

EDITORIALS - 2ND OCT 2026

1. Gandhiji's many ways of understanding 'genius' (GS Paper I Modern History)

This editorial '**Gandhiji's many ways of understanding 'genius'**' was published in **The Hindu** on 2nd Oct 2026, highlights how Gandhi's use of 'genius' reveals his assessment of people, achievements and the misuse of power.

Meaning and Creative Achievement

- Gandhi's use of **genius** offers **evaluative yardsticks** for judging people and events, with relevance to contemporary society.
- Borrowed unchanged from Latin, 'genius' originally meant **divine inner power**; modern usage denotes exceptional ability or a **distinctive characteristic**.
- In **1888**, Gandhi admired the **Suez Canal** as an achievement of vision and engineering associated with Ferdinand de Lesseps, rather than describing its creator as a genius.
- The **1956 Suez crisis**, following Nasser's nationalisation of the canal, and contemporary regional conflicts connect creative achievement with threats from **destructive power**.

Genius and Oppressive Power

- Descartes's **1641 Meditations on First Philosophy** introduced **evil genius** as a malign power opposed to divine power.
- Gandhi invoked **evil genius** against South Africa's **Asiatic Department**, linking administrative power with discrimination and humiliation of Indians.
- After the **Jallianwala Bagh massacre (1919)**, Gandhi called Sir Michael O'Dwyer Dyer's evil genius; in **1921**, he sarcastically described British genius as dividing Hindus and Muslims to retain colonial control.

Recognition of Exceptional Ability

- At the **Belgaum Congress (1924)**, Gandhi called Tilak the genius of **swaraj**, recognising exceptional ability within a specific political pursuit.
- Gandhi praised Tagore's **poetic genius** and purity of life in 1931 for enhancing India's standing; in 1946, he credited his **creative genius** with Santiniketan, Sriniketan and Visvabharati.
- Gandhi recognised **Rajchandra** as a genius despite elementary schooling, valuing his knowledge of Sanskrit, Magadhi and possibly Pali over **formal education**.

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Gandhi's Concept of Ethical Leadership

- **Truthfulness:** Leaders build credibility by admitting wrongdoing; Gandhi's written confession of stealing gold from his brother's armlet illustrates honesty coupled with willingness to accept punishment.
- **Purity of means:** Ethical objectives require ethical methods; Gandhi's seed-tree analogy linked means inseparably with ends, rejecting the belief that desirable outcomes justify wrongful conduct.
- **Dignity of labour:** Leadership should respect manual work rather than privilege intellectual status; Gandhi made bread labour a central ashram observance, connecting personal effort with service.
- **Humility:** Exceptional ability must remain open to correction; in his autobiography, Gandhi explicitly rejected claims of perfection or infallibility, presenting his conclusions as revisable experiments.
- **Service orientation:** Public decisions should benefit the vulnerable; Gandhi's talisman asks decision-makers to assess whether their proposed action helps the poorest and weakest person.
- **Leading by example:** Personal conduct strengthens moral credibility; Gandhi adopted simpler clothing at Madurai in 1921 to identify more closely with poorly clothed masses.
- **Accountability:** Leaders must acknowledge strategic errors; Gandhi publicly described premature civil disobedience as a Himalayan miscalculation and subsequently prioritised training volunteers in satyagraha.

2. The Mahatma's unfinished work on the world stage (GS Paper I Modern History)

This editorial '**The Mahatma's unfinished work on the world stage**' was published in **The Hindu** on 2nd Oct 2026, highlights Gandhi's global influence on **non-violent movements** and the **international role** his assassination left unfulfilled.

Global Influence and Civil Rights

- Gandhi's **assassination** interrupted a potentially active international phase; at 78, his Noakhali walks and Calcutta and Delhi fasts demonstrated continuing capacity for **communal reconciliation**.
- Expanding **print media** amplified his transparent, public campaigns; reports of the Dharasana beatings appeared in around **1,300 newspapers** worldwide.

- The **African-American press** drew practical inspiration from Gandhi; a Harlem ashram and Ohio ahimsa farm reflected adoption beyond **symbolic admiration**.
- **Bayard Rustin**, who organised the 1963 March on Washington, applied Indian lessons during the **Montgomery Bus Boycott**, opposing armed protection and advocating voluntary surrender for morally justified lawbreaking.
- **James Lawson** established a **Satyagraha training school** in Nashville, translating Gandhian methods into organised civil rights activism.

Non-Violence as a Global Strategy

- Gandhi's innovation was **organised mass action**, making earlier forms of peaceful protest systematically replicable through **non-violent mobilisation**.
- Scholars cited in the editorial link entrenched **power asymmetries** with the effectiveness of **non-violent campaigns** in the later twentieth century, citing East Timor.
- The largely **non-violent** early First Intifada arguably pushed Israeli leaders towards negotiations and a **two-state solution** more effectively than bombings, assassinations and hijackings, though later events reversed progress.

Unfulfilled International Role

- Gandhi envisaged a **world movement** for non-violence after independence; his 1931 remarks and **1947 conference discussions** indicate concrete international intentions.
- A **1949 conference**, held after his death, discussed an international organisation; A.J. Muste proposed an Indian **training institute**, but Gandhi's direct leadership was absent.
- The editorial presents **Palestine** as a hypothetical test of Gandhi's capacity to invoke **moral accountability**, confronting Israeli Jews with suffering inflicted on Palestinians despite their own history of persecution.

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Limitations of Non-Violent Resistance

- **Severe repression:** Peaceful mobilisation cannot guarantee protection from state violence; China's military suppression of the Tiananmen demonstrations in June 1989 illustrates the risks under authoritarian rule.
- **Inadequate preparation:** Mass participation requires disciplined training; Gandhi's account of premature civil disobedience records difficulty recruiting volunteers and sustaining their systematic preparation for peaceful resistance.
- **Discipline breakdown:** Violence can derail peaceful campaigns; after Chauri Chaura in 1922, Gandhi defended suspension, warning that continued mobilisation would become essentially violent.
- **Participation costs:** Sustained boycotts require practical support; the Montgomery movement organised approximately 300 cars in a carpool system, helping participants continue resistance despite transport difficulties.

- **Internal fragmentation:** Diverse groups need shared objectives to sustain collective pressure; Belarus's 2020 protesters built unity around freedom of choice and basic rights despite differing interests.
- **Delegitimisation:** Authorities may portray peaceful protesters as security threats; during Colombia's 2021 protests, government accusations of links with armed actors challenged the movement's legitimacy.
- **Reversible gains:** Removing a ruler does not guarantee durable civilian government; Sudan's 2019 uprising helped oust Omar al-Bashir, but the October 2021 military coup renewed resistance.

3. Gandhi's first fight was for the vote (GS Paper I Modern History)

This editorial '**Gandhi's first fight was for the vote**' was published in **The Indian Express** on 2nd Oct 2026, highlights Gandhi's defence of **voting rights** as a benchmark for assessing **electoral roll revisions**.

Gandhi's Defence of Voting Rights

- Gandhi's first political battle concerned **voting rights**: opposing Natal's July **1894** disenfranchisement proposal, he petitioned Lord Ripon, linking the vote with self-respect and warning of exclusion's grave consequences.
- Rejecting illiteracy, caste and diversity as grounds for exclusion, Gandhi demanded **universal adult franchise** at the **1931 Round Table Conference**, irrespective of gender, wealth, literacy, faith or caste, to make the powerful listen.
- In **Durban (1896)**, a candidate enrolled Gandhi without his knowledge to secure support; Gandhi later cited this experience to expose **electoral roll manipulation**.
- India adopted **universal adult franchise** at the Republic's founding in **1950**; the editorial connects this commitment to Gandhi's vision of equal citizenship.

Electoral Revision and Democratic Citizenship

- The editorial alleges unprecedented mass **disenfranchisement** through **SIR**, arguing that voter exclusion undermines equal democratic voice beyond longstanding distortions from money and muscle power.
- It compares unlawful revisions that contract voter lists with **Natal's exclusionary policy**, warning that legal procedures can become instruments for weakening **citizenship rights**.
- Administrators must apply three **Gandhian tests**: whether revision preserves self-respect, ensures impartial rolls rather than partisan advantage, and protects voting as a **right**; the editorial characterises deliberate mass erasure as destruction of citizen rights rather than technical error.

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Procedural Safeguards Against Wrongful Voter Exclusion

- **Verified grounds:** Deletion must rest on evidence rather than assumptions; Election Commission of India safeguards require a Booth Level Officer's field verification report for each deletion case.
- **Prior notice:** Affected voters need time to contest proposed exclusion; the Commission's Electoral Rolls Manual prescribes seven-day notice for specified suo motu deletion proceedings.
- **Accessible verification:** Lack of conventional documents should not automatically prevent enrolment; Delhi's official guidance permits residence verification of homeless applicants through visits on more than one night.
- **Opportunity to respond:** Section 22 of the Representation of the People Act, 1950 requires a reasonable hearing before deletion for changed ordinary residence or ineligibility.
- **Public transparency:** Citizens must be able to scrutinise proposed changes; Delhi's electoral guidance provides for publishing claims and objections online and displaying them at registration offices.
- **Effective appeals:** Review mechanisms can correct erroneous decisions; the Commission's guidance provides an appeal to the District Election Officer during electoral roll revision.
- **Independent scrutiny:** Political-party representatives can flag wrongful omissions; Commission instructions provide for Booth Level Agents to scrutinise draft rolls, supplementing administrative verification with external oversight.