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Relevance of Gandhian Philosophy in the Management of Pandemic Era:

An Overview

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Abstract: Mahatma Gandhi, though not formally trained in management, demonstrated a deep understanding of it through his leadership, organizational skills, and ethical practices. He applied these principles in running his ashrams and mobilizing mass movements. His philosophy—centred on truth, non-violence, simplicity, and self-reliance—offers valuable lessons for modern management. Gandhi advocated natural healing, vegetarianism, and fasting as tools for physical and mental well-being. His rural-centric model aimed to make villages self-sufficient, which could have reduced rural-to-urban migration and social inequality. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the world experienced helplessness and disconnection—issues Gandhi's values could help address through community care and decentralized action. His charisma and moral integrity inspired millions to act—spinning khadi, rejecting foreign goods, and peacefully breaking unjust laws. Gandhi's alignment of words and actions earned trust and unity, proving that ethical leadership and value-based management can bring about powerful social, political, and economic change.

Keywords: Pandemic, Gandhian Philosophy, Satya, Ahimsa, Trusteeship, Ethics, principle etc.

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1. Introduction

Mahatma Gandhi was born on 2nd October, 1869 in a beautiful place Porbander of Gujrat, a small seaside town, then a semi-independent independent state of Kathiawad Peninsula in Western India. His mother Putlibai was from a

PranamiVaishanava Hindu family. His father Karamchand Gandhi was the Diwan of Porbandar state of British India. Mahatma Gandhi practiced Truth and Non-violence that are relevant in this modern era. Today when a lot of people are killed in a pandemic situation or terrorist attack then the only one man that comes in mind is none other than Gandhiji and his principles. According to my opinion Mahatma Gandhi, who needs no introduction in India and we are not eligible for his description, as an ideal personality which inspires, commands respects and fills the India hearts. Gandhi's name is an ever-inspiring force for the politicians and has become a never fading brand image for the government and absolutely as the business world. Gandhiji himself said, "My life is my message".

According to Gandhiji concept of non-violence and his high moral sanders are what Today' s leaders must emulate in order for organisations to have the advantage in the global Market, His concept of a self –ruled society can be compared to a project organisation, where individual teams are self governed and highly efficient. Trusteeship as a perceived by Gandhi is all embracing. 'Trusteeship' is an altitude first, then a technique and finally constitutional form. The principles practised by Mahatma Gandhiji may look simple on surface but the depth and greatness of them can be realized only when them can be realized only when they are practised.

Mahatma Gandhi is considered as one of the greatest personalities of our modern India. The Gandhian era is not just a figure of speech as it is a historical fact of reality. Gandhiji was a great Patriotic man of modern India, if not the greatest. We understand that, Gandhiji was a man of an incredibly great personality. Gandhiji assuredly does not need anyone like me laudatory him. Moreover, his endeavours for our independence are exceptional. We understand that, without Gandhi's mass mobilization and negotiation skills, the journey to independence might have been protected. Ethics is the branch of philosophy to discuss about the voluntary human actions. Actions which are performed voluntarily but not mechanically come under the scope of morality. According to Gandhiji, acting in accordance to our thought, will rational intelligence or the power of discrimination is a necessary condition to regard an act as the moral. We should keep in mind the distinction between acting intentionally, while arbitrating an act as moral. There is no content of morality in the mechanical action. Letting one self to be swift along like a log of wood by a current can never be regarded as an act of morality. Thus, when the king pardons a criminal then it can be regarded as an act morality. But if the messenger were to bear the king's order, considering it to be his duty, his action would be regarded as moral.

The global outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the world in unprecedented ways. Social systems, economic structures, health infrastructure, and organizational management all came under immense strain (World Health Organization, 2020). Nations witnessed a fundamental reconfiguration of work, education, healthcare, and governance systems. Globalization took a step back as borders closed and nations turned inward to develop self-reliant solutions. Amid this turmoil, the need for a value-based,

ethically sound, and human-centric leadership and management model became evident (George et al., 2021).

Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy, rooted in the ideals of truth, non-violence, simplicity, and trusteeship, presents a compelling alternative to the prevailing management orthodoxy. Gandhi's vision of self-sustained villages, ethical leadership, and economic equity holds profound relevance in navigating the complexities of both pre- and post-pandemic organizational environments (Parel, 1997).

Mahatma Gandhi (1869–1948), a spiritual and political leader, championed a unique blend of moral philosophy and practical activism. Central to Gandhian thought are the principles of Satya (truth), Ahimsa (non-violence), Swadeshi (self-reliance), Sarvodaya (welfare of all), Simplicity, and Trusteeship (Gandhi, 1938).

- **Satya and Ahimsa:** Gandhi emphasized that truth is God and that non-violence is the path to truth. In management, this calls for transparent communication, ethical leadership, and conflict resolution through dialogue rather than coercion (Nanda, 2002).
- **Swadeshi and Self-reliance:** Gandhi advocated economic self-reliance and localized economies. This has gained renewed relevance in discussions on sustainable development and resilience (Parekh, 1991).
- **Trusteeship:** Gandhi's idea that wealth must be held in trust and used for the common good prefigures modern concepts of ethical capitalism and corporate social responsibility (CSR) (Tripathi, 2013).

These principles collectively represent a management philosophy grounded in moral integrity and social responsibility.

2. Problem Statement

The central problem this thesis addresses is the disconnect between modern management practices—often characterized by profit-driven motives and mechanistic efficiency—and the ethical, community-oriented principles advocated by Gandhian philosophy. The pandemic has underscored the limitations of conventional management and opened a window to explore value-based alternatives (Sharma & Bhal, 2020).

In early 2020, India stood on the precipice of an unprecedented crisis as the first wave of COVID-19 began to sweep across the nation. The first confirmed case, reported in Kerala on January 30, signaled the quiet start of a storm that would soon engulf the country (Moneycontrol, 2021). By March, the government imposed one of the world's strictest nationwide lockdowns, halting all movement in a desperate attempt to contain the virus (ThePrint, 2020). But the sudden closure left millions of migrant workers stranded in cities with no income, food, or shelter. Desperate, many set out on foot to return to their distant villages, walking hundreds of kilometers in scorching heat—this mass migration became a haunting symbol of the pandemic's human cost (TIME, 2020a). Meanwhile, India's fragile healthcare system buckled under the pressure as cases rose, exposing shortages of beds, ventilators, and medical staff (New Yorker, 2020). With hospitals overwhelmed and testing limited, fears of unreported cases and silent community transmission grew (TIME, 2020b). The silence of empty streets was pierced only by the wail of ambulance sirens and the cries of grief-stricken families. The year 2020, etched in sorrow and survival, revealed the stark inequalities in Indian society—and the resilience of its people in the face of tragedy.

According to Gandhian concept of non-violence and his moral standards are what Today's leaders must emulate in order for organizations to have the advantage in the global Market. His concept of a self-rule society can be compared to a project organization, where individual teams are self governed and highly efficient. Albert Einstein exclaimed—"Generations to come will scarce believe that such a one as this ever in flesh and blood walked upon the earth". Trusteeship as a perceived by Gandhi is all embracing. 'Trusteeship' is an altitude first, then a technique and finally constitutional form.

Gandhian concept of 'walk and talk' were trusted by his followers since they were pure and sincere. According Gandhiji followed and practiced what he told his followers and told them what he practiced. There was no question of getting disappointing them on the part of both parties. On the contrary the present corporate leaders and managers advertise their goods with false information with a view to attract public. According to my opinion, they advertise goods with some features cannot be seen in the purchased good.

The principles practiced by Mahatma Gandhi may look simple on surface but the depth and greatness of them can be realized only when they are practiced. Every Indians feels happy to hear the news of the revival of Gandhi's principles and them being followed by Indian corporate leaders and industrialists. The Gandhian techniques are recognized as needful and are applied to the present business world. The

management gurus and corporate consultants find that they are more effective than the latest trading methods. A successful management hero is one who has needed to understanding of the psychology of colleagues, character building ability, organizational capacity, sense of duty honor for time, laborious, positive attitude, inspiring, for a moment ability to take decisions, balanced even in adverse condition and health consciousness. While we studying Gandhian philosophy it seems that he created his own standers of balancing everything.

According to Gandhian concept of stress management, Gandhiji had a good sense of humour, which he used to reduce stress. Understanding that, when he felt disconsolate, he read Bhagvada Gita. He was a karma yogi who usually tried various yama and niyama, he did yoga asanas, simple pranayama, massage drinking water through the nose. To maintain his fit and free from diseases and fatigue. Gandhijibelieved in Dhyana(meditation), Samadhi(attainment of the super conscious state), and Dharana(concentration of the mind) to avoid depression and mental exhaustion, attain and maintain physical and mental wellness and relax them. Yoga enables us to discover empowering to the individual, physically, mentally and spiritually. Gandhiji used remedies such as positive thinking, meditation, internal peace and skill of non-violence to reduce stress. Today's managers should conduct the laughing class, yoga class for employees or Gita path as stress busters.

3. Significance of the Study

This study contributes to the ongoing discourse on ethical and sustainable management by:

- Exploring the applicability of Gandhian philosophy to contemporary organizational contexts;
- Providing a theoretical foundation for integrating Gandhian values into modern leadership and crisis management models;
- Offering practical recommendations for public policy, business ethics, and leadership development in a post-pandemic world.

4. Research Questions and Objectives

Research Questions:

1. How relevant is Gandhian philosophy in the addressing management challenges in the pandemic era?
2. In what ways can Gandhian principles enhance contemporary leadership and management models?
3. Can Gandhian philosophy be operationalized within current organizational structures?

Objectives:

- To analyze the ethical foundations of Gandhian philosophy;
- To compare and contrast Gandhian ideals with contemporary management practices;
- To evaluate case studies of Gandhian philosophy applied in crisis and scenarios.

Understanding the role that, Gandhiji played as a manager and as an ideal leader. We would co-relate Gandhi's techniques with recent management principles. We are studying various tools (techniques) used by him which had high impact during freedom struggle. There is nothing utopian about Mahatma Gandhi's ideals and techniques. Here I shall try to understand whether these tools used in our personal life to develop our personality Gandhian ways. I want to realise whether the Gandhian tools can develop our personality in such a way that others may derive inspiration out of it.

Establish our positive ideals emphatically so that the positive impression may reflect on others.

According to the Gandhian concept of trusteeship the profits gained by doing business should be deposited in a trust. Therefore other objective of this study would to show business, leader there corporate social responsibility in formulating economic policy for the society and the mankind as a whole.

According to Gandhiji, violence means exploitation of money, freedom or rights of others. Understanding as customers, we see difference between the actual function of a good and the advertisement of the good given by a business organization in print and electronic media. Concept of the difference speaks that the business people are not fair in advertising their goods. In this way they cheat their customer, the business world does not integrate truth and non-violence in their dealings.

Understanding that, his principles like non-violence and satyagraha ensure mutual understanding, cooperation, forgiveness and forbearance which will all together frame a healthy environment for mental wellbeing. Mental health is an internal and essential component of health.

5. Literature Review- Studying various books, journal, article blogs and posts from the various news paper to develop this paper on –“ *Relevance of Gandhian Philosophy in the Management of Pandemic Era: An Overview*”. There is no doubt that Gandhiji was a good man and an intensely spiritual man, but he was also a manager and executive, supremely practical leader.

The book entitled “Perspectives on Gandhian Thoughts “ has been written by R.K. Prithi and Archana Charturvedi, in 2009, analyses Mahatma Gandhiji was a many faceted personality of world leaders call for return of Gandhian principles.

6. Scope and Limitations

The scope of this study includes:

- A conceptual analysis of Gandhian principles;
- An evaluation of leadership and management practices in pre- and post-pandemic periods;
- A comparison with modern management theories such as servant leadership, CSR, lean management, and agile models.

Limitations:

- This study does not include quantitative data collection due to scope constraints;
- Focuses primarily on Indian and global perspectives without regional micro-analysis.

7. Methodology Overview

This research adopts a qualitative methodology, drawing from primary sources such as Gandhi’s writings (e.g., *Hind Swaraj*, *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*) and secondary literature including journal articles, books on management, and crisis leadership. A thematic content analysis approach is used to identify parallels between Gandhian ideals and contemporary management strategies.

Case study methodology is employed to demonstrate the relevance of Gandhian principles in real-world scenarios, including examples from Indian enterprises and global initiatives that have employed value-based leadership.

8. Conclusion

From the above discussion we may come to the conclusion. Mahatma Gandhi knew the importance of management very well. He applied them for his Ashram and other constructive works. His techniques are all about management. Though, in order to apply Gandhian model, we would require a revamping to current management. This is true that Gandhiji has nowhere formulated a theory of management as such. Hence is to be evolved from his social philosophy, principles and his thoughts.

Gandhiji vigorously believed that in natural cure. We also know that, Gandhiji also advocated vegetarianism. He recommended fasting to be a therapeutic invention against ailments like fever, depression, constipation and diarrhoea.

Understand that, Gandhian model reflects India as rural country. If Gandhian ideals would have prevailed, there would have been less rural to urban migration and hence a smaller number of immigrants would have existed.

Gandhi's aimed that, "every person should recognize that working with their hands and their hearts and their minds and being interconnected-is the highest evolution of our species. Working with our hands is not a degradation, it's our humanity. This is the radical equality". As we are all aware of that the whole mankind has undergone through a pandemic situation due to covid-19. The whole mankind has realized his helplessness in front of the mother earth- a helplessness that has not been faced by mankind in the last 50 or 100 years. Thus, through this study I shall try to realise whether the Gandhian values and his philosophy could help the mankind in overcoming the pandemic situation and whether the Gandhian management techniques could guide us in the post- pandemic era.

We know that, When Gandhiji returned back from South-Africa and applied his own methods of fighting against the British Empire; it was beyond anybody's expectation that such a common man can create power of common people that would be unbeaten. But, Gandhiji prepped himself. He was not a management trainee. I shall try to understand how did he proved that truth, non-violence and 'Charka' can be the instruments of social, economic and political transformation? Understand the role that, how did he laid if millions of people of India different castes and creeds, poor and rich, man and women would launch movement against the mighty empire, would be unanswerable. I shall try, what was that element that derived, so people to follow him? Gandhiji said that, "Spin cotton thread" and people obeyed. When he said to denounce foreign clothes". People burnt all foreign clothes. When he moved forward to break Salt Law and every one stood up to break the Law. Understand the role, this was definitely the light of his 'Charismatic' personality. Understand that his ideas and way of living inspired every Indians. There was no difference in his words and deeds. So this is where his mastery over management is proved.

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