



Gandhi's concepts and ideals: a Grand Alternative

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Abstract : Leaders and heroes are rarely born. Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Gautama Buddha and swami Vivekananda possess a charismatic power and stand for their everlasting values like truth, love, nonviolence and Satyagraha. Leaders and heroes are mythicised out of sheer expectancy that the people find a savior hero in them and adore them for ages. It is interesting to know Gandhiji, the father of our nation, is distinctly different from other leaders of our nation. The people have raised him to the status of messiah and consider him an icon of humanity and peace. Mahatma Gandhi's ideology, his teachings and his values have great relevance in today's turbulent world. In the distraught and the catachrestic world of today India needs Mahatma Gandhi again and his teachings of love, truth, nonviolence which seem to be a grand alternative to all the problems faced by the humanity. In this paper an attempt is made to show the relevance of Gandhism in the contemporary India based on the analytical study of Gandhian ideology and the Indian fiction... As the people are highly materialistic and often go terribly wrong in interpreting our history and lacking in insight and judgment One of the greatest admirers of Gandhi was Albert Einstein, who saw in Gandhi's nonviolence a possible antidote to the massive violence unleashed by the fission of the atom..

Key Words; Gandhi's ideology, values, kind actions

Introduction

The Indians under the shrewd and stewardship of Mahatma Gandhi fought the freedom struggle against the imperial power. Gandhiji alone of all the Indian leaders had a mass appeal. Millions of people revered him like a catalyst if not the initiator of three of the major revolutions of the 20th century: the movements against colonialism, racism, and violence. He became a perennial source of power and the champion of the struggling Indians. He strove hard for country's freedom and to restore its honor and prestige. In his life, devoted to the acquiring of freedom for India, he also lived according to three ideals. The first was Satyagraha, holding fast to the truth with all the powers of the spirit. Gandhi's second basic principle was ahimsa, which is to be understood

not only in the negative sense of "not killing" but also positively as a renunciation of the self and an indulgence in "kind actions" toward all beings. His third ideal was brahmacharya, which often is rendered too narrowly as chastity; it is the ascetic way of life that Gandhi followed as a saint and as a statesman, hence receiving boundless veneration by the masses.

Gandhiji, the prophet, by his personal saintliness and selflessness, could unlock the doors of the hearts of the masses. He was no erudite scholar nor a brilliant thinker nor a great theoretician but he possessed a moral earnestness and the ethical values which were indispensable for getting freedom for colonial India. There were two striking features of Gandhi's leadership: his devoted



character as a giant or the prophet or Mahatma, the second was his dedication to emancipate Indian masses. He had the noble attributes of a teacher and a prophet of mankind. Gandhi's greatest ideal tolerance toward all forms of life became widespread in India. The practice of ahimsa requires that one not kill any animal life. However, for an ascetic observing the great vows, ahimsa entails the greatest care to prevent the ascetic from knowingly or unknowingly being the cause of injury to any living soul; thus, ahimsa applies not only to human beings and to large animals but also to insects, plants, and microbe. Therefore, Romaine Rolland called him the Saint Paul of our times.

As a father of our nation Gandhi was an icon of salvation that employed prudence and utmost mercurial when setting his mission statements and while envisioning the future. His drive for change was generated from a provocative consciousness; his consciousness invariably was generated from the external i.e. his immediate environment.

Gandhiji was an inspired soul and a man of deep love and faith. He was a wise man and a hero with a moral force who may be regarded as embodiment of the best qualities of the mythological heroes such as the celibacy of Rama, the ahimsa of Gautama Buddha and the compassion and tolerance of Jesus Christ. He will be remembered as the icon of the Divine Kingdom of truth, love and peace which have great relevance in this trouble torn world. His undaunted soul and his inexhaustible quest for ethical values have made him immortal.

The British rule in India has brought about the moral material, cultural and spiritual ruination. Gandhi regarded the

British rule as a curse. He said that he was not against the British people but he was fight was against the oppressive, and hegemonic British rule. He was genuine, sincere and humane in his approach. *"He was, as G. K. Gokhale observed, a marvelous spiritual power to convert ordinary men around him into hero's martyrs. One of his greatest contributions in national movement in India was that he provided it with able leaders at various levels and ultimately made himself indispensable"*.

It is argued that independence would have come even without Gandhi. But without Gandhi the national movement would have lost moral elevation. Gandhi's influence on modern India has had indelible marked which cannot be effaced nor ignored. Gandhi first launched Satyagraha in India in February 1919. The great French noble laureate, Romaine Roland, writes about *Satyagraha* *"the active force of love, of faith and sacrifice, the three fold energy is expressed in the word "satyagraha"*. It took the form of constitutional opposition to the government under Gandhi". Shakespeare through the following lines from "The merchant of Venice" breathes the very spirit of the Gandhian Satyagraha.

Satyagraha "A Nonviolent Resistance

"I do oppose

My patience to his fury, and am armed

To suffer with a quietness of spirit

The very tyranny and rage of his. "

Gandhi's fasts were no less potent than Satyagraha to fight against the colonial power. As a devout Hindu Gandhi was no stranger to fasting which was a Hindu



religious practice for spiritual self-purification. He used fasting as a political weapon and felt that "A genuine fast cleans our body, mind and soul. It crucifies the flesh and to that extinct sets the soul free". His fasts has a profound impact in curbing communal rights and became instrumental in elevating spiritual eminence and the moral behavior of his followers.

RadhaKrishnan observed "Satyagraha, the weapon forged by Gandhi is born of truth and nonviolence. He used it in his struggle against racism and imperialism. Satyagraha is a belief in the power of spirit, the power of truth, and power of love by which one can overcome evil through self-suffering and self-sacrifice. It is not nonresistance or submission to evil. It is resistance to it through love".

Gandhi is for ever through his ideology which is deeply rooted in imparting everlasting human values passed on to Indians from one generation to another. Gandhi reiterated the eternal values taught in Upanishads, the Vedas, the Bhagavad-Gita, the Bible and the Quran. As Nutver Singh observes "Gandhi was a repository of spiritual values. He civilized our political manner and humanized our conduct"

He waged a relentless battle against social evils such as untouchability, caste discrimination, Racism, religious fanaticism, communal violence and cruelty against animals. Gandhi looked upon untouchability not only as a crime against man and god but also as a divisive force breaking up the Hindu society. Many Indian novelists felt that Gandhi was a true social reformer who had guts to raise his voice against the orthodox caste ridden society. This was clearly revealed in Anand's "Untouchable".

He loathed caste system. He made a clear distinction between the "varnadarma" and the caste system. He observed:" all varnas are equal for the community depends no less on one than on another. Today Varna means gradations of high and low. It is a hideous travesty of the original". These lines reveal the fact that he was against the division of society into classes based on the caste.

In order to uplift the people in poverty and ignorance, he evolved a system of education called "Nai Talim (New Education)" which mainly focused on character and personality development. He evolved an educational system based on learning through experiments and experiences which is similar to present day education system

Gandhi was aware of the fact that freedom would be meaningless to the millions of Indians unless the nation was completely free from social evils and economic problems. He, therefore, encouraged the production of indigenous goods. He preferred production of various goods in the cottage industries at the village level by the masses and the self help groups. His concept of giving priority to indigenous technology and home made goods has inspired the top notches of our country today and made them introduce "Make in India" programme. . Gandhi's promotion of innovative ideas on social change, like Gender sensitive programming, led to The Bête Bachao Bête Padhao scheme launched by the central Government heralding a multi-modal approach to improve the rapidly falling child sex ratio in the country. BBBP aims at hitting at the core issues - respecting, protecting and fulfilling the rights of girls and women and ending gender based violence.



Gandhi's impact on rural India is eternal, His concerted endeavors to eradicate the untouchability and to make villages self-reliant has endeared him to the helpless people in India. Gandhi's sincerity, love of truth, love for the downtrodden and the outcaste always draw him close to the masses that venerate and adore him for ever like the avatar of Vishnu. His spirit of sacrifice made him the guiding spirit of the Indian freedom struggle. Influenced by him many young people plunged into the freedom struggle and sacrificed their lives. It is his ideas and aspirations which are shared by most of us even today and hundreds of thousands of young people filled with patriotic fervor drawn from Gandhian ideology are ready to lay down their lives if the country demands.

Gandhi's ideology includes many contemporary issues like communal rights, communal violence, religious fanaticism, untouchability, caste discrimination, rural poverty and the status of woman in society. In all these things Gandhi stressed that means are as important as ends. Like many other leaders Gandhiji was also forgotten for quite some time. Now that the rat race of materialism has come to a decimal end, there has arisen a dire necessity understanding Gandhiji better. Gandhi's values are of greater relevance in the present context. Socialism through trusteeship is Gandhiji's contribution to Independent India. He has dreamed of India as a nation with a classless and casteless society which is Gandhian alternative to the present society which needs serious consideration and concern of the Intelligentsia and the Elite.

Gandhiji's relevance depends on conceptualizing his ideas and applying them in actual experiences. If Gandhism

seems to be panacea for all the problems of today Gandhiji shall have to be called back, not as a saint or as a god, but as a guide that Gandhi always wished to be.

G. P. Mishra writes in Gandhi in today's India: "*The application of the Gandhian model of development in the context of changing rural India, cannot work successfully for providing social justice, without the existence of the Gandhian type of rural economic and social framework.*"

The Prophetic vision of Gandhiji has come true now. Having suffered the maladies of Industrialization, privatization and globalization the gap between haves and have-nots has enormously increased menacing the peaceful rural life. Now even the advanced countries in the world have had enlightenment about what Gandhiji said. His model of development and his ideology evoke a great interest in the present day rulers of India who wish visionary Gandhiji to return to the present day society.

Conclusion

Gunnar Myrdal, the Swedish economist, after his survey of the socioeconomic problems of the underdeveloped world, pronounced Gandhi "in practically all fields an enlightened liberal." *In a time of deepening crisis in the underdeveloped world, of social malaise in the affluent societies, of the shadow of unbridled technology and the precarious peace of nuclear terror, it seems likely that Gandhi's ideas and techniques will become increasingly relevant.* A careful study of present policies implemented by the present government reveals the truth that there is a great relevance to Gandhian concepts of stable social order,



woman empowerment, new economic order, society free from diseases (Swatch Bharat), Gender sensitive programming, zero marginalization, transparency, accountability and new educational system, decentralized political system which are the buzzing words and the slogans of the present leaders of our nation. To conclude in Gandhi's own words "*For me whatever is in the atoms and molecules are in the universe. I believe in the saying that what is in the microcosm of one's self is reflected in the macrocosm.*"

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