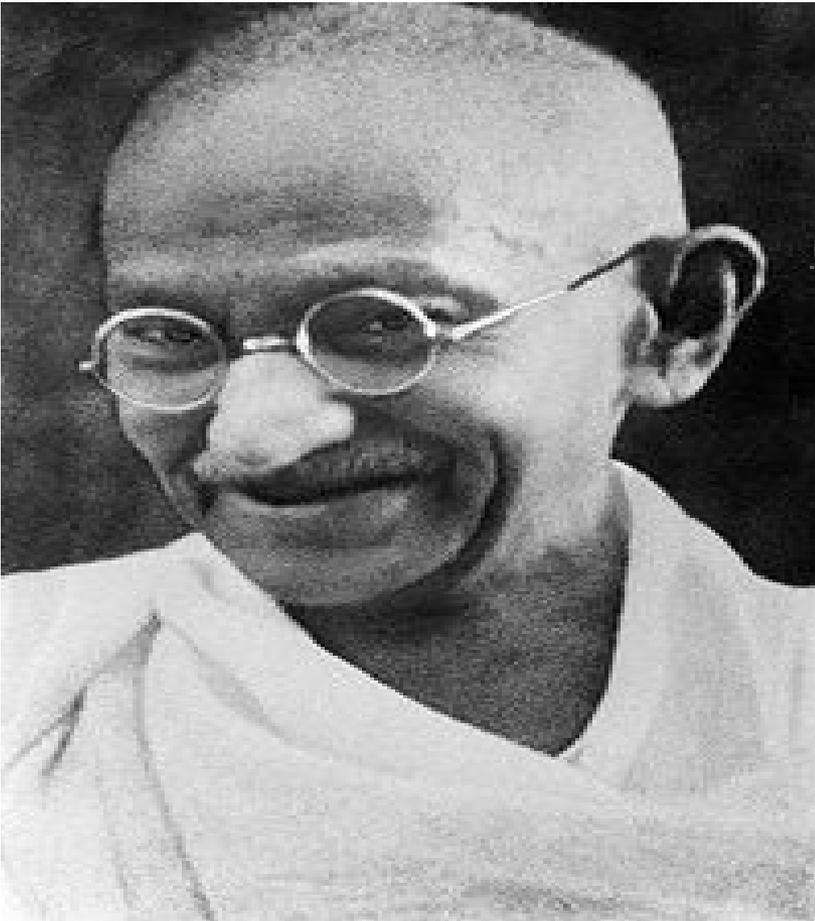


Mahatma Gandhi(1869-1948)



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Introduction:

- 1920-48 is known as Gandhian era in Indian history.
- His contribution to modern Indian political thought is immense.
- He was known to the entire world as the great messenger of peace, a great living force, a silent revolutionary and a man of courage.
- Gandhian message is not just for the present generation but for all generations to come – Dr. Radhakrishnan.
- His political philosophy was a fusion of individualism, idealism and socialism.
- His mission was to purify politics, rekindle love in human mind, to rehabilitate the freedom of man & to restore and teach the dignity of human labour.

Introduction....

- He was popularly called as “Bapu”- the father of our nation, and “Mahatma”- the great soul.
- No other leader has commanded such love, reverence and loyalty of the people in India like Gandhi did.

Political Philosophy of Gandhi:

- His political philosophy was not based on any particular doctrine.
- He has not left behind him any ideology of his own.
- But the rules and regulations followed in his life were combined in his philosophy.

1. His Ideas on State:

- He had a definite views on the concept of state.
- In fact he had conceptualized an ideal state which is free of violence , regulating the social life.
- His ideas on state may be envisaged in the following slides-

a. State is a soulless machine:

- He repudiated the state on ethical, historical and economic grounds.
- He says man is moral when he acts freely and voluntarily.
- In the words of Gandhi, state represents violence in a concentrated and organized form.
- The individual has a soul but the state is soulless machine it can never be weaned from violence to which it owes its very existence.
- Like the anarchists he regarded the state as rooted in violence, but he also differed from them.
- According to him, only a society based on non-violence could be stateless.
- Hence, there is no place for violence in Gandhi's Ideal society.

b. Self governing Village Community:

- His ideal society would be a stateless society consisting of self sufficing, self-regulating and self –governing village communities joined together in a voluntary federation.
- The maintenance of the federation involved the necessity of a government.
- Thus his ideal society was predominantly a non-violent society (State).
- He was only opposed to the oppressive authority of the state.

c. Sovereignty of the people:

- He believed in the sovereignty of the people based on pure moral authority.
- According to him, man being the member of a large number of associations owed only limited and relative loyalty to the state.
- More over this loyalty to the state was conditional.
- So Gandhi's ideas are similar to the pluralist conception of sovereignty.
- But Gandhi provided safeguard against anarchy as he made disobedience non-violent.

d. Limited State Action:

- He was very much influenced by Thoreau's "Essay's on Civil Disobedience".
- To him, that government is the best which governed the least.
- He knew that undue state action kills individual's initiative.
- He wanted the state to exercise minimum functions transferring more and more authority to the voluntary associations.
- Every case of state action was to be judged on its own merit – whether it promotes human welfare.
- His maxim was "the less the authority of the state the greater the moral freedom of the individual and that is the real swaraj for him."

e. Stateless Democracy:

- His ideal is a stateless democracy.
- He says in such a state (enlightened anarchy) every one was his own ruler.
- He rules himself in such a manner that he is never a hindrance to his neighbor.
- In the ideal state, therefore there is no political power because there is no state.
- He considered a democratic government as the one where there is non-interference in the freedom of the individual.
- His ideal democracy would be a stateless and casteless society.

f. Predominantly non-violent State:

- Gandhi knew that the conception of a stateless & classless non-violent society was unreliable.
- So he believed in the predominantly non-violent society.

g. Right to Resist state authority:

- To Gandhi, state is not an end in itself, but a means to an end i.e. bettering the life of the people.
- So he gave to the individual the right to resist the authority of the state through non-violent means, if its policies are not appeal to his moral conscience.
- To him, Swarajya means the freedom for the meanest of our countrymen.
- The real Swarajya will not come by the acquisition of capacity by all to resist authority when abused.
- Gandhi wanted to develop in the people the capacity to resist the laws of the state. But this resistance must be strictly non-violent.

h. System of Government:

- He advocated a system of rural communities more or less self sufficient in their basic needs and composed of simple meaningful units, cooperatively nit together.
- Thus, communities will be autonomous for all purposes, including the administration of justice and keeping peace in the locality.
- This was regarded as the real Swarajya in order to get their moral freedom.
- Gandhi was against direct elections as it led to evils like corruption, bribery, impersonation etc.

i. Qualifications for Electors & Elected:

- He said that a candidate must be selfless, able and incorruptible.
- He should not hanker after office, must avoid self advertisements and must not exploit the voters.
- The qualification prescribed for voter is manual work.

j. State is Internally free & Externally Equal to other States:

- In a state everyone will participate in its governance.
- In such a state there will be interdependence and harmony.
- Gandhi said that even in a non-violent state there is the need for the police as some anti-social elements may resort to violence and break laws – such people need to be reformed.

k. Gandhian Socialism:

- The ideology of Gandhian state is “Sarvodaya”(Socialism).
- That is the upliftment and growth of everyone.
- Gandhi’s ideal state is based on perfect justice and called as Ramarajya (Kingdom of God).
- Thus, Gandhi’s ideas on state indicate originality of thought, desire for individual freedom and social welfare.

2. His Conception of Non-Violence:

- His greatest contribution to mankind are his teachings and practice of non-violence.
- To him, non-violence is the law of our species as the violence is the law of the brute.
- Non-violence is a perfect state. It is the goal towards which all mankind moves naturally though unconsciously.
- Non-violence is not just a philosophical principle but the matter of the heart.
- He was not the originator of the principle but he was the first to apply them in the political field.
- He had a staunch belief in non-violence which would bring about real freedom.

a. Non-violence is the struggle for the truth:

- Truth is the basic factor of non-violence.
- He equated the truth with God.
- It is the struggle for truth and which if conducted along right lines would achieve victory for its seekers.

b. Non- violence does not mean Pacifism:

- Non-violence is positive and dynamic & not negative.
- It does not mean pacifism or weak submission to the will of the evil-doer.
- It is the soul force or truth force.
- The highest violence can be met by the highest non-violence.
- His non-violence is therefore called as the bravery of the soul, a warfare of ascetic and an adventure in love.

c. Non-violence is “Ahimsa”:

- His idea of non-violence has its origin in the Indian doctrine of Ahimsa or non-injury.
- Ahimsa means avoiding injury to anything on earth in thought, word and deed.
- Ahimsa in the positive form means goodwill towards others and doing good to others.
- Ahimsa thus, stands for the highest kind of love, kindness and self sacrifice.
- Gandhi became a champion of Ahimsa after reading Tolstoy’s book “The Kingdom of God is Within you”.

d. Non-violence is the weapon of the Strong:

- Non-violence is not the weapon of the weak and cowardly but it is the weapon of the strong.
- One who uses non-violence has also the ability to be violent.
- Hence the principle of non-violence is superior to violence.
- To him, non-violence can never be the weapon of those who are morally weak.
- Ahimsa in its form, means the largest love and the greatest charity.
- Non-violence is the strongest force known, which may be used even against the most powerful government.

e. Non-violence a total philosophy of life:

- To Gandhi , non- violence embraces every aspect of the life of man on this earth.
- In the economic field , it implies a decentralized village economy opposed to both capitalism & communism which are forms of exploitation.
- In the political field, it implies the federation of autonomous village republics.
- In international relations, it implies negotiation, arbitration and adjudication.
- It is tolerance when applied to man's relationship with culture, religion and ideologies.

f. Practice of non-violence not dependent on Mass support:

- According to him, non-violence may be practiced even by a single individual who has the soul force or moral courage.
- The effectiveness non-violence is not dependent on mass support.
- Due to this conviction, Gandhi was never afraid to stand alone to practice non-violence.

g. Non-violence is persuasion:

- Gandhi held the view that non-violence is not moral coercion but moral persuasion. It appeals to the sense of reason and decency of mankind.

h. Requisites of Non- violence:

- To him, certain requisites are necessary to practice non-violence. They are-
 1. Inner Purity included self discipline, civility & fearlessness.
 2. Fasting was also regarded as an important element in the practice of non- violence.
 3. If non-violence has to become effective, fearlessness should be practiced.
 4. Non- possession is non attachment to material things of life.
 5. Since non-violence takes a longer time to attain its results than violent methods perseverance is required.

Thus, ahimsa wants to replace ferocious character of the politics of power by the righteousness of the universal moral will.

Gandhi's Ideas on Sathyagraha:

- Gandhi believe in good means to attain good ends.
- Non-violence and sathyagraha forms the major means adopted to attain the ends.
- The idea of sathyagraha is the very important Gandhian technique.
- It is a very unique contribution of Gandhi to Indian political thought & politics.
- To him, sathyagraha means assertion of truth or holding on truth.
- Sathyagraha is a dynamic force as it contemplates resistance to injustice.

1. Meaning of Sathyagraha:

- In the words of Brown, Sathyagraha is a simple technique of direct action open to literate and illiterate, a means of demanding redress for almost every grievance.
- Sathyagraha Means –
 1. It is a technique of resisting all that is evil, unjust, impure and untrue by love, suffering and by appealing to the divine spark of the soul of the opponent.
 2. It is the weapon of the strongest and the bravest. So it does not originate with fear.
 3. It is based on the concept of sufferings. The sufferings purify the sufferer, create favourable public opinion and make direct appeal to the soul of the oppressor .
 4. It is the vindication of truth through love or self sufferings which can win the hearts of all.

Meaning

5. Sathyagraha ennobles the one who practices it and the one against whom it is practiced.
6. Sathyagraha is truth- force, love- force or sol- force.
7. Sathyagraha is a inherent birth right of a person. It is not only a sacred right but it can also be a sacred duty.
8. Ahimsa is also a method of asserting truth which implies that ahimsa and sathyagraha always go together.
9. Sathyagraha is voluntary.
10. It can be used by those who have unquestionable faith in God and with spiritual maturity.

Who is a Sathyagrahi?

- Gandhi laid down strict discipline for sathyagrahi. They are as follows-
 1. He must have an unmistakable faith in God.
 2. He must not hanker after wealth and fame.
 3. He must obey the leader of the sathyagraha unit.
 4. He should strengthen his body by physical exercises like Hathayoga.
 5. He should practice Brahmacharya(celibacy) and should be absolutely fearless and firm in his resolve.
 6. He must have patience and purposefulness.
 7. Sathyagraha cannot be resorted for personal gains by the sathyagrahi.
 8. The sathyagrahi should purify himself and employ pure means for serving a righteous cause.

Techniques of Sathyagraha:

- There are different techniques of sathyagraha. They are as follows –
 1. Non- cooperation
 2. Civil Disobedience
 3. Hijrath or Voluntary Exile
 4. Fasting
 5. Strike.

1. Non-cooperation:

- This is an effective technique which could be used by the helpless people against the government.
- It is a technique directed against the government or authority.
- Gandhi felt that the people are oppressed and exploited as they cooperate willingly with the government.
- Even the most despotic government cannot stand except for the consent of the governed and that consent is forcibly procured by the despot.
- Non-cooperation indicates the purity of means and the purity of ends as well. It is directed against the evil which leads to self-purification.

Forms of Non-cooperation:

- Non-cooperation may assume the following forms-
 - a. **Hartal:** It stands for stopping of business for registering protest.
 - It is a kind of peaceful protest, the main object being to draw the attention of the people and also of the government to the problem involved.
 - If the Hartals are to be effective they should be strictly voluntary and the result of persuasion.
 - b. **Social Ostracism or Boycott:** This is a technique that is adopted to boycott socially those who defy public opinion and fail to take part in non-cooperation.

This could be used in a very limited sense so that no physical harm, insult or abuse is caused to the person non-cooperating.

Forms.....

- c. **Picketing:** The literal meaning of picketing is forming a living wall against some individuals or articles.
- Here the main intention is not to create difficulties but to establish the truth.
 - Picketing does not mean sitting in dharna.
 - Picketing should not involve violence, coercion, intimidation, discourtesy, burning of effigies and hunger strikes.

2. Civil Disobedience:

- Gandhi preferred any disobedience to be always civil and never criminal. Any revolt must be non-violent revolt.
- Civil disobedience is also a form of non-cooperation.
- It is a protest against unjust law and the last stage of non-cooperation.
- He described it as complete, effective and bloodless substitute of armed revolt.
- Those who participate in this protest must be mentally strong to accept any punishment for going against the law.
- **Non-payment of tax** is a technique adopted by a sathyagrahi who believes that a particular tax is collected illegally or unjustly. Here there is a fusion of non-cooperation & civil disobedience.

3. Hijrat or voluntary exile:

- This is a technique proposed by Gandhi to escape from oppression and injustice.
- Hijrat literally means voluntary exile from the permanent place of residence to escape from oppression and injustice.
- For example if a particular group is subject to oppression, the best course open to them, is to leave the village of their permanent residence.
- This is an attempt to live with self- respect.
- Gandhi asked the Harijans of Kaitha to emigrate as the caste Hindus were oppressing them.

4. Fasting:

- It is the most powerful form of sathyagraha which Gandhi called as a “fiery weapon”.
- It is to be used against injustice and evil and used on rare occasions by one who possesses spiritual fitness and a clear vision.
- It is not the physical act of fasting, but the spiritual content of fast that gives it potency.
- It requires a high degree of purity, self-discipline, humility and faith on the part of the faster.

5. Strike:

- According to Gandhi ,this weapon is to be utilized, to convert the heart of the wrong doing opponent.
- Strike is a kind of protest involving the stoppage of work to draw the attention of the public on a certain issue.
- It is undertaken by the workers for the redressal of their grievances.
- Gandhi wanted it to be voluntary and non-violent. Therefore it was not similar to the Marxist conception strikes.
- Gandhi wanted strikes to be directed against corruption, injustice, inefficiency and the greed of the owners.

Utility of Sathyagraha as a weapon:

- Gandhi considered sathyagraha as a weapon to be utilized on various occasions to get justice.
 1. Sathyagraha as a technique to meet foreign aggression.
 2. Sathyagraha for ending racism.
 3. Sathyagraha to remove tyranny and gain independence.
- The sathyagraha as a weapon has a philosophical and moral dimension.
- The preaching of Jesus Christ, Buddha, Mahaveera, Lao Tse are fused within this great technique of Gandhi.
- However make it successful, a strong moral strength and firm conviction in non-violence and truth are required.
- Martin Luther King of America, Nelson Mandela of South Africa were impressed by this political weapon.

