

# THE RELEVANCE OF AHIMSA IN MODERN ETHICAL THOUGHT

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*Abstract* : Love gives birth to all the highest virtues of the world. -Plato

“Without love ahimsa becomes forced or mechanical” “with love ahimsa becomes natural and sincere” that is why Mahatma Gandhi would certainly exclaim that ahimsa is born from love and truth. Rightly saying, love is soul and ahimsa is its expression. One would remember the attribute of Saint Augustine of Hippo “Dilige et quod vis fac” means love first and then do what you will. Love is the highest moral principle or guide. It is clearly depicted that a genuine love secrets genuine moral action, which is consequently right and leads to non-violence.

**Keywords:** *Ahimsa, Love, Right Knowledge, Conflicts, Gandhi*

## I. INTRODUCTION

The Sanskrit word "ahimsa" means "nonviolence." The Buddhist, Hindu, and Jain faiths all embrace this way of looking at life. Avoiding violent acts is only one aspect of the concept of nonviolence. It includes a nonviolent mind set and an all-encompassing way of living. Ahimsa literally means "to be without harm or injury." Being harmless means, no harm, no matter how minor or seemingly inconsequential, is done to oneself or any living thing. The concept of ahimsa is applicable to both people and the smallest organisms, such as bacteria and insects. Ahimsa stands for virtues like kindness, forgiveness, compassion, justice, honesty, and tolerance.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Gandhi, morality is Satyagraha. The requirement of morality is nothing but the requirements that a true Satyagraha has to meet. Therefore, Satyagraha is the highest morality. Indian ethics speaks about five virtues: they are Non- Violence (Ahimsa), Truthfulness (satya), Non- Stealing (Asteya), Non-Possession (Aparigraha), and Chastity (Brahmacarya). Gandhi admits all these yet emphasizes on Ahimsa more and more. It is the most important virtue. He emphasizes that ahimsa is nothing but tolerance and love. It also lays down the maxim that all persons are equal. Rigorously he brings forwards that Ahimsa as the highest virtue (*ahimsa paramo dharmah*). And this is not possible to achieve without love for humanity and oneself.

## III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is brought out on the secondary sources of data and research methodology that I have used based on secondary research and literature review. Most relevant topics based has been studied and carefully analyzed. The method used in this research finding is qualitative and analytical, focusing on interpretation and critical examination.

Besides some primary philosophical texts written by Gandhi has been studied and understood for the development on this paper. There also could be found sites from some specific websites for reference.

## IV. LOVE LEADS TO AHIMSA

Love stitches reason, freedom and morality into one vein leading individual to spontaneous growth and development.

A man's growth and development is very essential likewise society with love and ahimsa (Non-violence) empowers better and healthy nation.

Ahimsa cannot be practiced in certain cases as an intruder enters one's room and molest someone, obviously there cannot exist ahimsa. The concept of dharma has been annihilated in order to take revenge and protect ones right to live.

More over a soldier cannot put down his arms before his enemies. Arjun is impelled and asked to withstand himself to fight in the kurukshetra, Arjuna fights against injustice and unrighteousness.

The literal meaning of ahimsa stands for non-injuries to none or not to harm anyone. It means no one should harm anyone at any cost. In deeper sense, one should not harm anyone in thoughts as well as in deeds.

An individual's heart or mind should be in the form of harmonizing oneself with inner self, which can obviously lead every individual to better perfection. Moreover one must abstain oneself from harming others by speech or thoughts. In physical sense one has to withhold ones action that can result in harming others.

### V. HOW IS OVERLOOKED NON-VIOLENCE IN MODERN TIMES? (*THE WORLD OF SADISM*)

One would recall ongoing conflicts in and around the world. A power is dominated by another power, the desires to hold on ones rights and demands at any cost beyond the limits of human intelligence. The ethical principles have been untrodden and vanished in modern era.



*Figure 1* palestinians-evacuate-the-area-following-an-israeli-airstrike-on-the-sousi-mosque-in-gaza-city

People will fight against another people with selfish attitude and motive. Plato's ideal society justifies as moral and highest form of intellectual based society. Egocentric people are crazing on one's own selfish aspirations. Truth will be guided by authoritative one and power. Actual facts will be justified with falsification. Weaker section will continue to lead oneself in ignorance. Educated mind will be curtailed and subdued in talk about ahimsa (non-violence) but abides none. Holding in power will rule the country and laws will be formed based on their instincts will or desire. Their words will be constituted as highest form of rules of man on this society. It is certain that because power and money would pave the way of this society. As Socrates says- man is the measure of all things' (Plato, Theaetetus, 152a)". A man with power and money would deliberately be considered as a highest form of moral order. Yet one of Socrates' followers reinterprets his moral principles of moderation in indulgence, rational self-command in presence of the allurements of sense, and intelligent control of the vulgar instincts of our nature. He continues to say that at any circumstances, one must remain masters of oneself and therefore one can affirm that I own, I am not owned. Ideal society of Plato is governed by philosopher-kings, protected by a warrior class, and maintained by a producer class, with a strong emphasis on communal life for the ruling classes, rigorous education, and the suppression of individual, selfish interests for the collective good.

### VI. CRITICAL EVALUATION: AHIMSA- A PRACTICAL IMPLICATION

*"Everyone thinks of changing the world but no one thinks of changing own self"*- rightly quoting the words of Leo Tolstoy (Tolstoy, 1900) that each persons are predominantly involved in the world of power, position and wealth yet few are aspiring for wellbeing of whole humanity. World needs a transformation of Ahimsa resolution. Besides world is being heaped up with conflicts that persist as well as violence and ecological damage? A state without Ahimsa remains to exist into global conflict, environmental degradation and social injustice. World needs a compassionate heart for the hilarious world.

Jainism just fully propounds Ahimsa beyond physical action, it covers all sort of harms or injuries, including vulgar talks and words. It even acts at apex that no insects or bacteria's must be killed because

Jaina believes that it has soul as sentient beings. No forms of harms must be inflicted to any small animals or beings. Let all beings must live in harmony supporting environmental care and promoting healthy ecological sustainable to exist. Self-restraint indicating in both physically and mentally must be instituted when we know to control our emotions or stimulation; certainly we could keep out one self away from profane thoughts or words. Simultaneously one must do avoiding one's indulgence from injuries others.

*"Do not injure, abuse, oppress, enslave, insult, torment, torture or kill any creature or living being"* - **Jain scripture.**

Gandhi rigorously admits his passive form of Ahimsa that Non – violence is the only *margh* (way) to gain freedom from Britishers. The native Indians were subdued under Britishers' oppressions and suppression. Gandhi propounds his ideology of Non- violence deliberately against British Govt. that revolting back is not only the means of acquiring liberation or freedom from Britishers. More over Jaina philosophy upholds its consistency of Ahimsa of detachment because when soul is attached with karma leads to bondage of each soul and lead to live in constant karmic actions. So attachment to Non- violence is the best option for all Jaina followers. Traditionally, Jaina strongly propounds its ideology of ethical and philosophical judgement on its followers who would still believe and remain on the teachings of their Thirthankaras. Especially, the sect of Digambaras who are more orthodox and rigid in their living could attend the state of bliss of pure knowledge or pure consciousness, therefore lead a soul like Sakshin, a pure Purusha, yet the karmic particles intervenes or unite the Jiva or the soul to the body and consequently Jiva falls into ignorance or in passions of Anger, Greed, Pride and Delusion. Concretely I would say - Virtue is barren where there is no education- education plays a vital role in formation of each individual's moral and cognitive judgements. When an individual knows about Right Faith (*Samyag- Darsana*), Right Knowledge (*Samyag- Jnana*) and Right Conduct (*Samyag- Caritra*) then only one could lead a life of Ahimsa (Non-Violence). It is not necessary to abide by as Jainas yet as normal individual who would lead a life of Brahma-Vihara of Metta-Loving kindness, Karuna- Compassion, Mudita- joy of being with others and Upekkha- equanimity or as Aristotle's Golden Mean Theory that is leading a life with Courage, Generosity and Confidence. So whatever it can be yet one individual needs education whether at home or in school so that he or she may lead a life of Ahimsa (Non-Violence).

## VII. CONCLUSION

Ahimsa has been propagated throughout all the society era after era. World is once again governed in the hands of certain authorities towards world wars. The concept of Ahimsa (Non Violence) has been overlapped by the instincts of egoist minds. The Ghandhian universal principle of Ahimsa (Non- Violence) consequently sacked out from its practical implication. The moral and ethical principle of Ahimsa is at stuck or I can say Ahimsa is on a difficult predicament with no clear solution.

*"Love and compassion are necessities, not luxuries. Without them humanity cannot survive"* - Dalai Lama. Rightly propagating, in this current scenario the world has moved towards craving and accumulating power and wealth at any cost. Nature and environment have been made slaved to its utter degradation and disaster. Humanity has flocked into the world so called development or advancement of technology yet the liveliness or the value of humanism has been pushed back in acquiring and maintaining its status quo.

Gandhi held the belief that ahimsa was the pathway to truth. He maintained that truth and ahimsa are fundamentally connected. In essence, ahimsa serves as the method to achieve the ultimate goal, which is truth. The Sanskrit word for "nonviolence" implies an active state of releasing energy, even though the term might appear passive at first glance. Gandhi deepened this understanding by urging his followers to harness the tremendous power of their will, nurturing a profound inner strength and capability to accomplish anything while practicing ahimsa.

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