

6. Leader in News – Mahatma Gandhi

Gandhi Jayanti, celebrated on October 2, marks the birth anniversary of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (Mahatma Gandhi). In 2025, India observes his 156th birth anniversary. Gandhi Jayanti is a national holiday in India and is also recognized worldwide as the International Day of Non-Violence. The day commemorates Gandhi's principles of truth (Satya) and non-violence (Ahimsa), highlighting his enduring influence on India and the world.

Mahatma Gandhi – Life, Philosophy, and Legacy

Birth and Early Life – Born on 2 October 1869 in Porbandar, Gujarat. Professionally a lawyer, socially a reformer, and politically a leader of India's freedom struggle. Known globally as the Father of the Nation, he pioneered Satyagraha, a method of non-violent resistance.

Core Philosophies

a. Political Philosophy

Swaraj (Self-Rule) – Emphasized individual, family, and village self-governance beyond mere political independence. Encouraged moral responsibility and community participation, contrasting Western liberal models.

Satyagraha (Non-Violent Resistance) – Advocated truth, courage, and civil disobedience. Strong moral principle – “Ends do not justify the means”.

b. Economic Philosophy

Swadeshi and Trusteeship – Promoted local production and consumption; wealth holders act as caretakers for societal welfare. Prefigured modern Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

Village-Centric Development – Emphasized Gram Swaraj, sustainable local economies, and equitable resource distribution, contrasting Nehru's industrialization approach.

c. Social Reform

Eradication of Untouchability – Harijan upliftment campaigns integrated oppressed castes into mainstream society. Advocated social unity over separate electorates, differing from B.R. Ambedkar.

Gender and Education – Encouraged women's participation and literacy through Nai Talim, fostering civic responsibility and ethical values.

d. Moral and Physical Courage

Johannesburg Plague (1904) – Treated abandoned patients, risking life.

Chauri Chaura Incident (1922) – Suspended Non-Cooperation Movement due to violence, prioritizing principle over expediency.

Noakhali Mission (1946) – Promoted communal harmony, walking barefoot through riot-affected areas. Survived multiple assassination attempts without compromising on Ahimsa and principled living.

Historical Context & Influences

South African Experience (1893–1915) – Confronted racial discrimination; developed Satyagraha as a mass mobilization technique.

Thinkers Influencing Gandhi – Leo Tolstoy, John Ruskin, Gopal Krishna Gokhale.

Impact on Indian Society – Politicized ordinary citizens (peasants, women, lower castes) for the first time. Movements such as Non-Cooperation, Civil Disobedience, Quit India shaped social consciousness.

Major Movements & Key Events

Year	Event	Significance
1917	Champaran Satyagraha	1 st civil disobedience in India; supported oppressed farmers.
1918	Kheda Satyagraha	Successful tax revolt post-crop failure; empowered rural communities.
1920–22	Non-Cooperation Movement	Nationwide boycott of British institutions; mass mobilization.
1930	Salt March & Civil Disobedience	Protested British monopoly; triggered national participation.
1942	Quit India Movement	Launched “Do or Die” call; intensified freedom struggle.
1947	India's Independence	Culmination of sustained non-violent struggle.

1948	Assassinated	30 January; global mourning and reflection on non-violence.
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Literary Contributions

Hind Swaraj (1909) – Vision of Swaraj, critique of industrial civilization, ethics in politics.

Autobiography – “The Story of My Experiments with Truth” – Personal journey, moral struggles, and development of Satyagraha.

Journalism – Founded newspapers like Indian Opinion, Young India, Navjivan, mobilizing public opinion and spreading nationalist ideas.

Constructive Programmes Writings – Practical ideas on rural development, education, sanitation, women’s empowerment.

Role in Indian National Congress (INC)

Joined INC in 1915, transforming it into a mass-based, ethically driven movement. Advocated non-violent protest and constructive programmes. Led major movements through INC –

1. **Champaran & Kheda Agitations** (1917–18)
2. **Non-Cooperation Movement** (1920–22)
3. **Civil Disobedience Movement** (1930–34)

Introduced ethical anchoring in politics through Satya and Ahimsa.

Constructive Programmes and Social Reform

Education (Nai Talim) – Learning through productive work; civic responsibility.

Rural Development – Promoted Khadi, village industries, sanitation.

Women Empowerment – Active participation in movements.

Harijan Upliftment – Integrated marginalized castes into society.

Key Speeches & Quotes

Quit India (1942) – “Do or Die.”

On Truth & Nonviolence – “My religion is based on truth and non-violence.”

Inspirational Quotes – “Be the change you wish to see in the world.” “An eye for an eye only ends up making the whole world blind.” “In a gentle way, you can shake the world.”

Awards, Recognitions, and Memorials

Kaisar-i-Hind Gold Medal (1915) – Returned in 1920 as protest against Jallianwala Bagh.

Nominated for Nobel Peace Prize five times.

International Day of Non-Violence – 2 October, UNGA 2007.

Global Statues & Memorials – UK, USA, South Africa, Japan, Israel.

Gandhi Peace Prizes – Awarded globally to individuals promoting non-violence and social justice.

Contemporary Relevance

Ethical governance, inclusive politics, conflict resolution, and sustainable living.

Policies inspired by Gandhi –

1. Economic self-reliance (Swadeshi, cottage industries)
2. Directive Principles of State Policy (Articles 39, 40, 43, 46, 47) reflecting Gandhian ideals.
3. Panchayati Raj system institutionalizes Gram Swaraj.

Global influence – Inspired Martin Luther King Jr., Nelson Mandela, and other peace movements. Offers a framework for tackling inequality, climate crises, and conflicts in the 21st century.

Gandhi in the Digital Age

Resists simplification into memes and soundbites; principles remain complex. Challenges posed by digital world –

1. Algorithmic polarization vs Ahimsa
2. Post-truth narratives vs pursuit of Satya
3. Instant gratification culture vs patience and reflection

Offers lessons for ethical leadership, community engagement, and thoughtful action.

Conclusion

Gandhi's philosophy is timeless, emphasizing truth, non-violence, inclusivity, and self-rule. His life and teachings provide a practical and moral blueprint for individual ethics, governance, and social transformation in modern India and globally. Gandhi Jayanti serves as a reminder of peaceful coexistence, moral courage, and sustainable development in today's complex world.

