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Bapu's views transcend time

Gandhi ji tested his ideas practically on the ground. Today, the world sees the path shown by the Mahatma as the best and most enduring



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The thoughts and messages of Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of the Nation, are timeless and are proving their mettle all over the globe today. The people of the world are opening the books of their problems in the sea of the Mahatma's thoughts. The rest of the world that was getting entangled in an arms race for decades, is now becoming more deep-rooted in Gandhism. People are now forced to understand that wars are not a solution to any problem and violent revolutions around the world have not led anywhere. Time has revealed that "ahimsa" (holding onto the truth) and non-violence are the best paths to take. In 21st century, millions of countries, it is now believed that there is a better, alternative, peaceful and humane way to express dissent and to register protest.

The relevance of Mahatma Gandhi's ideas is increasing with time. The issue of environmental protection is fast becoming a major priority for global society these days. Intellectuals and environmental activists have taken to the streets in many parts of the world due to the worsening environmental situation. Mahatma Gandhi, too, had made several discourses on the environment. Although the term "environment" or "sustainability" was not in vogue during Bapu's lifetime, the visionary that Gandhi ji was, he began to worry and ponder over the future of the planet Earth and consequently all the species that called it home much ahead of his time.

The far-sighted Mahatma that he was, Bapu foresaw the situation that we face today. He knew that in our greed, we were hurtling towards self-destruction. Gandhi ji believed that "there is enough on Earth for everybody's needs but not enough for everybody's greed." In his article *Sanatdharma Ki Rung*, he expressed his views on the importance of clean air. He said that for the survival of mankind and all other species on the planet, three natural resources were needed, namely air, water and food, but clean air was the most important of them all.

Gandhi ji inspired Indians to spin and make yarn with the charkha (wooden spinning wheel) and wear hand-woven clothes. The objective behind this was not only to arouse the *swadeshi* spirit in the country but also to reduce general wastage of resources and also the waste coming out of textile mills.

Bapu was a great champion of rural development. Advocating the uplift of villages, he wrote in *Rajgan Sevai* in 1948, "There should be development of such art and handicrafts in the countryside, not that their products are raised outside of villages too." On one hand, Gandhi ji was fighting a relentless battle for freedom, on the other hand, he was trying to save the fragmented fabric of Indian society through his creative programmes.

The Mahatma considered education to be a major contributor for building a better society. It was due to this belief that he established the first school at Baroda, Lakshmi in 1917. In the context of the importance of education, on May 6, 1937, he wrote in *Rajgan Sevai* that "man is neither entirely intellect, nor a gross body, neither only a heart or a soul. A proper and consistent combination of all these is needed to create a complete human being. This is the true purpose of education."

Bapu knew that only through *swadeshi* could India become a self-sufficient and strong country. Today, there is an increasing move towards *swadeshi* in the nation. This gives an opportunity to small industries to flourish. Rural people from backward areas get a chance to become financially self-reliant through this renewed thrust. Gandhi ji wanted the country to become self-sufficient. We have moved in that direction after a long time and this has started yielding positive results. Today there is an awakening among the people for *swadeshi* and it is a heartening trend.

Gandhi ji always wanted that the villages, where the seed of India lies, should be healthy and clean. The Government has started a mass movement to carry out this task and villages and cities are getting benefitted with programmes that promote cleanliness. He often said that if cleanliness does not figure in village reforms, then our villages will remain like garbage. Cleanliness of villages is an inseparable part of the lives of the people. It may be difficult to achieve but it is necessary. We need hard work and courage to get over our filthy hygienic habits.

Gandhi ji was equally concerned about the dirt in the cities. In this context he said that "one thing we can learn from the filth and we must learn is the sacredness attached to cleanliness in the cities." We are yet to realise this thought of the Mahatma.

His thoughts are eternal. His relevance knows no time. The biggest reason for this is that he tested his ideas practically on the ground. Today, the world sees the path shown by Gandhi ji as the best and most enduring.

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