

The Modern Significance of Gandhian Philosophy

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The Gandhian ideas and philosophy, though, not accepted by Indian state after independence, did not die with Gandhi on January 30, 1948. It is true at least to some extent. As a matter of fact it is a question of interpretation. When Gandhi talks of his experiment of truth, scientific culture gets reflected in his ideas. It cannot be termed as unscientific analysis because in his subconscious mind he carried a vast experience of social and spiritual life of Indians. His whole approach towards appeasement of religious sentiment of masses for mobilizing them for struggle against British may have some element of scientific temper in it.

The first Ashram, known as Satyagraha Ashram, was founded by Gandhi in May 1915 at Ahemadabad. Thereafter with passage of time other Ashramas were established in India mostly by congressmen. The funds for these Ashramas were donated by the rich people. The activities of these Ashramas included production and training in production of Khadi yarn and cloths, bee keeping, handicraft materials, some agricultural goods etc. The sole moto of these Ashramas of early days was spiritualization of social and political life. The post independence era also witnessed a rather rapid growth of these Ashramas. Of course, some Ashramas still are engaged in service of society, neglected person, person affected by disease who needs segregation etc. some indulge in community service in the neighboring areas. But many are run for pleasure and comforts incorporating many vices in the process. Thus Gandhian approach to constructive work and spiritual upliftment of masses also was ultimately lost.

Another area where Gandhian model scores over the approach of either Lenin or Mao in the area related to technology. Neither Lenin nor Mao critically examined the nuances related to technology which evolved under capitalism and contained a definite bias towards centralization, concentration and dependency. Gandhian approach was emphasized domestic resource endowment, self-reliant and decentralization bias, was not only more positive but also was consistent with the model of progress.

‘Charkha’ symbolized Gandhian technological syndrome. Wood was available in every part of country, idle labour was abundant everywhere, any village carpenter could manufacture Charkha in the then skill syndrome prevailing in the country and cotton could be grown in most part of the country. With the improvement in skill syndrome, a corresponding technological improvement incorporating Gandhian ethos was difficult but not impossible. The validity of Gandhian model of progress cannot be questioned merely on account of the fact that it has not been subjected to experiment in any society. Gandhian model of progress present a strong hypothesis, a near theory, not only for India, but possibly for the world as a whole.

During India’s independence movement, Gandhi showed a decisive preference for Non-violence. Violence, as has been witnessed, frequently gets into a syndrome of extreme cruelty and barbaric acts, more so when the movement draws its support largely from lumpen men and women. Indians had a cultural heritage of high degree of pacifism where God fearing men and women live with poor understanding about material means of living. In such situation violence, barbaric acts and cruel deeds could not be obliterated altogether during the independence movements; it certainly remained at a low key. Indeed, the Indian leaders could have derived an added advantage by associating non-violence with the movement of working men and women. In such a situation, keeping struggle non-violence offers great opportunity of imparting political education to those involved in the movement and potential friends.

Gandhi’s non-violence was all pervasive. It included his entire ethos related to social justice and progress. “NO man could be actively non-violent and not rise against social justice, no matter where it occurred.”⁰¹ Unfortunately, western socialists have believed in the necessity of violence for enforcing socialist doctrines. He has traced the origin of doctrine in the writings of Ruskin and Thoreau. He had practiced it for himself for a considerable period of time in his struggle against the mighty British imperialism and was aware of its virtues.

Against this background, if the above mentioned issue based Gandhian movement gets going, catches gradually the imagination of masses subsequently gathers momentum on the course chartered by the masses. It has also a strong possibility of achieving a federal unity of fully autonomous regions including even Pakistan, Bangladesh and many other countries, which is the only lasting solution to the strife-torn Indian sub-continent.

References

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