CHAPTER 5
GANDHIAN IDEOLOGY: IT’S PRESENT RELEVANCE

In this chapter my endeavour is to see how Gandhian ideology is relevant in today’s context. There is nothing extra ordinarily new in what Gandhi said, believed or did. He himself once accepted this fact when he said: “I have nothing new to teach the people. Truth and non-violence are as old as the hills” (Gandhi 1936: 49). Gandhi has become an iconic figure, a symbol of many things for many people. In the words of Rammanohar Lohia: “tens of millions thought the world saw in him their spokesman, the solace and the remedy for their sufferings and distress” (Lohia 1963: 121). His technique of civil resistance which he developed had its powerful effect against the white rulers in South Africa, and later, opponents in India. The technique has universal appeal. It is not only relevant today but it is relevant for all times and ages.

The moment we think of Gandhi, the question presents itself: what is the relevance of Gandhian Ideology in contemporary time? He perceived that love, spelt as non-violence in thought, word and deed, was shortest cut to human progress and evolution, both individual and social. In his eyes, progressive non-violence could express itself best through service, self suffering and, if necessary, total sacrifice. In the words of Diwakar:

“Gandhi is eminently fitted to be a good guide to us because he is extremely human and does not interpose any distance between himself and us by assuming an air of superiority or authority. He declared what
he had done, or was doing, every other human being equally capable of doing” (Diwakar 1967: XI).

Gandhi’s ideology is relevant because it is positive, constructive and practical - for example, sarvodaya - the rise and well-being of all. While it is the duty and responsibility of society to plan for the fullest development of the best in the individual, it is equally necessary that the individual render back unto society what he is, in fact, owes to society. Thus, there has to be a balancing of rights and obligations between the individuals and the society which they compose.

The relevance of satyagraha, both as a way of life and as a weapon, for evolutionary social change, need not now be in doubt when it is being used successfully by people all over the world. Gandhi’s insistence on the resolution of all conflicts by peaceful means is also an important aspect of his teaching. His declaration that war and violence never solve any problems is still relevant. War and violence create new ones and sow the seeds of future wars and the continuance of hatred. The appearance of nuclear weapons, the use of which involves total destruction, has made Gandhi’s plea doubly forceful and important if the future of humanity and its peaceful, orderly progress is our concern.

His principles and technique of satyagraha are highly efficacious instruments of peaceful, economic, social and political change whenever and wherever it is required. His gospel of peaceful means for resolving all conflicts is the only way to escape the disaster of nuclear war. In its totality, Gandhi’s teaching is a highly inspiring one and serves as a signpost to humanity marching towards a better, happier and more harmonious world.
Mahatma Gandhi has become an International icon, Martyr and Champion of nonviolence. People all over the world have never lost interest in Mahatma Gandhi and his ideology. Thinkers, educators, cinema makers, environmentalists, social activists, political leaders, social scientists and a host of others are innovatively using and advocating Gandhian ideals to address the challenges of changing world. In the last few decades, numerous biographies of Gandhi have appeared, placing him in new light and focus. The youth in particular no longer reject Gandhi as a theoretician, a non-practical practitioner of ethics and at the best an exceptional individual impossible to emulate. Young politicians are even trying to free Gandhism of the fads and are attempting to carry forward the essence of Gandhi in politics. Many essential Gandhian principles are echoed without the use of Gandhi’s name.

M K Gandhi was a great son of India who struggled for the freedom of his country and for the spiritual and material well-being of his people. He was an apostle of non-violence who espoused the concept that goodness dwells in all men and who ennobled both his cause and country by his work. A great American thinker, Henry David Thoreau, provided some of the inspiration on which Gandhi drew. And in turn, this generation of Americans, earnestly seeking to further the civil rights movement, has adopted much of the philosophy and many of the techniques moulded and refined by Gandhi. He believed that the world could reconcile its differences with love. He strongly believed that men are brothers to each other. And our aim must be to help men act more like brothers: to prefer compassion over intolerance, to elevate generosity above greed, to cast out cruelty for justice. Six decades after his death,
with the world still beset by divisiveness and anger, the need for the Gandhian
message is greater than ever. The light of Gandhi burns brightly still as a beacon for
Indians and for the entire world.

However, more recently the whole scenario has changed. All the nations are
racing for nuclear weapons and nature’s beauty is now at the mercy of the power
hunger. The positive and purposeful living of human beings is thwarted, buffeted
today. In this context, Gandhian outlook and his way of solving the problems through
his principles has become a necessity. To understand and accept Gandhi one has to
grow into maturity. Conflict has been a constant phenomenon in the history of human
race. “War is the father of all things”, declared Heraclites in his famous aphorism “by
which he meant that evolution in the universe due solely to its conflicting elements;
procreating new things in turn” (Singh 1991: 65).

Darwin in his obsession with struggle completely ignores the element of
cooperation both in biological and sociological realms, the harmonious blend that
attracts the elements of nature towards each other and holds them together. Gandhi
observed that there are repulsions enough in nature. But he adds, she lives by
attraction. Mutual love enables nature to persist. Man does live by destruction. Self
love compels regards for others. Nations cohere because of the mutual regard among
individuals composing them. Some day we must extend the national law to the
universe, even as we have extended family laws to form nations a larger family.

To Gandhi, cooperation and harmony rather than conflict and struggle
constitute the fundamental law of the universe. Conflicts occur more as temporary
irregularities in the even and ordered flow of life, rather than as universal and
ceaseless phenomena. Gandhian dialectic takes man as the centre of reason and provides for a technique of conflict resolution whereby one or both sides of a conflict can resolve the antimony into a reinterpretation. This can lead to what is termed as a “creative resolution of conflict” (Bondurant 1958: 199). Gandhi believed that a conflict can be creatively resolved only when peace is taken to be a positive concept rather than a negative one.

This negative concept of peace is standard western formulation to which Johan Galtung also subscribes when he defines “resolution of conflict” as absence of conflict. Hence the Gandhian sense of conflict resolution would mean not merely the elimination of maladjustment, but also progressing towards a better and more meaningful readjustment. When violent relationship is transformed into a non-violent one and the energies of the opponents are harnessed to achieve a higher goal, a creative resolution of conflict is reached at. Gandhi does not regard a conflict as an antagonism between two, but takes it as a product of the faulty system. The means, therefore, must develop to change the system itself eliminating any future possibility of conflict. Social transformation of the conflicting parties works miracle in this regard.

Gandhi does not believe that violence is embedded in human nature. To him, man is essentially peace-loving, co-operative and caring for others. And goodness in man can be aroused, articulated and strengthened. He thought that the Hindu-Muslim quarrels had often been due to the intervention of lawyers. Gandhi believed that quarrels could be resolved by the parties concerned as they could be completely aware of the situation which negate the need to go to court to settle the matter.
In Gandhi’s perception the root of conflict lies in *himsa* or violence. Gandhi believed that nobody has an access to absolute truth, but has access to relative truth. Therefore, when persons or groups fight, it involves a conflict between different sets of relative truths. And in order to resolve the conflict, these sets of relative truths are to be synthesized which result into an improvement its constituents which lead towards the absolute truth. Against such a backdrop Gandhi rejects the employment of violence as a means in conflict resolution. Since nobody represents the absolute truth, no one has also the rights to force his opinion on others which, in other words, entails rejection of violence. Therefore, conflict resolution should necessarily be achieved through peaceful negotiations.

Blanche Watson also corroborates Gandhian objectives of non-violence against violence. He puts:

Repression has never worked. I challenge anybody to point me to a single episode in either ancient or modern history, which proves that repression has even once achieved the end to which it has been directed. This policy has certainly been no success in English hands. It failed in America in 1775; it failed in English domestic affairs in the ‘20s’ and the ‘40s’ of the last century; it failed in South Africa after the Boer War; it failed in Ireland yesterday; and it will fail in India tomorrow. If repression succeeds in anything, it is in advertising the cause of the enemy (Watson 1989: 516-517).

Repression provokes conflict and a solution is never reached at. Further, the synthesis of the two opposing claims in conflict resolution does not necessarily imply
partial surrendering of original claims from both the sides. In other words, a synthesis is not a compromise as understood in the modern parlance in negotiations. The only thing that a synthesis ensures is an increased hold over the truth. Thus, a non-violent conflict resolution in the Gandhian sense departs from the traditional sense in that there is no sacrificing of position, no concession to any party, and no victory in the sense of triumph of one party over the other. A synthesis is a triumph for both the parties, because this higher realization of truth makes a victory of the situation which leads to the conflict possible. Thus, a conflict should not be viewed as a naked confrontation of predetermined objectives from which departures can not be made. The negotiators, on the other hand, should proceed with an open mind or heart, prepared to convince and to be convinced. This is a fact that there stands a relation between social structure and techniques of resolving conflicts.

Gandhi had never attempted to put his ideas on conflict and its solution in a well synthesized manner. They lie scattered in his works and one has to go into the whole lot to present them cohesively. He suggests different stages of conflict resolutions with each stage having a separate course of conduct. Each stage has to be taken up only after the failure of the preceding one. If persuasion through reason or negotiation holds the first stage, self- suffering becomes the second one. It is to be remembered that parties to a negotiation should be unprejudiced to the maximum extent possible and must have complete understanding of the conflict situation in general and of the objectives to be attained in particular.

Stressing upon self “suffering” Gandhi writes, “I have found that mere appeal to reason does not answer where prejudices are age-long and based on supposed
religious authority. Reason has to be strengthened by suffering and suffering opens
the eyes of understanding” (Gandhi 1925). Bondurant calls this mechanism of self-
suffering as ‘shock-therapy’ upon the opponent, Jacques Maritain sees in it Gandhi’s
“real genius” (Maritain 1951: 70) and Blanche Watson calls it “the law of conscious
suffering” (Watson 1989: 530).

Gandhi also holds a religious view of self-suffering. Most of the religions
advocate self-suffering instead of causing harm to others. If self-suffering fails to
resolve the conflict, Gandhi would prescribe for ‘non-violent direct action’ which is
characterized by such tools as non-cooperation and civil disobedience as the sphere of
conflict may be, that is to say that while civil disobedience can be undertaken only
against a governmental authority, non-cooperation can be applied in cases of personal
and group conflict also.

Clarence Case prefers to put it as ‘non-violent coercion’ rather than ‘non-
violent direct action’. He goes to deny a contradiction in terms of non-violent
coercion and comments that the combination of non-violence and coercion “is not the
outcome of a preconceived notion but represents a working arrangement” (Case 1923:
3). But this is hardly applicable in the light of Gandhian ideas on conflict resolution.
Coercion involves intimidation, physical or psychological and Gandhi would not
prescribe for such a course which is likely to make the opponent more and more
obdurate and less amenable to see the reason in the Satyagrahi.

For him satyagraha had deep linkage with the brotherhood of man. It discards
the biological concept of the struggle for human existence as well as the survival of
the fittest. It believes in love, respect, mutual help and cooperation in the work for the
welfare of our society as a whole. Ultimately, it is the concept of human progress and advancement in social, economic and other fields. He opines that evil can not be cured by evil, nor hate conquered by hate. “It is non-violence if we merely love those that love us. It is nonviolence only when we love those that hate us. I know how difficult it is to follow this grand law of love. Love of the hater is the most difficult of all. But by the grace of God even this most difficult thing becomes easy to accomplish if we want to do it” (Bakshi 1990: 55-56).

Incidence of conflict resolution is also reflected in case of his own personality being understood as an icon or God by his blind followers. Gandhi warned every one of us against being a blind devotee of Gandhi, because this country is given to hero-worship. It should be commonly understood that he was a man and he must be allowed to remain a man. Our good lies in his remaining a man. On the other hand, if we impose godhood upon him no good would come of it and we would have lost a human ideal. We shall only lose by turning him into God. We shall only be adding to the plethora of sects that already exists. Let, therefore, Gandhi remain what he was, an ideal man.

On conflict resolution Gandhi never put anything as a diehard theoretician. He himself practised what he propagated and in one sphere or the other he had put into practice all the modes of conflict resolution and that with a fair measure of success. His opponents at various stages have included even his wife, Kasturba, the Natal Government in South Africa, the Ahmedabad Mill owners and of course, the British Government, and his successes on all these fronts are hardly questioned.
In fact, Gandhi’s life was a saga of meditation of incessant efforts towards achieving moral perfection. He was a man of action, an activist and as such plunged himself into the vortex of social activism. He never had the slightest notion of becoming a great man one day. He simply attended to what came before him; a series of crises followed one after the other. And he simply responded to them. With the spark of genius that nature had endowed him with he would have made a mark for himself in any sphere of life. It was not merely the circumstances but his inner strength to face them squarely that led to Gandhi’s greatness which placed him at the pinnacle of magnificence. Gandhian device of conflict resolution has not been claimed a basic technique. Even Gandhi also agreed to it. But we believe that suitably getting adopted to the present day circumstances may prove to be one of the most viable techniques of conflict resolution.

There were lots of people who were inspired by the ideals of Mahatma Gandhi to fight for the independence of the country and had laid down their lives and a few of them still survive. Moreover the number of people who had personally come in contact with Mahatma is on the steady decline. On the other hand, there has been an increasing awareness of Gandhism throughout the world in modern times. Mahatma Gandhi had significantly contributed to different spheres of knowledge and India would be immensely benefited by the real application of some of these ideas in the fields of economics, polity and social affairs. Gandhi’s ideas on economic were fundamentally humanistic and practically based on a set of interrelated concepts characterized by simplicity, self-sufficiency and self-reliance. The basic concepts inherent in Gandhian economics are village self-sufficiency, Swadeshi, trusteeship,
bread-labour, decentralization, co-operative principles, appropriate technology etc. and these have elements of inter-dependence so that taken together, they form a coherent system and in spirit, strive for man’s welfare by keeping ethics as their essence and social welfare as prime objective.

‘Constructive programme’ was closest to his heart which “incorporated principles such as swadeshi (home-based production), in which a village, locality or nation would be self-reliant as possible, sarvodaya (commitment to public welfare) and aparigraha (non-possessiveness)” (Pinto 1998: 67-69).

His views on village self-sufficiency are still relevant in the present times. To Gandhi, every village must be economically self-sufficient at least in the production of their basic physical needs and for this he needed production by masses instead of mass production by machines. It was the only viable basis of stable economy, since a system of localized production and distribution would not suffer from drastic inflation and recessions to which a centralized economy naturally suffers. Gandhi conceived a broader view of rural development and asked people to cultivate rural mindedness, fully utilize the local resources for becoming self-reliant and these together constituted the Swadeshi movement. In exchange of letters with Nehru he drew a beautiful picture of the ideal village:

My village will contain intelligent human beings. They will not live in dirt and darkness as animals. Men and women will be free and able to hold their own against anyone in the world. There will be neither plague nor cholera, nor small pox; no one will be idle, no one will
wallow in luxury. It is possible to envisage railways, post and telegraph
and the like (Tendulkar 1951: 54).

Trusteeship: Trusteeship is a revolutionary economic philosophy of Gandhi. He was
very much fed up with high-handedness of power and violence both in capitalism and
communism and wanted some approach to solve these. As a result trusteeship is born.
It has been observed that at the time Gandhi as formulating his ideas of trusteeship the
world has two principal methods of economics: capitalism and communism. Gandhi
had seen defects in both. Both have failed to provide fuller life for everybody. Instead
of rejecting them straightway, he tries to incorporate some of the positive features of
both, into his alternative plan of trusteeship. Trusteeship is a synthesis of capitalism
and communism by eliminating violence

By the concept trusteeship Gandhi meant that capital, should be owned, operated and managed for the benefit of the society and not for the capitalist’s private gain. He hoped that capitalist should voluntarily renounce the assets in excess of their requirement to the state or continue to hold them only as Trustees of the society. He said “all people having money or property should hold it in trust for the society. Under the trusteeship scheme the rich people would keep for them only that much of wealth which is essential for a good standard of living. The rest would be meant for others in the society. Trusteeship would eliminate economic inequality.

It is true that Gandhi’s concept of trusteeship so far has not been tried. Gandhi himself was not sure of its practicability, but had full faith in it. He adhered to his doctrine of trusteeship in spite of the ridicule that has not been poured upon it. It is true that it is difficult to reach so is non-violence.
An integral part of Gandhian economics is his concept of Bread labour, according to which every human being should earn his daily bread by his own labour. The Russian writer T.M. Bondaref first put forward this idea. Tolstoy took it up and gave it wide publicity. Gandhi, on reading Tolstoy was very much taken up with this idea and made it an integral part of his philosophy. Even if, he had not read Tolstoy, it is more than likely that Gandhi would have stumbled on it spontaneously in the course of his political practice. Gandhi recognized physical labour as a biological necessity. The body needs physical labour almost as much as it needs food, air and water. The concept of bread-labour fits into Gandhian thought in the following way.

Gandhian socialism requires the capitalists to regard them as trustees of the property. It also emphasizes minimizing our wants to solve economic problem. The concept of bread-labour facilitates both. If a man works for his bread, he would maintain a sound health. He would want to eat wholesome food and live a natural life. This would automatically reduce his wants. Secondly, if every one did physical labour everyday, labour would acquire more dignity. Thirdly, when a capitalist does physical labour in his own factory he will not only understand the problem of workers, but also gradually realize that his income over and above what he earned through his physical labour is not legitimately his. Gradually he will think himself as a trustee rather than owner of the factory.

Gandhi emphasized the cooperative efforts in the field of agriculture small scale and cottage industries and in other fields of national interest. In agriculture, the small and fragmented holdings of land would be cooperatively cultivated to increase the production and minimize the cost. The small scale and cottage industries too
would enjoy all advantages of large scale productions without practically getting into large scale.

Gandhian economics propagates decentralization. Planning should be made at the grass root level in which villages, individuals, and families would play a dominant role. In the decentralized planning means would justify the ends and not ends satisfying the means. The subject matter of economic planning would be man and his development. Promotion of rural and small scale industries would be of prime importance. Resources would be conserved by avoiding wastage. What is waste in one becomes a raw material in the other. Gandhi was not advocating a stagnant self-sufficient village of the past but a vibrant and dynamic village economy which would not be made subservient to the urban cities. The decentralized system of production and independent village economy would also be a strategy against foreign invasion, since industries are not concentrated in a few urban centers. Decentralization would prevent concentration of economic and political power in the hands of a few. It would also strengthen the village economy and stop migration to urban areas. It will help to reduce inequalities and leads to realization of Gandhian socialism.

Gandhi was not against machines or technology. He was in favour of appropriate machinery and technology. He welcomed the machines that lighten the burden of millions of men living in cottages and reduces man’s labour. So it can be said that he was not against machinery but he was against all machinery designed for the exploitation of the people. In other words, he opposed large scale industrialization. He had written that there is no room for machines that would displace human labour and that would concentrate power in a few hands. Regarding
technology, it can be stated that Gandhi was not against technology, but he was in favour of appropriate technology. Appropriate technology, according to him was one, which, besides fully utilizing or augmenting the existing resources, would keep it need determined. Technology is essential if it is simple and usable by the masses. It should enhance the productivity of workers, and not replace workers. He favoured widely dispersed cottage and small scale industries using labour intensive technology as a solution to the problems of a labour surplus economy like India. Gandhi opposed establishment of large scale industries but he was not opposed to establishment of Iron and Steel, defense industries and other strategic large industries in the greater interests of the country.

Having an idea about the Gandhian economic concepts it is necessary to understand the relevance of these principles in the contemporary economic scenario. India has stepped into the era of globalization with the introduction of new economic reforms since 1991. Though some economic reforms were introduced by Rajiv Gandhi Government (1985-89), it was the Narasimha Rao Government that gave a definite shape and start to the new economic reforms or globalisation in India. The importance on liberalization, privatization and globalization has resulted in gradual withdrawal of unnecessary trade and business restrictions, encouragement to private initiatives and integration of the Indian economy to the world economy.

In the years since his assassination Gandhian ideas have acquired an international appeal and have been shared by individuals and by peace movements throughout the world. His care for non-violence in thought and action, his numerous experiments with new political weapons like Satyagraha and his voluminous writings,
journalistic and personal made him the most outstanding & dominating figure, from
the twenties of the last century unto his death. A practical idealist, an exponent of the
Bhagavad-Gita, the gospel of selfless action and Satyagraha, the philosophy of truth
and non-violence; Gandhi had many books published even though to himself he was
“neither a prolific writer nor a deliberate author” (Duncan 1983: 30). None-the less,
Gandhi with his recorded speeches, discourses and writings on various aspects of
contemporary India and the world; still remains one of the most distinguished thinker
- politicians in the history of mankind.

The importance of khadi and village industries, their role in meeting many of
our national issues and in bringing out rural development, and the robust rationale
which keeps them on a distinct and separate footing from other sectors of our
developing economy, speak in no uncertain terms about their present relevance.
Khadi, cottage and village industries along with handicrafts have been an inescapable
part of our developing economy since several centuries. In spite of awe-inspiring
advancements made by man in science and technology space and cybernetics,
progress in information technology, and computerization, men’s taste and
appreciation for things of artistic value and excellence would continue to go unabated.
All our formal mechanisms of planning, methods and strategies for development have
emphasized on the relevance of khadi and village industries sector to bring out rural
development and industrializing, the rural economy. Industrial Policy Resolutions of
1948, 1956 of 1977 and of 1980 have in unequivocal terms reiterated the relevance of
this sector in the context of our economic growth and social development. In the
context of our national planning beginning with the First Five Year Plan (1951-56) to
Tenth Five year Plan (2005-10), the role and relevance of khadi, village and small industries has been well recognized plan outlays made for their development, although not very adequately.

Industrial Policy Resolution in July 1991 marked a great reversal in important policies and programmes of our government in the context of national planning. The New Economic Policy of liberalization and globalization of Indian economy unleashed several changes and challenges to our vast industrial sector hitherto controlled and regulated by policies of protection. Linking up of our domestic economy to the global economy had led to a stiff international competition with increasing demand for quality and excellence in products and services.

In spite of these changes and challenges in the context of globalization and economic liberalization, the khadi and village industries sector would continue to keep its relevance and play a significant role as a major provider of opportunities for work and employment to a large number of people in the rural areas of our countries. However, in order to maintain its uniqueness and to sustain itself as an important sector in the first growing Indian economy, khadi and village industries segment must reorient and revitalize its structure with modern tools and techniques, update its processes and technologies and diversify its activities in a greater varieties of products. Appropriate backward and forward linkages should be provided for expanding its scope and ambience for enhanced sale and marketing.

Right after the World War II the movement against nuclear weapons gained early momentum by the 'Operation Gandhi' in London in 1952. A popular peace movement that continued and grew for decades followed. Along it various support
movements for international solidarity and Third World liberation grew, many of them emphasizing nonviolent struggle. Gandhian influence in the post cold war global solidarity and justice movement is also remarkable. The Karnataka farmers’ struggles and initiative in forming the People's Global Action against the WTO and Free Trade that lead to the Seattle demonstrations in 1999 is one example. Further, the Gandhian concept of *swaraj* provides a framework for movements trying to combine human dignity, cultural plurality, ecological concern, last person first economics and political participation into a comprehensive democracy perspective.

Gandhian influence gained momentum among Western popular movements in the 1960s through four methods. The mass boycott which was used by the antiapartheid movement, padyatras or long marches used by the peace movement, direct action through nonviolent civil disobedience intervening in conflicts used by movements for freedom of speech and for disarmament and mass support for constructive programmes.

The Gandhian and Indian popular movement influence on other societies is of global interest. The predominant view on social change and popular movements is that they start in modern Western societies, usually in the Great Britain or the US, and then are spread globally.

Although numerous European popular movement leaders were in touch with Gandhi already in 1910s and 1920s, the interactions became much more intensive in the 1930s resulting in the conclusion of Liberation Struggle and Constructive Programme 1917-1947. That is when the Indian freedom struggle obtained new momentum and Gandhi’s constructive programme had become increasingly popular.
This growth in Indian popular movement activity had its response in Europe also. These early contact benefited from direct contacts with Gandhi himself.

The freedom struggle for India set an example for the whole of the colonised world in Africa, Asia and Latin America. A central question in the struggles was the means, especially role of armed struggle. Gandhi addressed these issues already in his seminal Hind Swaraj in 1909, taking very strong stand against violence and for ahimsa. Based on the 1906/07 experiences with satyagraha in South Africa, he was able to outline the basic elements of the active nonviolent struggle also. The ideas and practices of the support groups inspired by Gandhi for the freedom of India served as models for future solidarity campaigns all the way to the transformation of South Africa in the 1990s from apartheid to democracy.

Gandhi was inspired and influenced by various protests in India and elsewhere. He came to understand very clearly the weak points of the modern polity and deployed his particular form of protest to powerful effect. This has been acknowledged by Michael Randle in his book Civil Resistance in which he argues that Gandhi is ‘the figure whose actions and ideas have most crucially influenced the development of civil resistance in the twentieth century’ (Randle 1994: 52).

And it is no doubt that Gandhian ideas have inspired every non-violent movement since early 1900. When Gandhi moved back to India the world was experiencing the first waves of democratization. In country after country, social movements fought for full voting rights to the Parliaments, first of all adult men and later women as well. These movements used a wide variety of non-violent actions.
The peace movement of the 1950s also grew up to protest the arms race and the threat of nuclear war. For these peace activists, it was natural to use non-violent means. Individuals in many countries refused to fight, and served long prison terms as deserters. This was a classic form of civil disobedience, and non-cooperation. In these years we also saw the women’s movement taking up topics other than the right to vote. Representing more than half of the population, they wanted more than crumbs of the rights and power that men held. Non-violence completely dominated the struggle.

The civil rights movement in US became important when thousands of African-Americans returned from service in World War II and realized that they were deemed good enough to sacrifice their lives in the war but not good enough to get equal rights as citizens in their ordinary lives. Their best known leader, Martin Luther King Jr., often talked about the inspiration he got from Gandhi and his commitment to non-violence. He once stated that if humanity is to progress, Gandhi is inescapable. He lived, thought and acted, inspire by vision of humanity evolving toward a world peace and harmony.

The Gandhian nonviolent freedom struggle inspired many Europeans and engaged them in various support activities. The struggle brought International Solidarity for India’s freedom. One such person was Danish lady Ellen Hørup who since the 1920s wrote extensively on Gandhi and Indian liberation and contributed centrally to the establishment of the India freedom support group in Europe in the 1930’s.

In March 1960 the trade unions and cooperative consumer organizations in all
Scandinavian countries launched a boycott against South African goods to support the freedom movement in the country. The first international consumer boycott campaign was called upon by All African People’s Conference in Accra 1958. As the international trade union movement agreed to the proposal it became viable.

As is well known, a consumer boycott at a mass scale was a central part of the Indian freedom movement in their struggle against the British. Later, the experiences with the Boycott of South African goods provided a model for an international boycott against Nestle Company for its unethical and lethal marketing practices of baby milk formulas. The campaign in the 1980s connected groups, movements and issues in an unforeseen way against a multinational corporation and brought unity in the third-world Countries.

Discussions on nonviolence and Gandhian methods rather than his whole ideology were crucial in this era that by its own activists and academicians has been described as the breakthrough of new social movements in the North. Peace padyatras were organized against nuclear armament.

Gandhian inspiration strongly reemerged on global scale at the end of the 1990s when the Karnataka farmers and their chairman M.D.Nanjundaswamy along with others from Gandhian socialist background such as Kishen Pattanayak and Medha Patkar took the leadership in forming People's Global Action against the WTO and Free Trade (PGA) centered on the principles of nonviolence and refusal to cooperate as the main tools in the struggle against the neoliberal world order. At that time Gandhian Ideology was used to integrate an anti-globalization Movement. The use of violence was not explicitly excluded but the emphasis was only made on nonviolence
with the inspiration from the Gandhian style mass movements in India and the impressive demonstration with half a million participants against WTO in Bangalore in 1993. Many other movements were also present when PGA was founded in Geneva in 1998, mainly mass movements from the third world like the Landless movement from Brazil, the black movement from Colombia, Ogonis from Nigeria, Maoris from New Zealand, the Indigenous communities from Ecuador, trade unions from Argentina, Nicaragua and Canada, farmer movements from everywhere and the Zapatistas from Mexico as well as Friends of the Earth from Finland, Sweden and Uruguay and the organization of small farmers from Norway.

Stronger impact have the boycott, long marches, direct action to intervene nonviolently in conflicts and mass support for constructive programs of the second period. Four inspirations of Gandhi: Boycott against oppressive regimes, padyatras or long marches linked to direct action, intervention by direct non-violent intervention in conflicts and mass support for constructive programmes to give humanitarian support to liberation movement territories.