

## Are Gandhi's ideals relevant today?

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When I was first told to write about my impressions on the relevance of Gandhi today to my generation, I did not research him- partly because I was too busy watching Smallville, but mainly because I wanted to do it wholly on my own existing knowledge in order to have a completely organic view on the matter, as it were.

Recently, I encountered a boy about the same age as me, brought up in India who thought Gandhi a spectacled old fool. Certainly Gandhi did wear glasses and at one point in his life he was old, but the fool part had me a little confused.

So, I decided to find out what I thought. I am of the more conventional view that Gandhi was not a fool and was, in fact, a pioneer of sorts when it came to non-violent resistance.

Albert Einstein said that *'generations to come will scarce believe that such a one as this ever in flesh and blood walked upon this earth'*. Like most things that Einstein said, this turned out to be true. Even though not many generations have passed since Gandhi's death, I believe myself to be a member of one of those generations that Einstein mentioned. For me, at least, it is hard to believe that he was, in fact, a real man who lived and breathed. He seems to be the stuff of legend rather than of reality, on par not with politicians and philosophers of today, but with religious figures like Buddha and Jesus. In fact, to me he seems decidedly more divine than mortal.

His ideas were based on a strong faith in humanity. He believed that no matter how repressing, no matter how ruthless the opposition were, underneath the cold-hearted veneer, harming and killing people who refused to fight would strike against their better nature. It was Gandhi's belief that better nature would prevail against cruelty and the evil. It was that age-old belief - that good would win over evil, but Gandhi found a subtler meaning – he did not think people good and their oppressors bad. He believed that the good in a person would prevail against the evil in them.

As to whether his methods and teachings and beliefs are relevant today, well, there hardly seems to be a time where it is more relevant. There are wars and oppressed people all over the world but can Gandhi's ideas be practised as they were then and still produce results?

I have to say, I have my doubts. Do the oppressors of today spend sleepless nights thinking of the destruction they have caused? Somehow, I think not. After all, some seem to think what they are doing will make them martyrs.

One of Gandhi's main methods was non-cooperation with unjust activities, but how are people meant to not co-operate when their homes and places of work are being carpet bombed by neighbouring countries? How can methods of appealing to the better nature in the oppressors work when the killer is sitting a control room thousands of miles away from the defenceless innocent people that they are killing? War has become something so abstract that the killers don't see the persons whose lives they are ending. It has become something almost like a terrible macabre game. And it is almost impossible to feel anything about ending those lives let alone guilt when all you are doing is launching a bomb or a missile by pressing just one little button.

Though we would like to believe that Gandhi's beliefs and ideas could have a place in world politics today his methods belong to a different time and a different world, against a different opposition with different goals. Perhaps they were a more humane opposition.

This is just my own opinion and I may yet be proved wrong, in fact, I hope that I will be, but it seems to me that this new age and this world calls for a more different approach. What that different approach would be I do not know.

Finally, I am told that the boy I mentioned earlier has, in fact, changed his views about Gandhi after making efforts to know more about Gandhi, so at least this speech, if nothing else, has a happy ending.