



## Mains Practice Question

**Q.** What do you understand by the term 'Gandhian Ethics'? Discuss with examples the application of the Gandhian ethics in public service. (150 words)

17 Sep, 2020 GS Paper 4 Theoretical Questions

### Approach

- Introduce by writing a few lines on Gandhian ethics.
- Explain the major principles of Gandhian ethics.
- Discuss with examples the role and application of Gandhian ethics in public services.
- Conclude suitably.

### Introduction

- Gandhian philosophy's objective is to transform the individual and society simultaneously, in accordance with the principles inspired from various sources like Bhagvad Geeta, Jainism, Buddhism, Bible, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Tolstoy, John Ruskin among others.
- Gandhian thought can not altogether be separated from ethics. His ideas are generally expressed in moral categories or terminology. Ethical theories provide the underpinnings for Gandhian thought in any sphere.

### Body

#### Major principles of Gandhian Ethics:

- **Truth and nonviolence:** They are the twin cardinal principles of Gandhian thoughts.
  - For Gandhi, truth is the relative truth of truthfulness in word and deed, and the absolute truth - the ultimate reality.
  - Nonviolence is understood by Mahatma Gandhi to denote active love - the pole opposite of violence, in every sense. Nonviolence or love is regarded as the highest law of humankind.
- **Satyagraha:** Gandhi called his overall method of nonviolent action Satyagraha. It means the exercise of the purest soul-force against all injustice, oppression and exploitation. It is a method of securing rights by personal suffering and not inflicting injury on others.
- **Sarvodaya:** Sarvodaya is a term meaning 'Universal Uplift' or 'Progress of All'. The term was first coined by Gandhi as the title of his translation of John Ruskin's tract on political economy, "Unto This Last".
- **Swaraj:** Although the word swaraj means self-rule, Gandhi gave it the content of an integral revolution that encompasses all spheres of life.
  - For Gandhi, swaraj is much more than freedom from all restraints, it is self-rule, self-restraint and could be equated with moksha or salvation.
- **Trusteeship:** Trusteeship is a socio-economic philosophy that was propounded by Gandhi. It provides a means by which the wealthy people would be the trustees of trusts that looked after the welfare of the people in general.
- **Swadeshi:** Swadeshi is the focus on acting within and from one's own community, both politically

and economically. It is the interdependence of community and self-sufficiency.

### **Application of Gandhian ethics:**

- Functioning on the basis of voluntary **cooperation and dignified & peaceful co-existence** was replicated in several other modern democracies.
  - Also, his emphasis on **political tolerance and religious pluralism** holds relevance in contemporary Indian politics.
- The ideals of truth and nonviolence, which underpin the whole philosophy, are **relevant to all humankind**, and are considered as **universal** by the Gandhians.
- More than ever before, Gandhi's teachings are valid today, when people are trying to find solutions to the rampant greed, widespread violence, and runaway consumptive style of living.
- Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence was a great weapon used by him during the freedom movement of India against British Raj. Normally, people say that non-violence is the weapon of weak but in reality non-violence and tolerance require a great level of courage and patience.
  - In world that is moving through the phases of war marred by violence and the menace of terrorism there is a significant requirement of Gandhian idea of Non- violence more and more today than the past days.
- Dalai Lama said, "We have a big war going on today between world peace and world war, between the force of mind and force of materialism, between democracy and totalitarianism." It is precisely to fight these big wars that the Gandhian philosophy needed in contemporary times.

### **Conclusion**

Gandhi's Seven Sins are an integral part of the Gandhian ethics and needed to be adopted in the society and in governance. Gandhian ethics shaped the creation of institutions and practices where the voice and perspective of everyone can be articulated, tested and transformed.

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