

How each one of us can change the World – Lessons from Mahatma Gandhi

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This year is 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. His writings and messages are as relevant today as were 100 years ago when he wrote them.

One of the central themes of Gandhi ji's life was that if we want to change the world then it should start with us. All his life he did experiments on himself and expanded them for the larger good.

I feel this motto is what each one of us should follow. That is discovering the truth and goodness in us and then to share it with the humanity so that this collective knowledge can help in mankind's evolution.

All the people who have made an impact on this world have followed the regime of first finding the truth (discovery); broadcasting it (papers, publicity, etc.) and then spreading the message (manufacturing; sales; inspiring others, etc.) to the world. This is the methodology that Gandhi ji also followed.

All his experiments on non-violence; brahmacharya (celibacy); food, etc. were first done on himself and then he wrote about them, gave speeches and inspired millions of Indians so that tremendous replication took place.

Similarly the quest for truth drove great scientists and inventors like Einstein, Newton, Faraday, Thomas Edison, Shockley, etc. to discover the secrets of nature. They developed the science and the technology because it was the romance of discovery and they were after the truth. Besides in

discovering the truth they got tremendous personal happiness. And each one in his own way changed the world.

They did not start on their discovery path by thinking about how to change the world. They started by thinking about how to find the truth and their discovery then changed the world. This is how nature evolves. It comes in equilibrium with its surroundings and develops slowly but surely. Large scale replication of such phenomena then changes the world.

So each one of us should try to search for truth in our own lives and spheres. However this requires a great courage and honesty because each one of us has to delve deeply inside ourselves and follow the path diligently since it is not for impressing others or to show the world.

I have always been inspired by Gandhi ji. He has been my hero and in a small way I have tried to imbibe his message in my life and this essay is an attempt to chronicle it.

In my own life my self-discovery started at the age of 13 when I came under the influence of Mahatma Gandhi after reading his autobiography. Then followed [many years of spiritual journey](#) resulting in interesting spiritual experiences and dreams.

This journey was further enhanced by [my engineering education](#) which exposed me to the effect technology can have on human life.

There are lots of articles written to show how Gandhi ji was anti-technology and anti-science. He was neither. In fact [he was the pujari or worshipper of human body](#) (the greatest machine ever designed by nature) and hence could never be anti-technology. He wrote about this issue couple of times since he was sensitive to this criticism.

In his life he used the latest technologies of his time; telephones, telegraph, trains, cars, ships, etc. What he rebelled against was the exploitative nature of technology and big machines of that time for poor masses. Intuitively he felt that decentralization and sustainable development was the solution to remove the poverty of rural poor.

Gandhi ji was **an engineer at heart**. He improvised on many things like better snake catching equipment; small cotton spinning wheel (*takli*); *chappals* (sandals) from used tyres, etc. In 1929 he even instituted a [Rs. one lakh prize](#) (Rs. 20 crores in today's value and 2.6 times bigger than the Nobel Prize!) for the design of an excellent charkha.

Such things could not come from an anti-technology person but from an innovator and an engineer. This is the hallmark of a great mind since it can produce original ideas in whichever field it becomes interested in.

Had Gandhi lived in the present times he would have embraced the latest technology of [3D printing](#), cell phones, enhanced rural mobility, etc., since it allowed decentralized development and helped in the improvement of lives of rural population.

In my case the enhancement of understanding through the study of engineering of what is possible with technology allowed me to look at the universe through new eyes. Thus I became aware of the problems of environment and the natural resources and how best to use them with the help of technology to solve the problems of rural India.

This awareness allowed us at our Institute to do [interesting experiments in renewable energy research](#); electric mobility development; electric power from biomass energy; purifying water for drinking, among others.

All this work was done to find and understand the truth which in turn gave me great joy and happiness. I never had any great desire to change the

world but wanted to discover the truth. However, in the process it might have inspired others and thus we can take small credit for influencing the world.

All these things combined then helped me on the path of spirituality and I have become convinced that [technology with spirituality should be the path of development for India and the world.](#)

So each one of us should find the truth in our own small way and then share it with the mankind. This will help increase the total knowledge of mankind and help in its evolution. This I feel was the essence of Gandhi ji's teachings.

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