

Gandhian

Principles & Practices :
Its Relevance Today



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GANDHI AND SOCIAL WORK- AN EYE OPENER TO THE SOCIETY



- Dr.N.Ravichandran

Introduction:

To-day Gandhi is recalled in India largely on his birthday which is celebrated as national holiday rather than a rite. As a true social worker Gandhi was fighting against the evils of the society. Besides being a political leader, great freedom fighter and a social reformer. He dedicated his life for the upliftment of down-trodden and peasants. Poverty was the main focus of social work and it is elaborately connected with the idea of charity work. The weaker sections of the society exploited for centuries, such as the depressed classes, the aborigines, the women and the landless labourers etc. were to assume their due place in the society. As an eye-opener, his ideologies are most suitable for present society to curb the violence, crime and injustice. His major concern was social status of women. Freedom is being misused and gives rise to domestic violence, atrocities against women, child abduction, delay in criminal proceedings, corruption and so on. According to Mahatma Gandhi every citizen should follow truth and non-violence for the progress of the nation and educate the virtues to our new generation. His vision of removal of untouchability is becoming a reality in the society by example and also his dream of freedom for women in India is getting reality. Gandhi lashed mercilessly against some evil customs in Indian society, such as child marriages, forced marriages and forced widowhood, especially of teenage widowhood. In fact modern India

fields, from driving license to death certificate. Unfaithful behaviour of people in all section of the society makes them sick and loss of hope. In order to reduce these evils the technological advancement makes the government to bring everything online and transparent.

Gandhi adopted the innovative method of civil disobedience and social transformation, which had several exemplary features. His concepts of truth and non-violence are values to be aspired for not just for better co-existence but also enhanced quality of life for all. To-day we do not have respect and tolerance for each other, giving rise to regional, racial and religious conflicts among various sectors of societies. Gandhi said: "I am uncompromising in the matter of woman's rights. In my opinion she should labour under no legal disability not suffered by man. He emphasised the point repeatedly 'She has the right to participate in the minutest details of activity of man, and she has the same right of freedom and liberty as he'. According to him 'Man and woman are equal in status, but are not identical. They are a peerless pair being complementary to one another....' As a matter of fact, India is not following any of Gandhi's teachings which are mostly confined to text books. Since independence the country has witness many violent communal riots in this multi communal country. He has still enormous relevance today, in a variety of fields. Gandhi engaged critically with issues that remain important in our own times: Industrialism, technology, capitalism, liberalism, democracy, and violence; in short, modernity and all diverse manifestations. (Kidambi- Writings and Political practice). In effect, all energies and attention of the society were to be absorbed in the uphill but the glorious task of ushering in justice- social, economic and political-by non-violent means, for therein lies the secret of non-violent freedom. His major worry was about India's poverty, and political movements were also eccentric of social work. Gandhi started a vigorous campaign for the removal of the disabilities of untouchables, whom Gandhi referred to as Harijans. He promoted hand spinning, weaving and other cottage industries to supplement the current

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Normally people say that non-violence is the weapon of the weak but in reality non-violence and tolerance require a great level of courage and patience. In the world this is moving through the phases of war marred by violence and a naked dance of death of common people due to the menace of terrorism there is a significant requirement of Gandhian idea of non-violence more and more today than the past days. Even to-day Gandhian idea of decentralization of power can be implemented in democracies through empowered local self governments at grass root level, Indian government, for instance have implemented local self government by adopting Panchayati Raj and Municipality system in rural and urban areas respectively.

The term Harijan was coined by Gandhiji to pay respect to the lower caste people and he did not enter the premises of the temples where lower caste people were not allowed. Thus, the Gandhian philosophy is useful to create a casteless society where everyone is treated equally irrespective of their caste. It is pertinent to mention that Harijan in the country get the equal status of treatment as gets by the other caste and no restriction on entering in temples and other places.

Creating repeated awareness on Gandhi, among the young generation will definitely follow the truth, Non-violence (Ahimsa) and Faith. In India millennial generation and next generations are influenced by western cultures and forgetting Gandhi and his principles. In order to encourage the domestic product the different governments introduce policies like "Be Indian Buy Indian" and "Make in India" to curb the imports.

Later the liberalisation policy encourages more imports and reduces production and unemployment in the country. Technological development makes it easy for people to buy items through online shopping and make the payment digitally. This is merely a technical advancement and not ethics of Gandhi. Mahatma, as an inspiration because he embodies the kind of transformational change that can be made when ordinary people come together to do extraordinary things.

Gandhi can be looked at as the unique non-violence. India freedom from the British find place in the third world, namely, religious, political, resulting less violence. They are trying to find a solution to corruption, communalism. His gospel of non-violence from childhood and through his schools and colleges. Once he failed in an examination but he was better than his classmates. He was inspired from his father's non-violence. An incident made a great impact. "There are many castes but I am prepared to live with them to avoid violent path especially to young generation."

Gandhi did not, like many, reject age-old customs of India. He gave a rational interpretation to them. He believed that the solution to India's problems. He went to villages. He opined that the solution with decentralization, self-help efforts to make the villages self-sufficient. He eradicated the need for unemployment to earn a living. He connected to communities in a systematic way of providing

In all over the world, great leaders takes inspiration from the teachings and life of Gandhi, whereas, we the natives of the land where he was born are ignoring his teachings as something not relevant to present times. His teachings are of honesty, integrity and kindness which can never go old or irrelevant. For example Barrack Obama, the former US president, sees Gandhi as an inspiration and has a portrait of the apostle of peace in his office. He commented, "In my life, I have always looked to Mahatma Gandhi as an inspiration, because he embodies the kind of transformational change that can be made when ordinary people come together to do extraordinary things". Nehru also described Gandhi "A powerful current of fresh air... like a beam of light." Gandhism is alive and active in the modern world. He has inspired and will continue to inspire many political, social religious leaders all over the world. Joan Baez, the American folk singer and human rights activist, or Cesar Chavez, the American social activist, or Joanna Macy, the environmental activist, or Mubarak Awad, the non-violent Palestine leader and many others get different inspirations from Gandhi in their fight. His preaching and messages are inspired by so many people across the world. He stressed the importance of Truth and non-violence and called the youth to "Be Fearless". He is a person who realized the power and capableness of youth, understanding the dynamics of social change.

A big question is, Are all Indian respected him? What better way to pay tribute to such a great man than to follow and implement the ideals? On positive side we say yes. In contrary to the answer we live in country where the youth show no respect to elders, have utter disregard for others feeling, show no brotherhood and true friendship, harass women and girls and use foul and mixed language which in itself shows lack of patriotism. Gandhi wanted to teach the youth to be self reliant and respect manual labour. For this the education must be rooted in the culture and life of the common people and wanted to promote all around development of the pupil. His aim in the education should include thorough industrial training if youths are to become self reliant and self

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integration, endless love for other living beings, non-violence, truth and moral values, all can have significant positive impact on mental health of individuals. Present society is inspired by his activities and eager to practise regularly in order to keep their health fit.

In addition to health, he was very specific on cleanliness and sanitation. He left no stone unturned for awakening the consciousness of the people of India towards cleanliness. In order to create awareness mass media and mass gatherings were extensively used. He wrote extensively in newspapers and bulletins about the relevance of keeping surrounding clean. His comments on cleanliness and good habits and indicated their close relationship with good health:

“No one should spit or clean his nose on the streets. In some cases, the sputum is so harmful that the germs are carried from it and they infect others with tuberculosis. In some places spitting on the road is a criminal offence. Those who spit after chewing betel leaves and tobacco have no consideration for the feelings of others. Spittle, mucus from the nose, etc., should also be covered with earth”.

“Near the village or dwellings, there should be no ditches in which water can collect; Mosquitoes do not breed where water does not stagnate. Where there are no mosquitoes, the incidence of malaria is low. At one time, water used to collect around Delhi. After the hollows were filled, mosquitoes were greatly reduced and so also was malaria”.

His message clearly expressed that the unclean habits of people and unhygienic environment for the growth of illness like plague and other diseases. He also appealed the educated people to initiate and lead an unstoppable fight against uncleanliness and filth. Cleanliness was one of the agenda of his constructive programme that paved the way for attaining independence for the country. One of his notable observations “If we do not keep our backyards clean, our swaraj will have a foul stench” confirms the same. This has been observed

throughout the country. In October 2014 at Raj Ghat, New Delhi, Narendra Modi. It is India's largest cleanliness drive. Government employees are participating in 4,043 cities, towns and villages from 2014 to 2019 that are part of India's cities, towns and villages. Examples of Gandhian principles. By creating awareness, the government is looking for clean and healthy living. Virtues are tried and tested. It is facing communication, poverty and malnutrition. We can say that our life expectancy is increasing. Years with successful eradication of polio and plague (elimination) like cholera and malaria. In the younger generation, the cancer awareness is spreading. It is a clear example of Mahatma.

His views about self-empowerment and non-violence are well and is followed. Efficiency as emphasis is one of his primary goals in the field. He believed that the contributions to social empowerment of the people of India. He involved people in Gram Swaraj. In the development and spread

natural resources for development and he felt that anything extra is stealing. His vision of constructive programmes for social upliftment includes reconstruct the Indian villages. He said "Village tanks are promiscuously used for bathing, washing clothes and drinking and cooking purposes. Many village tanks are also used by cattle. Buffaloes are often to be seen wallowing in them. The wonder is that, in spite of this sinful misuse of village tanks, villages have not been destroyed by epidemics. It is the universal medical evidence that this neglect to ensure purity of the water supply of villages is responsible for many of the diseases suffered by the villagers". (February 8th 1935, Harijan).

Conclusion:

On positive side Gandhian values are useful for the present society to reduce the atrocities and violence. In the present guild, it is seen hatred is preferable to love, fraud to sincerity, vilification and vindictiveness. Technological advancement and social media is a challenge to social workers to rise and restore our past glory. Gandhi was of opinion; unless people came together, social problems will not be solved. Collectively efforts are needed for common solution which will be inclusive, comprehensive and sustainable in the society. He emphasized truth, non-violence, faith and kindness are the essential things that our younger generation have to learn and follow from him. He wished every Indian youth to get inspiration and follow his ideals to lead a peaceful India. It is important to have faith and don't have to believe in God. It is not following others blindly- especially when someone else is doing something that, your heart says is not right. It is about knowing your ethics, morals and values. His simplicity and sacrifice to the nation are the takeaways for to-days generation. He wished every Indian youth to get inspiration and follow his ideals to lead a peaceful India. Especially the youth of India, gain inspiration from his principles, dedication and mission for the benefit of our nation and for ourselves. His teachings transcend all generations and are relevant even to the modern times. Particularly his teachings to the modern youth bring inspiration, instilling in them the power of his ideas.

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T. Sobhasri A.B.S.V. Ranga Rao P. Kishore Kumar

Is Gandhi relevant to the world of today? This is the question that is uppermost in the minds of all thinking people who have learnt to set great store by the revolutionary ideas of Gandhi and this is the question that this book tries to explore, objectively and from a great many points of view. The relevance of a man or his message can be said to have many aspects. It can be immediate or remote; it can be local, regional or general; it can be personally relevant to some or universally for all. In the case of Gandhi all these aspects of his relevance can be studied with profit. Man, in Gandhi's eyes, was the measure. Gandhi's approach to himself, and to life in general, was that of a seeker of truth and of a votary of nonviolence or love. His was a scientific mind and he sought for that law of life and being which would promote the common weal and help man to reach higher elevations of consciousness. He perceived that love, spelt as nonviolence in thought, word and deed, was the shortest cut to human progress and evolution, both individual and social. In his eyes, progressive nonviolence could express itself best through service, self-suffering and, if necessary, total sacrifice. His mind was always open, fresh and receptive to truth as he went on finding it from day to day by experience. For him, while his own consciousness was the laboratory for searching out the inner core of truth, human society was the field for social experiments which could lead to harmony and happiness. In whatever corner of the world he worked for the time being, the whole of humanity and its good were always present to him.

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