

RELEVANCE OF GANDHIAN PHILOSOPHY IN PRESENT SOCIETY

DR. VIKRAMJIT SINGH, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

DAYANAND COLLEGE, HISAR

ABSTRACT

The philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi is most powerful and relevant in Indian context. He had deep understanding of ethos and values of Indian culture and heritage that's why he depicted a clear picture of society through his ideas in form of philosophy. He raised socio-economic and cultural issues of Indian society and also the challenges before Indian society. He also suggested solutions to these challenges through his ideas in form philosophy. The independence couldn't resolve the problems and challenges rather these have become more sharp and grave. Gandhian philosophy as a panacea of these challenges has become more relevant. Still all the socio-economic and cultural challenges are still unresolved. Gandhian philosophy can be used as an instrument to resolve these issues of present Indian society. The concept of 'Non-violence' and 'Satyagraha' are core of Gandhian philosophy and these are all time relevant to resolve socio-economic, cultural and political challenges. Indian society has been passing through a very critical phase of various forms of violence. The problem of terrorism, the naxalism, caste and communal violence are grave social evils of Indian society and can be better resolved by following the concept of 'Non-violence' of Gandhian philosophy. The concept of Satyagraha means firm stand for 'Truth' and this can be followed to eradicate the problems of discrimination and exploitation by dominant class over submerged society. The problem of corruption is just like termite for Indian society. The concept of Satyagraha can be followed against corrupt people. The theory of 'Ends and Means' can be better understood to resolve the problem of corruptions and other related issues.

KEYWORDS: Non-violence, Satyagraha, Mankind, Organic Unity, Sarvodya

On the occasion of the 70th birth anniversary of Gandhi, the great scientist Albert Einstein described the stature of Mahatma Gandhi as "Generations to come, it may well be, will scarce believe that such a man as this one ever in flesh and blood walked upon this earth." Einstein is very true in transcendence the personality of great Mahatma Gandhi because the generations will hardly believe that a human being with normal physique and simple life could challenge mighty British Empire with the methods of 'Truth' and 'Non-violence' and the British had to bow down. Mahatma Gandhi was a great epistemologist of his century; his epistemology was relevant not only during his time but is still relevant in contemporary era. He was not only a great epistemologist but also a great political activist. Critics of Gandhi used to separate his philosophy with his political actions and criticise his contribution in freedom struggle on this basis but great irony with his critics is that they criticise his actions without transcendence his philosophy with his actions. The philosophy and

political actions of Gandhi are inseparable and can't be studied and understood in isolation. His every political action truly justifies his philosophy and vice-versa. Mahatma's contribution in freedom struggle can be understood only in light of his epistemology. He was also a great philanthropist and his love for human kind was first reflected when he was encountered with South African government and opposed the apartheid policy. His philosophy speaks human being can't be discriminated on the basis of caste, creed, colour, religion and place of birth. The story of making of Mahatma from Karam Chand begins and ends with his epistemology and his political actions which truly justify his philosophy.

The Gandhi's ideas were not only relevant during his times but have universal epistemology relevant for all the times. Admiring Gandhi, Einstein wrote in 1931 "I believe that Gandhi's views were most enlightened of all the political men of our time. We should strive to do things in his spirit: not to use violence in fighting for our cause, but by non-participation in anything you believe is evil." The very idea of Gandhian philosophy can be applied even in present day society to make it better. In a letter to Einstein wrote to Gandhi "we may hope that your example will spread beyond the borders of your country and will help to establish an international authority, respected by all, which will take decisions and will resolve the conflicts." Gandhian philosophy is still relevant to resolve the basic conflicts of life.

'Non-Violence' is the core concept of the philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi. It is the basic value of human civilisation which governs the behaviour of individual. It was not only philosophical concept but was fundamental basis of life for Gandhi. The Non-violence is literally defined as absence of force and not to harm to the body of individual but Gandhi has wider connotation for this concept and according to him non-violence has not only physical basis but also have mental status. It is not only physical harm to the individual but also absence of mental torture. The concept of Non-violence also includes not hating, not to utter the harsh or abusive language, not to think negative for others and not to create a feeling where any can get hurt. Einstein admired the concept of Non-violence by quoting "you have shown through your works that is possible to succeed without violence even with those who have not discarded the method of violence." The concept of Non-violence is positive in nature. It not only teaches the individual not to harm others both mentally and physically but also encourages doing well for others. Gandhi himself defined it as "Non-violence is the greatest force at the disposal of mankind. It is mightier than mightiest weapon of destruction devised by the ingenuity of man." The Non-violence never means pessimism or submission before evil doer. It means to stand against the exploitation

or evil doer with firm faith and by peaceful means. According to Mahatma Gandhi Non-violence is not the tool for poor, weak or coward but it can be practised by the person having the qualities of truthfulness, inner purity, fearlessness, perseverance and inner moral values.

Mahatma Gandhi advised to practise this concept during freedom struggle and it was mightier tool for him against mighty British Empire to get independence. He was well aware that violence cannot win violence. The British regime was based on violence which created atmosphere of fear among the masses and this fear couldn't be encountered by another fear of violence by Indian. He was well aware that this fear could be eradicated from the minds of people through the concept of Non-violence and by standing firmly against this regime with peaceful means. Gandhi was able to create a mass movement against British only because he got success in bringing out fear from the common man's mind. He never compromised with his convictions and philosophy even when he was badly criticised for his decision to withdraw Non-cooperation movement. His political actions can be never be seen in isolation from his philosophy and that's why he never surrender his convictions and values in his actions and ultimately truth prevailed and Gandhi got succeed in getting independence through this very powerful tool.

'Non-violence,' the core concept of Gandhian philosophy is still relevant in present era. The present society is characterised by violence, exploitation of man by man and suppression of submerged society by dominant class. Although India got independence from British rule but social evils are still prevailing in society in one form or other. Gandhi used the tool of 'Non-violence' to create awareness against the oppression and suppression by the dominant class. Although the nature of suppressive class has changed but its existence still can be felt in different forms, that's why Gandhian principle of Non-violence is still relevant. This concept can be used as a tool to create awareness among the masses and to stand firmly against such violence. The capitalists, zamindars and other dominant sections of society are still exploiting the poor section of society. The suppressed are still suppressed and they need independence, independence from suppression, exploitation, poverty, illiteracy, starvation and Non-violence can be used as tool to create awareness among these sections of society and to prepare masses to get this independence by using this method of 'Non-violence.'

Gandhi's theory of 'Ends and Means' justifies his idea that actions can never be separated from thoughts. Gandhi followed this principle throughout his life and several times he has to face criticism for his actions and decisions during freedom

struggle but he took all his actions according to his principle and his philosophy. He had the firm belief that both ends and means should justify each other. If the pious goals are achieved by impious means then these goals can never be justified and cannot be pious. This theory negates the concept of 'All is Well, That End's well.' End can never justify the means. As the actions never are separated from the thoughts, end can never be evaluated in isolation of means. Even the best goal achieved through impious means can never be long-lasting. According to Gandhi there is a Organic Unity between means and ends. So the pious destination can be reached through pious means.

This theory of Gndhian philosophy is most relevant theory in present day. The prevalent and most accepted theory of present day society is all is well that's end's well. It means end is more important than means and this is the root causes of all problems of present day. Every individual is eager to achieve the destination without considering the piousness of the means because he has belief that ends always justify the means. This is theory becomes more relevant in context of present day politics. Major objective of politicians is to grab power by hook or crook and they never bother about the means to get power. They make false promises and fantasize their slogans during the elections and get power by befooling the masses. Their destination is only to come in power and make money. Not only in politics but such cheating and fraudulent is prevalent in other walks of life and it is outcome of the focus on destination rather on means to reach the destination. So the theory of 'Ends and Means' of Mahatma Gandhi is very much relevant in context of Indian democracy and society. It can create the awakening among the masses to defeat such leaders who use impious means to get political power. This theory can lighten the enlightenment of the individual and the society, if people start focusing to use pious means to achieve pious destination. Although it is not an easy task to expect the people of such society to follow this theory but there needs another Gandhi who can light the lamp of piousness among the people.

Another core issue of Gandhian philosophy which compelled the mighty British rule to bow down is the concept of 'Satyagraha.' It was the mightiest tool of Mahatma Gandhi to get Indian Independence. The core of this concept lies in 'Pious Struggle for Truth.' According to Gandhi Satyagraha is a most difficult mean to stand for truth but it is the most powerful and strong way to win for truth. The follower of this principle can never hurt or give pain to anyone but will bear pain himself for the truth. The satyagrahi will always try to enlighten his inner conscience to make himself strong morally to struggle against exploitation and suppression and through this process he will come out from fear with a enlighten soul to stand firmly with truth. According to Gandhi, Satyagraha is strength of soul. Impious soul or

weak soul can never stand for truth. A person who can make sacrifices for rightness is real satyagrahi. Truth stands for honesty, righteousness, dignity of the individual, strong moral inner conscience and pious spiritualism. Satyagrahi means to have a firm stand to follow these divine virtues of truth. Although it is not easy to follow these divine virtues in present day because modern day society is infected with fear, selfishness, dishonesty, lies, exploitation, suppression and corruption but the solution of all these evils lies in these divine virtues, that's why this theory of Gandhi is most relevant theory to resolve modern day problems. In present time the individual has become self-centred and not ready to stand or sacrifice for truth. Only objective of the individual is to fulfil selfish interests without considering the righteousness of the means and this attitude has infected the society with all types of evils. In such atmosphere, a powerful and dominant section of society has been mercilessly suppressing and exploiting the poor and downtrodden of society without any fear because they know that nobody is going to oppose their exploitation. The need of the hour is to follow the divine virtues of truth to save society from these sins. Although the path of satyagraha is tough to follow but it is only way to make society free from all sins. The people will have to follow the path showed by Mahatma Gandhi to save the coming generations. It is the spiritual duty of all individuals of the society to stand firmly for the cause of truth. It will be real homage to Mahatma.

The concept of Sarvodya is another key issue to Gandhian philosophy. He was very much impressed with book 'Unto the Last' of John Ruskin and translated this book in Gujarati language with a title Sarvodya. It means development of all the section of society irrespective of caste, creed, colour, language, religion and place of birth. All the sections of society will get equality of opportunity to develop them and no section of society will be allowed to exploit or suppress the other section or submerged strata. Gandhi wanted to create a society where all sections of society will not only get equal chances for growth but all will co-operate each other for the growth of whole society. The literal meaning of Sarvodya is the development and growth of every individual on the basis of the concept of equality. It means the benefit of resources must reach to last or the most deprived person of the society and this John Ruskin wanted to say in his famous work 'Unto the Last.' The welfare of individual lies in welfare of the whole nation. Sarvodya is a theory in which all the sections of society will treated equal and will get equal chances to grow. Healthy body connotes equal growth of all parts and in the same way the comprehensive growth of society depends on the growth of all sections of society. Mahatma Gandhi has related this concept of Sarvodya with supremacy of Spirit. Unequal and imbalance growth of society is outcome of the absence of spiritual values in the society. A spiritual person will always think about

the well being of all. The lack of spirituality creates lust and dishonesty which further accelerate imbalance growth. The present day society is ridden with several evils and sins because of the lack of spiritual values among themselves. The selfishness and self-centrism is the base of present day society. The unequal and imbalance growth has made society unhealthy and handicapped. Only few sections of society are growing very fast and rest of the sections are living a very miserable life. The mushroom growth of society is biggest hindrance in achieving the concept of Sarvodya and the major cause of such growth is absence of spiritualism. Without these spiritual virtues every individual is focussing only on self rather having a broader vision and comprehensive thought for the growth of society which will accelerate the growth of all.

The concept of Sarvodya is the most relevant theory in present day society because of sharp division between haves and have not. Indian society is divided both horizontally and vertically. People are being discriminated on the basis of caste, creed, religion, gender and culture. The concept of Sarvodya can be proved as panacea. The development of all can resolve all the problems of socio-economic discrimination and can reduce the gap between haves and have not. The concept of Sarvodya was coined in context of Indian society due to the divisions and discriminations. Now this problem has become more grave and sharp that's why this theory has become more relevant in present day context.

Mahatma Gandhi put forth various socio-economic and cultural challenges before Indian society and he was of the opinion that these challenges emerged in Indian society because of its deformity and he propounded his ideas in form of philosophy as the solutions of Indian society.

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