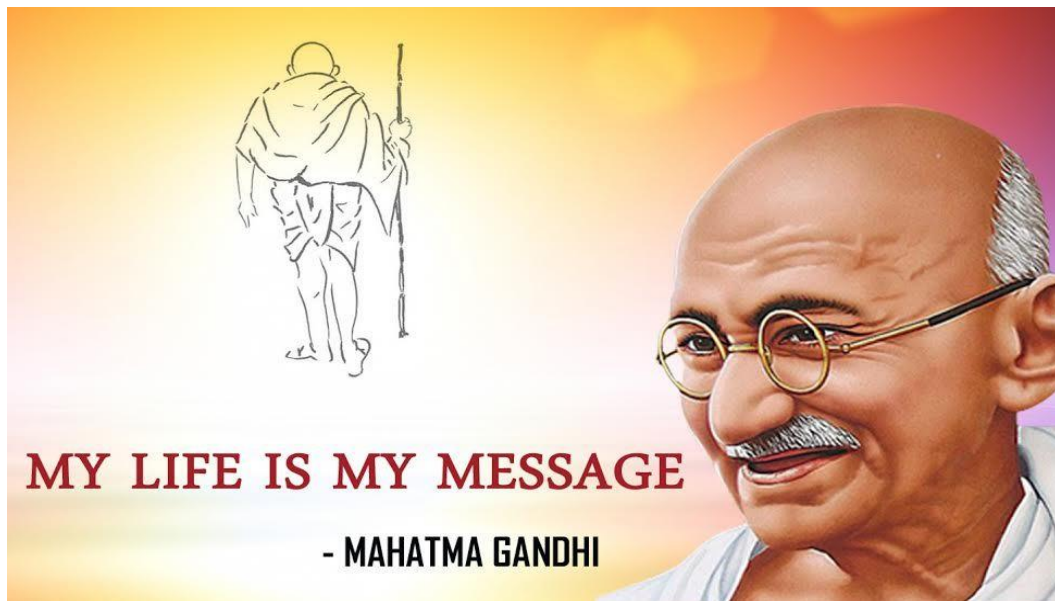


Mahatma Gandhi : My Life is My Message



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Special Feature-2 on Gandhi Jayanti

Mahatma Gandhi summed up his philosophy of life with the words, “My Life is my Message”. His multifarious and dynamic personality was based on truth and nothing but the truth. Non – violence was another intrinsic element of this philosophy.

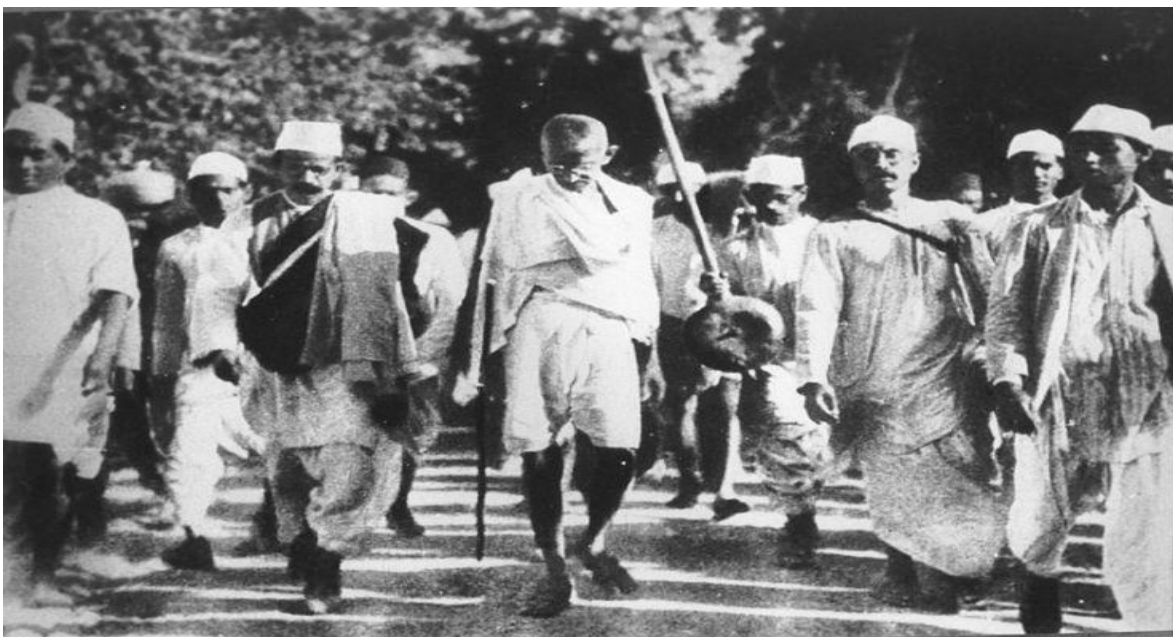
At the All India Congress Committee meeting in Bombay on 8th August, 1942, that is, on the eve of [Quit India Movement](#), Mahatma Gandhi declared, “I want to live full span of my life and according to me, the full span of life is 125 years. By that time, India will not only be free but the whole world will be free.



Mahatma Gandhi giving the Quit India speech on August 8, 1942, on the eve of the Quit India movement.

Today, I do not believe that Englishmen are free, I do not believe that Americans are free. They are free to do what? To hold other part of humanity in bondage? Are they fighting for their liberty? I am not arrogant. I am not a proud man. I know the distinction between pride, arrogance, insolence and so on. But what I am saying is, I believe, in the voice of God. It is the fundamental truth that I am telling you.”

Gandhi was the most normal of men. He was universal, such a man cannot be measured, weighed, or estimated. He is the measure of all things. Gandhi was not a philosopher, nor a politician. He was a humble seeker of truth. Truth unites, because it can be only one. You can cut a man’s head, but not his thoughts. Non – violence is the only other aspect of the sterling coin of truth. Non – violence is love, the very content of life.



Gandhi leading the 1930 [Salt March](#), a notable example of Satyagraha.

In this principle of non-violence, Gandhi introduced technique of resistance to evil and untruth. His Satyagraha is inspired by boundless love and compassion. It is opposed to sin, not sinner, the evil, not evil doer. For him truth was God and in that sense he was man of God. Truth is not yours or mine. It is neither Western nor Eastern.

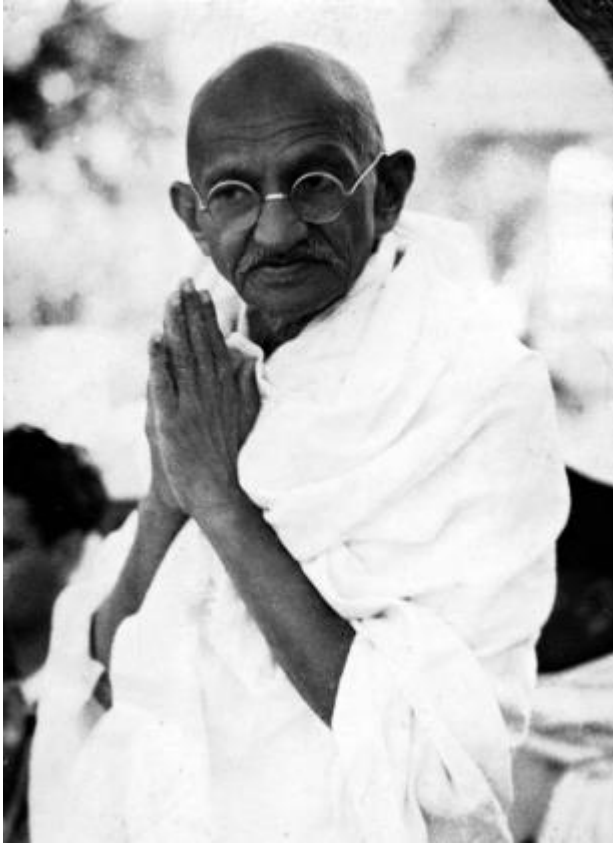
Gandhi's prayer stands for invoking the inner strength of men for the good of one another, his spinning wheel for dignity of productive labour, and broomstick for abolition of social inequalities based on birth. He wanted freedom from rule of merchandise. He wanted rationality in productive system, which should be based on human rationality. He was not an orthodox economist. His plan was peace, security and progress for human race as a whole. He believed that the planning should be based on 'Man Power' rather than horse power. These issues are not restricted to India, but are global in nature. These principles are universal. He insisted on individual code of conduct. He introduced an entirely new dimension in technique of social transformation.



Gandhi picking up grains of salt at the end of his march

One cannot comprehend [Satyagraha](#) without connecting it with Constructive Work or the Ashram observances. Gandhi, the statesman and the fighter for freedom, could not have been like what he was, had he not been Gandhi, the social reformer, and Gandhi, the saint. It is the quest for truth in all its glory that creates Gandhi, the man.

Gandhi never pretended to be consistent with previously held views in his life. He readily abandoned his stands when he felt the need to do so. These "inconsistencies" often infuriated his antagonists, who felt that he was a "slippery" politician. I think his inconsistencies were more a reflection of an ever – growing personality to whom consistency was less important than being true to the inner voice of truth as understood at any given point of time.



Gandhi ji took up the ancient but powerful idea of Ahimsa or non – violence and made it familiar throughout the world, particularly in political and economic field. However, non – violence means more than the mere absence of violence. It is something more positive, more meaningful and dynamic and Gandhiji combined it with a sense of responsibility for the welfare of people. His great achievement was to demonstrate through his own example that non – violence can be implemented effectively not only in the political arena, but also in our day – to – day life. His whole life was his experiment with truth.

He knew that human dignity cannot be preserved on charity. Mutuality and well – being is the essence of life. It is therefore S+G that is “Science plus Gandhi”, which alone can save a planet earth. Gandhi was an apostle of peace and brotherhood. The modern nuclear weapons, not only pose a grave threat to world peace but will destroy mother earth. Apart from the ecological sustainable model of development preached by Gandhi, decentralisation of socio – economic power based on non – violence, and building up of people’s power, communal harmony based on people’s initiative, rather than the state power is the only alternative.

The 20th century was the most violent period in human history. More people have suffered and have been killed by organized violence than any other time before. The wars, the genocides, the weapons of mass destruction have created such an enormous mass misery and agony that it is difficult to find any trace of hope. Therefore, Gandhi’s teachings of non – violence are most relevant today. Now, though late, there is a realization that there is no other alternative. This is the reason why amidst report of increasing teenage violence across the United States, a bill have been introduced in New Jersey Assembly seeking to include Mahatma Gandhi’s teachings of non – violence in the school curriculum. On 12th May 2000, on Mother’s Day in New York, several thousand mothers resolved and demanded a ban on

the manufacture of arms, and its use. Therefore, in my view the teachings of Gandhi are not only relevant but also the only alternative.

Some people seem to think that compassion or non-violence is just a passive emotional response, rather than a rational stimulus to action. They forget that Gandhi combined it with a sense of responsibility. He was not a mere onlooker but was an active participant. He first followed and then preached. He was a leader in real sense of the said term. Whenever there was a risk to life he was at the fore front and never had a desire for power or wealth. Sacrifice was key word of his life. He lived a simple need based life because he knew that needs have an end whereas greed is endless. Gandhiji knew that “In times to come people will not judge us by the creed we profess or label we wear or the slogans we shout, but by our work, industry, sacrifice, honesty and purity of character.” He also knew that man who wants freedom has to take tremendous risk. That was essence of his life, that is why he could say that “My Life is My Message”.

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