**Introduction**

Based on his critique of modern civilization in *Hind Swaraj* and lack of material on his views on science, Gandhi has been falsely labeled as anti-science. Gandhi, however, did consider himself a scientist:

> It (saint) is too sacred a word to be lightly applied to anybody, much less to one like myself who claims only to be a humble searcher after truth, knows his limitations, makes mistakes, never hesitates to admit them when he makes them, and frankly confesses that he, like a scientist, is making experiments about some of the ‘eternal verities’ of life.\(^1\)

Aldous Huxley was among the first to brand Gandhi and the kadhi movement as anti-science: Gandhites tell us that we must ‘return to nature’, in other words, abandon science altogether and live like primitives, or at best, in the style of our medieval ancestors.\(^2\) Huxley’s criticism of Gandhi was representative of contemporary understanding of Gandhi on science. Even Nehru, one of Gandhi’s closest followers, revealed the extent of this misunderstanding: My whole outlook on life and its problems is a scientific one and I have never felt attracted towards religion and its methods (like Gandhi).\(^3\) Here Nehru makes a distinction between himself as a science person and Gandhi as a religious man.

Adding to this misconception of Gandhi is the missing “science” in Gandhian writings and studies. Most studies on Gandhi have largely focused on his political philosophy. His views on science can be seen in his books, *Nature Cure, Key to Health*, and throughout his autobiography, *My Experiments with the Truth*, however there is not much analysis done on these components of Gandhi’s writing.

Gandhi denied that he was “an opponent, a foe of science.” Rather, he claimed he was concerned “about the misuse of science.”\(^4\) He had seen the misuse of science in his
travels round the world and believed that there were limitations even to scientific search. One such misuse was the practice of vivisection. To Gandhi, the practice of vivisection was ethically unacceptable. “I abhor vivisection with my whole soul. I detest the unpardonable slaughter of innocent life in the name of science and humanity so-called, and all the scientists’ discoveries stained with innocent blood I count of no consequence. If the circulation of blood theory could not have been discovered without vivisection the human kind could well have done without it.”

Therefore, in this case Gandhi felt that “science” had overstepped its boundaries but this in no case means that he was anti-science. It is from reading quotes such as the previous that people get the misconception that Gandhi was opposed to all science.

Gandhi is noted as having an admiration for both Paul Bureau, who wrote *L’Indiscipline des moeurs (The Indiscipline of Manners)*, and also for William Loftus Hare whose treatise on the enervating physiological effects of sex was entitled “Generation and Regeneration,” due to the fact that what they said about the body was scientific. Therefore it holds true that if Gandhi was anti-science he would not appreciate, let alone admire these works.

Instead, Gandhi’s life defined a space for an alternative science for civil society. To Gandhi, science was more a way of life to be learnt. The practice of science Gandhi emphasized melted science and morality together and required an attitude for research more than science qualifications and insisted that scientific knowledge should ultimately contribute to self-knowledge. He advocated aspects of traditional medicines like Ayurveda and Unanu that had unlike western science and allopathic medicine, maintained a relation between science and religion, body and soul; however, he did not
think these practices to be perfect because they had not instilled the spirit of research that should fire modern science. He also argued that modern medicine’s focus on the individual body de-emphasizes other reasons for sickness (such as the environment), which portrays Gandhi as viewing sickness from a more sociological viewpoint.

Because Gandhi did not find what he considered to be an appropriate system of health and medicine, he created his own health system that included both preventative and curative measures and both were a way to live life, not an instantaneous remedy. His health care system addressed the issues of diet, exercise, and medicine, and it was through various experiments he conducted on himself and in his ashrams as well as through his own experiences through reading books and hearing stories that he came to his conclusions. It is these experiments that specifically illustrate that Gandhi was not anti-science. Webster’s Dictionary defines a scientist as “a scientific investigator; one devoted to scientific study.” Gandhi believed that it is through experiments that one finds the truth, therefore he spent his whole life experimenting, and “experiment” was a critical word in his dictionary, as is noticed in his autobiography, My Experiments with Truth. Many experiments were conducted on himself, however many more were implemented as what amounts to small scale public health measures in his ashrams. This obsession with experimentation portrays Gandhi to be a scientist as defined by the dictionary because he was devoted to scientific study. So it can be seen that Gandhi, although labeled as anti-science, instead created an alternative way of viewing and applying science as one can see in his thoughts on health, diet, exercise, and medicine.

Gandhi was not opposed to the science but to the hierarchical relationship it created between those who did have the technology and those who didn’t. Gandhi
remained aware that one could not live without science, provided that it was kept in its right place. He felt that modern science reaches to control nature and is employed to control people. Therefore, Gandhi’s thoughts on healthcare reflected his thoughts on self-rule. As noted by historians like David Arnold, Gandhi rejected Western medicine because he saw it as an instrument that made colonized Indians dependent on and subject to colonial policy. He thought that India would not have been colonized without the modern science that enabled the British to assert their sovereignty. As he put it, “It is not the British who are ruling India but it is modern civilization, through its railways, telegraphs, telephones, and almost every invention which has been claimed to be a triumph of civilization.”

Instead of this dependence, Gandhi advocated self-cure – diet, exercise – as the basis of a public health policy that returned agency to Indians. Gandhi wanted a health system that was available and affordable by all. Gandhi felt that Swadeshi (self-sufficiency, a reliance on the products of one’s own country) was a reliance “on our own strength…the strength of our body, our mind and our soul” and applied this notion to all aspects of his health care system.

Gandhi considered diet crucial to India’s independence struggle and to the suitability of the Indian people to assume the responsibilities of democracy. As he saw it, the essence of democracy is “self-rule,” which is why he imposed very strict dietary restraints on himself and he stressed that Indians ought to follow his example. Gandhi found, through his affiliation with the London Vegetarian Society and his association with Dr. Josiah Oldfield, that controlling what one ate and that a science of diet provided the means by which to effect moral change on a large scale. Gandhi believed that if
individuals were unable to rule themselves, if they lacked discipline to control their gluttonous urges, then their shared exercise in governmental self-rule would suffer.

Gandhi also regarded diet as a way to prevent illness from arising in the first place and believed that if one follows a strict diet, thereby exhibiting self-rule, there would be no reason to turn to medicine because ailments would have been prevented. Therefore he was in search of a reformed national diet that would be “regulated scientifically” such that “everyone would get pure milk, pure ghee, sufficient fruit and vegetables.” The key word here is “everyone.” The welfare of people living in the villages was first priority to him. He wanted to find a diet that even the poor could afford. After his return to India in 1914, in spite of his political responsibilities Gandhi worked unceasingly to improve the quality of life for the poor in the countless villages whose life he wished to share. He tried to enrich the people's impoverished diet by teaching them the higher food value of unpolished rice, the importance of the soya bean and the benefit of eating green vegetables. Gandhi also worked with many nutritionists to derive a diet-chart that gave maximum nutrition at a minimum cost. In 1935 Gandhi published the findings of Dr. Aykroyd, the director of nutritional research at Coonoor, who claimed that a well-balanced diet need not cost any more than 2 anas per day, or 4 rupees per month: sixteen ounces of soya bean, six ounces of buttermilk, two ounces of arhardal, an ounce of jaggery, and so forth, in smaller and smaller increments through spinach, amaranth, potatoes, colacasia, and coconut oil, thus tabulating a perfect cost-effective, simple diet. To pave the way for equal distribution of food, Gandhi proposed that all members of the community should share the available food resources. He thought that those who could afford animal proteins such as milk, cheese, eggs or meat should avoid pulses and leave
them for those who could not afford anything else.\textsuperscript{18} Gandhi also expressed this view in respect to desserts, stating, “It may be said without any fear or exaggeration that to partake of sweetmeats and other delicacies, in a country where the millions do not even get an ordinary full meal, is equivalent to robbery.”\textsuperscript{19}

Just as Gandhi wanted a diet to be able to afford by all, so were his thoughts on healthcare. He wanted a system of health care that was eminently “public” in the way in which that term had come to signify the availability to all by India itself.\textsuperscript{20} Gandhi’s curative aspect of his health system was Nature Cure. Gandhi felt that Nature Cure meant a change for the better in one’s outlook on life itself and a regulation of one’s life in accordance with the laws of health. Gandhi viewed a man who accepts Nature Cure as taking steps to cure himself by eliminating poisons from the system and takes precautions against falling ill in the future. Nature Cure to him was not a drug cure, but a way of life to be learnt, which placed the onus on the patient’s self-curing abilities, coinciding with his views on \textit{Swadeshi}.\textsuperscript{21} Gandhi summarized the essence of Nature Cure as being \textit{Swadeshi:}

\begin{quote}
A Nature Cure man will tell the patient about the all-healing principle that is in every being, and how can one cure oneself by evoking it and making it an active force in his life. If India could realize the power of that principle, not only would we be free but we would be a land of healthy individuals too-not the land of epidemics and ill health that we are today.”\textsuperscript{22}
\end{quote}

Because Nature Cure came from the elements India possessed, it exemplified the ideal of self-rule and also provided an affordable way for all to treat ailments.
Experience and Experiments are Key

Like a scientist and inventor, Gandhi experimented with and analyzed his self and body: “Life is but an endless series of experiments…in my experimentation I must involve the whole of my kind.” Gandhi was convinced that it is through experimentation that once gets at Truth. He experimented with his body so much in fact that he confessed of his strenuous devotion to the task, “I wore out my body experimenting,” but he still insisted, “my number of experiments is too small.”

Gandhi experimented a great deal with his diet. After adopting a convinced vegetarianism Gandhi began his lifelong practice of experiments in diet. In London these, he admits, were for economy and health. Having first given up the sweets and condiments sent to him from home he drank cocoa to replace tea and coffee and later gave up eggs and all dishes made with them. In another one of Gandhi’s experiments, he, along with a group of volunteers were put on a raw food diet, because Gandhi believed that proper mastication of food could reduce food intake and that this would help the economy. Though the experiment failed and many volunteers showed a marked deterioration of health and Gandhi himself fell sick, he continued to express faith in the value of uncooked food and performed more experiments. In the belief that it 'stimulated animal passion' and also because he had heard of cruel practices to increase the milk yield of cows in Calcutta, Gandhi gave up milk. At this time, after more experimentation, he found that fresh fruit and nuts provided an ideal diet.

There are also many instances of his experiments noted in his dealings with Nature Cure. For example, Gandhi was suffering from headaches and read once that Englishmen ate too often and too much, so he chose to drop breakfast in the morning in
the hopes that he would become free from headaches. He tried the experiment and at first it was difficult but his headaches disappeared, which led him to conclude that he was eating more than he needed.\textsuperscript{27} In another instance, after Gandhi read Adolph Just’s book, \textit{Return to Nature}, he decided to experiment with earth treatment. A bandage of clean earth moistened with cold water and spread on a linen was applied to the abdomen at bedtime and he believed it proved to be a radical cure, he even said “since then I have tried the treatment on myself and my friends and never had reason to regret it.”\textsuperscript{28} Gandhi even experimented Nature Cure on his children. On a boat to South Africa, Gandhi’s son Ramdas broke his arm. The ship’s doctor advised that his wound should be addressed by a qualified doctor as soon as Gandhi reached home, but according to Gandhi, “this was the time when I was full of faith in my experiments in earth treatment.”\textsuperscript{29} So Gandhi addressed the wound himself by applying a clean earth poultice to the wound and then tied up the arm. He did this for about a month and the wound was completely healed. Gandhi stated that this and other experiments enhanced his faith in such household remedies and he proceeded in this manner with more confidence.

It is important to understand that Gandhi was interested in the success of his own experiments primarily to the extent that others might learn from them and subscribe to a regiment of self-discipline.\textsuperscript{30} The main aspect of his experiments was replicability. Gandhi even persuaded others to experiment for themselves. He said that he could not claim success for any experiment and that his main purpose for referencing his own experiments in order to show others that they should not believe everything that is read but rather should begin experiments with himself. He believed personal experimentation “leads to a quicker discovery of truth, and God always protects honest experimenter.”\textsuperscript{31}
Gandhi also relied heavily on experience to make conclusions. For example his reasoning behind the different substances to be included or not included in his diet were backed up by personal experience. Gandhi advocated drinking milk in a vegetarian diet, due to the incident where he was sick and had to drink it: “I have always been in favor of a pure vegetarian diet. But experience has taught me that in order to keep perfectly fit, vegetarian diet must include milk and milk products such as curds, butter, ghee, etc.” In *Key to Health*, Gandhi related an experience in 1917 when he was very sick with severe dysentery, refused to take medicine, and had taken a vow against drinking cow’s milk. He described himself as “reduced to a skeleton,” and he could not build up the strength to leave to leave the bed so the doctor suggested that instead of drinking cow milk, he drink goat milk, and Gandhi’s wife supported this decision. The goat milk was produced and Gandhi gave in and drank the milk. He said that it brought him “to a new life.” Gandhi also thought that many condiments are not needed in the diet. He related a story in which one man, who was fond of chilies, died a premature death due to his excessive use of them. Gandhi also emphasized prohibition of alcohol, and one experience that contributed to this viewpoint was described by Gandhi: “I have seen respectable Englishmen falling in the gutter under the effect of alcohol…On my return from South Africa I had a similar painful experience of the evils of drink. Several Princes have been and are being ruined by liquor.”

It was also through his experience and observation that Gandhi urged the concept of Ramanama in Nature Cure. He said, “I have come to the conclusion, based on observation and scriptural reading, that when a man comes to that complete living faith in
the Unseen Power and has become free from passion, the body undergoes internal transformation.\textsuperscript{36}

Therefore it is mainly through experiments and experience that Gandhi first formed his conclusions about diet, nature cure, exercise, and science in general.
Health

In *Key to Health* Gandhi addressed the issue to of health. Gandhi defined being healthy as the body being in ease.

“A man is healthy whose body is free from disease and who can carry on his normal activities without fatigue. He is one who can walk ten to twelve miles a day and perform ordinary physical tasks without getting tired. He can digest ordinary simple food, and his mind and senses are in a state of harmony. This definition does not include prize fighters and such like. A man with extraordinary physical strength is not necessarily healthy. He has merely developed his musculature, possible at the expense of something else.”

The senses that Gandhi was speaking of are the sense of action (involving: the hands, feet, mouth, anus and genitals) and the senses of perception (the sense of touch though skin, smell through the nose, taste through the tongue, seeing through the eyes, and hearing through the ears.)

Gandhi thought that it was necessary to have knowledge about one’s own body before one can expect to attain good standards of health. He argued that if one essential part of the body is out of order, the whole body comes to a stop. For example, if the digestion is out of order, the whole body becomes slack. Therefore one must take all ailments no matter how small, seriously. He felt that it was our duty to cleanse and keep our body in a fit condition. Air, water, and food were the essential elements to keep the body going and in this fit condition.

Gandhi regarded air as the most important element, more important to health and strength than either food or water. One can live without water much longer than without air. He argued that one should live and work in a well-ventilated environment where poisonous atmospheric gases get dissipated. He felt so strongly about proper ventilation
that in 1913, he explicitly correlated the need for fresh air with the development of good Indian Character in South Africa.\textsuperscript{41} On the question of breathing, he emphasized the fact that air had to be fresh, and taken in through the nose because it filters and warms the air. When breathing through the mouth the air reaches the lungs without being filtered or warmed. He encouraged those who do not know how to breathe properly, to take breathing exercises. By this he meant basic simplified procedures of yogic \textit{pranayama}, literally meaning breath control, “which are as easy to learn as they are useful.”\textsuperscript{42} Gandhi also advocated sleeping naked under a sheet outdoors. In no case was one to cover one’s head while sleeping. If the head got cold a separate covering could be worn, but it was not to be covered so as to avoid breathing stale, contaminated air. The day clothes should be changed for loose nightclothes before retiring and even during the day tight-fitting clothes should be avoided.\textsuperscript{43}

Gandhi viewed water as the second necessity of life. He urged people to drink 5 lbs. of water or other liquid food in 24 hours, and felt each person should carry a supply of water at all times. The drinking water should be pure shallow well water, and even deep wells with a staircase leading down to the water level should be considered unfit for drinking. According to Gandhi there are millions of people who drink unpure water, a habit that should not be copied by all. Whenever the purity of the water is doubtful, it should be boiled before drinking.\textsuperscript{44}

For Gandhi, food was not something that just satiated hunger but was an integral part of shaping human consciousness, which is why he carried out a number of experiments to find the perfect diet. As a youth, Gandhi yielded for a short time to the temptation to eat meat, as seen in his autobiography. He was assured by a friend that
eating meat would make him strong and daring, because to the people in Gandhi’s village, the Englishman's power to dominate India was attributed to the superior strength that came from regular meat eating. On latter occasions his friend had more tasty meat dishes prepared for him and Gandhi began to enjoy them. Then a moral revulsion from the deceit that he was practicing on his parents overcame him and he resolved never to eat meat while they were still alive. In fact, this was for him the end of meat eating.

When Gandhi was allowed to go to England to study, his mother would only withdraw her strong opposition if he took a solemn vow to abstain from meat and alcohol while he was away from home. Gandhi took this vow very seriously and endured many difficulties regarding food until he discovered that there were vegetarian restaurants in London and a Vegetarian Society of which he soon became a member. When in England, he read Henry Salt’s *Plea for Vegetarianism*, Howard Williams’ *Ethics of Diet*, and Anna Kingsford’s *Perfect Way in Diet* all of which provided an argument for not eating meat.

Before he read Henry Salt’s book, Gandhi’s vegetarianism was purely personal:

> I had all along abstained from meat in the interests of truth and of the vow I had taken, but had wished at the same time that every Indian should be a meat-eater, and had looked forward to being one myself freely and openly some day, and to enlisting others in the cause. The choice was now (after reading Salt’s book) in favor of vegetarianism, the spread of which henceforward became my mission.46

Gandhi also discussed the moral basis of vegetarianism, stating, “Man was not born a carnivorous animal but born to live on fruits and herbs that the Earth grows.” He believed that anatomical and physiological evidence was in the favor of man being a vegetarian, in that his teeth, stomach and intestines seem to prove that nature has meant man to be a vegetarian.48
After long experimentation with food, Gandhi came to the conclusion: “In order to stay in good health, no matter what you ate, it was necessary to cut down the quantity of your food, and reduce the number of meals. One should eat not in order to please the palate but just to keep the body going.”\(^{49}\) Gandhi thought that food should be taken as a matter of duty, even as a medicine to sustain the body.\(^{50}\) Through this it can be seen that he thought of food as a preventative measure, in that eating the proper quantity of food would sustain the body and keep it healthy. He believed that man requires food in order to supply tissue building substances to provide for the growth and daily wear and tear of the body, and to supply energy, fat, certain salts and roughage to help the excretion of waste matter.\(^{51}\) Based on these ideas he made a food hierarchy and a simple diet.

Gandhi encouraged a vegetarian diet of grains, pulses, edible roots, fresh fruit, nuts, vegetables, and included milk. Although both milk and meat supply animal proteins for tissue building and tissue repair, Gandhi felt that milk was superior to meat because it can be digested more easily (however he did think that there must be some kind of vegetable supplying the same necessary substances as milk).\(^{52}\)

Gandhi gave second place to cereals (wheat, rice, juwar, bajri, etc.), specifically taking in six ounces per day. These all supply starch, and he felt it was better to take them one at a time. If one had access to wheat then no other cereals were necessary, because according to Gandhi, wheat was the king among the cereals. Gandhi had a specific way for cleaning these cereals, so as to not remove the pericarp, which is a rich source of salts and vitamins as well as aids in the movement of bowels. He also stressed the importance of proper mastication because this allows a thorough mixing of food with
saliva and therefore there is a greater amount of digestion occurring in the mouth especially of starch with saliva.\textsuperscript{53}

After the starch supplying cereals came the protein supplying pulses (beans, lentils, etc.) He felt that those who could not afford milk, had to take pulses, which are eaten in much smaller quantities than cereals and supply protein. But those who lived sedentary lifestyles such as clerks, lawyers and teachers and those who can buy milk do not need pulses because they are difficult to digest.\textsuperscript{54} Out of all the pulses, peas, gram and haricot means were considered to be the most digestible.

Vegetables and fruit came next on Gandhi’s list. Leafy fresh vegetables should be taken daily, and certain varieties such as cucumber, tomatoes and cress do not need to be cooked. Fruits such as mangoes, guavas, grapes, limes, and oranges should all be used in their appropriate seasons. The best time for eating fruit, according to Gandhi, is in the early morning and he felt that a breakfast of fruit and milk should give satisfaction (specifically banana and milk make the perfect meal.)\textsuperscript{55}

Gandhi believed that a certain amount of fat was also necessary in the form of ghee or oil, specifically an ounce and a half.\textsuperscript{56} Gandhi also gave specifics on the type of oils to be used, such as sweet oil, groundnut oil and cocoanut oil. He felt a certain amount of sugar was needed, specifically one to one and a half ounces of brown or white sugars, which became a necessity if one could not get sweet fruits. Sweets such as desserts were all considered to be unnecessary and harmful when taken in large amounts.

Common salts were the only condiments Gandhi argued should be in the diet because the body requires salts. However, condiments such as pepper, turmeric, coriander, and mustard destroy the natural flavor of food and can even be harmful by enhancing the
sex-drive. He felt these are only taken to satisfy the palate and are not needed to stay healthy.$^57$

Gandhi did not think that tea, coffee, or cocoa was to be required by the body. Gandhi said that he used to suffer from one ailment or another when taking either of the three and that by giving them up he has lost nothing and benefited a great amount. He believed that a healthy man does not require the help of tea, coffee or cocoa and can get all the satisfaction that is needed out of ordinary food. Tea could actually be harmful due to the tannin in teach which can harden the mucous lining of the stomach and intestines impairing digestion.$^1$ For those who drink tea because it is a warm sweet drink, he suggested they instead drink boiling water mixed with a little milk and sugar or hot water, or honey and lemon as a nourishing drink to replace coffee.$^58$

All intoxicants, such as alcohol, tobacco, and opium should be strictly prohibited as they cause people to ruin themselves and lose all sense of decency and propriety. Under the effects of alcohol, a person becomes rowdy whereas opium makes the addict dull and lazy. He did feel, however, that opium was necessary as a medical agent. Tobacco, Gandhi argued, does not have a single advantage accruing from its use, and has worked havoc among mankind.$^59$

Although many people eat two meals a day and Gandhi himself when in England experimented with taking two meals, he felt that one should take no more than three meals a day: breakfast in the morning, dinner at midday and supper in the evening. Nibbling was considered harmful because he felt the digestive system requires rest.$^60$

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$^1$ Tannin is now seen as having a positive effect on the body as well: they are excellent antioxidants, they lower total cholesterol and blood pressure, lessen risks of cancer, stimulate the immune system, and have anti-bacterial properties. (Source: http://www.dcs.napier.ac.uk/~cs203/wine.html)
Gandhi’s views on diet may seem extreme and the rules hard to abide by, but Dr. P.P. Bose, a doctor who has been studying dietary habits, said, “Gandhi’s concept of diet fits the recommended food pyramid, which is essential for good health.” The food pyramid begins with fat and oils at the top, meaning their consumption should be the least, then milk and poultry products, followed by fruits and vegetables. The base of the pyramid represents cereals and a maximum amount of water content is also emphasized, which mirrors Gandhi’s views on diet. Gandhi expressed his preference for jaggery over sugar because, as Dr. Bose explains, “sugar goes directly into blood, raising the sugar level, and the excess sugar gets converted into calorie or fat. Jaggery, however, takes more time to masticate, thus resulting in a slower rise in sugar level.” Dr. Bose goes on to discuss how Gandhi “consumed small quantities of pure ghee, which is derived from milk and therefore is more like unsaturated fat, which is not cholesterol forming.” Gandhi’s experimentation with eating raw meals also has health benefits as Dr. Ann Wigmore, founder of the Hippocrates Health Institution in Florida points out in *Food for the Soul*, “The easiest way to add living enzymes to the digestive tract is to eat ripe fruits, uncooked organically grown vegetables, sprouts, and wheatgrass.” Therefore, there are health benefits associated with Gandhi’s diet, and as Dr. Bose put it, “Gandhi was far ahead of his time. What he proclaimed 50 years ago is not being promoted as the ideal diet pattern.”

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*ii Research now proves that food variety, and small amounts of wine promote good health through maintaining the immune system, stimulating metabolism, reducing coronary heart disease, provide antioxidants, prevent certain cancers, and helps the body relax. (Source: http://www.dcs.napier.ac.uk/~cs203/wine.html)*

*Spices also can promote good health by inhibiting several food-borne pathogens. (Source: http://www.tldp.com/issue/191/Antioxidants191.htm)
Gandhi associated eating with his vow of *Brahmacharya*. One can see how important the idea of self-rule was to Gandhi as illustrated by the extensive nature of the regulations on diet that Gandhi imposed. He thought that controlling one’s palate is intimately associated with controlling desire and standard vegetarianism aside, a moderate unspiced, minimally cooked, and quickly prepared meal of simple, unprocessed natural food is the dietary basis for *brahmacharya* and probably the single most important variable in redefining the scope of public health. As he put it, reflecting on the nation as a whole from the perspective of his diet in jail in the early 1930s, “I am convinced that if we plan our diet on a scientific basis and eat moderately, nobody would fall ill.”64
Nature Cure

Nature Cure was Gandhi’s curative aspect of health care. When describing his Nature Cure, Gandhi said:

The essence of nature cure is that we learn the principles of hygiene and sanitation and abide by those laws as well as the laws relating to proper nutrition. Thus does every one become his own doctor. Disease springs from a willful or ignorant breach of the laws of nature. It follows, therefore, that timely return to those laws should mean restoration.65

Nature Cure to Gandhi was a way of life. He argued that knowledge of anatomy and physiology was not essential for learning Nature Cure.66 Nature Cure is primarily composed of five elements: earth, water, ether, sunlight and air. According to Gandhi, the use of earth, mainly making a mud poultice can serve to relieve headaches in most cases, cure ordinary boils, reducing the pain of a wasp sting, and relieve the restlessness and abate the suffering of a high fever. Not just any sort of earth can be used and there is a methodical way to use and make the poultice. Gandhi believed that the best type of earth to be used was “sweet smelling clean red earth,” however, this is hard to obtain, and so it is also safe to use “soft alluvial clay.”67 One should never use earth taken from manured soil. The earth should be dried, pounded and passed through a fine sieve. The mud poultice can be used again and again after drying it in the sun if it is used on a clean surface. The specifics on the thickness and placement of the poultice depends on why it is being used, for example, in treating a high fever, the poultice should be placed on the head and abdomen or when treating a discharging abscess, Gandhi would prepare the poultice in a potassium permanganate lotion and then apply it to the abscess.68

Water was also used as a form of therapy, more specifically called hydrotherapy, through the use of hip baths, wet sheet packs, hot water and steam. For a hip bath, a tub
should be filled with fresh cold water (cold enough to give a slight shock to the patient) so that it does not over flow when the patient sits in it. The patients should sit in the tub keeping his feet outside and the other portions of the body not in the water should be kept well covered so that the patient does not feel cold. Gentle friction should be applied to the patient’s abdomen with a soft towel. The bath can be taken for 5-30 minutes. Gandhi believed hip baths bring down the temperature in high fever, relieves constipation, and improves digestion.\textsuperscript{69} Gandhi as a form of hydrotherapy also used wet sheet packs, which are made by first spreading three or four thick broad woolen blankets on a cot and adding a thick cotton sheet dipped in cold water on top. The patient would then lie flat on the wet sheet and all the layers are wrapped around the patient so that outside air can’t get in. If the patient falls asleep he should not be awakened because this indicates that the wet sheet pack has produced a soothing effect. According to Gandhi, wet sheet packs are useful in the treatment of prickly heat, skin irritation, measles, small pox and insomnia.\textsuperscript{70} Gandhi also believed that hot water application to swollen or bruised areas would give relief, as well as relieving the pain of a scorpion bite and subsiding a shivering fit. He felt that hot water is exceptionally useful because unlike other treatments such as iodine, there are no risks in using hot water; it is inexpensive and is available to all.\textsuperscript{71}

Steam baths were used by Gandhi in cases of rheumatism and other joint-pains. The easiest method is to spread a blanket on a cot and put one or two covered vessels full with boiling water under it. The patient would lie flat on the cot and covered up such that the ends of the covering blankets touch the group and prevent steam from escaping and outside air from getting in. Gandhi also advised variations to these treatments such as adding mustard powder to hot water to improve circulation in the legs and feet.\textsuperscript{72}
Akash, which Gandhi translated as “emptiness taken in the most literal sense,” is the subtlest form of matter, pure space.\textsuperscript{73} Gandhi believed that the more akash is utilized, the more healthy one will be and if the body could be in contact with the sky, without the intervention of houses, roofs and even clothes, then it would enjoy the maximum amount of health. So in order to do this, one should make it a point to sleep in the open, and people should keep their houses as open as possible, not filled with unnecessary furniture and decorations that harbor dust, bacteria and insects.\textsuperscript{74}

According to Gandhi, man cannot do without sunlight and if he does not make full use of sunlight, then he cannot enjoy perfect health. He advocated sunbaths, in which one exposes the uncovered body to the sun or pacing up and down in the sun covering only private areas with cloth, as a cure for slow circulation, tuberculosis, and ulcers. Gandhi believed that the most effective time to sunbath was in the morning because the morning sun has the greatest amount of ultra-violet rays, which are the most effective component of the sun’s rays.\textsuperscript{75iii}

Gandhi argued that air was just as important as the other four elements of Nature Cure. He thought that if one lives in the open, in the middle of plenty of fresh air, that the body would become hardened and that person will never suffer from a cold in the head or other ailments.\textsuperscript{76} When giving a discourse on Nature Cure, he said, “Shortages of food or water there may be at times, but of air never. In spite of it we foolishly deprive ourselves of God’s blessing of fresh and pure air by sleeping within doors, with doors and windows shut.”\textsuperscript{77}

\textsuperscript{iii} It is now proven that ultra-violet rays are harmful to health in that they cause a variety of skin cancers. (Source: http://www.cityofhope.org/presspass/Archive_MSN%5CWinter%20Skin%201.09.03.htm)
Gandhi’s Nature Cure implies an ideal mode of life and that in its turn presupposes ideal living conditions in towns and villages. Gandhi argued that Nature Cure implies that the treatment should be the cheapest and the simplest possible. The idea is that such treatments should be carried out in the villages, which coincides with Gandhi’s views on self-rule. The villages should be able to priced the necessary means and equipment. What cannot be had in the villages should be procured. Gandhi believed that Nature Cure is designed solely for villagers and villages and therefore there is no place in it for the microscope, X-rays, and similar things. He thought that the specialty of nature cure methods lies in the fact that being natural, laymen can safely practice them.\textsuperscript{78}
Ramanama and Nature Cure

Gandhi added to his Nature Cure due to personal experiences in his life and one addition was that of Ramanama.

“My conception of Nature Cure, like everything else, has undergone a progressive evolution. And for years now I have believed that if a person is filled with the presence of God and has thus attained the state of dispassion, he can surmount handicaps against long life…the surest remedy for all our ills was Ramanama. He who can make full use of it can show powerful results with very little outside effort.”

Gandhi began to stress the importance of Ramanama, or using the name of God as a healing power. Therefore Ramanama took part in Gandhi’s curative aspect of health as opposed to the preventative aspect, in that it helped one who was already suffering from an ailment. As for the specifics of Ramanama, Gandhi felt that each person could choose the name of God that appeals most to him because they all mean the same. When describing Ramanama to village folk as a cure for bodily ailments Gandhi said:

If you are subject to anger, eat and sleep for indulgence, not solely for sustenance, you do not know the meaning of Ramanama. Your recitation of it is mere lip-service. Ramanama, to be effective, must absorb your entire being during its recitation and express itself in your whole life.

Therefore, the recitation should not be “parrot like” but rather must be backed up by a “living faith” and must come from the heart. He also argued that Ramanama is not like black magic and is not for those who will indulge themselves again after being cured. Rather, it is for those that want to gain purity and stay pure because Ramanama purifies while it cures. Gandhi believed that to take Ramanama from the heart meant deriving help from an incomparable power. So, according to Gandhi, if one accepted this reasoning, then there would be no need for big hospitals or even doctors. He even called
it “an unfailing remedy,” “the prince of remedies,” and “no matter what the ailment from which a man may be suffering, recitation of Ramanama from the heart is the sure cure.”

Gandhi included Ramanama in Nature Cure, stating that Nature Cure consisted of two parts: first to cure disease by taking the name of God, and second to prevent illness by right and hygienic living.
Bramacharya

Gandhi believed that maintenance of perfect health should be considered impossible without *Bramacharya*, or a mode of life, which leads to the realization to God through self-restraint of all the senses including control over the sexual organs and sexual instinct. According to Gandhi, the way *Bramacharya* promoted health was through conservation of sexual secretions. This conservation allows the secretion to be utilized for enhancing one’s mental and physical energy. Gandhi said, “He, who would learn to utilize it thus, will find he requires very little food to keep his body in a fit condition. And yet he will be as capable as any of undertaking physical labor.”

He even made a case for why it is necessary to make celibacy an integral part of national reform:

“We have more than an ordinary share of disease, famines and pauperism—even starvation among millions. We are being ground down under slavery in such a subtle manner that many of us refuse even to recognize it as such and mistake our state as one of progressive freedom in spite of the triple curse of economic, mental and moral drain.”

Gandhi thought that common ailments such as constipation in particular were directly linked to the physiology of sensual arousal. Gandhi also attributed his bouts of pleurisy, dysentery and appendicitis to “imperfect celibacy.”

It can be seen that *Brahmacharya* emphasizes Gandhi’s ideas on preventative measures, that is, preventing the illness from occurring in the first place, instead of using *Brahmacharya* as an immediate way to combat a disease. The idea of *Brahmacharya* mirrors Gandhi’s emphasis on self-rule, in that *Brahmacharya* is the self-rule of the body and if people were unable to rule themselves, then Gandhi believed, their shared exercise in governmental self-rule would suffer.
**Exercise**

Gandhi is found on a billboard for Equinox Fitness Clubs in New York City, which read: “Gandhi was a great and charitable man.” Beneath, in smaller type, were the words, “However, he could have used some work on his triceps.” This billboard in itself is ironic because Gandhi argued that the critical point of exercise was not to build up strength per se but to stimulate normal breathing and establish control over the senses. He felt that the body must be kept well and usefully occupied so that the fatigue of the day can lead to a refreshing sleep.

Gandhi advocated a brisk walk in the open as a good form of exercise. During the walk, the mouth should be closed and breathing should be done through the nose. He also advocated yoga, or *pranayama*. Primarily through correspondence with S.D. Satavalekar and Swami Kuvalyananda, two experts in the field of *pranayama*, Gandhi experimented with the health value of various exercises. He found that yoga was helpful in treating some diseases and was a practical means by which some young men could regulate self-control. In fact, when inaugurating a few gymnasiums Gandhi said that breathing was of critical importance in effecting proactive, nonviolent self-control and was far more important than the kind of “might-is-right” physical strength that he felt was being developed in some regional gymnasiums. These exercises, rather than gross muscle building, he pointed out, were responsible for creating expansive physique. Gandhi felt that organized sports (especially wrestling) were contrived and excessive, while agricultural work, manual labor, and walking were considered to be highly effective. In other words, health was quite different from strength and it was to the end of better health...
and greater self-control that he admonished children in the ashram to breathe plenty of fresh air, practice *pranayama*, and get regular, moderate exercise.\textsuperscript{92} Gandhi came to regard yoga as a nonviolent means of physical training which would enable satyagrahis to tolerate extreme cold and heat, stand guard for hours, withstand beatings, and nurse others. Gandhi also regarded spinning as a kind of pure, practical, productive form of exercise, which he described as involving drill-like regimentation and self-control.\textsuperscript{93}
**Medicine, Pills, Shots, No Way**

Gandhi himself once aspired to be a doctor before the thoughts of being a lawyer or politician entered his mind. However, this notion was quickly disregarded because Gandhi did not feel that healers should charge money for their services. His views on medicine also changed throughout his life. He used to have shelves lined with bottles, and one day realized that they didn’t make him feel better, and therefore threw them all away.\(^{94}\) Gandhi began to read books about Just’s naturopathy and Kuhne’s hydrotherapy and consequently started to follow the ideal that nature can bring about the body’s own healing power. From then on, he himself no longer took medicine and didn’t allow his family too either. Instead, Gandhi believed that where the rules of personal, domestic and public sanitation are strictly observed and due care is taken in the matter of diet and exercise, there should be no occasion for illness or disease and there would be no need for doctors where there is absolute inner and outer purity.\(^{95}\) He took on a more preventative practice in which western medicine was of no use. On instances in which Gandhi wrote about medicine it was mainly negative, for example, he said that he feared people have handed over control of their bodies to others.

While Gandhi was more than receptive to Western “fads” such as vegetarianism and nature cure, Gandhi was critical of allopathic medicine and regarded biomedicine as dangerous, in part because he saw it providing violent, symptomatic cures for specific illnesses rather than holistic therapies to remedy poor health. As he put it in a letter to Maganlal Gandhi: “What service will an army of doctors render to the country? What great things are they going to achieve by dissecting dead bodies, by killing animals, and by cramming worthless dicta for five or seven years? What will the country gain by the
ability to cure physical diseases? That will simply increase our attachment to the body.”

He believed that man had little need to drug himself, stating that 999 cases out of a thousand can be brought round by means of a well-regulated diet, water and earth treatment and similar household remedies.

Instead of placing an emphasis on taking medicine right away, Gandhi felt that including preventative measures was a more effective way of living than relying on medicine to cure an ailment. He thought that it was far easier and safer to prevent illness by observance of the laws of health than curing illness, which has been brought about by our own ignorance and carelessness. He felt that ignorance was the root cause of disease. That people were ignorant of the structures of the body and how the body works. However, Gandhi did say “my love of nature cure and of indigenous system does not blind me to the advance that Western medicine has made in spite of the fact that I have stigmatized it as black magic.” He went on to rationalize the use of the term black magic to describe Western medicine, stating, “I have used the harsh term, and do not withdraw it, because of the fact that it has countenanced vivisection and all the awfulness it means and because it will stop at no practice, however bad it may be, if it prolongs the life of the body and because it ignores the immortal soul which resides in the body.”

Gandhi’s overall sentiments towards healthcare in India was that India does not need imported drugs from the West when there are an inexhaustible stock of a variety of drugs grown in the villages themselves. But more than drugs, scientists and doctors need to teach the people the right mode of living, so education is key.

Gandhi extended his dislike of Western medicine to birth control. He felt that artificial birth control is like “putting a premium upon a vice. They make man and
Gandhi argued that artificial birth control would result in impeccability, would amount to playing with unknown forces, and would be found to be worse than the disease. He thought it would be difficult and impractical for millions of people to use artificial birth control but rather that it would easier to induce them to practice self-control. He felt the only from of birth-control should be that of self-control of brahmacharya, which he considered to be “an infallible, sovereign remedy doing good to those who practice it.” Here again, Gandhi’s emphasis on medicine as being an indulgence is seen. He said, “It is still worse for a person to indulge in his animal passions and escape the consequences of his acts.” He disputed the notion that artificial birth control is necessary for the nation because of over-population by stated that it has not been proved. Gandhi urged the advocates of artificial methods to consider the consequences that large use of artificial birth control is likely to result in the dissolution of the marriage bond and in free love. Gandhi applied his views on artificial contraception to sterilization in that he felt the latter was also a sort of contraceptive. Interestingly, however, he was not opposed to the sterilization of the man “since he is the aggressor,” but was opposed to the sterilization of females.

Gandhi was also profoundly skeptical of Ayurveda, a classical Indian system of humoral medicine, for several reasons: it placed the agency of healing outside the reach of everyone; it had become an elite upper caste urban system of medicinal healing; and, as he put it to the physician Vallabham Vaidya, “Ayurveda has not yet become a science. In a science there is always room to progress. Where is any progress here?” He also thought that Ayurvedic doctors are too engaged in making money and do not do research work because of this greed and their mental laziness. Gandhi instead wanted a
system of health care that was “public” in the sense that everyone could have access to and afford it. Gandhi felt that Nature Cure was this health care. His expansive and expanding ideal for public health was reflected in his recruitments of Hiralal Sharma, a nature-cure physician to work at the ashram in the early 1930s. He distinguished an “ordinary doctor” from a Nature Curist in that the ordinary doctor is interested mostly in the study of disease while the Nature Curist is interested more in the study of health. The Nature Curist's real interest begins where that of the ordinary doctor ends and the cure of a patient’s ailment is the beginning of treatment, not the end. Nature Cure is thus a way of life, not a course of treatment.

It is ironic however, that Gandhi’s scientific theory of healing was not derived from Hindu therapeutics at all, but instead from a reading of the West—from Just’s naturopathy, and Kuhne’s Hydrotherapy.

Gandhi’s regarded doctors in the same negative manner he regarded medicine, he even said, “Sometimes I think quacks are better than highly qualified doctors.” He argued that doctors induce people to indulge and the result is that they then have become deprived of self-control. According to Gandhi if one indulges in vice, then contracts a disease and is cured by a doctor, then one will repeat the vice. He believed that had the doctor not intervened, nature would have done its work and that person would have acquired mastery over himself, would have been freed from vice and would have become happy. Therefore the doctor intervened and helped the person to indulge himself. Gandhi argued that doctors make a show of their knowledge and charge exorbitant fees for preparations that cost a lot less. He felt that doctors do not consider the profession of medicine for the purpose of serving humanity but rather so that they main obtain honor
and riches. He argued that doctors do not promote Ramanama because it would cause their very livelihood or occupation to go. They instead have to rely on “powder and potions as infallible remedies,” because these provide money for the doctor.

Ironically, the Society of General Internal Medicine used this quote from Gandhi: “I shall pass through this world but once. Any good therefore I can do or any kindness that I can show to any human being. Let me do it now. Let me not defer or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again,” as the opening for a conference in 2003, not knowing that Gandhi was against their profession in general! It also is ironic that Gandhi wanted people to know more about their bodies, which is what doctors spend years studying, and yet Gandhi does not acknowledge this. He also thought that hospitals were institutions for propagating sin.
To Every Rule there are Exceptions

There are many times in which Gandhi himself did not “practice what he preached.” Gandhi many times publicly announced that “hospitals are institutions for propagating sin,” that “European doctors are the worst of all,” and that “quacks whom we know are better than the doctors who put on an air of humaneness.” Because Gandhi ‘renounced medicine’ his family was to do the same. For example, he refused to allow his wife to receive a life-saving shot of penicillin when she was dying of pneumonia and whenever his son was sick, whether it was from a headache to typhoid fever, Gandhi implemented the regimen of nature cure. In one instance when Gandhi’s wife was to be given meat as medicine, Gandhi told the doctor, “I would never allow my wife to be given meat or beef, even in the denial meant her death, unless of course she desired to take it.” Then when speaking to his wife, she said that she would not take the meat and Gandhi “was delighted.” However, when he himself fell suddenly ill of appendicitis, a British surgeon of the Indian Medical Service came straightway to see him. ”Mr. Gandhi,” said the surgeon, as the incident was reported, “I am sorry to have to tell you that you have appendicitis. If you were my patient, I should operate at once. But you will probably prefer to call in your Ayurvedic (Hindu) Physician.” Gandhi, however, had the surgery. Another time, Gandhi had malaria, and took the medicine quinine. Gandhi also wore spectacles, which is treatment for vision correction that is given by a doctor, instead of a more natural procedure for vision correction such as eating certain foods or a method of Nature Cure.

In regards to exercise, although Gandhi advocated yoga, and its non-violence, he seemed at times to have had an underlying admiration for certain aspects of regimented
training, as in his commendation of Manikrao’s program of mass drill exercises and his translation of physical training drill terminology into Gujurati.\textsuperscript{120}

Gandhi himself knew that he could not perfectly follow what he said in terms of nonviolence. He realized that his desire to continue in life in the body involved him in constant \textit{himsa} (violence). Examples of this contradiction, which he gave, were in the act of respiration, he destroys innumerable invisible germs floating in the air, but he did not stop breathing. He also thought that the consumption of vegetables involved \textit{himsa} but “I find that I cannot give them up.”\textsuperscript{121} These exceptions illustrate the scientist part of Gandhi through the belief that a scientist realizes his own boundaries.
Gandhi’s Legacy Lives on: Nature Cure Clinics, Homeopathy and Yoga

Homeopathy is a therapeutic system of medicine that clinically applies nature’s Law of Cure, namely “Like Cures Likes.” From this definition alone it can be seen that Homeopathy is a branching out of Gandhi’s ideas of Nature Cure, in that Gandhi felt the body was made up of five elements: earth, air, akash, sunlight, and water, which are the same elements used to treat ailments in Nature Cure, so “Like cures like.” Homeopathy is slightly different than Nature Cure, however, in that it is a natural pharmaceutical science that uses various plants and minerals in small doses to stimulate a sick person’s natural defenses. The concept of disease in Homeopathy is that disease is a total affection of mind and body, the disturbance of the whole organism, which is a more holistic approach to disease, and in that sense, similar to Gandhi’s approach. According to Dr. Deepak Sharma, homeopathic medicines are prepared by “potentization” which is when medicines are prepared from sources such as vegetables, minerals, animals and chemicals and therefore the medicines are nontoxic and curative in the safest way. They stimulate the reactions of the boy in order to make them more effective, so they work with the body and only very small doses are required. Homeopathy is ideal for children and infant ailments such as colds, coughs, tonsillitis, diarrhea, and vomiting. It also can be used as a substitute for antibiotics, and to treat viral infections (such as influenza, measles, mumps, herpes, etc.), allergic disorders and psychosomatic illnesses.122

Gandhi’s emphasis on Nature Cure is also still seen in this day and age. Gandhi was first going to become a co-partner in a clinic in Poona and planned to make Nature Cure available here, but then he realized that if he wanted to make an institution for the poor, he should go to them and not expect them to come to the city. Because Nature Cure
was way of life that has to be learnt, in order to be effective, it has to be near a man’s house and therefore in the village. Therefore, Gandhi established a nature cure ashram at Urli-Kanchan, a village near Pune, in India. He believed that Nature Cure is limiting to rendering such aid as can be given to them through what can be procured in the village so he did not need either electricity or ice.\textsuperscript{123}

Gandhi also inspired many other individuals to adopt and promote naturopathy. Pioneering naturopaths include Dr Mahavir Prasad Poddar, Dr Vithal Das Modi, Dr J.M. Jussawala, Dr B. Venkat Rao, K. Lakshmana Sarma and Dr R. Krishnaswamy Gounder. Government support since India’s independence is in part given to nature cure clinics, hospitals, and colleges because of the Gandhian legacy and many clinics even bear his name.\textsuperscript{124} Today, there are around 2,000 practitioners all over India and according to Dr B.T. Chidananda Murthy, director of National Institute of Naturopathy, Pune, around 10 major hospitals, 30 medium ones, 50 small ones and 50 clinics are in existence. The best-known ones in India are the Nisargopchar Ashram at Urlikanchan, Jindal's health farm near Bangalore, Arogya Mandir at Gorakhpur. There are also four-degree colleges in the country conducting Bachelor of Naturopathy degree courses of five and a half years duration.\textsuperscript{125}

The basic principle of nature cure is still the same as Gandhi practices, in that all healing comes from within the body itself as the body strives to maintain human body equilibrium. Disease indicates that the human body is working towards health and healing. The physician through his nature cure techniques should enhance and not prevent or interfere with this healing. Nature cure procedures accomplish this aim by assisting nature in removing the accumulated waste products from the body. They
stimulate the organs of elimination towards better functioning and, thus, restore to diseased and disordered organs their normal tone, blood supply, glandular activity, and so on. They also intend to bring back to normal, the abnormal physical and mental habits of the patient so as to stop further harm to the body and to teach him to live in harmony with Nature, not in opposition to it. The methods of hydrotherapy (such as water baths and hot water treatment,) mud poultices, sunbaths, and proper exposure to air are used as treatments just as Gandhi advocated. Keeping fit or being cured through nature cure is a long-drawn process, which can take not only months but also years. Furthermore, nature cure demands personal determination and exercising strict control on diet such as requiring the patient to abstain from rich foods, alcohol, smoking, and drinking tea and coffee, which interestingly coincides with Gandhi’s views on diet.  

The conflict between Naturopathy and Allopathic medicine still continues today and is summed up succinctly by Gandhi: “Although the medical profession has taken up some things from nature cure methods, on the whole, they have given a cold shoulder to naturopathy. In my opinion, both the parties are to be blamed for this state of affairs. The medical profession has got into the habit of confining itself to whatever is, included in its own curriculum. It presents an attitude of indifference, if not that of contempt, for anything that lies outside its groove. On the other hand, the naturopaths nurse a feeling of grievance against the medicos, and in spite of their very limited scientific knowledge, they make tall claims. They lack the spirit of organization. Each one is self-satisfied and works by himself instead of all pouring their resources for the advancement of their system.”
In India, Nature Cure and yoga came together in terms of a new language of science. The book, Yoga Therapy in Asthma, Diabetes, and Heart Disease: Principles, Practice and Scientific Results, reports the results of various studies of the benefit of yoga and provided extensive case analyses. Throughout the book, emphasis is placed on balanced, holistic treatment that takes into account diet, social relationships, recreation and mental attitudes. These parameters are the same that Gandhi emphasized so it can be seen that Gandhi’s legacy lives on through this same emphasis provided in yoga. Yoga has also become increasingly popular in the United States partly in response to the new exercise technique it offers as well as its meditative aspect.
Conclusion

Although Gandhi is often portrayed as being anti-science due to his novels and critiques of modern civilization and the lack of “science” containing material (with more focus on his political philosophy), he rather is the very definition of a scientist. Gandhi’s life defined a space for an alternative science for civil society and he applied science to his strong views on health and medicine, which also prove him to far from anti-science. He was concerned with the misuse of science but was not opposed to it in general.

To Gandhi, science was more a way of life to be learnt. The practice of science Gandhi emphasized melted science and morality together and required an attitude for research more than science qualifications and insisted that scientific knowledge should ultimately contribute to self-knowledge. He felt that there should be a relation between science and religion, body and soul. Gandhi also did not like the hierarchical relationship science created between those who have the best technology and those who don’t.

Gandhi applied his views of science to those of health and medicine. He did not feel there should be a hierarchy between those that had access to healthcare and those who didn’t and therefore created a system that was accessible and attainable by all. Gandhi’s opinion on health focused on the self-rule aspect of his philosophy, in that all measures of health should come from India and should be attainable by all in India. Gandhi advocated self-cure – diet, exercise – as the basis of a public health policy that returned agency to Indians. His health care system included both preventative and curative measures and both were a way to live life, not an instantaneous remedy. This health care system addressed the issues of diet, exercise, and medicine, and it was
through various experiments he conducted on himself and in his ashrams as well as through his own experiences through reading books and hearing stories that he came to his conclusions on how to attain his notion of health.

Although Gandhi rejected modern medicine, this does not mean he rejected science as a whole but rather he took a different angle on science. In the end, this Gandhian science is one in which there is no hierarchy, and is one to which all can have access, and his views on health live on today through the various nature cure clinics and the new rise in Homeopathy and yoga.
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