji's philosophical devotion to non-violence. Non violence means non killing but for Gandhiji's. It had a higher meaning it signifies avoiding injury to anything on earth. In thought, word and deed. A votary of non violence should abstain not only from causing hurt to the body of an individual but also offending him by harsh speech and from even thinking ill of him. He should not harbour no ill will against him. One of the cardinal principles of gandhian thought is that right means should be employed for realizing right ends.

He repudiated the doctrine that the ends justify means because of involves the artificial divisions of an act into ends and means and there by destroys its organic unity. He held that ends and means are in separable, the ends grow out of means the compared the means to a seed and the ends to a tree, which grows out of it.

As Ahimsa and truth are so intertwined as to be impossible to be disentangled, so are the ends and means for Ahimsa is the means truth the end. They are like two sides of an unstamped metallic disc so that no one can say which is observe and which the reverse, if we take care of good means, we are bound to reach good ends sooner or later.

Mahatma Gandhi adhered to these principles throughout his life. At times he was left alone but that did not deter him. He rejected the use of force even to win independence for India. That is why he unconditionally with drew the civil disobedience movement in 1922 at a tune when the citadel of British authority had been badly shaken and the success was within sight. He knew that if means were not in consistence with truth and non violence, the success achieved would be transient even in the sphere of social reconstruction, Gandhiji firmly believed that socialism cannot be established by restoring to impure means , the prince and peasant would not be equalled by cutting off the prince head, if socialism was achieved through immoral means it would loose its significance for him, Gandhiji to indicate the nature of non violent struggle conducted by him against the government of south Africa in defence of the rights of his country men settled there. Its root meaning is holding on to truth hence truthfulness non violent resistance to political authority, non cooperation with evil and fasting constitute essential parts of satyagraha. The satyagraha uses the moral weapon of love and truth. By undergoing, suffering for a right cause, he melts the heart of his energy. In this way he conquers hatred by love, untruth by truth and violence by suffering.

While satyagraha is a moral weapon based on superiority of soul force over physical force satyagraha is to win the enemy from error by love and patient suffering. Mahatma Gandhi was a strict pacifist, hew abhorred all wars. He was not in a favour of resorting to violence even for achieving independence. When in 1921 there was chauri chaura outrage in U.P. where the villagers set fire to a police station, burning some policemen alive, he at once with drew the movement much against the wishes of other

members of the congress working Committee. In 1942 when the Quit India Movement was launched he would not leave his non violent method. He said freedom won by violent methods was if no use. By the strength of his character, he was able to win I; independence from the British imperialists by non violent means. Gandhi wanted the application of the principles of non violence to the sphere of international relations. He also conceded that voluntary associations would take up the great cause of the peace of the world.

A non violent world organization would give up armament and the use of force to defend even proved rights. He welcomed international peace brigades. According to Gandhiji non violence if the quality of the brave so non violence has no room for cowardice or even weakness. A violent man can become non violence some day but a coward can never become non violent. According to Gandhiji if a man does not seen reason or truth as we know it, it does not mean that we should use force against him. On the other hand, an attempt should be made to appeal to his heart by undergoing suffering and hardship. The only thing that is required is patience. He said it is the acid test of non violence that in a non violent conflict there is no rancour left believed and in the end the enemies are converted into friends. He had firm faith that we could build a world without war and blood shed, if only we could get anchored into the world of spirit.

Swaraj won by violence in his opinion, would not be worth anything. True democracy could not be worked by twenty men sitting at the centre. If had to be worked from below by the people of every village. He realized that absolute continence or brahma charya was indispensable for the purpose for one could not live after both the fresh and the spirit. This step was taken under the influence of the Bhagwadgita which he had been reading regularly every morning for some time and committing to memory another doctrine of the Gita which influenced him profoundly was not possession. Hence forth he would put his faith in god alone. He had read Tolstoy and Thoreau and was happy to find partial confirmation of his idea in their writings.

Thoreau is use of the term civil disobedience did not seem to express Gandhi is own concept of ahimsa as a position force of love, nor did he like the use of the phrases like passive resistance general smut wrote I have worn these sandals for many a summer since then even though I may feel that I am not worthy to stand in the shoes of so great a man in January 1915 Gandhiji finally returned to India. Though the intelligent had heard of his exploits in South Africa. He was not much known in India and Indians in general did not realize that the great soul in the beggars garb as Tagore called him later had reached her shores nor did he know his India well. He therefore readily promised his political guru Gokhale that he would spend the first year in India and study the country with his ears open but his mouth shut Gandhiji settled down on the banks of the river Sabarmati on the out skirts of Ahmedabad.

The inmates about twenty five men and women took the vows of truth, ahimsa, celibacy, non-stealing, non possession and control of the palate. They dedicated themselves to the service of the people. Gandhiji sympathies grew wider with age and his understanding calmer and deeper. These words seemed to be prophetic on January, 30, 1948 Gandhi hurriedly went up the few steps of the prayer ground in the large park of Birla house. Before medical aid could arrive the heart had ceased to beat the heart that had beaten only with love of man. Thus died the Mahatma at the hands of one of his own people.

The nations feeling was best expressed by Jawaharlal Nehru, when with a trembling voice and a heartful of grief he gave the news on the radio. The light has gone out of our lives and there is darkness every where and I do not quite know what to tell you and to say it. The light that has illumined this country for these many years represented the living truth and the eternal truth reminding us of the right path, drawing us from error, taking this ancient country to freedom. He freed millions of human beings from the shackles of caste, tyranny and social indignity. The moral influence of Gandhi is personality and his gospel and technique of non-

violence cannot be weighed in any material scale nor is its value limited to any particular country or generation.