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Gandhi's Ideas on World Government

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Gandhi's ideas on World Government

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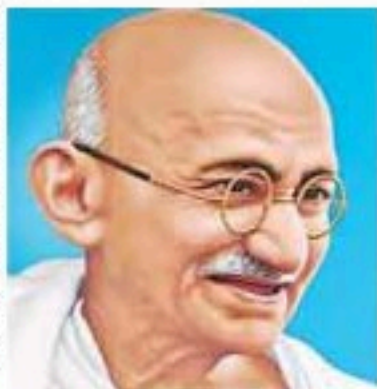
Gandhi is known worldwide as a freedom fighter of India who led India to independence by employing non-violent civil disobedience method. He was involved in the freedom movement for more than three decades (1915-1947), i.e., most part of his work life. Hence, Gandhi is largely seen as a nationalist leader and his ideas and views on world political structure is not much researched and debated in public domain. Many might not know that it was Gandhi who said 'Nationalism is not the highest concept; the highest concept is world community. I would not like to live in this world, if it is not to be one.'

Gandhi had clearly articulated in the journals he used edit that India's freedom is not India-centric or against any other nation. Rather he considered India's freedom as a precondition for global welfare. Gandhi's preference for world government is quite evident in his statement in *Young India* dated December 26, 1924, which reads as "The better mind of the world desires today not absolutely independent states warring one against another but a federation of friendly interdependent states". Gandhi maintained this view throughout the freedom struggle. A couple of months before India's independence he wrote in *Harijan* (dated June 8, 1947) that "The only condition on which the world can live is being united is when it is under one central governing body composed of representatives of the component parts."

Gandhi had witnessed two World Wars and its dangerous consequences. He had realised that 'competitive sovereignty' and the absence of world government have caused the compulsive large defence expenditure by countries. To curtail expenditure on arms, eliminate wars among countries, and achieving perpetual peace, Gandhi viewed world government as a necessary instrument and was ready to sacrifice India's sovereignty for the same. In his opinion peace can be ensured in the world if a single government wields control over the armaments and no sacrifice would be too big to achieve world peace—be it surrendering of a part of national sovereignty. J B Kripalani, one of the

most ardent disciples of Gandhi, has written that 'if Gandhi would have alive today he would have wanted India to dispense with its fighting forces whatever the consequences. He would have advised that this question of India's disarmament should be irrespective of what others did or did not.'

Apart from demilitarization, Gandhi wanted world government for two other righteous reasons. First, to end 'resource disparity', which he regarded as the cause of disharmony among people of different countries. Any resource available in any part of the world belongs to the entire world and must be utilized taking equity and sustainability into consideration. World government with its authority over countries can instrument this resource distribution to end



poverty and minimise disparity. Gandhi wished for world government purely from the principle of morality as well. As per his views, human life is one, which cannot be compartmentalized—social or national. Absence of world federal structure makes countries to behave and act in a selfish manner, which leads to the syndrome of 'split personality'. On individual capacity a person is admired for

being peaceful, truthful, modest, and helpful, whereas, as an agent of a country in international relations, in order to be effective, one has to be selfish, proud, aggressive, overbearing, and overpowering. Likewise justice, peace, democracy, Gandhi believed morality is indivisible; and collective immorality is bound to poison individual morality.

The idea of world government was not exclusive to Gandhi. Many intellectuals starting from Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) to Bertrand Russell (1872-1970) have advocated for federal world government. Nevertheless, as citizens of India it is worthwhile to understand what Gandhi, the Father of Nation, had in mind about the world political structure. His ideas on world government were relevant in his life time. They are all the more pertinent today with worldwide multiplying expenditure on arms, trade and oil monopoly, terrorism and international crime, and energy and climate crises.

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