

GANDHIJI'S POLITICAL IDEOLOGY AND ITS REPERCUSSIONS IN INDIA SOCIETY – A STUDY

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Abstract: The paper studied Gandhi's political contributions such as secularism, panchayats, abolition of untouchability, freedom of speech etc. in the Indian Constitution and their relevance in the present age. In last, briefly, I had made some understanding of recent emerging challenges in present society and hope to resolve them in the light of Gandhian principles, so that true democracy could be prevail. Therefore, the focus of this paper was mainly on political ideas and political contributions of Gandhiji and their present relevance. His political ideas were stateless and party less democracy, decentralization, freedom of speech, abolition of untouchability, moral politics, secularism etc. There is great relevance of Gandhian political ideas or values in the present age of increasing violence and intolerance.

Keywords: State, Democracy, Decentralization, Politics, Swaraj.

Introduction: Gandhiji will always be remembered for his attempt to spiritualise politics or introduce purity into politics He was not a philosopher like Shankaracharya or Kant. He never preach any startling theory or ism. In his own words: 'So my patriotism is for me a stage on my journey to the land of eternal freedom and peace . . . for me there are no politics devoid of religion Politics bereft of religion are a death-trap because they kill the soul.' Addressing some Congress workers in 1936 he admitted that there was no such thing as Gandhism nor was he inclined to leave after him a sect of his followers. He never claimed to have originated any new 'ism'; he had merely tried to apply the eternal truths in his own way to everyday life and its problems. He also did not express that his assessment or the interpretation of virtues was final and unchangeable. They were amenable to changes in new contexts, he had nothing new to lecture to the world. His principles of truth and Ahimsa were as old as the hills of India. His effort had been only to make new experiments with truth and non-violence in a broader field. Gandhi advised his admirers not to give the name of Gandhism to his philosophy for there was no innovation in it, nothing doctrinaire.¹

Ahimsa and Satyagraha: Gandhiji was a spiritual man in the strictest sense within the word. His religion, however, was broader based and inclusive of all that was ethical and good in any religion of the world. Religion, according to him, was belief in the ordered moral governance of the world. Humanism was the keynote of his outlook and behaviour. Politics and religion were for him two sides of the same coin. He gave religious basis to politics. Religion, he said, had driven him into politics; and if he consented to dabble with politics, it was because there was no escape from it and he wanted to temper politics with religion.² He said, "All religions are founded on the same moral laws. My ethical religion is made up of laws which bind men all over the world." If truth is the ultimate reality and the highest ideal, it has to be safeguarded, not by brute force but Ahimsa. Non-violence, as Gandhiji meant, was the cult of love which alone promised a safe harbour to erring humanity. Ahimsa and truth were inseparable, they anticipate each other. The weapon of ahimsa and truth could be handled not by a coward but a strong man only who could lift the sword but refrained from doing so on moral considerations. The true test of a votary of Ahimsa is when despite the strongest provocation to use force, he acts with reason in a non-violent way.³

Gandhiji's noblest gift to mankind is satyagraha which literally means 'holding on to truth'. He used to call it spiritual force or the force of love. He made a distinction between passive resistance and satyagraha. *Passive resistance may be political weapon based on expediency; satyagraha is a spiritual weapon. Passive resistance is a weapon of the weak; it is only a man who is morally and spiritually strong*

who can practice satyagraha. Passive resistance does not entirely ignore the possibility of violence . . . ; satyagraha will not tolerate violence in word or deed."So Gandhiji' satyagraha was not a negative act, it was a positive effort to correct the wrongdoer by the exercise of the purest soul force. There was no place for malice or ill-will against the opponent in the philosophy and technique of satyagraha. A true satyagrahi never tries to overpower the opponent to physical force or inflict physical injuries. This is the way to win his rival's mind and heart by his arguments and sacrifice, Satyagrahi is real *Karmayogin* who accepts no defeat. He fights for truth with full awareness of the ordeals on the way. He accepts death cheerfully as a gateway heaven and welcomes imprisonment as a step towards freedom.⁴

He believed that even armed aggression on one's country can be resisted with satyagraha. A satyagrahi should prefer death to slavery. He should try to knock down the foreign rulers by holding back his co-operation and even by disobeying the laws of the Government. He claimed that the impact of non-violent resistance was more formidable than all the warheads in the arsenal of the well equipped country. Even Hitler could be run down by the earnest application of non-violent ways. A warring people become more desperate and cruel if resisted with force. They become milder when they find themselves face to face with an army of unarmed men, women and children who refuse to submit to the destructive power of arms. Gandhiji practiced his principles in South Africa against racial hatred. His experiment was a resounding success. He recommended this weapon to Indians as an alternative to the cult of bombs which the terrorists were practicing. In Champaran (Bihar), Ahmedabad and Kheda (Gujarat), the efficacy of satyagraha as a political weapon was conclusively proved. He clung to this belief firmly that however heartless or imperialistic the British be, they were bound to respond to the wishes of non-violent satyagrahis of India.⁵

Conception of True Swaraj: The word Swaraj signified a government which truly represents the people of all classes and creeds, which is thoroughly democratic and in which there is no place for nepotism, corruption or abuse of power. Such a state, said Gandhiji, was not an utopia. It could be realised by the people provided they were politically conscious, bold and literate Gandhiji was against concentration of power. He preferred decentralisation of authority. He favoured the idea of vitalising the Panchayats and letting them work for the uplift of the villages. He wanted the process of delegation of powers to be reversed. The people, he said, should play vital role in the governance of the country. The governments should derive powers to the extent the people through their representative bodies might consent to give. The Centre should be invested with minimum of powers, leaving maximum of sphere to be controlled by the Local Bodies and the Panchayats.

Mahatma Gandhi said, "By Swaraj I mean the Government of India by the consent of the people as ascertained by the largest number of the adult population, male or female, native born ...I hope to demonstrate that real Swaraj will come not by the acquisition of authority by a few but by the acquisition of the capacity by all to resist authority when abused. In other words, Swaraj is to be gained by educating the masses to a sense of their capacity to regulate and control authority".⁶ Mahatma Gandhi further says, "that by political independence I do not mean an imitation of the British House of Commons or the Soviet rule of Russia or the Fascist rule of Italy or the Nazi rule of Germany. They have systems suited to their genius. We must have ours suited to ours. What that can be more than I can tell. I have described it as Ram Raj, i.e., sovereignty of the people based on pure moral authority."⁷

Mahatma Gandhi further said, "We have long been accustomed to think that power comes only through Legislative Assemblies. I have regarded this belief as a grave error brought about by inertia or hypnotism. A superficial study of British history has made us think that all power percolates to the people from parliaments. The truth is that power resides in the people and it is entrusted for the time being to those whom they choose their representatives. Parliaments have no power or even existence independent of the people. It has been my effort for the last twenty-one years to convince the people of this simple truth. Civil Disobedience is the store house of power. Imagine a whole people unwilling to conform to the laws of the legislature and prepared to suffer the consequences of noncompliance. They will bring the whole legislative and executive machinery to a standstill. The police and the military are of

no use to coerce minorities, however, powerful they may be. But no police or military coercion can bend the resolute will of a people, out for suffering to the uttermost".⁸

Conception of an Ideal Society: Gandhiji was a great idealist. He always kept before him the distant vision of a classless and stateless society. In this respect his object appeared to be the same as that of the Anarchists and Marxists but the means that he suggested to reach that goal were quite different and novel. He did not approve violence or class war in any form. He proposed to end capitalism not by sending the capitalists to gallows but by promoting economic parity through cottage industries. He wanted the landlords to act not as masters but as trustees of the cultivable land. In case of their unwillingness to do so, they were to be deprived of their land in a peaceful way by the State. He advocated the doctrine that the land belonged to him who tilled it. He laid stress on sound and self-sufficient village economy.⁹ His own words: "At the same time I believe that some key industries are necessary. . . . I would have state ownership (of key industries) where a large, number of people have to work together. But as I can conceive such a state only based on nonviolence, I would not dispossess moneyed men by force but would invite their co-operation in the process of conversation to state ownership. There are no pariahs of society, whether they are millionaires or paupers." But since he was a practical idealist, he knew that the creation of an ideal state or ideal society was not an easy task till man continued to be fallible and selfish. For this reason he did not elaborate his conception of an ideal society, he put accent on an ideal state which could with not much difficulty be realize.¹⁰

Social Conceptions of Gandhiji: Gandhiji was the harbinger champion of primary Education. This might be the solution for to enhance the poor students life and self-supporting. Moreover, he propounded for women education was the only thing provide must for social upliftment an enlightenment. Further he opposed to child marriage, particularly social inequality. He permitted widow marriage.¹¹ He supported Hindi education, Hindu-Muslim religious tolerance. He called himself a Hindu, but his definition of Hinduism was most liberal and enlightened. He shouted drinking was the greatest curse of Indian people. He called drinking the greatest bane of Indian people. He popularised Charkha and Khadi because it promised employment to lakhs of jobless weavers. He recommended the use of *Khadi* mandatory for every congressman. He desired jails and execution houses convert into reformatories¹² Being a model of oriented, then revolutionary outlook else. His instruction to the masses contained the doctrine of simplicity, benevolence and honesty. He never support fetch in favour of heavy industries, because it directed to the concentration of wealth which led loss of jobs of many.

Gandhiji was A Practical Idealist: Gandhiji was not an absolute dreamer and idealist. He was a idealist, a prophet politician who influence new paths for the downtrodden to move forward to their aim of freedom and political sujection His philosophy was not completely divorced from realism. He presumed in *Sarvodaya* concept, aspire to replace the politics of power by the politics of co-operation. The reigns of Ram and Ashoka were models before him. Overall, he taught by his writings, he practiced in his life.¹³ The improvements he suggested in politics, society, character and state were all practicable ones. He advanced with his eyes ever fixed on the realities. He was, in fact, a citizen of the world. His teachings have been incorporated in the charter of U.N.O. The world is realizing increasingly that its salvation lies in accepting the code of conduct laid down by Gandhiji. Without racial equality, political independence, tolerance and Ahimsa, the world will never enjoy a moment of peace. In Gandhi we come across a prophet and a patriot. He occupies the same place in Indian history as Washington in America or Mazzini in Italy. The ideals of Gandhiji are beacon lights for Indian Government. His ideas were about Khadi. Charkha spiritualisation of politics, abjuring force, cottage industries, international peace, religious amity or communal harmony, decentralisation, panchayatiraj, social equality, rural uplift, simplicity and ideal society and state, good means to achieve good end, have found permanent place not only in the annals of our country but in the history of the world. He will always be remembered as a great seer, statesman, politician and a saint wedded to the unity of mankind.

Conclusion: Mahatma Gandhi is not merely a political philosopher; he is a message and philosophy of life. His political ideas are stateless and partyless democracy, decentralization, freedom of speech, abolition of untouchability, moral politics, secularism etc. There is great relevance of Gandhian political

ideas or values in the present age of increasing violence and intolerance. Gandhi was a practical thinker. Gandhi was one of those philosophers who believe in self sacrifice, *Satyagraha* or *Non-cooperation*. He believes that violence brought with it hatred and feelings of revenge where as in non-violence there is no such danger. Gandhian philosophy is so comprehensive that it has left no aspect of human life untouched. In the field of politics he understands the issues with special consideration based on Indian nature of socio-economic and politics.

References:

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