

Gandhian Ideology

Gandhian ideology (also known as Gandhism) is the set of religious and social ideas adopted and developed by India's Father of Nation, Mahatma Gandhi, first during his period in South Africa from 1893 to 1914, and later in India.

Although incorporating certain Western ideologies that Mahatma Gandhi was exposed to, Gandhian ideologies were primarily rooted in Indian culture.

This article will give details about Gandhian Ideology within the context of the IAS Exam. Aspirants can learn from the philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi and integrate it with ethics preparation of UPSC Mains GS 4.

Major Gandhian Ideologies

The following thoughts are part of Gandhian ideologies

1. Truth and Non-violence: They are the twin pillars of Gandhian thoughts.

For Mahatma Gandhi, truth translated into words and deeds. For him, the ultimate truth was God and morality. Thus moral laws and code became its basis.

As far as Mahatma Gandhi was concerned, non-violence was active love, the direct opposite of violence.

2. Satyagraha: Satyagraha meant the exercise of the purest soul-force against all forms of injustice, oppression and exploitation. The method secures rights by personal suffering and not inflicting injuries

3. Sarvodaya: Sarvodaya is a term meaning 'Universal Uplift' or 'Progress of All'. The term was first coined by Mahatma Gandhi as the title of his translation of John Ruskin's tract on political economy, "Unto This Last".

4. Swaraj: Although the word swaraj means self-rule, Mahatma Gandhi gave it the content of an integral revolution that encompasses all spheres of life.

5. Trusteeship: Trusteeship was a socio-economic philosophy that meant the rich people would be the trustees of trusts and charities set up for the purpose of the common people.

6. Swadeshi: Swadeshi, the adjectival form, means of one's own country, but can be loosely translated in most contexts as self-sufficiency.

Swadeshi is the focus on acting within and from one's own community, both politically and economically.

It is the interdependence of community and self-sufficiency.

Relevance of Gandhism in 21st Century

Although it is widely believed that Gandhism is a challenge to pursue in the 21st century; that is not the case. Gandhi's principles can be applied in the following ways:

1. Concept of Society: The contemporary society is a complex whole which is neither value-oriented nor purely speculative. Tradition and authority which were once revered are now utterly disregarded.

The whole of humanity is steered by jealousy, distrust, suspicion and hatred. Violence, poverty and intolerance are on the rise. The outer homogeneity brought by science and civilization doesn't emanate with the inner unity of our souls.

So, there is a dire need to reform our minds. He says that adherence to truthfulness should be our only purpose of existence. The ultimate end of the individual is the realization of truth and justice through consistent endeavours, not only for ourselves but for the entire humanity.

2. Economy: While it is generally recognized that socialism can't be established without the use of force, Mahatma Gandhi's idea of socialism involves the use of non-violence. He didn't believe in extremes and neither appreciated complete liberty, as in a capitalist democracy, nor regimentation as in communist dictatorships. His idea was that power is to be as decentralized as possible.

Globalization means integration of world economies through cross-country exchange of goods, ideas, information, and many services. Dominant economies with the aid of Multinational Companies and International Organizations are serving their interests to the extent that often the interest of the poor countries is compromised.

3. Education: Mahatma Gandhi thought that humanization of knowledge can lead us to immunization of ideas against communal distrust. He was critical of traditional education and said that being literate doesn't mean being educated.

4. Swaraj: Swaraj meant to be free from external influences and foreign control. Now the country is independent and free from any external control. In today's competitive and fast-paced world, there must be control over our inner conscience. Self-empowerment is the need of the hour. Every person should search for their own identity, and shouldn't try to fit themselves in the moulds created by society.

5. Technology: The Gandhian principles are still relevant and technology can be used to enhance their effectiveness. The main tenet that he propagated was Satya.

It would include truth with respect to speech, reality as it exists and good as opposed to immoral, evil, and bad. As opposed to this, in contemporary times, people are not truthful and they are not presented with the existing reality of the system.

Here, technology plays its part. Technology can help bring the reality and truth out of the systems. It can curb our main evil, corruption. Information and Communications Technology plays a significant role in this. It facilitates the movement of data among governmental institutions, among citizens and between citizens and government as well. It helps bring transparency, answerability, and public participation.