

Relevance of Gandhism

Manoj Kumar

M.A.Ph.D, Guest Teacher, Deptt.of History, D.S.College, Katihar

Mahatma Gandhi has done enormous work for India's society and the world and even for ourselves. The biggest contribution of Gandhi was to teach us the value of mass mobilization and mass action and to shed all fears. Satyagraha was coined by Gandhiji to express the value of non-violence and the direct action of the Indians in South Africa against the government there. He says that it is a force that may be used by individuals as well as communities. It may be used on political as well as domestic affairs. According to Gandhiji Satyagraha is a surgery of the soul, a way of activating soul force.

Rodolph has rightly pointed out that the serenity he achieved by his asceticism was among his strongest assets as a leader of a mass movement that sometimes aroused strong feelings and evoked violent hatreds....it lays at the root of his capacity to act sensibly in a crisis to keep himself being thrown off stride by other people's hysteria.

Gandhiji had strong belief on Ahinsa (non-violence). According to Gandhiji Ahinsa means infinite love, which again means infinite capacity for suffering. Who but women the mother of man shows this capacity in the largest measure She shows it as she carries the infant and feeds it during nine months and derives joy in the suffering involved.

He was against untouchability as he said that, 'I am undermining caste system completely' and he also said, 'by my tackling untouchability'. 'If untouchability goes' he said the 'caste system goes'.

He too was against racialism. Martin Luther King was his strong follower in his Stride Freedom he tells us that the Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence resistant was better than the revolutionary method of Marx and Lenin, the social contracts theory of Hobbes, the "back to nature" optimism of Rousseau and the superhuman philosophy of Nietzsche.

Gandhi's theory of trusteeship was offered as an alternative to both capitalism and communism. The trusteeship formula, which Gandhi drafted during his imprisonment in the Agra Khan Palace during the Second World War, did not exclude legislative regulation of the ownership, and the use of wealth for social purposes, and was avowedly a means of transforming the capitalist order into an egalitarian one.

The common impression that Gandhi was opposed in principle to technology is enormous; he only asked for an appropriate technology. Jawahar Lal Nehru who was a critic of Gandhi's stance on mechanization, learnt to see rationale behind it when he visited mechanized farm at Suratgarh in Rajasthan.

Nehru did not adopt Gandhi's model of economic development in independent India but successive five year plan have recognised the value of some of Gandhi's ideas and have included programmes for the uplift of rural India, cottage industries and village self government.

Gandhiji challenged some of the basis postulates of the economists. He did not assess economic progress merely in terms of per capita income. His concept of economic progress was a composite one, partly economic, partly moral and partly spiritual.

The different standards in Gandhism make different appeals. Some respond to Gandhiji's theism; some to his humanism; and yet others to his economic doctrines. For example, Mr. Nehru regards Gandhi's theism as a superstitious Mumbo Jumbo, probably politically useful but intellectually obscurantist, and rejects his economy too, but he accepts his Humanism, and theism at least the secular side of it. Others accept his economic decentralization, but reject his humanism and atheism. Communists reject all these elements, though the claim that after a more or less long-drawn period of violence, dictatorship, regimented life, purges and forced labour camps, humanity will emerge into the secular paradise of plenty and equality.

If Gandhism has any universal message, it must be applicable to an age and to nations where non-industrialization and decentralization no longer obtain. There are things which are more important than the industrial structure of a country. What unites India and West are the value of theism and democracy. Hinduism and Christianity affirm the same reality, the same underlying truth of our being.

Gandhiji took an integrated approach to life, and tried to weave insights, derived from different disciplines, into a single unified view. In twentieth century no one, except Karl Marx had undertaken such an enormous task. Gandhian totality has confounded specialists who tended to take a partial and distorted view of Gandhiji. He had been called a philosophical anarchist, a believer in agrarian primitivism, a subsistence economist, anti-technologist, a religious leader and so on. None of these views does justice to Gandhiji because no closet, senior common room theorizing can aptly describe him.

Thus the Gandhian concept of development relates to man as a whole, not just to the economic man; it seeks to avoid distortions in the relationship between man and his environment, between man and machine, between labour and capital and between village and town. Gandhi's economic thinking was mainly done for India and indirectly for other Third World countries, which were struggling to free themselves from colonial rule.

Sarvodaya means the rise and wellbeing of all. Gandhi's emphasis on the eradication of untouchables was a part of Sarvodaya. Thus Sarvodaya meant social Rehabilitation, the maimed and the diseased part of the society must be made healthy and whole again. To mend a tear, to heal a wound is the restless urge of an organic, truly human outlook everywhere it reaches her the tendrils, the tiny green shoots of the growth.

Gunnar Myrdal, who in his Asian Drama attempted a painstaking survey of the social and economic scene in India before and after independence, described Gandhi's message as 'radically egalitarian' and adds that he was a true Westernized liberal, indeed a radical and a Revolutionary, whose demand for drastic changes in the social and economic order was heard Throughout the sub - continent'.

N.K.Bose the eminent Indian anthropologist has rightly highlighted Gandhi's Humanity and dynamism as follows, "the secret of Gandhi's lay not in the absence of human failings and foibles, but in his inner restlessness, ceaseless striving and

intense involvement in the problems of mankind. He was not a slave to ideas and concepts. (Which) were for him aids in grappling with human problems, and were to be reconsidered if they did not work spiritual.

Fischer has rightly said that there may be fifteen days of chaos but Gandhi could soon bring that under control Thus Gandhian is relevant even today because it is only a distinctive attitude to society and politics rather than a ideology, a particular ethical stand point rather than fixed formulae or definitive system.

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