

Incorporation of Gandhian Way of Thinking in the Current Setting

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Abstract

The current situation of the globe is larded with the considerations of realism and doubt where the world resorts to ravenousness, noxiousness and contempt. Effortlessness, truth, inner voice and virtues are disintegrating down. At such a crossroads, the mankind needing a reliable anchor to hold, and that anchor rotate round non-violence and truth. On the off chance that we follow these two, consequently a large portion of the clashing cases will be settled. The post-modern man has become visually impaired with all his erraticism, voracity, desire, corruption, power and ceremony. After the demise of mahatma and India acquiring independence from the English rule, there was a sharp deviation from Gandhian principles of Non-violence and harmony. At the point when the primary nuclear bomb was detonated on Hiroshima and Nagasaki Mahatma Gandhi's reaction was, "I did not move a muscle. On the contrary I said to myself that unless now they adopt nonviolence, it will spell certain suicide for mankind." The irony of the very perfection of the weapons of war rendering them useless as arbiters between nations has become increasingly clear during the recent years.

KEYWORDS: Gandhian Philosophy, values, non-violence

Introduction

Gandhi was a many-sided personality. The outward simplicity of his life and his single-minded devotion to truth cloaked innumerable deep currents of ideas, disciplines, loyalties and aspirations. He was at once saint and revolutionary, politician and social reformer, economist and man of religion, educationist and satyagrahi; devotee alike of faith and reasons, Hindu and inter-religious, nationalist and internationalist, man of action and dreamer of dreams. He was a very great reconciler of opposites and he was that without strain or artificiality. He loved greatly and accepted unreservedly that truth can reside in opposites. No one has yet understood objectively his complex and magnificent personality. We have all come too much under the spell of the astonishing integration and unity of the man within himself.

Gandhi's life was one long and ceaseless saga of endeavour in which he added, bit-by-bit and piece by piece, to his stature culminating in the advancing fullness of his personality. There was nothing mystic or miraculous about his development and growth, from a common man into the unsurpassed Mahatma of our history. It is open to each one of us to see how he advanced, step by step, gathering innumerable fragments of truth one by one and piecing them together in the crucible of his life, ready to look at facts, understand their significance, face any consequence

in the pursuit of a cause, suffer any penalty for a mistake, recover lost ground again, but always advancing, open-minded and without fear and dedicated selflessly to reach and hold the truth of a matter at any cost. He was, therefore, not born a Mahatma. He grew into one. He was a common man who pulled himself up to most uncommon heights. He was no god, but became a god-man.

Gandhi has been, and is the source of new dynamism in world affairs. He is changing our thoughts, guiding our actions, raising problems, and altering the basis of our individual and collective lives. But there was no official or military power behind him, or any of the usual methods of wielding authority. He can use the resources of human power because of his humanity.

Gandhi spoke in traditional idioms. This might mislead one to infer that he wanted to look backwards, and from this a hasty conclusion is arrived at, that he was antinationalist and hence non-humanist. But the temptation to exploit the pre-scientific phraseology, so glaring in Gandhi's writings should be avoided. It is important to note here that he had added new meanings to old terms.

Gandhi claimed to be a mixture of moderate, extremist, conservative and a radical. Anything which could promote the cause of truth through non-violence was welcome to him whether it came from the traditions of his own country or from the West. "What is excellent in British political institutions is there for the whole world to see and copy. The British need not come all the way to India as rulers to teach us political wisdom. Whatever is worth adopting for India must come to her through the process of assimilation, not forcible superimposition".

One of the most important insights from the Gandhi's tradition relates to the keyword 'power' in contemporary society and culture. Dominant orientations to power have tended to see it either in terms of conservative and neo-conservative Structural Functionalist theory of normative, homeostatic and positive or, as in much Western radical theory, as exclusively or almost exclusively exploitative, oppressive, structurally violent and negative. These two epistemological orientations have been very much within the dominant, Western industrial paradigm of development, with the future imaged as a predetermined trajectory rather than provisional and negotiable. By contrast, the Gandhian tradition has offered an alternative knowledge tradition that, while not neglecting structural violence, offers insights about "the people's power" or the power of non-violence.

Over recent decades, there has been an important growth of international non-government organizations, such as Greenpeace and Amnesty International that owe much to the Gandhian tradition of non-violence. During these years in Western countries, such as Australia and New Zealand, there has been, also a sharp learning curve for those ordinary citizens involved in the anti-war, anti-nuclear, civil rights, feminist and environmental movements.

He had been deeply influenced by the New Testament, the Bhagavadgita. The Life of Gautama Buddha and Tolstoy. Like Plato, Rousseau, Tolstoy and Dayananda, Gandhi represents a reaction against civilisation, its sophistries and its ostentations,

and its maximization of luxuries and pleasure. Like Cierco and Aquinas, Gandhi upholds the cause of moral authority in politics. Like Spencer, Seeley and other individualists, Gandhi also has a distrust of the action of government. Like John of Sailsbury, Hotman, Calvin, Thoreau and Laski, Gandhi vindicates the right of resistance against unjustified authority. The Gandhian philosophy of Sarvodaya is partly based on Ruskin's "Unto the Last". John Ruskin had started with the basic aim to moralize the economic assumptions of classical economists. Gandhi's fusion of the teachings of the Gita and Buddhism, with the teachings of the Bible, Tolstoy and Ruskin points to a cultural synthesis of the East and the West.

Gandhi was a conservative and a revolutionary and a realist and a utopian. There was never any finality in Gandhian thinking while formulating the theories or concepts. This was the case because Gandhi very rarely conceived his theories or propositions which were not closely related to time and place. The model on which India is set is one of modernization of an ancient and highly plural society in the context of an open polity and this is how Gandhi had pictured India.

Gandhi appropriates the intellectual and moral achievements of modern civilisation but rejects the very science and technology that both generate and sustain them. Since this cannot be done, a deep contradiction lies at the centre of his system. His heart seeks identification with every human being on earth, but his head cannot rise above small and intimate groups.

Thus, if Gandhi has been praised enough, he has also been subject to severe criticism. The criticism made of Gandhi as his being partial to Hinduism and caste system, as one not deserving the credit for India's independence as the British had already their intention of leaving India in 1917, as a defender of the capitalist quo, as a votary of a sort of primitivism set against the machine civilisation, a utopian pacifist and a rigid conservative from many angles are all quite marked and hence cannot be ignored.

Gandhian framework has to be viewed objectively to view it in a balanced perspective. It is rather important to mention that the Gandhian ideology is an interesting amalgam of Western liberalism and the Indian classical ethos. The contradictions appear when the interaction of the Eastern and Western influences on him are viewed in the light of the viewer's own preconceptions and value-preferences of ideological commitments. Gandhi tried to reconstruct the present on the model of the ancient but he was by no means a revivalist, in the pejorative sense of the term, but one imbued with a Renaissance spirit.

However, it would be very difficult to identify Gandhi either with the new or old society, although his symbolism was traditional and his approach was modern. Some of these concepts like non-violence, asceticism, compromise and conservatism are as liable to fatalistic and otherworldly interpretations as to an activist and a worldly one. The validity of these interpretations depends upon the meaning with which they are infused and the purposes to which they are put. Hence to arrive at any definite and substantive conclusion of Gandhi is a formidable and challenging task.

An attempt at a deeper analysis of Gandhi-positive and negative will require transcending the realms of both the traditional religious and the modern scientific paradigms that are, any way, being found to be inadequate for understanding and living in the world of today. The Gandhian thinking aimed at evolving a comprehensive conceptual framework by absorbing the valid and the utilitarian aspects of the thematic concepts of tradition and modernity. Whether Gandhi succeeded or not is a million-dollar question, which even if put up again and again will still be surrounded by doubt and controversy. Nevertheless, Gandhi, like any other normal human being, had his share of sins, but he certainly did make a beginning of inestimable value and remains a sort of historic landmark for the future generations embarking on the road to achieve lofty ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity.

For Gandhi, patriotism was the same as humanity. As he put it, “Through the acknowledgment of the freedom of India, I desire to understand and carry on the mission of the brotherhood of man. The concept of my patriotism is predictable with the broadest good of humanity at large.” (Young India 4-4-1929)

Indeed, one of the difficulties that the world faces today is the test of changing the inescapability of violence in the entirety of its structures into that of a culture of peace; a peace that goes beyond mere absence of war, to incorporate living with justice and compassion, human rights and responsibilities and celebration of diversity. Gandhi’s peaceful, unconventional, non-violent strategy to bring about Independence to India from British colonialism. Gandhi once stated “It is impossible for one to be an internationalist without being a nationalist. It is not nationalism that is evil it is the narrowness, selfishness and exclusiveness which is evil.” (Young India 18-6-1925).

Gandhi’s plan for Basic Education or Nai Talim aimed at developing moral citizens for an independent India. Gandhi wrote, “I learnt from my illiterate but wise mother that all rights to be deserved and preserved came from duty well done”. From this one fundamental statement, perhaps it is easy enough to define the duties of man and woman and correlate every right to some corresponding duty to be first performed.

Mahatma Gandhi is indisputably India’s gift to the world; the pursuit of peace through the practice of truth (satyagraha), nonviolence (ahinsa), compassion and kindness is his gift to humanity. Though the centrality of education, like nonviolence, is almost conclusive, the type of education that is necessary for peace is what has never been addressed in any serious manner. There is a need for education not as the usual intellectual exercise of regurgitation but a journey through self – of building peace first with the self, before the society.

He believed that one has to be rooted in one’s own culture to understand the other. “Gandhi’s intercultural approach to the ideas of civilization and citizenship is a form of cosmopolitanism that refrains from monolithic moralizing and gestures instead towards a comfort with difference, alterity, and otherness”. (Jahanbegloo, 2017). Gandhi said: “I believe that if one man gains spiritually, the whole world gains with him and, if one man falls, the whole world falls to that extent” (Young India, 1924:398). He recognized the interdependence of humanity and the need to identify

with the whole of humanity.

In a weekly newspaper Harijan that he published, Gandhi wrote: “I am deeply interested in the efforts of the United Nations Economic, Social and Cultural Organization to secure peace through educational and cultural activities. I fully appreciate that real security and lasting peace cannot be secured so long as extreme inequalities in education and culture exist as they do among the nations of the world. Light must be carried even to the remotest homes in the less fortunate countries which are in comparative darkness and I think that, in this cause, the nations which are economically and educationally advanced have a special responsibility.” (Harijan, 16-11-1947, 412-13).

People generally think that we should work to promote the happiness of the majority of mankind, in particular, they talk of ‘the greater good of the greater number’. Further, happiness is equated with physical happiness and economic prosperity. Gandhi was of the firm belief that such a pursuit breaks the law of morality. When in doubt about one’s duty, or course of action, Gandhi offers a solution: “I will give you a talisman. Whenever you are in doubt, or when the self becomes too much with you, apply the following test. Recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man whom you may have seen, and ask yourself if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him. Will he gain anything by it? Will it restore him to a control over his own life and destiny? In other words, will it lead to Swaraj for the hungry and spiritually starving millions? Then you will find your doubts and yourself melting away.” (Miething, 2019)

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