

# MAHATMA GANDHI'S VIEWS ON MAN AND HUMANITY

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## Abstract

Mahatma Gandhi the father of India, was a freedom fighter through non – violence and is well known for his love towards the nature. Thousands of books are written on Gandhi and by himself, are available to know insights and teachings of Gandhi. He developed a system peaceful co- existence of reality in social, political, economic, cultural and religious fields. His concepts of non – violence, Satyagraha, Sarvodaya etc. have a perennial value. All his perceptions of what he looked up on as the only goal worthy of the human being, namely self realization through the pursuit of Truth. This article provide Mahatma Gandhi's views on man and humanity.

**Key Words:** Humanity, non – violence, equality, divinity.

## Introduction

Every philosophy, every religion, every political system represents at bottom a theory of the nature of man. Great thinkers, like comte, Marx, Sartre and many others have made attempted to understand human nature. Gandhi also gave much importance to man. The whole philosophy of Gandhi shows that man is the measure of all things and he is a manifestation of God. The essence of his teachings is the glorification of man as the centre and goal of all social and political action.

## Different Religions on Man and Gandhian attitude

Gandhi's concept of man was formulated essentially in the light of religious beliefs. He took man's nature in a very exalted and idealized form. Different religions of the world seen human nature in an exalted form, Hinduism has taken the social within man, which is really his essence, as the divine spark within him. The advaita doctrine takes human soul Brahman as identical. The same divine soul is present in every human being according to it. The Mahabharata says that there is nothing higher than man on earth. Jainism holds that in the soul of man lies the potentialities of attaining infinitude or goodhood. Christianity tells us that man was made on the last day of creation and God made him in his own image. Man's creation on the last day signifies that man is the final fruit of creation and he is the centre of universe. Gandhi's concept of man was formulated essentially in the light of such religious beliefs.

## Gandhian Concept of man

In Gandhi's view man's dignity derives from his power to realize the dignity indwelling in him. Man can become great with the greatness of God, apart from it man has no destiny.

Gandhian views on man are the following:

### 1. Divinity in man

According to Gandhi there is divinity hidden in every man. God dwells in the hearts of every man. He wrote "A human being however debased or fallen he may be has in him the capacity of rising to greatest height every man can attain by any human being irrespective of race or colour"<sup>i</sup>. Gandhi's concept of man is the outcome of his metaphysical reality – what he calls God, Truth or Brahman. According to Gandhi, God is the ultimate reality and man, world and nature are his manifestations. To Gandhi, man is the beautiful creation on earth. He alone is made in the image of God. Even though he is made in the image of God, he is a fallible being. Compared to God we all are Zeros and we are only drops in that limitless ocean of mercy. According to Gandhi, God is neither in heaven nor down, but in every one.

### 2. He is a social being

The individual for Gandhi is not an isolated being. He is a social being. Hence Gandhi said, every individual must have the fullest liberty to use his talents. He can use his talents not for self only but for the society. The main duty of man is to the service of society. Gandhi insisted that "everyone must act in a way that would not harm or endanger the community or the natural environment. Man should exercise his will rather than follow his impulses or act merely on the force of habit"<sup>ii</sup>

### 3. All men are equal

Equality meant to Gandhi primarily two things : First, everybody has a basic right to live, is to meet the basic needs and live a dignified life integrated in community with one's fellow. He advocated guaranteed employment for everybody who wants to work. Secondly, equality is absence of exploitation. He endorsed non exploitative capital labour relation as well as non – exploitation of manual by intellectual labour and above all non – exploitation of the country side by the city. Equality he meant

equality of opportunities open to all in order to be self supporting and finally self – reliant. According to Gandhi, all men are equal, because the same divine spark is present in all of them. The soul is one in all. The difference between one man and another is only of a degree, and not of kind. Some are more good, and some are bad. There is no who is wholly good or wholly bad. They are all equal. Gandhi condemns the idea of superiority and inferiority on the basis of heredity. There is diversity in the physical size and growth. It does not mean that they are unequal. Gandhi believes in Advaita which emphasizes the unity of God and the world. Man realizes himself in the measure he identifies with fellow man and whole creation. Gandhiji says” The moment we have restored the real living equality between man, we shall be able to establish man and the whole creation”<sup>iii</sup>.

#### 4. Man’s Primary Duty

According to Gandhi, service of the whole humanity is the duty of everyman. We must think about everyone and show love, sympathy and kindness to all because we are all basically one. Hence Gandhi says that each man has certain natural obligations towards the other members of the society.

#### 5. Freedom of Choice

In Gandhi’s view, man has a free will, reason, conscience and love, and he is the maker of his destiny. He is a rational being. While other beings are simply feeling beings, man alone is a thinking being. He has reason which enables him to think good from evil, right from wrong, justice from injustice. Man has the freedom to choose from different options but must choose God to realize, his innate divinity. But unfortunately the opposite happens. Man is the maker of his own destiny because he has freedom.

#### 6. Man a complex Being

According to Gandhi, man is a complex being. He has body and soul. His body is a part and parcel of nature. It is composed of five natural elements - air, water, earth, fire and ether. Because of his body man is essentially imperfect.

#### 7. Man is essentially Good

Different theologians and philosophers state that man is essentially evil. They teach that every individual is born in a state of sin and hence he is evil and is unable to do any good through his own effort. But according to Mahatma Gandhi, there is something good in every man. By cultivating the habit of listening and acting accordingly to his conscience, man can avoid evil and be good to one and all. So Gandhi believed that “Man is a manifestation of God and human nature is basically and essentially good”<sup>iv</sup>. This provides the master key to Gandhi’s concept of human nature.

#### Conclusion

The whole philosophy of Gandhi shows that man is good. He is the beautiful creation on earth. Hence, he becomes the measure of all things in Gandhian philosophy what he said and wrote about man is very meaningful and significant. Gandhiji in his scheme kept people at the center and all his programmes and policies were designed to ensure the full participation of people enabling them to develop the capacities in them to work as members of one inter related community. However, Gandhiji was of the opinion that a moral and an immoral society cannot co-exist in harmony. In short, Gandhi provides new vision and space for the people to live sustainably, to share nature’s resources equitably, to live without violence, fear, oppression or alienation, in spiritual harmony and peace.

#### Reference

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- iii Collective Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol.66, p.285.
- iv M.P. Mathai, *op.cit*, p.93.