

# Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence



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First there was hostility, blood, vandalism, looting, pillaging, and then there was Gandhi. Mahatma Gandhi was one of the most influential people in history and fittingly has a place in the pantheon of the visionaries who changed the world. His philosophies of ahimsa and satyagraha, meaning non violence and non violent resistance respectively as a form of civil resistance and disobedience is one of the most prominent and most renowned for its massive implementations through history. This essay's aim is to describe the basic principles of ahimsa (non-violence) as it was introduced by Gandhi and bring to light one very important aspect of his teachings, the fact that violence is not only its obvious and apparent physical form, but can also be economic, ethical, political, psychological and educational and the only way for these to be eradicated is through peaceful manifestations.

Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence (ahimsa) and non-violent action (satyagraha) is constituted by a number of fundamental principles.

Thomas Berton, having dedicated his life being drawn into a dialogue between Eastern and Western religions and viewpoints, has made a lot of research on the matter.

In his book entitled " Gandhi on Non Violence: A Selection from the Writings of Mahatma Gandhi" he insightfully states that " Ahimsa (non violence) is for Gandhi the basic law of our being" (23). Based on this notion, Berton argues that non violence is one of the most valuable beliefs when it comes to public action, because it matches up to man's instinctive craving for peace, justice, freedom etc. (23). The main principles of Gandhian non violence are respect for other people, understanding, acceptance of the differences of others, appreciating and celebrating diversity, truth and truthfulness, dealing with

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untruth wherever one finds it, and soaking up pain and agony from any altercation with untruth. According to Berton, “[s]ince himsa (violence) degrades and corrupts man, to meet force with force and hatred with hatred only increases man’s progressive degeneration” (23).

In practicing the relational values of non violence we seek to recuperate and renew ourselves, become the change we want to see in the world and eventually demonstrate that people, organizations and governments can move the world toward love and peace pro-actively. Ahimsa gives man the possibility to reinstate impartiality and social order and by no means usurp authority (Berton 23). One aspect of Gandhi’s philosophy that is universally unfamiliar is that of the multidimensionality of violence. Douglas Allen, in his article “ Mahatma Gandhi on Violence and Peace Education” focuses attention on this feature. “ Gandhi, of course is very concerned with violence in the more usual sense of overt physical violence” (Allen 295). However, as Allen correctly points out, such severe explicit violence only comprises a minute quantity of the violence that ought to be dealt with (295). “ For Gandhi, non violence is more than the absence of overt violence; peace is more than the absence of overt war...” (Allen 294).

According to Douglas Allen, “ interpreters of violence”, center on obvious demonstrations, such as murdering, injuring, rape etc. while Gandhi focuses on the diverse kinds of violence and how status quo, even when liberated from explicit violent disagreements, is undeniably very aggressive (294). “ These many dimensions of violence interact, [and] mutually reinforce each other...” (Allen 295). Gandhi, as Allen rightly illustrates, is very considerate of affairs, in which some who own a lot of money are able to take advantage

of and govern those deficient of such supremacy (295). This is a typical example of economic violence. Furthermore, Gandhi uses the term educational violence. "A professor may use the grade as a weapon to threaten, intimidate, terrorize, and control students, including those who raise legitimate concerns..." (Allen 296).

Similarly, most political discipline would be analysed by Gandhi as being innately violent, as it actually engages us in a world of "antagonistic adversarial relations" (Allen 296). All these different kinds of violence, according to Gandhi, can be done away with only through peaceful manifestations and the employment of non violence.

In conclusion, non violence is essential to people because it matches their innate will for peace, harmony, freedom and order. Any action of violence degenerates their progress. Violence has many faces, including political, economic, educational, ethical and psychological aspects. Gandhi focuses on such features, as he considers them the big piece out of the pie named violence. Non violence is based on tolerance, acceptance, truth and diversity and gives everyone the possibility to re-establish objectivity and justice, but that can only happen if everyone erases violence from his life.

#### Works Cited

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