

Gandhism – college essay



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Gandhism is a body of ideas and principles that describes the inspiration, vision and the life work of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. It is particularly associated with his contributions to the idea and practice of nonviolent resistance, sometimes also called civil resistance. The term “ Gandhism” also encompasses what Gandhi’s ideas, words and actions mean to people around the world, and how they used them for guidance in building their own future. Gandhism also permeates into the realm of the individual human being, non-political and non-social.

A Gandhian can mean either an individual who follows, or a specific philosophy which is attributed to, Gandhism. Eminent scholar, Professor Ramjee Singh has called Mahatma Gandhi the Bodhisattva of the twentieth century. [1] However Gandhi did not approve of ‘ Gandhism’, as Gandhi explained: There is no such thing as “ Gandhism,” and I do not want to leave any sect after me. I do not claim to have originated any new principle or doctrine. I have simply tried in my own way to apply the eternal truths to our daily life and problems...

The opinions I have formed and the conclusions I have arrived at are not final. I may change them tomorrow. I have nothing new to teach the world. Truth and non-violence are as old as the hills. The pivotal and defining element of Gandhism is satya, a Sanskrit word usually translated into English as truth, whose literal meaning is ‘ what actually is’ (deriving from the root verb as meaning ‘ to be’). The principle of Satya as espoused by Gandhi needed that Truth must pervade all considerations of politics, e the pure, existing facts of life to make his decisions.

Gandhi's commitments to non-violence, human freedom, equality and justice arose from his personal examination. Truth is interpreted subjectively.

Gandhism does not demand that its adherents agree to Gandhi's own principles to the letter, but in spirit. If one honestly believes that violence is sometimes necessary, it is truthful to believe in it. When Gandhi returned to India in the middle of World War I, he said he would have supported the British in the war.

It would have been wrong, according to Gandhi, to demand equal rights for Indians in the Empire, and not contribute to its defence. On the other hand, by the time of the advance of the Japanese in World War II, Gandhi had given up notions of fighting alongside the British and argued for nonviolence instead. Gandhi was a proponent of Ahimsa. Gandhi developed a way of life by his constant "experimenting with truth" — a phrase that formed the subtitle to his autobiography.

He was prepared to learn through trial and error, often admitting to mistakes and changing his behaviour accordingly. This was particularly notable when Gandhi stopped all nationwide civil resistance in 1922 after the Chauri Chaura incident. He would forsake political independence for truth — believing that Indians should not become murderers and commit the very evils they were accusing the British of perpetrating in India. Gandhism is more about the spirit of Gandhi's journey to discover the truth, than what he finally considered to be the truth.

It is the foundation of Gandhi's teachings, and the spirit of his whole life to examine and understand for oneself, and not take anybody or any ideology

for granted. Gandhi said: "The Truth is far more powerful than any weapon of mass destruction." [3] Gandhi's philosophy encompassed ontology and its association with truth. For Gandhi, "to be" did not mean to exist within the realm of time, as it has in the past with the Greek philosophers. But rather, "to exist" meant to exist within the realm of truth, or to use the term Gandhi did, satya.

Gandhi summarized his beliefs first when he said "God is Truth", which his experimenting later prompted him to change to "Truth is God". The first statement seemed insufficient to Gandhi, as the mistake could be made that Gandhi was using truth as a description of God, as opposed to God as an aspect of satya. Satya (truth) in Gandhi's philosophy is God. It shares all the characteristics of the Hindu concept of God, or Brahman, and is believed by Gandhians to live within each person as their conscience while at the same time guiding the universe.