

Gandhian Ideology as a Reflection of Light

Paper Submission: 02/05/2021, Date of Acceptance: 14/05/2021, Date of Publication: 25/05/2021



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Abstract

Mahatma Gandhi was a great leader, social activist, reformer, political thinker and had developed certain Social, Political, economic and religious ideas, which were not only promoted by him but also were practiced. He advocated for such a social system in which all irrespective of their social and religious background could enjoy equal rights and equal status. Truth, honesty and non-violence are the guiding principle of this life.

The contemporary world with nuclear weapons, arm struggle to change governments, religious hatred economic crisis and problem of unemployment, the ideas of Gandhi are relevant to solve these. The idea of Gandhi becomes the only ray of hope to maintain peace and harmony among people. The Gandhian ideology is becoming very much relevant in the context of Modern World when the conventional education system is producing only educated unemployment. The world on the basis of wealth and religion, killing of innocent people in the name of religious fundamentalism may be stopped only by adopting Gandhian principle. At last we can say that Gandhi is the only hope of survival for the whole of the humanity at large.

Keywords: Satyagraha, Truth, Non-Violence, Trusteeship, Sarvodaya, Structural-Violence, Positive Peace.

Introduction

Gandhian Ideology has been discussed often and reflection of Gandhian vision have been widely observed and analysed not only in India but also in many other countries across the world. It is not easy to ignore the influence of Gandhiji's principles and thoughts upon individual, society and politics not only during his time but also after his death. The ideology of Gandhi has had significant influence on the current socio-economic and environmental conditions in India. Non-violence, self-rule, basic education, rural development, sarvodaya, development of local industries are the major slogans of Gandhian mission and vision. But in present time of global world order all aspects of society have faced many problems like- terrorism, poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, exploitation, backwardness, corruption etc. The major threats are faced by every society and becoming unresolvable and non-eliminating problems. Here in my analytical view point, it can be recommended that the acceptance and implementation of the Gandhian principles by all of us will able to solve these rampant problems of the society as a whole.

The vital principle of today modern society is primarily based on science and technology. Instrument of science and technology has machanized our life style. Thinking of luxurious and comfortable life has affected our daily life as well as the moral and ethical values of our society. As a result number of serious problems of deprivation and marginalization being faced by millions across the world. Although, people suffer silently in every society and occasionally they rise up in protest and commit violence against the state and other individuals, becoming unsolvable and non eliminating matters. Now, the world can be made free from all obstacles of its sustenance only with Gandhian point of view based on high moral and ethical values.

Objective of the Study

In this paper there is an effort to evaluate the importance of Gandhian principles of truth, non - violence, Satyagraha, religion, economic etc. in contemporary world. Moreover, aim is to show the relevance of such principles in the present world for maintaining peace and prosperity in life. Hope it will give an idea regarding the importance and relevance of Gandhian principles to resolve the contemporary world problems.

Violence against Society and Gandhian Principles

Although violence is found in and used against all forms of life. Man's cruelty and violence against fellow men is well known from time memorial. No doubt the act of violence and its meaning have changed, but the nature and broad intension of use of violence have not. In primitive time, man had stones, sticks, bow and arrows, today there are not only automatic machine guns, grenades, drone but fighter jet, missiles for fight against their enemy or adversaries.

Today, there is a constant threat of nuclear war that looms over mankind in forms of direct war or accidental. Another mode of conflict or threat is the rise of terrorism that has spread its tentacles all over world, be it Sudan, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Palestine, Afganistan, Libiya, Myanmar, Pakistan, India and racialism in America. But it is very difficult to identify the act of terrorism from direct war or fight for nationhood. For example, Pakistan has waged four time naked aggression against India on Kashmir and indulged at large scale in cross-border terrorist activities including 26th November 2008, Mumbai attack, when India raised this Issue with Pakistan, Pakistan always defended itself by asserting that it is non-state actors who are responsible for terrorist activities in Kashmir and other parts of India or even in Kargil, Pakistani forces were not involved. No doubt Pakistan itself is suffering from terrorist activities of Taliban, Al-Quida and other militia that is no sign of relief from such violent activities.

There is another type of violence is visible in form of stones pelting, blowing up of schools, religious places, police stations, public vehicles etc. to high light certain core issues or injustice against the state or police in Kashmir and in tribal area by Moist/Naxals, particularly in Orisa, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh and some part of Bihar & West Bengal. We are also witnessing crime against the weaker sections of society, particularly the poor women and the tribals. Even if not all the forms of the above mentioned violence lead to killing of innocent, it can result in deep adverse psychological or social impairment that can be quite dangerous and traumatic.

The situation with tribal people is particularly alarming since they were heavily dependent on the hills, forest land and water bodies of their livelihood. They have been living in harmony with nature, consciously using these resources with restraint. But modern developmental activities and involvement of corporate bodies in their areas, their very survival is at stake. As reported by A.Babu, water has become a commodity, out of reach of millions of poor in developing countries.¹ Ravi Bhatia underline the close relationship of the tribals with the neighbouring hills and forests.² They have uprooted from their traditional homes due to gradual encroachment by state agencies and industrial houses, particularly, in Orissa, Jharkhand, chhattisgarh and Andhra Pradesh.³

Now, question arises that how would Gandhian principles of truth, non-violence, peace, harmony, religious tolerance, help in addressing the

problems of today and how would these principles help to reduce conflict and violence ?

As People all over the world, despite the diversities of religions faith, language, culture and race, desire to live in peace and harmony in their daily lives. They require basic needs of a decent life- food, shelter, clothes, education, health, freedom to practice their religion and culture.

In this context Gandhi's idea of truth and non-violence is treated to be essential to rebuild our society. As Gandhi was the promoter of high religious value which is decreasing day by day and subsequently various anti-social and unethical activities are emerged in every society across the world.

Gandhi Ji always wanted to remove social evils for that he emphasized more on issues like :- removal of untouchability, upliftment of women, communal harmony, service of backward class, bread labour, village sanitation, village industries etc. Gandhiji asserted that besides individual endeavor, corporate actions are also needed. He emphasized 'Asharam', where people could be inciting in vows.⁴

Gandhi as a Practical Man

Gandhi was a practical thinker and rightly said about him, that he was a great Karma Yogi/Yug Purusha, I have presented no new principles but tried to restate old principles.⁵ I do not claim to have originated any new principle or doctrine. I have simply tried in my own way to apply the eternal truths to our daily life and problems... I have nothing new to teach the world. Gandhi ji strongly believed in self-sacrifice, Satyagraha, non-violence and non-co-operation. He believed that violence brought with it hatred and fallings of revenge, where as in non-violence there is no such any danger. I come now to what is called the 'Gandhian' Ideology and the means of propagating it. The propagation of truth and non-violence can be done less by books than actually living these principles. Life truly lived is more than books.⁶

Before entering in India's struggle for freedom Gandhi fought against injustice and class division in South Africa. Within ten years of arrival in Durban, South Africa, Gandhi propagated the philosophy of Satyagraha and propelled the country towards a no class or ethnic discrimination society. His involvement in non-violent movement in South Africa had made such impact that even today he is considered as a leader there. Phoenix farm is considered as the birth place of Satyagraha while Tolstoy farm where Stayagrah was molded into a weapon of protest.

Political Philosophy of Gandhi

Gandhiji's philosophy was profound engagement with modernity and its pitfalls. Against the evils of wonton industrialization, materialism and selfish pursuits. Gandhi suggested in turn, Swadeshi, primacy of the self and trusteeship, against the institution of state, as the force personified and the prevalent nation of democracy where only head are counted, he favoured swaraj type of democracy, where everything springs from the free individual and where decisions are made bottom up with the locus of

power below.⁷ He proposed a minimal state vested only with coordinative powers, that support decentralisation with the autonomous individual as its base of support.⁸

Gandhiji's Spiritual Obligations

A Spiritual perspective infuses Gandhiji's whole approach to life. The political understanding and practices, suggestions on the economy, social mobilization and practical life have their basis in morality and ethics. Pursuit of truth is his mantra and non-violence was integral to it.⁹ Faith in the omnipotent majesty and kindness of God was essential for the Satyagrahi. This faith imparted titanic strength before great concentrations of earthly power. The only weapon of the Satyagrahi is God.¹⁰ A living faith in God as the unfailing protector makes one fearless.

Concept of truth and Non-Violence

In true senses Gandhiji was a devotee of truth. Theory of truth takes us to the consideration of his views on the nature of non-violence. In Gandhiji's experiment of truth and non-violence was a crucial variable. Not only did it enable Gandhiji to provide a new conception of anti-colonial politics, it also provide an opportunity by completely avoiding ill feelings towards those in opposition, to politically accommodate in his fold those who, so, far remained peripheral.¹¹

Truth for Gandhiji is God himself. Therefore, he changed the statement, "God is Truth", later in his life into, "Truth is God" and suggested that it was one of the fundamental discoveries of his life's experiments. It is Truth, he says that exists; what does not exist is untruth. The life of man for Gandhiji is a March of his pursuit in search of Truth or God.¹² According to Gandhi, Truth is what the inner self experiences at any point of time, it is an answer to one's conscience, it is what responds to one's moral self. He was convinced that knowledge alone leads a person to the truth while ignorance takes one away from the truth.¹³

Satyagraha means urge for satya or truth. Satyagraha is not only the insistence on truth, it is, in fact, holding on to truth ways which are moral and non-violent; it is not the imposition on one's will over the others, but it is appealing to the reasoning of the opponent, it is not coercion but is persuasion.¹⁴ According to Gandhiji a Satyagrahi is always truthful, morally imbued, non-violent and a person without any malice, he is one who is devoted to the service of all.

Truth as he believed that can be attained only through non-violence which was not negative, meaning absence of violence, but was positively defined by him as love. Resort to non-violence is reverse to love. In its positive sense, non-violence means love for others, in its negative sense; it seeks no injury to others, both in words as well as deeds.

Gandhiji has justified by saying that; in its negative form of non-violence (Ahimsa) means not injuring any living being whether by body or mind. I may not, therefore, hurt the person of any wrong-doer or bear any ill-will to him and so cause him mental suffering. In its positive form, Ahimsa, means the largest love, the greatest charity. If I am a follower of

Ahimsa. I must love my enemy or a stranger to me, as I would my wrong doing father or son. This active Ahimsa necessarily included truth and fearlessness¹⁵. Through non-violence one appeal to the truth that nestles in people and makes the latter realize it in them, come around and join hands in the common march to truth along with those whom they earlier considered as their adversaries. Given the enmeshing of means and ends, Gandhiji, often saw love, truth, God and non-violence as inter changeable terms. Truth or God or self-realisation being man's ultimate goal in life, this goal can be attained only through non-violence or Ahimsa.

Truth and Non-Violence relations - as an End & Means

In Gandhi's view truth and non-violence are closely related to each other. Truth is the end and non-violence is the means. It is also said that these were like the two sides of a same coin and in some cases; he used 'non-violence' as synonym of 'truth' in the sense that for him, both ends and means were convertible terms. According to Gandhi, non-violence is the greatest force at the disposal of mankind. It is mightier than the mightiest weapon of destructive devised by ingenuity of human being. It has no cause for fear, but a man of non-violence has to cultivate the capacity for sacrifice at the highest type to be free from fear except the fear of God. As Gandhi said ; in fact it was in the course of my pursuit of truth I discovered non-violence. To express a clear description regarding the relation between truth and non-violence, Gandhiji said- Non-Violence and Truth are so intertwined that it is practically impossible to disentangle and separate them. Non-violence is the means Truth is the end. Means to be means must always be within our reach, and so non-violence is our supreme duty. If we take care of the means, we are bound to reach the end sooner or later that is truth.

Application of Non-Violence

According to Gandhi all human have a body and soul. The former is subject to many desires and passions like ego, greed, lust, envy etc. when any of these desires is not fulfilled, it leads to unhappiness, resentment and ultimately to violence against society, another individual or even oneself. Therefore, thus we see violence all around us.

He felt that only soul (Atman) can be free from desires and passions and thus become free from becoming violent. The atman is a source and embodiment of virtues like love, harmony and compassion, among other qualities. But as soon as it takes on a body, it becomes subject to passions and violence.¹⁶ Gandhi wrote, just as violence is the law of the jungle; ahimsa is the law of humanity. The spiritual mind is dormant in animals. The dignity of man comes from higher spirituality.¹⁷

According to Gandhi the Universal human value of Ahimsa/Non-Violence ought to be cultivated not merely at personal level but at social locally, national and international level, if we wish to avoid personal, social, national and international conflicts. For Gandhiji non-violence is not the goal, truth is the goal. But we have no means of realizing truth in human relationship except through the practice of

non-violence. Ahimsa is my God and truth is my God. When I look for ahimsa, truth says find it out through me, when I look for truth, ahimsa says find it out through me.¹⁸ As Gandhiji mentioned that 'I believe myself to be saturated with Ahimsa/non-violence. Ahimsa and truth are as my two lungs. I cannot live without them. But I see every moment with more and more clearness the immense power of ahimsa and the littleness of man. Even the forest dweller cannot be entirely free from violence, in spite of his limitless compassion. With every breath he commits a certain amount of violence'.¹⁹

Gandhiji mentioned that- "We have to make truth and non-violence not matters for mere individual practice but for practice by groups and communities and nations. That at any rate is my dream. I shall live and die in trying to realize it. My faith helps me to discover new truths every day. Ahimsa is the attribute of the soul, and therefore, to be practiced by everybody in all the affairs of life. If it cannot be practiced in all departments, it has no practical value."²⁰ My aspiration is limited. God has not given me the power to guide the world on the path of non-violence. But I have imagined that he has chosen me as his instrument for presenting non-violence to India for dealing with her many ills. The progress already made is great, but much more remains to be done.²¹

Fraud and untruth today are stalking the world, I cannot sit as a helpless witness to such a situation... if today I sit quiet and inactive, God will take me to task for not using up the treasure. He had given me, in the midst of the conflagration that is enveloping the whole world.²²

Socialist thought of Gandhi

To bring equality in all work of life and removed all the disparities among the society, Gandhiji accepted the spiritual orientation to politics, sociology and economics. As he said that ; truth and non-violence must incarnate in socialism because 'the first condition of non-violence is justice all around in every part of life.' The western socialism was born of violence, while Satyagraha was the only means to bring about true socialism.²³ In India as a reformer he fought against social in-justices, tyrannies and oppressions. According to him no one could be actively non - violence and not rise against social injustices. This noble crusade for the liberation of the suppressed lower classes in India shows his deep attachment to the concept of social justice. But primarily he was engaged in abolishing the unjust economic and political exploitation of India and stood for safeguarding the integrity and foundations of the village. His heart bled to see the disintegration and utter ruin of Indian countryside.²⁴ His 'Back to the Villages' slogan was not an abstraction or a reactionary trend. Even Marxists have recognized that a balance has to be established between the rural and urban centres. Gandhi found that a strengthened and economically sound village economy would revitalize. Our democracy that still importance to empowers Indian democracy specially village Panchayats.

Labour and Village Development

Gandhiji advocacy for "Land belongs to him who tills it."²⁵ In the 'Charkha' he found not the symbol

of crudeness but the means and instrument of helping our people in at least getting the barest morsel of food. It symbolized the dignity of labour. For concrete realization of economic equality it was essential to take recourse to the Charkha and the cottage industries. He encourages cottage and village industries to improve the economic condition. Gradually number of industries increased and the capital employed into them also increased. The opportunities of the employment capacities were increased which resulted in high gross domestic products and purchasing capacity of the general public also increased. Their living standard become high. The development of village is very necessary to develop country. For developing country he started the improvements like art and craft, clean drinking water, good sanitation facilities of medical treatment, Indian School through Nai Taleem, and hand woven threads. By Swadeshi in movement he started working at village level. By industrialization gross domestic product (GDP) and per capital increased and balance of payment become favourable.

Economic Aspect of Gandhiji

Modern economics has solved almost all the problems of the production but even today the problem of distribution is a far cry. According to Gandhian theory in the ideal society, there should be equality of wages not only for labourers but also for other members of different professions. He extends Ruskin's conception of the equality of wages to all kinds of labour and pleads for equal distribution. Thus, it is amply proved that only through Gandhian economic thought the problem of distribution could be solved, which is heart searching difficult exercise among well-wishers of the society as without this, the future of humanity seems to be dark and greatest catastrophe is an on anvil and no one could avert it for all time to come.

Religious Aspect of Gandhi

At global level when violence is being condemned, religious fundamentalism is rebuked, high technology with its high profile is not going to solve the problem of the teeming millions of people of the world, and Gandhi is the only hope of survival for the whole of the humanity at large.

The killing of innocent people in the name of religion is so dangerous that even now terrorism is vividly viewed from the angle of religion. But for Gandhiji all religious adhere to the fact that God is the truth. If it is so with one religion, it is true with other religions also and brings out the common point from all religions and for him i.e. 'Truth is God'. If this concept is accepted by all there shall be no war, hatred or ill will against any religion. If this is brought in to action religions of all will be respected by all. Gandhiji said: that my religion is not a religion of prison house. He was against insolence, pride of race, religion or color. He believed in equal approach to all religions (Sarve Dharma Sambhava). His religion unites men of different faiths and brings them on the same platform to reach the ultimate truth ; the spirit of humanity and thus conflict shall be resolved amicably and with temperance and hot with superiority of one over other. Thus if Gandhiji's concept of religion is

practiced, there shall be no scope of hatred, enmity, war and destruction in the world. If we have to save the world of today from catastrophe, there is only way and that is the Gandhian way to practice the universal religion which shall herald an era of peace, tranquility and harmony on earth.

Concept of Satyagraha

While engaging with and confronting violence the key issue is to look beyond physical manifestations of violence and address the underlying causes and situation breeding direct violence in society. In this context there is require of a deeper understanding and appreciation of what Johan Galtung Calls - Structural violence.²⁶ That means perpetuation of exploitation through structures embedded in the social cultural environment. In this context, the Satyagrahi while uncompromisingly condemning in-justice, knows that the oppressor and oppressed alike are victims of an unjust system. Again such an appreciation of the root causes of violence and its perpetuation in the society, the various methods of Satyagraha including non-cooperation, civil-disobedience, strike, boycott or fast are directed towards the various 'systems of evil', rather than toward individuals. Thus, Satyagraha as a tool for conflict transformation is based on engaging the other and relates oneself to the other so that the community itself becomes an extension of the individual. In the process there prevails 'peace with other'. This underscores the 'relatedness of mankind' and as a corollary eliminates possibilities of exploitation of one group by another, of future generations by the present generation. The Gandhian Scheme of a non-violent society that is sought to be realized through the technique of Satyagraha is ever committed to Sarvodaya the growth of all its citizens, without my semblance of discrimination or exploitation at any level.

The primary concern is to create the social, cultural, economic and political environment in which the individual can expand his or her capabilities and use them in a way that helps serve the larger interest of the society. In the Gandhian Scheme of things, development becomes a peoplecentric process whereby 'development is woven around people and not vice versa.'²⁷ Such an arrangement would ensure the attainment of not merely political but also economic, social and moral freedom on the part of each and every citizen.

Gandhi as a hope of World Peace

Gandhian principles were not only essential for past, they are still essential in present context. Gandhian thought should not be implemented only for local or national development but also for the whole world. Its impact not only covers one or two generations, it covers all coming generations. It is not only important from a political point of view but also essential from social, economical, cultural developmental, peace, humanity and environmental point of view. Gandhian principle is not only essential for the decision makers, activist or academicians. It is also essential for children for their all-round development. The name of Gandhi is become synonyms with peace and non-violence. That is why

United Nation Organization (UNO) announced 'World Peace Day' on 2nd October, the birth day of Mahatma Gandhi. The contribution of Gandhi to the humanity is incomparable. Ex U.S. President Barak Obama is also impressed with those great philosophies of Gandhi in which Gandhi inspired the world society to face the crushing policies with peaceful ones. President Obama accepts Gandhi as his idol and took inspiration from the picture of Gandhi in his office. Barak Obama, who talks of the Great change in the world and finds solution of the problems while following the path of non-violence, its feeling the relevance of Gandhian ideals in this age of violence and terrorism.²⁸

Conclusion

We can conclude by saying that Gandhian Thought is that idea which can be removed the violence, evil thought, war, terrorism, unrest, injustice, exploitation, corruption etc. from the world society. Through the principle of truth and non-violence, people can maintain peace and security in society. Gandhiji's dream of future society was that society where every people irrespective of caste, create, religion, sex will get equal opportunity and equal justice as a citizen of the society or the nation. So, we can say that in the present days of unrest, exploitation, violence and injustice, people all work of life should follow Gandhian thought and live as a happy life and let others live happy.

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