

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

My Understanding of Mahatma Gandhi: A Museum Anthropological Study of Gandhi's Artefacts and their Symbolism, as Represented in Museums

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HOW TO CITE THIS ARTICLE:

Banita Behera, M.R. Gangadhar. My Understanding of Mahatma Gandhi: A Museum Anthropological Study of Gandhi's Artefacts and their Symbolism, as Represented in Museums. Ind J Res Anthropol 2025; 11(1): 07-17.

ABSTRACT

Background: Mahatma Gandhi's belongings, including the charkha, lathi, sandals, spectacles, stopwatch, and three wise monkeys, have become iconic artefacts representing his ethical worldview. In museum settings, these objects are reimagined as strong symbols that actively communicate ideological meaning beyond their utilitarian origins.

Aim: To investigate how Gandhi's personal items serve as semiotic and ethical tools in museums, transcending their utilitarian beginnings.

Objectives: The study aims to investigate the symbolic meanings of Gandhi's belongings, utilizing Museum Anthropology and Alfred Gell's object agency theory to study their ideological value, and enquires how museums curate and disseminate his ethical legacy to modern audiences.

Material: The study tried to examine Gandhi's charkha (spinning wheel), lathi (walking stick), leather sandals, spectacles, stopwatch, and the three wise monkeys, as well as the practice of fasting, as depicted in museum exhibitions and cultural representations of National Gandhi Museum and Charkha Museum, New Delhi.

Results: The study revealed that Gandhi's personal artefacts had multiple symbolic connotations in museum contexts. The charkha indicates self-reliance, the lathi represents moral fortitude, and the sandals promote anti-caste equality. His spectacles signify an ethical vision, the stopwatch symbolises time discipline, and the three wise monkeys represent pacifism. Fasting is seen as embodied ethics. Collectively, these artefacts provide rich tales that connect visitors to Gandhi's lived philosophy.

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➤ Received: 24.02.2025 ➤ Accepted: 04.06.2025



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Conclusion: Museums does not only conserve Gandhi's material legacy; they actively reinterpret and contextualise his ethical visions. These personal things serve as moral artefacts and semiotic instruments, instilling Gandhi's ideas in public consciousness through carefully chosen iconography and tailored experiences.

KEYWORDS

• Mahatma Gandhi • Museum anthropology • Symbolism • Material culture
• Ethical ideals • Social change • Nonviolence

Key Message: Gandhi's belongings, rather than being passive relics, serve as potent moral symbols and educational tools in museum settings, representing his lived ideology and ethical worldview.

INTRODUCTION

In this context, narrating a story offers a useful analogy to explain how I perceive Mahatma Gandhi. The fundamental principles of the Bhagavad Gita, as elucidated by Bhakta Vedanta Swami Prabhupada, align closely with my own example. To illustrate, there is a well-known story about six blind men who, encountering an elephant for the first time, tried to understand it by touch alone. Each man, touching a different part of the animal, formed a distinct interpretation: the one who touched the body likened it to a wall, while the man who touched the tusk described it as a spear, finding it sharp and smooth. Another, feeling the trunk, thought it resembled a snake, while the one who touched the leg compared it to a tree. The man who felt the ear described it as a fan. Each man's explanation reflected his limited perception, based on the part of the elephant he encountered.

Similarly, my understanding of Gandhi can be shaped by different facets of his life and philosophy. Just as the blind men's interpretations varied, our senses can sometimes distort our comprehension of a broader reality. Anthropology, particularly Museum Anthropology, has deepened my ability to analyze and reflect on Gandhi's life and principles, allowing me to see beyond surface-level interpretations and gain a more holistic perspective.

In this analysis, I aim to open my "Pitara" of Mahatma Gandhi, which contains objects closely associated with him and that have become symbols of his legacy. Were these merely everyday objects, or did they convey deeper social messages to the nation? Did they signify specific actions or ideals? A few iconic items come to mind, such as the charkha, leather sandals, lathi, spectacles, stopwatch,

and the three monkeys. In this discussion, I will explore the significance of these objects in relation to Gandhi's vision for the development of the nation.

METHODOLOGY

The study examines the material culture linked with Mahatma Gandhi from the perspective of Museum Anthropology. This entails analysing artefacts not only for their physical characteristics, but also for their sociological, philosophical, and symbolic significance. The Symbolic Interpretation is a thorough examination of major artefacts such as the charkha, lathi, sandals, spectacles, stopwatch, and three wise monkeys to determine their greater social and ethical meanings. Each object is examined for its relevance to Gandhi's ideas of self-reliance, nonviolence, and social equality. The methodology has been described as incorporating historical and anthropological interpretations, positioning Gandhi's artefacts within their cultural and historical settings to investigate their relevance throughout India's independence movement and beyond. Insights are gained from exhibits and curation procedures in museums that maintain Gandhi's legacy, examining how these things are exhibited to reflect and perpetuate his ideas. Theoretical Frameworks in the study use ideas like "material agency," "syncretism," and the "social life of things" to contextualise the changing meanings of Gandhi's artefacts in both historical and current situations.

Exploring Gandhi's Legacy Through Museum Anthropology: An Examination of Symbolic Artefacts

Museum anthropology provides a unique perspective on the material culture of famous

historical personalities, revealing the deeper meanings inherent in their goods. This viewpoint examines items not just as tools or artefacts, but also in their sociological, philosophical, and symbolic qualities. Mahatma Gandhi's life and legacy, as represented by his personal items, demonstrate this relationship. His iconic artefacts, such as the charkha, lathi, sandals, spectacles, stopwatch, and Figures of the three wise monkeys, convey important social and ethical implications that are consistent with India's battle for independence and collective moral philosophy. Museums employ artefacts to connect visitors with Gandhi's values of nonviolence, self-reliance, and social equality. This narrative looks at Gandhi's symbolic artefacts through the viewpoint of museum anthropology, showing how they transcend their physical form to symbolise the ideas he advocated for.

The Charkha: A Symbol of Self-reliance and Economic Upliftment

Beginning with the charkha, it became a symbol of self-reliance and excellence, crystallizing Indian ethos in material form. The charkha (spinning wheel) is a well-known symbol of Gandhian philosophy. It exemplifies self-reliance, which is important to India's quest for freedom. Historically, the charkha carried spiritual significance in Indian culture, symbolising the cycle of existence and the interdependence of life. Historically, saints and Sufis used the charkha as a metaphor for their philosophy, and according to the Puranas, it represents the cycle of existence, symbolizing the inter connectedness of life, death, and rebirth. Gandhi sought to personify the charkha as an ever-turning wheel of love

and dharma, a symbol of spiritual upliftment and moral duty.⁷ Its meaning extended far beyond its physical form, embodying divinity and dignity. In recognition of its profound importance, the first national flag raised after India's independence was made from khadi woven on Gandhi's charkha, signifying its role in the nation's struggle for self-sufficiency and independence. Gandhi enhanced its significance by pushing it as a means for economic independence, boosting the manufacturing of khadi (hand woven cloth). Gandhi rejected industrialised imports by weaving his own garments, inspiring Indians to embrace self-sufficiency. The charkha evolved into a vehicle for spiritual and material upliftment, combining individual activity with a larger goal of national independence.¹²

The National Charkha Museum, New Delhi offers a spinning wheel gallery that displays 23 different charkha types, ranging from traditional designs to portable variants like the peti charkha and mechanised versions like the Ambar Charkha. The gallery also features two loom models, spinning component and accessory examples, and hand-spun yarn by Gandhiji and other luminaries. The picture collection features Gandhiji's selected writings as well as photographs of him and other freedom fighters working on spinning wheels. In addition, 285 chronological Figures of Gandhi, grouped into different phases from his childhood to his final arrival in Delhi in 1947 are on display, along with matching written descriptions. The memorial exhibit displays Gandhi's personal items, while the martyrdom gallery contains the blood-stained dhoti he wore during his assassination.

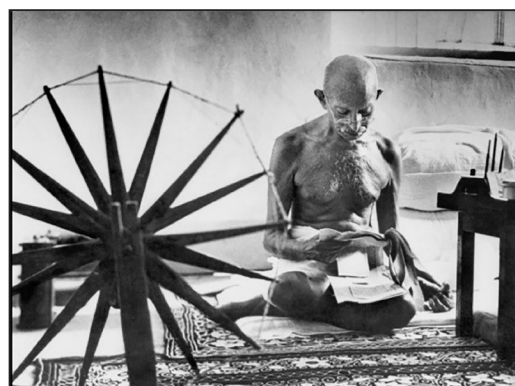


Figure 1 & 2: The Charkha displayed in National Charkha Museum, New Delhi, and old picture in National Charkha Museum, Delhi

The Lathi: Power Through Restraint:

Next, we turn to the lathi(walking stick), an object often misunderstood in relation to Mahatma Gandhi. Contrary to the common belief that Gandhi used the lathi as a physical aid due to frailty, its significance goes far beyond mere locomotion. The lathi, which is typically seen as a physical aid, takes on a deeper symbolic meaning in Gandhi's hands. The lathi, which was traditionally employed in Indian martial arts for self-defence, came to represent Gandhi's nonviolent force and self-control in fact, symbolized control and power.¹⁴ His reconstruction of the lathi emphasised the balance of strength and restraint, rejecting the idea that force is inherently aggressive. Museums displaying Gandhi's lathi frequently emphasise its dual role as a utilitarian tool and a symbol of moral power. This confirms Gandhi's belief that true power is in the ability to act with discipline and empathy rather than force or violence.

The lathi, During a visit to a village near Munger in Bihar, where villagers presented him with a lathi, Gandhi accepted it only after explaining its deeper meaning. He highlighted the lathi's historical significance as a weapon of self-defense and protection, traditionally used in Indian martial arts. For Gandhi, it was a symbol of restraint and the ability to defend, rather than a tool of aggression.



Figure 3 & 4: The sketch narrating lathi of Mahatma Gandhi and the object used during the Dandi March, 1930, National Gandhi Museum and Library, Rajghat, New Delhi.

The Stopwatch: Discipline and Ethical Time Management:

Additionally, Gandhi's stopwatch was a vital part of his daily routine, symbolizing his deep commitment to punctuality. Gandhi carried his stopwatch everywhere, and it became an emblem of his belief in the ethical use of time. Gandhi's stopwatch, a daily tool, represented his disciplined lifestyle and ethical approach to time. He believed that time was a sacred resource that should be used purposefully. The heartbreaking fact that the stopwatch stopped at the moment of his assassination highlights its symbolic association with his life and values. In museum displays, the stopwatch is often shown as an artifact showing Gandhi's meticulousness and his emphasis on the ethical use of time.¹¹ This is consistent with his overall message that individual actions, no matter how small, contribute to transformative social change. He famously remarked that "any abuse of time is unethical" in a letter to a friend, stressing that time must be treated as a sacred trust. His attachment to the stopwatch, which he referred to as "ladywatch," underscores his discipline and the importance he placed on time management. Remarkably, when Gandhi was assassinated, the stopwatch stopped at the precise moment of his death, creating a poignant and symbolic connection between the man and his strict adherence to time.

The anthropological analysis of Gandhi's stopwatch provides a valuable perspective on the relationship between material culture and human ideals. Objects like Gandhi's stopwatch go beyond their utilitarian function to become symbols of cultural, ethical, and personal significance. Anthropologically, the stopwatch represents Gandhi's embodiment of temporal discipline, which may be contextualised within larger cultural narratives that value order, structure, and ethical resource usage. In Gandhi's instance, the stopwatch was more than just a tool for measuring time; it was an extension of his idea of disciplined life and the moral framework he hoped to instill in society. Material things such as these provide physical insights into their owners' intangible principles, acting as anthropological artefacts to tell stories about value systems and activities. Gandhi's concept of time as a "sacred trust" is especially pertinent to studies of time consciousness in societies, where temporality frequently determines social rhythms, economic output, and spiritual activities.¹¹

The fact that the stopwatch stopped during his assassination can also be seen through the anthropological concept of "ritualised artefacts." In death, artefacts associated with an individual often take on new symbolic value, reflecting the end of a life's work and the continuation of their ideals. In museums, such artefacts spark discussions about how

people utilise material culture to form their ethical identities and leave legacies that last beyond their physical lives. Gandhi's "ladywatch" thus functions as both a historical relic and an anthropological touchstone, connecting materiality, temporality, and moral philosophy.¹¹

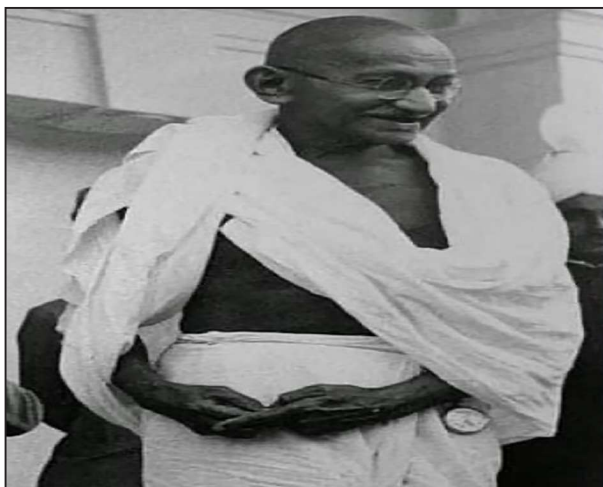


Figure 5 & 6: Mahatma Gandhi with his watch, and the object picture, National Gandhi Museum collection, New delhi

Sandals and Social Equality:

Mahatma Gandhi's traditional leather sandals carried a significant message of India's self-sufficiency and his commitment to breaking social boundaries of discrimination. Gandhi recognized the profound craftsmanship involved in making leather items, a skill passed down through generations. Traditionally, shoe-making was associated with lower caste groups and considered ritually impure in the context of India's caste system, where it was considered ritually impure. By wearing these sandals, Gandhi symbolically rejected caste-based prejudice, arguing that artistry and labour deserve respect regardless of social origin. The act of wearing leather sandals exemplifies Gandhi's ability to transform commonplace goods into symbols of equality and inclusion. Museums that display his sandals frequently frame them as reminders of his efforts to reconcile societal divides and promote the idea of human dignity. Through this act, he conveyed that skill and craftsmanship are not confined by caste and should be appreciated by all, thus challenging entrenched social hierarchies and promoting equality.

Anthropologically, Gandhi's decision to wear leather sandals, a commodity historically made by marginalised tribes, might be interpreted as a rejection of caste-based occupational systems. Within the caste system, occupations like leather working were stigmatised, pushing its practitioners to the social outskirts. Gandhi altered the story surrounding these artefacts by accepting and elevating their craftsmanship, converting them into symbols of equality and respect for labour. His acts are consistent with the anthropological concept of "material agency," in which things actively participate in cultural discourse, in this case questioning conceptions of ceremonial purity and social stratification.¹

In museums, these sandals are frequently shown as artefacts that go beyond their materiality to express Gandhi's larger goal of an equitable society. They demonstrate his capacity to elevate everyday things into tools of cultural critique and transformation, highlighting material culture's ability to embody and propagate transformative ideals.^{9,10} Scholars such as Appadurai (1986) emphasise how items take on "social lives" and reflect shifting cultural meanings, which

is similar to how Gandhi's sandals have been reinterpreted as symbols of dignity, inclusivity, and labour ethics.

This anthropological approach also highlights Gandhi's support for "everyday resistance," in which regular behaviours are transformed into conscious acts of rebellion against oppressive regimes. Gandhi's decision to wear leather sandals not only

spanned socioeconomic boundaries, but also reinforced the notion that labour, regardless of social origin, is intrinsically valuable.¹³ This interpretation places Gandhi's sandals within the larger context of how material culture may serve as a catalyst for societal reform, demonstrating the power of things to question and reshape communal consciousness.



Figure 7: Leather sandals of Gandhiji, National Gandhi Museum in New Delhi, India

Similarly, Gandhi's round spectacles, now widely recognized as the symbol of the Swachh Bharat (Clean India) campaign, represent his vision of a clean and green India. Gandhi always envisioned a nation with clean, self-sufficient villages and emphasized the importance of sanitation. His spectacles became symbolic of this broader vision, serving as a metaphor for his clarity of thought and his enduring aspiration for a hygienic and prosperous India. Through these iconic items, Gandhi communicated not only practical messages but also his ideals for a more equitable and sustainable society.

Gandhi's round glasses have tremendous anthropological importance, transcending their functional purpose and becoming a symbol of vision, both literal and metaphorical. From an anthropological standpoint, things like these serve as extensions of identity and cultural values, and Gandhi's spectacles represent his dedication to sanitation, sustainability, and social equality. As a material artefact, they express his philosophy of combining personal discipline with collective well-being, which is strongly ingrained in Indian culture. Gandhi's emphasis on cleanliness and sanitation is consistent with the concept of "symbolic

boundaries", in which ideas of purity and pollution play an important role in social organisation.⁶ Gandhi's glasses, together with his advocacy for hygiene and clean environs, call into question colonial India's traditional disdain of sanitation. Gandhi aimed to reframe conventional notions of ritual purity by emphasising cleanliness as a moral and civic obligation, extending them to public health and social reform. His vision of a clean and self-sufficient India is consistent with the anthropological interpretation of how health practices are inextricably linked to cultural and political contexts.

The spectacles, which have been extensively embraced as a symbol of the Swachh Bharat movement, highlight Gandhi's beliefs' continued relevance in modern India. In anthropological words, they exemplify the "objectification of values", in which material objects become vehicles for community goals.^{10,11} As a public symbol, Gandhi's spectacles serve as a mnemonic device, connecting one leader's personal discipline to the larger social aim of hygiene, sustainability, and equitable development.

In museum settings and public campaigns, these spectacles are portrayed not only as

personal possessions, but also as cultural artefacts embodying Gandhi's foresight and revolutionary leadership. Their symbolic power stems from their ability to motivate action, connecting material culture with civic involvement. Anthropologists such as Appadurai (1986) and Kopytoff (1986) have emphasised how things take on social life, becoming transmitters of ideas and ideals, much as Gandhi's spectacles have become a national and worldwide emblem of sustainable development and social responsibility.



Figure 8: Mahatma Gandhi's Spectacles, National Gandhi Museum in New Delhi, India

One of the most iconic objects associated with Mahatma Gandhi is the representation of the three monkeys, symbolizing "see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil." These three wise monkeys, traditionally known as Mizaru, Kikazaru, and Iwazaru, are often seen as a metaphor for Gandhi's simplicity and moral philosophy. Their message transcends their physical form, encapsulating Gandhi's commitment to non-violence (Ahimsa) in thought, word, and deed. In Asian mythology, monkeys (from "zaru," meaning "monkey" in Japanese) hold significant symbolic value, often associated with spiritual and cultural teachings across various traditions.⁴ Gandhi adopted this ancient symbol to promote restraint and ethical conduct, urging individuals to avoid harmful actions, thoughts, and speech.

The three wise monkeys associated with Mahatma Gandhi are an interesting anthropological example of how old symbols are recontextualised to fit modern beliefs. As artefacts, they symbolise the convergence of material culture, moral philosophy, and cross-

cultural symbolism, shedding light on Gandhi's capacity to combine traditional wisdom with his ethical framework of nonviolence (Ahimsa) and self-control. Anthropologically, the three monkeys represent the concept of "syncretism," in which cultural symbols from several traditions are transformed and given new meanings. Mizaru, Kikazaru, and Iwazaru, three monkeys from Asian mythology, teach moral restraint and the value of ethical self-regulation. Gandhi's use of these figures shows how cultural artefacts are transformed to fit into specific sociopolitical situations. Gandhi bridged cultural and chronological gaps by connecting the monkeys' message with his Ahimsa philosophy, transforming an old symbol into a globally recognised sign of ethical behaviour.

Furthermore, the three monkeys demonstrate the anthropological concept of "materiality," in which items are extensions of ideology and belief systems.¹⁰ For Gandhi, the monkeys were more than just ornamental characters; they were active actors in his moral tale, visually expressing his dedication to personal and communal nonviolence. Their simplicity is consistent with his overall emphasis on simple living and universal values, confirming the notion that great moral concepts can be conveyed through humble symbols.⁴

Animals, particularly monkeys, have symbolic meaning in South Asian and East Asian cultural traditions, where they are frequently connected with wisdom, protection, and spiritual direction. This cultural connection emphasises the anthropological significance of animals as mediators of human values, enhancing the monkeys' resonance in Gandhi's worldview. Museums and cultural shows using the three monkeys frequently interpret them as connecting Gandhi's vision to universal moral precepts, emphasising the importance of material culture in developing ethical discourse.

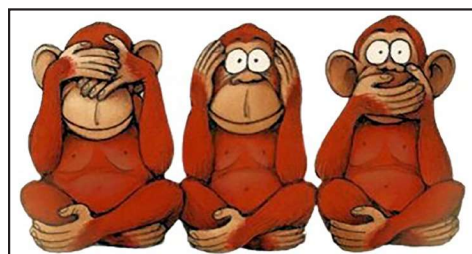


Figure 9: Three wise monkeys depicting Gandhi's life's moral

Another profound aspect of Gandhi's life was his practice of fasting, a powerful symbol of self-sacrifice and moral discipline. For Gandhi, fasting was not merely an exercise in physical self-control but a means of minimizing the importance of his personal existence in relation to the broader human and ecological community.² This self-sacrifice underscored his belief in humility, equality, and interconnectedness with all life forms. His fasting campaigns, often tied to socio-political movements, such as the Salt March, demonstrated his belief that peace and change must be embodied through personal commitment and action, rather than just intellectual or rhetorical pursuits.

Gandhi's sartorial choice of simple white clothes further reinforced his message of peace and equality. The white khadi cloth he wore symbolized purity, simplicity, and the Indian struggle for self-sufficiency.³ His life served as a message, illustrating that transformative visions for the nation are not achieved through words alone but through a life of conscious action and personal sacrifice. Gandhi believed that when individuals commit their lives to

embodying the values they wish to see in the world, it lays the foundation for a brighter and more just nation.

RESULTS

This research article illustrates how Mahatma Gandhi's common personal artefacts, such as the charkha, lathi, sandals, spectacles, stopwatch, and the three wise monkeys, function as deep representations of his philosophical beliefs when seen through the perspective of museum anthropology. These products go beyond their utilitarian functions, becoming potent symbols of self-reliance, nonviolence, social equality, and ethical living. The study shows that Gandhi purposefully imbued tangible items with transformational social meanings, employing them as vehicles of resistance and reform. Through museum curatorial methods, these items continue to express Gandhi's vision of a morally uplifted and inclusive society, making his legacy not only historically relevant but also culturally and ethically instructional for contemporary India.

Table 1: Gandhi's Artefacts and Symbolic Interpretations

Artefact	Functional Use	Symbolic Meaning	Associated Value/Ideal	Anthropological Concept
Charkha	Spinning yarn	Self-reliance, spiritual upliftment	Economic independence	Material agency, social life of things
Lathi	Walking support	Power through restraint, non-violence	Self-control	Embodied power, ethical symbolism
Leather Sandals	Footwear	Caste equality, dignity of labor	Social justice	Everyday resistance, material agency
Spectacles	Vision correction	Clarity of thought, cleanliness, sustainability	Swachh Bharat, hygiene ethics	Symbolic boundaries
Stopwatch	Timekeeping	Ethical time use, discipline	Moral punctuality	Ritualized artefact, temporality
Three Monkeys	Figurines	Ahimsa in thought, word, and deed	Non-violence	Syncretism, moral symbolism

This table successfully demonstrates how Gandhi's ordinary objects went beyond their utilitarian roles to become strong symbols of his ethical and political philosophy. The charkha, lathi, sandals, spectacles, stopwatch, and three monkeys all represent deeper ideals: self-reliance, restraint, equality, sustainability, discipline, and nonviolence. Based on anthropological theory, the table demonstrates how these artefacts served as physical manifestations of Gandhi's vision,

transforming ordinary material culture into tools for social and moral transformation.

This table demonstrates how Gandhi's artefacts are meticulously displayed in museums to reveal deeper tales beyond their historical context. Objects like as the charkha, lathi, spectacles, and stopwatch are shown not just as relics, but also as representations of Gandhi's ethical values and disciplined life. The stopwatch, metaphorically frozen at the time of his death, prompts deep

consideration. Similarly, the three monkeys and sandals act as a link between past ideals and current significance. The table emphasises

how museums serve as ethical storytellers, preserving and conveying Gandhi's ideas through thoughtful curation.

Table 2: Museum Curation and Anthropological Insights

Museum Exhibit	Displayed Artefact	Interpretive Focus	Curatorial Message
National Gandhi Museum, Delhi	Charkha	Spiritual and economic symbol during freedom movement	Self-sufficiency and dignity through simplicity
National Gandhi Museum, Delhi	Lathi	Symbol of moral strength and non-violent resistance	Inner power through non-aggression
National Gandhi Museum, Delhi	Spectacles	Vision of clean India	Moral clarity and civic duty
Martyrdom Gallery, Delhi	Stopwatch (stopped at death)	Sacredness of time, life and legacy	Discipline, sacrifice, end of ethical journey
Gandhi Memorials Across India	Sandals, Monkeys	Social inclusion, moral conduct	Transforming tradition into modern values

Table 3: Anthropological Concepts Applied to Gandhi's Artefacts.

Concept	Definition	Application in Gandhi's Artefacts
Material Agency	Objects influence social behavior and values	Charkha shaping self-reliance, sandals promoting equality
Social Life of Things	Objects change meaning as they move through contexts	Stopwatch's role before and after assassination
Syncretism	Blending of cultural symbols and meanings	Three monkeys linking Asian mythology to Gandhian ethics
Ritualized Artefact	Items gaining symbolic value through events or rites	Stopwatch stopped at Gandhi's assassination
Symbolic Boundaries	Purity, pollution, and social identity	Spectacles representing cleanliness as a moral duty
Everyday Resistance	Common acts symbolizing defiance or critique of power structures	Wearing caste-made sandals as rejection of hierarchy

This table highlights the study's theoretical complexity by connecting Gandhi's objects to significant anthropological ideas. It shows how things such as the charkha, stopwatch, spectacles, and sandals transcend their physical form to affect social behaviour, challenge hierarchies, and express ethical principles. Material agency, syncretism, and symbolic limits are all concepts that help explain how these artefacts evolved throughout time to take on multiple meanings. The study provides a significant framework for understanding how material culture may convey and express powerful beliefs, making it especially useful for scholars working at the nexus of history, symbolism, and social change.

Symbolism and Cultural Relevance:

These artefacts demonstrate Gandhi's ability to draw on India's rich cultural past while incorporating traditional symbols into his progressive vision of a new republic. The charkha, based on Indian spiritual traditions,

functioned as a link between the past and the future, combining philosophical aspirations of interconnectivity with the practical necessity for economic independence. Similarly, his spectacles, sandals, and three monkeys displayed his complex knowledge of material culture as a vehicle for societal reform.

Anthropologically, these things represent material culture's "social life".¹When they are shown in museums or utilised in public campaigns, they take on new meanings that resonate with current audiences while keeping their historical and cultural significance. This change demonstrates the dynamic link between artefacts and human agency, in which objects evolve to fulfil society's evolving requirements.

Legacy and Ethical Implications:

Gandhi's artefacts have an enduring legacy because of their potential to motivate action and prompt critical thinking. They serve as reminders of the connection between personal

discipline and society reform, encouraging people to embrace the values of simplicity, equality, and nonviolence. The usage of Gandhi's spectacles as a symbol of the Swachh Bharat campaign demonstrates how his vision continues to drive modern India's objectives, emphasising the philosophy's relevance in addressing current difficulties.

These artefacts raise important questions concerning the role of material culture in moulding ethical behaviour. Do objects have inherent moral weight, or does their value stem exclusively from human interpretation? Gandhi's life and artefacts indicate that the latter is correct, as his intentional interaction with these objects transformed them into symbols of greater ethical principles.⁴

Museum Anthropology and The Future:

From the perspective of museum anthropology, Gandhi's artefacts demonstrate the power of curation in interpreting history and ethics. Museums displaying his things serve an important role in maintaining and interpreting Gandhi's material culture, so that future generations can engage with his vision of social reform. Museums promote a better understanding of Gandhi's principles and their ongoing significance by contextualising these artefacts within their historical and cultural contexts. The anthropological study of these things also provides opportunities to explore the larger relationship between material culture and social movements. Gandhi's use of everyday goods as tools for resistance and reform demonstrates material culture's ability to challenge existing power systems and promote collective action.

DISCUSSION

Mahatma Gandhi's personal artefacts, as seen through the perspective of museum anthropology, tell a fascinating story about how ordinary objects may be converted into exceptional symbols of moral philosophy, national identity, and social reform. The examination of objects like as the charkha, lathi, sandals, spectacles, stopwatch, and three wise monkeys demonstrates Gandhi's remarkable ability to imbue material culture with ethical importance. Each artefact represents components of his vision for a just, self-sufficient, and equal society, demonstrating his fusion of personal discipline and collective well-

being. The charkha, as a spiritual and material symbol, evolved from a simple spinning wheel to a potent emblem of India's freedom cause. Gandhi's emphasis on khadi as a source of self-sufficiency and economic development demonstrated his dedication to an inclusive nationalism based on grassroots participation. The lathi, on the other hand, embodied Gandhi's reinterpretation of strength, which saw power as restraint and self-control rather than aggressiveness. This viewpoint called into question traditional concepts of authority, supporting his nonviolent worldview.¹

Gandhi's sandals, made by marginalised people, challenged caste-based inequalities, transforming them into symbols of dignity and social justice. His now-iconic spectacles served as a metaphorical lens for his vision of a clean and self-sufficient India, emphasising the value of cleanliness and sustainable living. Similarly, the stopwatch exemplified Gandhi's disciplined attitude to time as a precious resource, which combined timeliness with ethical behaviour.

The three wise monkeys embodied Gandhi's commitment to Ahimsa in thought, word, and practice. Gandhi used this old Asian emblem to express the timeless significance of ethical self-regulation in the face of contemporary sociopolitical concerns. Collectively, these artefacts highlight the anthropological concept of "material agency," in which items actively shape cultural narratives and moral discourses.

FINAL REFLECTIONS/ CONCLUSION

Gandhi's artefacts are more than just historical relics, they are living representations of a philosophy that aimed to transform society through human action and ethical integrity. Each item exemplifies his capacity to imbue everyday life with significant moral and cultural meaning, revealing the transformational power of simplicity and humility. As we examine these things through the lens of anthropology, we are reminded of Gandhi's vision's continued relevance in dealing with the challenges of our modern world. Finally, Gandhi's material legacy tells a captivating story about how ordinary objects may represent exceptional values, functioning as vehicles for social critique, cultural preservation, and ethical inspiration. Examining these artefacts in their anthropological and historical contexts allows us to acquire a better understanding

of Gandhi's life and his persistent devotion to the principles of nonviolence, equality, and self-reliance. His artefacts continue to demonstrate the power of material culture to promote transformational social change, encouraging us to consider our own beliefs and responsibilities in creating a more equal and sustainable future.

Competing Interests: The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this manuscript.

Funding: This work was supported by Anthropological Survey of India, Ministry of Culture, Government of India.

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