

## **Implications of Mahatma Gandhi's Charismatic Leadership in Today's Management**

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### **Abstract -**

Mahatma Gandhi was a leader in true sense and a management expert undoubtedly. He planned his activities precisely, detailed the targets achievable correctly and studied the opponent and their strategies accurately. He won the respect, confidence and allegiance by identifying himself with the masses, dressing like them, living among them and empathizing with them. Renowned International Schools of Business Management had crowned him the „Management Guru’ of the 20th century. Business leaders across the globe have discovered a new „Management icon’ -Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of the Indian Nation.

While leading the nation in the struggle for independence, Gandhi held a beacon to some management strategies which are critical in present day corporate world. The Mahatma is now being rediscovered as more than just a political leader who gained independence for the country. He is being looked upon as a master strategists and an exemplary leader. His ideas and strategies have great meaning for the corporate world. Mahatma Gandhi was charismatic, deliberate and analytical. He was a politician, a writer, an intellectual and an orator. Mahatma Gandhiji was a complex man believing in simple things. The present study is an attempt to study Mahatma Gandhis leadership and its implications in management today.

**Keywords** – icon, charismatic, strategist.

### **1.0 Introduction**

Leadership is the ability of an individual, group or organization to lead, influence or guide other individuals, teams, or the entire organizations. It involves leading a group of people or an organization and taking risks and challenging the status quo. Leaders motivate others to achieve something new and better. A good leader keeps the team on track. A leader should possess various qualities such as willingness to listen, perseverance, honesty, selflessness, trust, integrity etc. Leadership can be exercised through various styles such as Autocratic, Democratic, Laissez-faire or Transformational. Leadership styles refer to the behavioral approach employed by leaders to influence, motivate, and direct their followers. People are directed to special individuals like Gandhi or Napoleon or Mandela, Mother Terrasa.

Mahatma Gandhi was symbol of peace, spirituality and morality. He is always remembered for the great contribution of his hard work, simplicity, faith in truth, non violence, humanity, and unity. His actions and movements of Satyagraha, Non-cooperation movement, Dandi march, Quit movement have left an indelible mark not only in India but throughout the world. His service to mankind was numerous. Gandhi has been aptly hailed as A Revolutionary Transformer of Management. He was a spiritual mentor and known as a management reformer. His contribution to business management is remarkable and

marvelous for history as well as present era. Mahatma Gandhi was an ideal management guru. Truth and Non Violence were the two key components of his creed. The Mahatma inspired the common man to follow his principles and led the masses to win the fight for independent India. Innovation and creativity, founded on moral authority flowing from his "inner voice" (his term for 'conscience'), constituted the bedrock of whatever campaign he embarked upon. Gandhi's concept of Non-violence and his high moral standards are what today's leaders must emulate in order for organisations to have the advantage in the global market. Knowing that violence only begets violence, he began practicing passive resistance, Satyagraha. Mahatma Gandhi was a leader that brought one of the world's most powerful nations to its knees by using peace, love, and integrity as his method for change. He was a man of action and used the 4 Es throughout his life: Envision, Enable, Empower, and Energize.

### **1.1 Objectives of the Study**

1. To gain insight about the qualities of Mahatma Gandhi as a leader/ manager
2. To understand the relevance of leadership traits of Mahatma Gandhi to the field of business management today
3. To offer conclusions

### **1.2 Review of Literature** Swaroop Simha (Simha, 2018) in her study on "Significance and Relevance of the leadership qualities, Ideals and Values of Mahatma

Gandhi, in *Sustaining Successful Business in Today's World* noted that Gandhiji's leadership ideals and values can be termed as timeless and relevant to all working professionals. He was both a transformational and transactionable leader which was the prime reason for his lasting impact on the struggle for Indian independence.

- Dr Samer Kumar (Panigrahi, 2018) argue that Gandhiji attempted to stimulate his followers not only to overall vision, but also to educate them regarding the risk and challenges ahead.
- According to Samuel O obaki, Anthony Sang and Paul Ogenga (Samuel O. Obaki, 2013) Gandhiji opened a new dimension of thinking about leadership styles and their impact on institutions, people and other resources. His leadership inspired Indians to be creative and development conscious that have made them self-reliant.
- Annette Barnabas and Paul Sundararajan Clifford (Clifford, 2012) highlighted the importance of servant leadership qualities of Gandhiji like service, self-sacrificial love, spirituality, integrity, implicitly, emphasizing followers need and modelling.
- Surendra Munshi (Munshi, 2010) pointed out that Gandhiji as a leader challenged the entire nation to think in a radically different way for realizing an objective which he pursued with all the strength of "a pragmatic dreamer".
- Joan F. Marques (Marques, 2007) in his study observed that Gandhiji was most famous for his Satyagraha ideology which entailed a non-violent strategy of leading. He throws light on Gandhi's outstanding traits such as (a) his authentic appearance, (b) his charisma and knowledge and (c) his great motivational skills.

### 1.3 Qualities of Mahatma Gandhi as a leader/ manager

#### 1. Leadership by examples

Gandhi's greatest ability was „to walk his talk at every level and in every way. He practiced what he preached at every possible level. He dressed like the poorest Indian with a hand-woven cotton cloth that barely covered his body and had the simplest of watches and glasses. When it came to personal possessions, he had the barest of the minimum. It is not found in today's leaders.

#### 2. Equality

Gandhi always looked at everyone as equals. He gave more priority to interests of the organizations than individuals. He tried to truly understand his people. He spoke from their point of view.

#### 3. Persistence

Gandhi got support from the nation and in the international community. It was due to his extraordinary persistence once he had articulated his vision and his methods. His determination in following through on what he preached was often at a cost to his own well-being.

#### 4. Continuous Growth

Gandhi understood the importance of continuous growth in his life. He continually sought out greater understanding through much study of religious scripture. As a leader, one must also understand the need for constant growth.

#### 5. Strength through respect

Gandhi displayed great strength, not through his strength to force others to bend to his will, but by using nonviolent means. As a leader, he leveraged his position or authority. He used respect to win people over instead of using power to bend people to your will. He believed that the force of power never wins against the power of love.

#### 6. Compassion

Most human conflicts have been a result of a stubborn approach by the leaders. Most of the disputes can be resolved by the leaders showing a willingness to understand the issues of opponents and by using diplomacy and compassion. All have the same ambitions and aspirations to raise our family and to live life to its fullest.

#### 7. Kindness

A great leader always leads with an exemplary life that echoes his ideals. Mahatma Gandhi sacrificed his thriving law practice and adopted a simple life to live among the millions who lived in poverty during his freedom struggle. Modern leaders cajol the masses with promises that they never intend to keep. Gandhi demonstrated peaceful acts of kindness daily.

#### 8. Reasonable

Gandhi realized that partition was inevitable as the only solution to the Hindu-Muslim divide and accepted it. Although Gandhi was a man of faith, he did not create any specific dogma for his followers. Gandhi believed in the unity of all mankind under one God.

## 9. Strategist

Gandhiji was a strategist, showman, and leader. He had an amazing public relations network and a very good relationship with the press eg. the Dandi march, He knew he had to create an event to make an impact and so he took his followers on a march. It stirred the popular imagination of the time. He had a total understanding of the human psychology and used it along with his public relation skills.

## 10. Discipline

Mahatma believed that his self-discipline heightened his commitment to achieving his goals. He was a focused leader with a „Do or Die attitude. He „would free India or die in the process. Mahatma did extraordinary things to improve his discipline and his commitment.

### 1.4 Implications of Mahatma Gandhijis leadership traits in todays management

Gandhijis concept of Management and Philosophy played an essential role in corporate world. His thorough thinking about management was based on love, trust, understanding and human goodness. His philosophy gives an imprint in the corporate world. Mahatma Gandhi represented leadership and managerial abilities in the most numerous critical circumstances through Self Management, Time Management, Stress- Management, Wealth Management, Resource Management, Emotional Intelligence, and Communication, Turnaround Specialist etc. The implications of Mahatma Gandhijis leadership traits in todays management are as under.

**1. Self- Management** –Gandhijis principles of Ahimsa (Nonviolence), Satya (Truth), Asteya (Non-Stealing), Brahmacharya (Self Discipline), Aparigraha (NonPossession), Sharirshrama (Bread Labor), Aswada (Control of the Palate), Sarvatra Bhayavarjana (Fearlessness), Sarva Dharma Samantva (Equality of All Religions), Swadeshi (Use Locally Made Goods), Sparshbhavana (Remove Untouchability) elucidate Mahatmas self-management concept. When he went to the London for future study, before that he made a promise to his mother that he would desist from eating meat, taking alcohol, and engaging in promiscuity. He kept that promise lifelong and became a strict vegetarian. Self-management is about, acknowledging oneself, recognizing and accepting ones responsibilities, and mistakes also to moving onward in life. According to Gandhian self-management – First a manager is a man and then a manager. If he can have managed himself, only then he will able to control, manage and supervise others.

**2. Time Management**-Mahatma Gandhi was very punctual with esteems to the time and used to keep a dollar watch on it. He responded to each and every letter without delay due to the effective time management practiced by him. He did not waste his single second of the spare time and used the futile time in reading books or replying to the pending letters. Mahatma Gandhi never said to anybody that he is too busy. Whenever people came to meet him for some work or problem, he did not refuse them even he was met to all persons.

**3. Wealth management**-Gandhian philosophy of wealth management is based on Theory of Trusteeship. According to him if a single person had an enough amount of wealth, he must know that all that prosperity did not belong to him. What belongs to him was the right to a

respectable living. The excess of his prosperity belonged to the community and must be utilized for the welfare of the society. Money cannot be made without labour. Gandhi knew that the power of labour was in its unity. When labour is organized together, it become more powerful than capital.

**4.Resource Management**-Gandhi emphasized more on khadi industry because he knew that it can be redeveloped as a small-scale industry and people get maximum employment and no one can sit idle. Gandhi initiated the views of non cooperation and he knew that to make the people adhere to it, he needed to bring them under the swadeshi fold. He knew that the operating of British goods could be barricade for encouraging people to resuscitate and revitalize their own business. Gandhi focused on full consumption and maximum utilization of resource without exploitation of labour. Gandhiji knew the importance of producing goods and its results even from limited resources. It made Gandhi as a successful business leader.

**5.Stress Management**-Gandhiji had a good sense of humour which he used to reduce stress. When he felt frustrated he read Bhagavad Gita. Gandhi was a karma yogi who tried usually various Yama and Niyama, He did yoga asanas, simple pranayama, etc. to maintain his body fit and free from diseases and fatigue. Gandhi believed in Dhyana (meditation), samadhi and Dharana (concentration of the mind) its avoid depression and mental exhaustion, attain and maintain physical and mental wellness and relax them. Yoga enables to discover empowering to the individual physically, mentally and spiritually. Gandhi ji used remedies such as positive thinking, meditation, internal peace and skill of nonviolent to reduce stress. Today's managers should conduct laughing class, yoga class for employees or Gita path as stress busters.

6. **Reinvent**- Gandhi found the new ways to deal with a situation where all the available existing methods had failed. He had understood well fighting with the British was not possible with force. He had the courage to invent the means. and change the paradigm.

7. **Clarity of Purpose** - Gandhiji aimed at a common agenda. He had unleashed the power of ordinary people in the country to fight under a common goal. It was necessary for him to understand the motive of opponents leadership to tackle it.

8. **Flexibility**- Gandhi advocated leadership styles that were dependent on the circumstances. When Gandhi was in South Africa, he launched his protests in a suit and a tie. But when he came back to India, he thought of khadi and launched non-violent protests on a greater scale. He was quite a flexible leader. He used to change his plans around to counter British rules and tactics.

9. **Empowerment of people** - Gandhi was making sure that everyone in the cause is connected to the goal. Gandhis style of leadership as applied to corporate India involved making even the lowest person in the organization. In business, empowerment is all about making sure everyone is connected to the organizations goals. Gandhis role as a manager and leader is extraordinary He not only had self-belief but he had the ability to inspire the Indian people to achieve their goal of freedom, even through the hardships.

10. **Social Progress** - Leadership is an integral part of work and social life where a group of people wants to accomplish a common goal. Leadership behavior occurs in almost all formal and informal social situations. In that sense Gandhiji was a charismatic leader.

11. **Transcend Adversaries** - Gandhi failed many times. But every time he used the failure to improve his leadership skills and the task at hand. The first time Mahatma got up to speak in court when he was working as a lawyer, he could not speak a single word due to fear. This caused him great humiliation. It gives us learning that even the best leaders still fail and make mistakes, but they learn from their mistakes.

### 12. **Inspire and Motivate**

Its necessary for a leader to give a sense of hope to followers. He should encourage a culture of pride in the employees. A leader must have the ability to bring out the best in others, to enable others to act. Gandhi had all those abilities.

### 13. **Credibility**

Credibility is one of the most important qualities of a good leader. It is the foundation of leadership. Credibility is built upon honesty, integrity, and self-discipline. Leaders are the role models of the employees. Every leader must realize that employees are constantly observing and analyzing their actions, evaluating consistency between their work and their deeds, judging their integrity. Leaders must exercise self-discipline by eliminating their own personal egos or emotions.

14. **Long lasting relationships** A leaders job is not only limited to planning, creating strategies and organizational structure but to establish the kind of personal relationships with employees. Employees must find their leaders accessible.

15. **Lead through managing people** While Gandhi might have been „managing the Indian freedom movement with a troop of comrades on clockwork precision, he was actually leading a change of mindset that effected change in everyone who participated with him. Leaders need to understand the importance of getting on board the people whom they are managing and driving them to bring the change. A leader alone can not bring the desired effect. It is the mass which brings the on ground effect.

### 16. **Value based**

Gandhis brought positive changes through out his entire life. He both succeeded and failed in what he sought to do. But he was never disappointed and always moved forward. He never gave up the quest for improvement, both social and spiritual, and both for individuals and for the Nation as a whole.

Modern day management practices revolve around total quality, customer relations, corporate social responsibility, human resource development, etc. If we closely examine the life and work of Mahatma Gandhi we find that he had taken up all these aspects while fighting for our independence. Mahatma Gandhi stressed on quality in all his endeavours for mobilizing people for getting Swaraj. In todays management theory and practice, total quality means persistence of quality consciousness in every aspect of the organisation. That

was what exactly Gandhiji did when he was in the forefront of the non-violent struggle for independence.

Also customer care has remained at the centre of management practices today. Mahatma Gandhi observation “A customer is the most important visitor on our premises. He is not dependent on us. We are dependent on him. He is not an interruption in our work. He is the purpose of it. ... .” makes him one of the foremost modern day managers whose thinking goes beyond the conventional understanding of management.

Mahatma Gandhi emphasised on social responsibility and gave importance to the workers and labourers in a factory as major stakeholders. His theory of Trusteeship essentially stressed on the responsibility of the owners of factories and wealth to treat their possessions as not entirely their own but as that of the society. This is what exactly the modern day managers are doing while talking about maximizing the productivity of an organisation.

In short, Gandhi is remembered not only as a political leader but as a moralist too. Though Gandhi lived many years ago, his leadership principles are useful for organisations today to compete in a global market. His high moral standards are what leaders today should strive to achieve. His belief in Non Violence is a principle that must be understood by all project managers in order for them to lead a diverse and culturally mixed community. Hierarchical organisations, where managers rule and the worker is just a commodity, are a thing of the past. This highly uneven structure of leadership has many principles in common with the 'caste' system. Organisations must restructure themselves toward a more equal and fair workplace where every worker contributes to the corporate vision. A common value system must exist among the organisation and a clear sense of honesty and trust must permeate throughout. Harvard School of Business Management has even crowned him the Management Guru of the 20th century. Mahatma Gandhi knew he wasn't perfect. But he practiced a series of leadership principles which remain valid to this day.

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