

Relevance of Gandhian Philosophy in Contemporary Period

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Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was a saint and a moral revolutionary. He sincerely believed that violence would bring the doom of mankind. M.K. Gandhi has exercised the most powerful influence on modern world. Mahatma Gandhi is not merely a political philosopher, it is a message and philosophy of life. For quite some time it was considered that Gandhian philosophy and methods of struggle could not be put actual practice and with that these philosophy and methods have established their effectiveness. While M.K. Gandhi lived most of the people thought that his ideas are relevance only to win freedom for India from the British rule. So many persons were not convinced by his faith in Truth and non-violence; they agreed that this was the only strategy to turn British out of India.

There is great relevancy of Gandhian political philosophy. Gandhi was a practical thinker and as such it has rightly been said about him that he was a great *karmayogi*. Gandhi was one of those philosopher who believed in self sacrifice, *Satyagraha* or *Non-cooperation*. He believed that violence brought with it hatred and feelings of revenge where as in non-violence there was no such danger. Gandhian philosophy is no comprehensive that it has left no aspect of human life untouched. In his philosophy there are very clear indications of his love for individual and national freedom. Gandhi was a great social reformer. He had a many sided personality with clear vision and definite approach to the problems which faced India of his time.

Objectives of the Study:

- 1) To gain familiarity with Gandhian Philosophy
- 2) To achieve new insights of Gandhi's ideals



- 3) To examine the relevancy of Gandhian Philosophy in context of Peace and Conflict.
- 4) To examine the knowledge of younger generation on Gandhian Philosophy.

Methodology of the Study:

The methodology of the study would be Historical, Analytical and Experimental.

Relevancy of Gandhian Philosophy:

M.K. Gandhi very exhaustively dealt not only with political or economic but also with social problems of Indian society. It is very difficult to discuss all the theories of Gandhi to examine its relevancy. I make attempt to show the relevancy of Gandhian theory by some of his most important theories, these are

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Gandhi's Non-violence

In this theory we try to project the basic idea of Non-violence and its relevance in contemporary India. Non-violence means good will towards others and doing well towards others. It is not a weapon of weak and coward. Ahimsa means the largest love, greatest charity. It is a weapon of the strong and it is taken for granted that one who uses non-violence has the ability to be violent and to strike. There is close relation between truth and non-violence. One cannot be divorced from one another. The term non-violence connotes the positive value of love rather than the negative value of obtaining from harming living beings.

Gandhi had said, "I do not believe in shortcuts which involve violence. However, much I sympathize with admire worthy motives, I am an uncompromising opponent of violent methods even to serve the noblest causes.



There is, therefore, really no meeting ground between the school of violence and myself.”¹ The heart that bled at the sight of the misery of others was bled to death on 30th January, 1948 with the three death dealing slugs buried deep in it. The Mahatma has given the way of all saints? India has lost her soul, but his spirit lives and that spirit will continue to live among us as long as India survives.²

Philosophy of Non-violence has great relevancy in contemporary India. In India most of the conflict and extremist revolutions already settled and some are going to settle by non-violence and peaceful means.

Peace Process applied for different movements:

Peace process in extremist movement - Movement for Khalistan in Punjab, movement of Bodo Liberation Tiger (BLT) in Assam, in march 2000 Central government initiated a fresh peace process by suspending military, paramilitary, police operation against BLT), Telengana movement in Andhra Pradesh, movement of Jharkhand for a separate state from Bihar, movement of Uttarakhand for separate state from Uttar Pradesh, ultimately ULFA (United Liberation Front of Assam) also shows their interest to settle their problem by peaceful means as well as government also taken initiative to settle the problem peacefully.

Peace process in settlement of inter-state conflict: Problem of Chandigarh (conflict between Punjab and Haryana), Mysore-Maharashtra boundary conflict, Conflict between Gujarat and Maharashtra etc.

Peace process in Water Dispute: Cauvery Water dispute (Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala), Ravi Water Dispute (Punjab, Jammu-Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh), Krishna river (Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka), etc.

Peace process also applied to settle Assam movement (1979-1985).



According to Gandhiji, Non-violence does not mean meek submission to the will of the evil doer. It is the soul force or truth force or truth sacking force.

Gandhi's Satyagraha

Gandhiji's Satyagrahas implies adhering to truth. One should be truthful under all circumstances. According to Gandhi Satyagraha means non-violent resistance to political authority, non co-operation with evil and fasting constitutes essential part of it, but they do not exhaust its full import. There should be non-violence in Satyagraha. Violence is untruth and non-violence is truth.

The purpose of Satyagraha is to fight against injustice and tyranny. A satyagrahi cannot injure others; rather he makes them understand by means of reason. Satyagrahi should have moral force. There is no place for physical force.

Methods of Satyagraha

According to Gandhi, the methods of Satyagraha may take different form. We have discussed important methods of Satyagraha are:

Strike – It is an important weapon for fighting against the oppressor. Government and non-government employ have right to organise themselves against their authority. The employ may resort strike to fulfill their genuine demands. But the strike should be non-violent.

Fasting – According to Gandhiji fasting is a very important weapon of Satyagraha. It means self purification or changing the heart of the evil doers. It is also a means for resisting injustice. But fasting should not be undertaken by all. It should be undertaken only by those who have moral strength and purity of mind.

Non co-operation – Non co-operation is an important method of Satyagraha. It is practice against injustice. It may be used against governmental and non-



governmental organizations. Non co-operation includes surrender of educational institutions, law court, foreign goods and councils.

Civil Disobedience – Another important method is civil disobedience. It means the breach of immoral law. Generally citizens are not bound to obey unjust and anti social laws. If there is such laws, the citizens have right to disobey such immoral unjust laws. But whenever, the citizens stage civil disobedience, they should never try to escape punishment. According to Gandhi, “Civil disobedience is the most powerful expression of a soul’s anguish and an eloquent against the continuance of an evil state.”

For quite some time it was considered that Gandhiji’s methods of Satyagrahas have no any relevancy but with the passing of time Gandhiji proved how it was important for protection of life, liberty and property of Indian citizens. Still these all methods are highly relevant in India. Still Indian people frequently apply these methods for fulfillment of demands.

Gandhi’s Concept on Politics:

For Gandhi, politics is moral problem of value. This has been beautifully described by Arnold Brecht as “Scientific Value Relativism”³. Need of the hour is to revolutionise politics by ethics. “Unless the moral and spiritual qualities of the people are appropriate, the best of political system and constitutions will not work.”⁴ “Morals serve the cause of progress. Morality serves the great task of the social revolutions of our times” – Prof. A. Shishkin of the Institute of Philosophy of Academy of Sciences (Moscow).⁵

In Modern times, we see that politics is rooted in deceit and dishonesty and is bound to create greater deceit and greater dishonesty. Hate must generate hate and violence greater violence. Thus the need of the hour is to “moralise politics.”⁶ Gandhi’s prophetic emphasis is “there is no politics devoid of religion.”⁷ All through the Indian Freedom Movement, it was Gandhi and



Gandhi alone who, in reality, practiced politics on religious foundations as he always used to put emphasis on his often repeated saying i.e. “ Politics bereft of religion is a death trap.”⁸

Gandhi's Economy:

Gandhi's economic philosophy is inspired by John Ruskin (1819-1900) and he was immensely inspired, almost 'captured' by his book “Unto This Last”⁹ Mahatma Gandhi had his own approach to the economic problem of India. He did not essentially believe in promoting large scale industrialization which rendered economic dislocation and in fact was responsible for many present day economic problems. Gandhi Condemned the nineteenth century doctrine of laissez-faire which is the political basis of capitalism¹⁰ and he said that labour was superior to capital.¹¹

In 1921, Gandhiji wrote, “Economics that hurts the moral well being of an individual or a nation is immoral, and, therefore, sin.” Again in 1924, he repeated the same belief, “that economics is untrue which ignores or disregard moral values.” Khadi stood for the revival and rejuvenation of the Indian Village communities. For him, khadi was the symbol of Swadeshi.¹²

In his economy he paid attention mainly on:

Gandhian economy is still relevant to our times. It is often thought that Mahatma Gandhi was essentially a religious ascetic who was averse to the fruits of modern science and technology. It is an unfortunate misconception. He was not against machinery as such. All that he meant was that in a country like India where capital was scarce and labour abundant, it would be profitable to use labour intensive industries. He was afraid that use of machinery on a large scale would result in technological unemployment. He extends Ruskin's conception¹³ of the equality of wages to all kinds of labour and pleads for equal distribution¹⁴



The mad race in industrialization and urbanization has resulted in the pollution of air and water. Environmental pollution is slowly becoming number one problem of the industrialised world.

Rights of the Citizens:

Mahatma Gandhi also expressed his view on rights of citizens. These are- Right to Speech, Right to Press, Right to form Association, Right to Conscience, Right to Religion, Right to Cultural and Language, Right to Equality, Right to Public Service, Right to Profession, Right to use Public Road, Educational Institutions, Tank and other Public Institutions Rights.

These all rights Gandhiji mentioned before the preparation of Indian Constitution. But ultimately these rights have been incorporated in the Indian Constitution. From that point of view it is clear that rights which Gandhiji mentioned many years ago still relevant in contemporary India.

Gandhiji's Democracy

Gandhiji followed the principle of decenralisation in his democracy. Power should not be concentrated in a single authority. Gandhijis democracy shall be free from exploitation and oppression. There shall be no scope for exploitation by one class to another class. It is based on the rule of majority. According to him, "The nearest approach to the purest anarchy would be democracy based on Non-violence. In such a state everyone is his own ruler. However, Gandhi was highly critical of the parliamentary democracy and in his monumental book "Hind Swaraj" (Self Rule or Home Rule, he has called the British Parliament as a "sterile women and a prostitute", though for him "good government is no substitute for self-government."¹⁵ There is contradiction in the statement of Gandhi about parliamentary democracy but while diving deep into the democratic ideals, he has said, "Democracy, disciplined and enlightened is the finest things in the world."¹⁶ However, he



has highest regards for Democracy and he calls it as “a great institution” and again conscious people and says, “It is liable to be greatly abused.”¹⁷

Once again nation-wide anti corruption movement launched by the great Gandhian of our time Anna Hazare and his team undoubtedly proved the relevancy of Gandhism. The government had to bow down with his demand of introduction of Jana Lokpal Bill, following his 12 days fasting at Ramlila Maidan, New Delhi. There was no any evidence of violent act in the movement though lakhs of people gathered daily in Ramlila Maidan and crores of other agitated in every nook and corner of the nation. In Assam, Akhil gogoi, under the banner of Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti (KMSS) has been agitating against the Government and Multi National Corporations (MNCs) on the issues like big dam, rights of the son of soil, corruption and so on, on the principle of Gandhian philosophy. These are only the few examples of several other instances going on in different parts of the nation. These development must be inspired others for applying Gandhian way in future.

Gandhian democracy is still relevant India. It is clear from the 73rd amendment of Indian constitution. That amendment is related only with rural administration of India. One significant provision of that amendment is decentralization of power up to the rural level. That amendment has already been implemented in India. Gandhian techniques are mostly following by the Indian people to fulfillment different demands. .Gandhi’s philosophy of life is relevant to all humanity. He did not reserve any afford in serving India and humanity and sacrificed even his life. He was a scavenger, a manual labour, an economist, a politician, a religious man, a lover of humanity and above all a Mahatma. Gandhi’s life itself is a message to humanity.

Educational Relevance: Gandhi’s concept of Basic Education has got the maximum attention. It aims at all round development of human personality.



His primary emphasis is on the 3'H's i.e. – Head, Heart and Hand, rather than on 3 R's i.e. – Reading, Writing and Arithmetic. For Gandhi, The true development of head, heart and soul are necessary for a satisfactory system of education.”¹⁸ True education is that which draws out and stimulates the spiritual, intellectual and physical faculties.¹⁹ According to Gandhi, the aim of education should be build the whole man and develop his integral personality. “Literacy in itself is no education. It is no the end of education nor even the beginning.”²⁰ Aim of education should be to develop to the full potentialities of energy of the children. Education is simply the process of bringing out what is latent in man.

Before, Gandhi's concept of education through “Basic Education” could take off and materialized, it could not be implemented with true spirit and hence, there is apprehension in the mind of the educationists about its efficacy, usefulness and relevance for modern time. However, men of higher thinking always ponder over the failure of the present educational system, which has simply multiplied the number of so called educated unemployed and this huge army of educated unemployed is becoming a menace for the polity and society both. Still there is a ray of hope to get the Gandhian concepts of value education implemented to save the society from peril and total destruction.

Gandhi "pierced the darkness and removed the scales from our eyes, like a whirlwind that upset many things, but most of all the working of people's minds."²¹

Conclusion:

After many years of martyrdom, Gandhi is now more relevant on global level than before. In contemporary period Gandhi is remembered more with reverence than merely casually. He is being recognized as a great leader of action, a Liberator and a Prophet Martyr all over the universe. What is needed



at the hour is to implement his deeds, actions and thoughts into practice and thus, his relevance in different fields is unquestionable and unchallengeable. For the very survival of human being, it is imperative on our part to act upon his advice because only on his relevance, we shall survive together or if we fail in our venture, we are bound to perish together.



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