



The relevance of Gandhian Satyagraha in present scenario

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Abstract: - *Gandhiji not only gave India its freedom but also gave the world a new thought on nonviolence and sustainable living. His teachings and experiments are more valid today than ever before, especially when we are trying to find solutions to worldwide greed, corruption, violence and runaway consumptive lifestyle which are putting a very heavy burden on the world's resources. The paper would emphasize on whether in the 21st century's globalized world the Gandhian message could have any actuality in managing our century's real challenges.*

In this paper the core concept of Gandhi's thought such as Satya (truth), Ahimsa (non-violence), and Satyagraha (as Gandhi translated: holding on to truth, which in fact is the philosophy and practice of the non-violent resistance) will be discussed. Apart from that the focus will be laid on those aspects and concepts of the Gandhian thought which try to prove that Gandhi's Satyagraha has relevance and is useful in contemporary era.

Keywords: Gandhi, Truth, Satya, Ahimsa, Satyagraha, Non Violence

Introduction

Mahatma Gandhi a Father of the nation, well-known not just in India but in the whole world for his non-violent fight for India's freedom is put to question on the relevance of his teachings in today's world. Things have undergone great changes since independence but there are voices which state publicly that even in our globalized world the Gandhian spiritual heritage still has its actuality and relevance. The paper will try to demonstrate the spiritual heritage of Gandhi's concept- the concepts of satya (Truth), ahimsa (non-violence), Satyagraha (as Gandhi translated, holding on to truth or the force which is born of Truth which should have or must have an important role in dealing with the real problems of our globalized world. We are living in the world which is divided increasingly day by day by global unrest, fear, anger, hatred, discontent, despair, immorality etc., and the number and intensity of ethnic and religious conflicts seem to grow, gaining higher and higher intensity all around the world.

In general, the political and social philosophy of Gandhi and his approach to the concepts of

Truth, non-violence and Satyagraha in particular, could be the starting point of the regeneration or rebirth of non-violent or less violent cultures and societies. His simple living and high thinking and his insistence on all inclusive growth of society are the greatest contribution to sustainable development. The philosophy of Ahimsa or non violence is not a new proposition but Gandhi himself says that I have nothing new to teach the world. Truth and non-violence are as old as hill and all I have done is to try experiments in both on as vast scale as I could. Gandhi believed that the supreme law that governs all living things and the universe is nothing but love and non-violence. It was Gandhi's firm belief that the basis of all religions of world was the law of love. The very purpose of non-violent resistance and upholding the principles of truth was none other than asserting the freedom over his mind and body. Gandhi wanted to build an ideal society based on love, truth and non-violence.

The concept of Truth or Satya:

Truth or Satya is considering one of the fundamental concepts of Gandhian thought. Truth mean generally speaking true. But in Gandhi's Ashram it should understand in much wider sense as there should be Truth in thought, Truth in speech and Truth in action. The origin

of Satya from sat was taken by Gandhi to imply that nothing exists in reality except Truth.

The Rig-Veda and Platonic idea of the ever-existence Absolute Truth was necessary to Gandhi for the purpose of endowing truth, as normally understood, with indisputable and universal holiness as the highest moral value and the highest human end. Being largely concerned with individual integrity in human society, he appealed to ultimate, final and inevitable integrity of the cosmic order. This metaphysical and transcendental beginning of truth, which is an integral part of Indian tradition, implies the transiency of falsehood, the elusive but indestructible mature of Absolute Truth or Reality. The sustaining power and self-subsistent energy of every intimation of that is ultimately real or true.

There are moral being acted upon. Man is not his own legislator, giving a meaning to his life committing himself to principles which have no significance at all apart from such committal. He would not go so far as this, but he did stress that we could lay no claim to our daily life. Like Godwin, Gandhi believed that it is the property of truth to be fearless and to prove victorious, that truth must be sacred and inviolable. But he wit even further and believed, like Thoreau, that any truth is better than make-believe, and that

the individual and society must, like nature, rest on an underpinning of granitic truth, the lowest primitive rick. The universe reflects Sat or Absolute Truth and society must ultimately rely on the same foundation which is possible only when its members become truth-worshippers, common votaries at a single shrine consecrated to the unattainable, but ever-existing and all-powerful, deity of sat revealed in the world as the Eternal Law of Truth

Gandhi's exacting form of "theological utilitarianism" made him believe that honesty as a policy is not ultimately different from honesty as a creed. "A particular practice is a policy of its application is limited to space and time. Highest policy is therefore fullest practice." A dishonest man does not know his real interests, but a votary of truth, knowing that truth will triumph, still pursues it for its own sake, what a pure heart feels at a particular time is true; by remaining firm in that, undiluted truth can be attained. Purity in this context implies honesty in thought, word and deed. A man who is swayed by his passions, who is not relatively free from anger, selfishness and hatred, will never find the truth.

Thus we can say with this quotation, for Gandhi, the concept of Truth has a much deeper sense than it is understood by the majority in the

everyday life. Over and above of truth-saying or abstention from lies, for Gandhi, the term of Satya has extensions on all levels of the everyday life, such as the level of thinking, of talking and even the level of acting which means that Truth is the category which has to be permanently present in our life and, at the same time, it is the measure of our thought, speech and acts.

The concept of Non-violence or Ahimsa:

The word ahimsa literally means non-injury or more narrowly, non-killing, and, more, harmlessness, the renunciation of the will to kill and of the intention to hurt any living thing the abstention for hostile through, word and act. Ahimsa was essential to Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism in different ways. It was regarded as equivalent to dharma or the Moral Law. It was a necessary means to moksha or salvation and a vital part of the spiritual discipline prescribed by teachers of yoga like Patanjli. Gandhi refusal to accept different standards for saints and for ordinary men and his desire to give ancient Indian concept a social rather than a mystical use, led him to extend the meaning of ahimsa and to interpret and apply it in an original manner. Although he repeatedly declared that Ahimsa was advocated in Gita, the

Bible and the Quran and was particularly stressed by the Buddha and the Jain teachers, Gandhi claimed that his belief in non-violence was independent of the sanction of scriptures.

Dr. Martin Luther King, the Nobel peace laureate wrote, “The intellectual and moral satisfaction that I failed to gain from the utilitarian of Bentham and Mill, revolutionary method of Marx and Lenin, the Social Contracts theory of Hobbes, the back to mature optimism of Rousseau and superman philosophy of Nietzsche, I found in the non-violence resistance philosophy of Gandhi. I came to feel that this was the only morally and practically sound method open to oppressed people in their struggle for freedom”.

Gandhi considered Satya or Truth, as the highest value and his name is commonly known with the concept of ahimsa or non-violence. It has been suggested that “Gandhi will be remembered as one of the very few who have set the stamp of an idea on an epoch. That idea is Non-violence. While non-violence has been preached by religious prophets as a cardinal moral virtue, political philosopher have generally concentrated on the justification of force and the exercise of power. Gandhi merely blind to the permanent gulf between moral ideals and social facts in believing that ahimsa is a political

instrument and a social goal which can have immediate relevance and application.

Relevance of Satyagraha

The present world is full of problems such as war, violence, corruption, injustice inequality and terrorism. We are living in the age of tension, the tension between group and group, class and class, nation and nation. The reason behind these problems is between ends and means that characterize the present age. When brute force is used to settle a problem, the opposite side will use the same and then in turn will be use of great force, and so on, the tit for tat strategy will continue. For resolving the tension Gandhi give the doctrine of Satyagraha, which he called soul force and is the best alternative to face the present problem. The philosophy of Satyagraha implies that the injustice and cruel force are required to be resisted passively by following truth and non-violence. Here the opposite force are not to be removed, killed rather they are to be transformed by continuously appealing and insisting their conscience to see, realize and follow truth with a firm conviction. The revolution is not needed to be merely physical i.e. an armed revolution that if followed, would lead the country into hands of military rulers and feudal lords rather the revolution is needed to start from the



spiritual base that would transform ideas, individuals, society and finally a nation. Satyagraha implies to accept truth what the reason approved. Vinoba says, “Gandhiji taught us several things, but the most important of which satyagraha,. Faith in truth, in the whole of conduct of life is Satyagraha. Control of body, speech and mind is also satyagraha”.

Satyagraha, which was Gandhi’s supreme invention, discoveries or creation, stand for a ceaseless and relentless pursuit of truth without resorting to hatred, resentment ill-will or animosity. His concept does not imply passivity, weakness, helplessness or expediency. It is essentially an attitude of mind and a way of life based on the firm desire for vindicating just cause, correcting wrongs and converting wrong doers by voluntary self –suffering and by patient and active use of the means which are non-violent and intrinsically just. In J.B. Kripalani’s words, “satyagraha is strike plus something more. This something makes for better non-cooperator than a striker.” In fact Satyagraha is action- oriented search for and adherence to truth and a non-violent fight against untruth.

Satyagraha also implies an assertion of the power of the human soul against political and economic domination, because domination manipulation for maintaining itself. Thus,

Satyagraha is the vindication of the glory of the human conscience. The latter (conscience) reinforce the non-violent battle for the victory of truth.

Satyagraha is utter self-effacement, greatest humiliation, greatest patience and brightest faith. It is its own reward. Satyagraha is a relentless search for truth and a determination to reach truth. It implies the exercise of the purest soul-force against all injustice. It is the force that works silently apparently and slowly. In reality, there is no force in the world that is so swift in working. It implies the exercise of the purest soul-force against all injustice, oppression and exploitation. Literally, it means “truth pressure” and denotes the operation of the soul or spirit suffering, confidence, self-purification and trust are attributes of soul-force.

According to Gandhiji the real breeding ground of war is in the heart and consciousness of man and it is there that the final battle for peace has to be fought. Hence to the current predicament and the conflict in value systems that underlie the struggle between the how Gandhi would have liked at this issue and what approach he would have adopted to develop a solution to this highly complex problem. In order to evolve a Gandhian approach one has to understand what non-violence meant to him: how he was able to

unacceptable values and how resistance to dominance central to his thought and action. Narayan Desai has rightly opined:

“With the destructiveness of weapons increased a thousand fold since Hiroshima, the relevance of Gandhi has increased a thousand fold too for mankind”.

The great scientist of this century Dr. Albert Einstein said: “generation to come will scarcely believe that such a one as this ever in flesh and blood walked upon this earth.”

Pandit Nehru cried on January 30th 1948: “the light has gone out of our lives.” Then corrected himself and said: “Yet, I am for the light that shone in this country was no ordinary light and thousand years later, that light will be seen in the country and world will see in. . . . For the light represented the living truth”

Conclusion:

Gandhi is one of the most learned men in the world. He touched all kinds of problems which others may not like to face. After all this the question only remains whether we, the people of the 21st century are moral, open-minded and wise enough to understand the Gandhian teaching and to apply it in our everyday life,

irrespective of the fact that we are statesmen, policy makers, businessmen or simple world citizens. The answer is yes because the message of the Gandhian heritage could be considered universal irrespective of time, geographical space and cultural background, thus relevant even in the 21st century because it is based on such values as truth (Satya), nonviolence (Ahimsa), human dignity and respect and the love of our fellow beings. To conclude, we can say that the fundamental essential of Gandhi’s teaching are Satyagraha, truth and Ahimsa, which are relevant today. There is the need not only to preach and admire but to follow the model of Gandhian values. Various contemporary followers of Gandhi like Vinoba Bhave, Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan and many more who by their deeds of action can motivate and mobilize the mass to adopt Gandhian values and only by that we can make Gandhian values practical and useful for the future

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