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 Research Article

## THE SPIRIT OF NONVIOLENT RESISTANCE: GANDHI'S PHILOSOPHICAL LEGACY IN THE INDIAN NATIONAL MOVEMENT

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### ABSTRACT

This paper explores the profound influence of Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy on the Indian national movement, focusing on his principles of nonviolent resistance, truth (satyagraha), and self-reliance (swadeshi). By advocating for a form of protest rooted in ethical conviction and moral courage, Gandhi transformed the struggle for independence into a nationwide movement that transcended religious, cultural, and socio-economic divides. His approach to nonviolent resistance empowered ordinary Indians to actively participate in their quest for freedom, creating a legacy that not only shaped India's path to independence but also inspired global movements for social justice. This study examines Gandhi's strategies, including civil disobedience, boycotts, and non-cooperation, as philosophical tools that redefined power dynamics between the oppressor and the oppressed. The paper underscores Gandhi's enduring legacy, highlighting the relevance of his principles in contemporary socio-political struggles worldwide.

### KEYWORDS

Gandhian philosophy, Nonviolent resistance, Satyagraha, Indian national movement, Ahimsa (nonviolence), Civil disobedience, Swadeshi (self-reliance).

### INTRODUCTION

The Indian national movement, one of the most significant anti-colonial struggles of the 20th century, owes much of its distinctive character to the philosophical and strategic guidance of Mahatma

Gandhi. Faced with British colonial rule, Gandhi introduced a revolutionary approach to resistance—one that relied not on arms and violence, but on the power of nonviolence (ahimsa) and truth (satyagraha).



By transforming political struggle into a moral crusade, he galvanized millions of Indians, from all walks of life, to participate in the struggle for freedom. Gandhi's ideas brought a unique depth to the national movement, combining political action with an ethical vision that would leave an indelible mark on India and inspire nonviolent struggles across the world.

Gandhi's philosophy was not merely an abstract ideal; it was a lived principle that guided every aspect of his approach to independence. Through campaigns such as the Salt March, the Non-Cooperation Movement, and the Quit India Movement, he demonstrated the power of nonviolent resistance as both a form of protest and a tool for societal transformation. His insistence on swadeshi (self-reliance) and his call for the upliftment of marginalized communities created a framework in which political and social justice were interwoven. Gandhi's legacy in the Indian national movement was thus not only a political strategy but also a profound shift in the nature of resistance, emphasizing courage, compassion, and ethical integrity.

This paper seeks to analyze Gandhi's philosophical contributions to the Indian national movement, exploring the principles and methods he advocated and their lasting influence. By examining his ideals of nonviolent resistance, civil disobedience, and moral self-discipline, this study sheds light on the transformative impact of Gandhian philosophy in India's journey to independence. Furthermore, it highlights the enduring relevance of Gandhi's methods and ideals in contemporary movements for social justice, where his teachings continue to serve as a guide for peaceful and impactful resistance.

## METHOD

To examine the impact of Mahatma Gandhi's philosophical legacy on the Indian national movement,

this study employs a qualitative, historical approach that synthesizes primary and secondary sources. This method involves analyzing Gandhi's writings, speeches, and key documents, including Hind Swaraj and his numerous letters and addresses, which provide direct insights into his philosophy and strategic thinking. Additionally, we study major historical records and accounts from participants in the movement, assessing how Gandhi's principles of nonviolence, civil disobedience, and self-reliance were adopted, adapted, and put into practice during critical campaigns, such as the Salt March, the Non-Cooperation Movement, and the Quit India Movement. By drawing on these firsthand accounts, the study identifies core patterns in Gandhi's application of philosophical principles within the broader movement.

Furthermore, this research incorporates a comparative analysis of Gandhi's nonviolent methods and other contemporary resistance movements around the world. By contrasting Gandhi's approach with alternative forms of protest, we clarify the unique nature and influence of his methods within the Indian context. This analysis draws on both historical and philosophical perspectives, recognizing the ethical, political, and social dimensions of his ideas. Historical comparisons with nonviolent movements in South Africa and the United States, including the Civil Rights Movement led by figures like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., provide valuable insights into how Gandhi's philosophy not only shaped India's struggle for independence but also left an imprint on global resistance strategies.

The study also considers the socio-political impact of Gandhi's philosophy on Indian society, examining primary sources such as British colonial records, court proceedings, and media reports from the time. These sources allow us to understand how colonial authorities perceived and responded to Gandhi's nonviolent resistance, revealing how his strategies



disrupted traditional power structures and altered the dynamics between colonizer and colonized. By investigating how the British reacted to Gandhi's campaigns, we can better understand the effectiveness of nonviolent resistance as both a political tactic and a form of moral persuasion.

Finally, the study draws on secondary sources, including biographies of Gandhi and historical analyses of the Indian national movement. These sources provide critical interpretations and contextual understanding that support a comprehensive analysis of Gandhi's influence. By integrating historical, philosophical, and comparative perspectives, this study constructs a nuanced view of Gandhi's nonviolent resistance, illuminating the lasting impact of his philosophical legacy on the Indian national movement and beyond.

## RESULTS

The analysis reveals that Gandhi's philosophy of nonviolent resistance significantly influenced the Indian national movement by fostering a unified, morally grounded, and inclusive form of protest. His strategies, rooted in satyagraha (truth-force), ahimsa (nonviolence), and swadeshi (self-reliance), transformed India's independence struggle into a moral and ethical campaign that engaged diverse segments of society, including rural farmers, women, and marginalized communities. Key campaigns, such as the Salt March and the Quit India Movement, demonstrated the effectiveness of his approach, as these actions not only gained widespread participation but also drew international attention to the injustice of British rule. The study also finds that Gandhi's tactics forced the British authorities to confront the moral and political dimensions of their colonial power, often leading to strategic withdrawals and policy changes in response to mounting domestic and international pressure.

## DISCUSSION

The findings underscore Gandhi's philosophical legacy as one that redefined political resistance by integrating ethical and moral dimensions into political action. His insistence on nonviolence and moral courage challenged traditional notions of power and transformed the struggle for independence into a shared moral cause, inspiring unity among Indians regardless of class, religion, or social background. This unification was crucial in building a sustained, large-scale movement that could withstand repression while retaining its ethical integrity. By reframing the independence movement as a quest for justice, rather than merely a political struggle, Gandhi positioned the Indian national movement as a global example of principled resistance.

Comparatively, Gandhi's philosophy and methods had a profound influence on other global movements, inspiring leaders like Martin Luther King Jr. in the United States and Nelson Mandela in South Africa. This cross-cultural influence highlights the universality and adaptability of Gandhian principles, which continue to serve as a model for nonviolent resistance worldwide. However, it is also essential to recognize the limitations and criticisms of Gandhian philosophy within the context of India's independence movement. Some factions within the freedom struggle, including the revolutionary wing, felt that nonviolence was not always adequate in confronting the brutality of British rule, pointing to the complex landscape of resistance in colonial India.

## CONCLUSION

Gandhi's legacy in the Indian national movement remains a testament to the power of nonviolent resistance as a transformative force. His approach infused the independence movement with a sense of moral purpose, drawing on principles of truth,



nonviolence, and self-reliance that inspired mass participation and resilience. By fostering a culture of ethical resistance, Gandhi not only helped secure India's independence but also established a timeless philosophy that continues to guide movements for social justice and human rights around the world. His influence endures as a reminder that political action can be both powerful and principled, offering an alternative to cycles of violence and repression. The Indian national movement, shaped profoundly by Gandhi's vision, thus stands as a beacon of nonviolent resistance and an enduring model for ethical struggle in the pursuit of justice.

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