



Peace comes from within.
Do not seek it without
~ Buddha



Remembering Mahatma

As India celebrates the 155th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, we are reminded of the timeless relevance of his life and teachings. Gandhi, often revered as the "Father of the Nation," remains a towering figure in the history of humanity, not just for his role in India's struggle for independence but for the universal values he championed—truth (Satya), non-violence (Ahimsa), and social harmony. Today, as nations across the globe face increasing tensions and internal divisions, it is essential to reflect on his message and the profound impact it continues to have on shaping a more just and peaceful world. Gandhi's philosophy was deeply rooted in the principles of unity, brotherhood, and non-violence. He firmly believed that the true strength of a society lies in its ability to foster mutual respect and harmony among diverse groups, regardless of race, religion, or class. These ideals of inclusivity and peaceful co-existence are needed now more than ever, as countries and communities find themselves increasingly divided along cultural, political, and economic lines. Gandhi's insistence on non-violence as a tool for resistance offers a crucial lesson for modern society—a reminder that conflict and injustice cannot be solved through force but through moral courage and dialogue. Mahatma Gandhi's legacy extends far beyond India's borders, influencing world leaders and freedom movements worldwide. His ability to inspire through moral example, rather than political maneuvering, set him apart from the conventional leaders of his time. Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King Jr., and the Dalai Lama, among many others, have drawn from Gandhi's philosophy to advocate for justice, human rights, and equality. In a world where self-righteous power and aggression often dictate international relations, Gandhi's vision of law, justice, and peaceful negotiation provides a roadmap for a more sustainable and humane future. Bapu's ideals of social justice and the upliftment of the underprivileged remain as relevant today as they were during his lifetime. He was a tireless advocate for the rights of women, youth, and marginalized communities, emphasizing that the progress of a nation must be inclusive and equitable. His vision of Swaraj (self-rule) went beyond political freedom; it encompassed economic self-sufficiency and a society rooted in ethical values. In an era marked by growing economic disparities, environmental degradation, and social inequalities, his call for responsible governance and sustainable development is a guiding light for the future. As we commemorate Gandhi's birth anniversary, it is important to remember that his teachings are not relics of the past but enduring principles that can guide humanity toward a more compassionate and just society. His emphasis on truth, non-violence, and the dignity of all human beings continues to offer solutions to the challenges we face today. Let us honour his legacy by committing ourselves to the ideals he lived and died for—building a world where peace, justice, and equality prevail.

Mahatma Gandhi's Relevance

ACT WE MUST, NOT JUST OBSERVE

■ DHURJATI MUKHERJEE

India grapples with injustice, violence, caste divisions, inter-religious rivalry et al, away from essential pluralism, away from democratic mores, away from most of what has held such a diversity magically under one flag. Indeed, times are distressing when reading instances of offering of garlands to welcome rapists and criminals as also butchers of fellow human beings as they walk out of jail, of politics being playing over caste census, of mosques being demolished. The society is becoming increasingly violent and divided, with ruling dispensation either tolerating it or even encouraging it, in the name of nationalism or Hindutva. Worse, in the land of Mahatma Gandhi, whose birth anniversary the nation celebrates!

There is an acute civilisational crisis as relationships are breaking down while hatred, jealousy and intolerance are increasing among communities. The understanding and need for social justice may find expression almost regularly amongst our political leaders to cover up their inaction and unethical activities but, in actual practice, this has declined. The assertion that the State must facilitate an egalitarian social order remains a rhetoric. Even strong Dalit and adivasi movements along with feminist struggles have not inducted social justice in our system. Sarvodaya, meaning 'Universal Uplift' or 'Progress of All', one of Gandhi's ideologies continues to be blurred.

The importance of satyagraha or non-violent movements that Mahatma Gandhi professed though have gained importance as regimes become autocratic over the years, these have not necessarily had the impact they deserve. However, recent farmers' movement and the resistance against the rape and murder of a doctor in Kolkata are examples of the efficacy of satyagraha or non-violent resistance. In fact, it has been found that in such movements, the State uses force to curb such resistance, but if the resistance is non-violent, it can be effective to alter state decisions.

We cannot live in a world pervaded with violence, hatred, jealousy and inequality. Gandhi was against materialist culture and advocated the need for transformation of the human mind so that the craving for more and more does not exceed limits. He obviously did not visualise a society where inequality would increase every year and billionaires and millionaires would corner most of the wealth of the country.

Two other significant aspects of Gandhi's relevance which need to be underscored are his understanding of faith and the concern for sustainable environment. He refused to define citizenship on the basis of faith and always called for Hindu-Muslim harmony. The Mahatma pursued inter-faith dialogue as well as practised inter-faith social action. His satyagraha's, whether in South Africa or India, built fearless defiance of unjust laws, with a willingness to suffer and adherence to non-violence in thought and deed.

The other notable aspect of his thinking was his concern for the environment when there was virtually no public outcry over it. He could visualise at that point of time, in the late 20s, of the previous century about the planetary disaster that may come about with steady destruction of nature, over exploitation of earth's resources, including water and overall degradation of the environment. He

had cautioned how human behaviour destroys nature and how a sustainable way of living is the need of the hour. Had Gandhi's advice been adhered, and the pace of resource-intensive, energy-intensive industrialisation checked, the severe environmental crisis, global warming, would not have engulfed the world.

Gandhi's economic philosophy was a de-centralised order where there would be bal-

perpetual moral rebel, he called for organised movement against social exploitation, economic oppression and slavery. At a time when thinkers in the realm of philosophies and social sciences are trying to take stock of the Eastern heritage and Western thought, the Mahatma stands as a symbol of the conjunction of the East and West.

The service of Gandhi in awakening the soul of Asia and Africa is of immense impor-

deathless spirit of Gandhi stands as a mighty Himalaya, an immense source of strength to those devoted to the emancipation of mankind. Now in the second decade of the 21st century, Gandhi is a world phenomenon. It means, as if he has been reborn.

What is need of the hour is to go back to the Gandhian philosophy in letter and spirit and implement the Mahatma's deeds, actions and thoughts into practice. His relevance in

The importance of satyagraha or non-violent movements that Mahatma Gandhi professed though have gained importance as regimes become autocratic over the years, these have not necessarily had the impact they deserve. However, recent farmers' movement and the resistance against the rape and murder of a doctor in Kolkata are examples of the efficacy of satyagraha or non-violent resistance. In fact, it has been found that in such movements, the State uses force to curb such resistance, but if the resistance is non-violent, it can be effective to alter state decisions. We cannot live in a world pervaded with violence, hatred, jealousy and inequality. Gandhi was against materialist culture and advocated the need for transformation of the human mind so that the craving for more and more does not exceed limits. He obviously did not visualise a society where inequality would increase every year and billionaires and millionaires would corner most of the wealth of the country. Two other significant aspects of Gandhi's relevance which need to be underscored are his understanding of faith and the concern for sustainable environment. He refused to define citizenship on the basis of faith and always called for Hindu-Muslim harmony. The Mahatma pursued inter-faith dialogue as well as practised inter-faith social action. His satyagraha's, whether in South Africa or India, built fearless defiance of unjust laws, with a willingness to suffer and adherence to non-violence in thought and deed.



anced development, and villages would develop to serve the needs of the local communities. As he aptly remarked: "I do visualise electricity, ship building, iron works, machine making and the like. But the order of precedence has to be reversed. Henceforth industrialisation has been so planned as to destroy the villages and their crafts. In the state of the future, it will subserve the villages and their crafts". This observation is greatly relevant today as taken in a broader sense, capital-intensive, energy-intensive and mechanised industries are polluting the environment and leading to jobless growth.

As inequality and widening disparity in incomes has been rising, the relevance of Gandhi becomes more prominent as being a

tance. Dr. Ho-Chi-Minh and Dr Nelson Mandela have testified to the inspiration of the leaders and activists of the two continents Asia and Africa, received in their work from the trials, sufferings and teachings of the Mahatma. Even the Negro liberationists in North America under the leadership of Dr Martin Luther King II received inspiration from him.

Romain Rolland, French Nobel laureate, novelist, dramatist, and essayist, an idealist deeply involved with the fight against fascism, the search for world peace, had recognised the moral significance of the work of the Mahatma. Both Einstein and Tagore testified to the spiritual eminence of Gandhi. At a time, when cultural norms are collapsing and the structure of civilization is imperilled, the

different fields stands unquestionable and unchallengeable, and policies and programmes need to be tweaked. His communitarian spirit and concern for the masses by emphasising on grass-root development needs concerted action and not just piecemeal. If we genuinely want to bring inclusive development then 'sabka saath, sabka vikaas, sabka vishwas' cannot remain a mere slogan. Gandhi's line of action has to be incorporated, and though the political leadership will remember him on October 2, its deeds must match the words. It must remember that failing to bring about the much-needed transformation, future generations shall continue to be bedevilled by insurmountable problems and challenges.---INFA

INDO PACIFIC BONNHOMIE

■ JAYANT MURALIDHRAN

The relationship between the United States and India has undergone a remarkable transformation since Narendra Modi took office as Prime Minister in 2014. This evolution has been particularly pronounced in the context of global geopolitics, especially since 2021. Under President Biden's administration, there has been a notable Euro-centric focus, which has, at times, overshadowed the critical need for a robust partnership between Washington and New Delhi. Biden's preoccupation with Russia and the ongoing conflict in Ukraine reflects a historical tendency within the White House to prioritize European affairs, harkening back to an era when the European Union and the United States were the predominant forces on the global stage.

However, by the early 1990s, it became increasingly clear that the balance of power was shifting, with Eastern nations, particularly India, beginning to regain strength relative to their Western counterparts. This significant geopolitical shift, however, appears to have eluded the attention of Biden and other Western leaders, particularly those who rallied around the Biden-Johnson initiative against Russia in 2022. Despite this oversight, there are voices within the Biden administration that recognize the strategic importance of fostering a partnership with India.

These individuals understand that collabo-

ration with India, alongside allies like Japan and South Korea, is vital for ensuring an "open, free, and inclusive" Indo-Pacific region, a vision articulated by Prime Minister Modi. Institutions such as the Pentagon and various agencies focused on advanced technology have begun to acknowledge India's unparalleled intellectual potential in these fields. This recognition is not merely theoretical; it is being translated into tangible outcomes on the ground. For instance, military exercises in India have showcased significant advancements in joint capabilities.

The foreign training node at the Mahajan Field Firing Range in Rajasthan, typically a quiet locale, has recently been alive with activity. The air is charged with anticipation as the ground shakes from the powerful artillery fire of 1,200 brave soldiers, half of whom hail from India and the other half from the United States. On September 9, the 20th iteration of Yudh Abhyas commenced, marking a 21-day joint military exercise between the two nations. This exercise not only underscores the growing military cooperation between the U.S. and India but also serves as a testament to their shared commitment to enhancing defence capabilities and fostering mutual understanding.

As these two nations continue to deepen their ties, it becomes increasingly clear that their partnership is not just beneficial but essential for addressing the complex challenges of the contemporary global landscape. The exercises are not directed against any third na-

tion, particularly the People's Republic of China, but are intended solely to enhance interoperability in combating piracy across land, sea, and air. The United States has transported over 600 personnel from the 11th Airborne Division of the US Army from Alaska to Rajasthan, while India has deployed a comparable number of troops from the Rajput Regiment, supplemented by a few soldiers from other branches of its armed forces.

Since 2014, the initiative has aimed to enable the armed forces of the Republic of India to function cohesively rather than in isolation. Yudh Abhyas exemplifies the effectiveness of teamwork, demonstrating that collaboration saves lives and secures victories, whereas operating in isolation may lead to neither outcome, often at a significantly higher cost in human lives. In contrast to the State Department's leadership, which seems to be anchored in the bygone era of Cold War 1.0 with its emphasis on Europe and the Atlantic, the Department of Defense is strategically focused on Cold War 2.0, prioritizing the Indo-Pacific region.

Furthermore, there exists a superpower that is attempting to unlawfully transform a substantial portion of its vast waters into areas controlled by its military, in violation of the UN Charter and international agreements that are meant to guarantee equal access to all in waters such as the ASEAN Sea, commonly referred to as the South China Sea. In October, the naval forces of the four Quad nations will engage in exercises in the Bay of Bengal,

known as the Malabar Exercises.

The navies of India, the United States, Japan, and Australia will collaborate to develop strategies aimed at countering, deterring, and neutralizing any aggressor that threatens freedom of navigation, particularly for coastal nations whose exclusive economic zones are being claimed by China under the leadership of Xi Jinping. Such actions pose a risk of escalating into a conflict that could overshadow the ongoing Ukraine-Russia war, which has persisted since February 24, 2022. This war has resulted in devastation for Ukraine, significant profits for arms manufacturers, and increased consumer prices globally. Consequently, Prime Minister Modi has consistently urged for an end to the conflict, a plea that has yet to resonate with NATO, which appears to be entrenched in past policies and indifferent to the potential for President Zelenskyy to take drastic measures, potentially provoking a broader conflict with Russia.

Fortunately, public sentiment in both the EU and the US is shifting, with many expressing a desire to withdraw from the Ukraine war. Presidential candidate Kamala Harris risks political repercussions by overlooking this change in public opinion, as her alignment with President Biden's approach, which includes a continued commitment to the Ukraine conflict, may be detrimental to her campaign. She must redirect her focus towards the Indo-Pacific region, recognizing it as the primary area of concern for security and prosperity.

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