Relevance of Gandhian Philosophy in the 21st century

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1. Introduction

We the people are in the 21st century. The 21st century is commonly known as" The Era of development". Aren’t we know, leading for a disaster in this blind race of development? Amidst all sort of problems such as rapid population of growth, production and consumption, unemployment, poverty, racial discrimination, untouchability, economic inequality, social injustice, corruption. With present phase of globalization, which cannot be stopped the third world need to look into the evil effects of globalization. Industrialization is going to be curse for mankind. At present political, economic, social and moral rights as well as values are downgrading and exploiting. In the course of development we have to think of these problems and try to find out the solutions best suited to our needs. The best suited solutions for the above problems of contemporary world is to follow Gandhi’s principles. It is Gandhi’s philosophy can save us from this predicament. Gandhi’s profuse writings, speeches and talks cover every conceivable aspects of Indian life of his time as well as present world. This paper aims to tell the relevancy of Gandhian philosophy in the 21st century.

2. Gandhian Philosophy

Gandhi is universally known as the most renowned theorist, philosopher and also the practitioner of truth, love, non-violence, tolerance freedom and peace. He was a leader of his people, unsupported by any authority. He was very much concerned with the nature, poor deprived and the downtrodden and he has intender to alter the evil, political, social, and economic system of the people. His mission was to reconstruct India from below upwards a decentralized socio-political and economic order with India’s myriad villages as its base. Mahatma Gandhi is not merely a political philosopher, it is a message and philosophy of life.

Gandhi is a spirit of profound wisdom and captivating humility, armed with only an iron will and inflexible resolve and a frail man who confronted the brutality of military strength with the dignity of a simple human being. Gandhian philosophy is the religious and social ideas adopted and developed by Gandhi first in south Africa and later of course in India. These ideas have been further
developed by later "Gandhians". The philosophy exists on several planes - the spiritual or religious, moral, political, economic, social, individual and collective. Gandhi's thought can be also see as an ideology.

Gandhian philosophy is certainly considered by Gandhians as a universal and timeless philosophy, despite the fact that on the more superficial level it is set in the Indian social contexts. It is also compatible with the view that human kind is undergoing gradual moral evolution. Gandhian philosophy is double-edged weapon. Its objective is to transform the individual and society simultaneously, in accordance with the principles of truth and non-violence. It is the apparent that Gandhi's philosophy has much in common with several western philosophies which uphold the ideal of a more just and equitable society.

Gandhian philosophy, does contain many socialist sentiments. In fact, such an entity as Gandhian socialism emerged in theoretical literature during the 1970s and 1980s. Gandhi's thought has been likened also to Utopian Socialism and Philosophical Anarchism, and cannot be compared with stands of Moist thought, and even western liberal thought. His thought is equally a philosophy of self-transformation. For the individual self-transformation is attempted with carefully rather than with urgency. He viewed his own life as a process of development undertaken "one step at a time". He saw the need to continually "experiment with truth " in whatever field in order to come to see the truthful path. The individual's task is to make a sincere attempt to live according to his principle. They include - resisting injustice, developing a spirit of service, selflessness and sacrifice, emphasizing one's responsibility rather than rights, self-discipline, simplicity of life-style and attempting to maintain truthful and non-violent relations with others .

Truth, non-violence, freedom, equality, full employment, bread labour, trusteeship, decentralization, swadesh, service and co-operation are perceived as cardinal principles of Gandhi. As the base of the Gandhian social order is religious or spiritual, economic and political question are seen from the moral or humanistic perspective. The welfare of human beings, not of systems or institutions, is the ultimate consideration. Materially, it centre's on the following concepts and ideals; following concepts clearly represent pillars for a new social order,

- A deep respect for mother nature, compelling an economic system based on the preservation of the natural environment.
- The practice of comprehensive self-reliance by individuals, villages, regions and the nation.
The minimize of competition and exploitation in almost all the sectors and instead, the encouragement of co-operation.

Production on the basis of need rather than greed, eradication of poverty

Recognition of the dignity of labour and the greater purity of rural life.

Absence of oppression on the basis of race caste, class, language, gender or religion.

3. The main principles /philosophies Gandhi are as below:-

- Non-violence
- Satyagraha
- Concept of politics
- Economy
- Education system
- Decentralization in democracy

1. Non-Violence:

Gandhiji said "Non-violence is the greatest force at the disposal of man-kind.It is mightier than the mightiest weapon of destruction devised by ingenuity of man".

2. Satyagraha:

A Satyagraha campaign is undertaken only after all other peaceful means have proven ineffective. At its heart is non-violence. An attempt is made to convert, persuade or win over the opponent.

3. Gandhi’s Economy

Mahatma gandhi had his own approach to the economic problem of India. He did not essentially believe in prompting large scale industrialization.

4. Decentralization in democracy

Democracy depends upon the equality of all human beings; their right to participate in social and political transformation, to live in dignity. Political decentralization means dispersal of decision making powers, accompanied by delegation of required, authority to authority to individuals or units at all levels of organization.
Education system proposed by Gandhi is called "Basic Education". He mainly aims at the education in mother tongue an education should be make the children skilled and independent. More than ever before, Gandhiji's teachings are valid today, when people are trying to find solutions to the rampant greed, widespread violence, and runaway consumptive style of living. Anu Aga, one of India’s foremost women achievers, says that while, in the name of retaliation, violence and hatred are being perpetrated today Gandhiji’s gospel of non-violence makes immense sense.

6. Concept of politics

Gandhi stands for people’s politics and not party politics. For him politics opens the door of ‘service’ not for using power. He placed party less democracy. He resists injustice and exploitation and thus purifies the politics.

4. Relevance of Gandhian Philosophy in the 21st Century

M.K. Gandhi was a saint and moral revolutionary. He has exercised the most powerful influence on modern world. While Gandhi lived most of the people thought that his ideas are relevance only to win freedom for India. But there is a great relevancy of Gandhian Philosophy in the contemporary world also. Gandhi is one of those philosophers who believed in self-sacrifice. His philosophy is no comprehensive that it has left no aspect of human life untouched. In his philosophy there is very clear indication of his love for individual and national freedom. He had a many sided personality with clear vision and definite approach to problems which faced India. Gandhi is believed to have greater relevance in the present world of modern science & technology that produced geographical neighbourhood but become highly individualistic co-operation has been replaced by competition and consumeralism.

Gandhi very exhaustively dealt not only with political or economical but also with social problems of Indian society. It is very difficult to discuss all the theories of Gandhi to examine its relevancy. I make attempt to show the relevancy of Gandhian theory by some of his most important principles. They are;

5. Non-Violence:

In this paper try to explore the fundamental meaning of non-violence and its relevancy in present India. Non-violence means good will towards others doing well towards others. It is not a weapon of weak and coward. Ahimsa means the largest love, greatest charity.
Philosophy of non violence has great relevancy it contemporary 21st century. In India most of the conflict and extremist revolutions already selected & some are going to settle by non violence and peaceful means. Peace process in extremist movement, settlement of inter state conflict, Water dispute. For example: Cauvery water dispute, movement of Khalistan in Punjab Mysore Maharashtra boundary conflict etc.

According to the Gandhi non-violence does not mean meek submission to the will of the evil doer. It is the soul force or truth force. Non-violence is regarded has the highest law of human kind. It was the unique non-violent movement under his leadership that earned for India freedom from the colonial rule. In spearheading the campaign against the alien rule, Gandhiji adopted the innovative techniques of civil disobedience and social transformation, which had several exemplary features.

6. Satyagraha:

The central concepts of Gandhi’s philosophy is ‘Satyagraha’. It is itself a whole philosophy of non violence. A Satyagraha campaign is undertaken only after all other peaceful means have proven ineffective. An attempt is made to convert, perused the opponent. Any violence infected by the opponent is accepted without retaliation.

The purpose of Satyagrah is to fight against injustice and tyranny. Satyagrahi should have moral force; he makes understand by means of reason. There is no place for physical force.

7. Methods of Satyagraha:

In Gandhi view the methods of Satyagraha take different form. Here we see important methods. They are:

a) **Strike:** It is an a important weapon to fight against oppressor . But it should be a non violent.

b) **Fasting:** It is very important weapon of Satyagraha, only undertaken by those who have moral strength. It means self purification.

c) **Non-cooperation:** It is a practice against injustice. It may be used against governmental and nongovernmental organization.

d) **Civil disobedience:** It means the breach of immoral law. Generally citizens are not bound to unjust and anti-social laws. If the citizens stage the civil disobedience, they should never try to escape for punishment.
For extent of some period it was known as Gandhi’s method of Satyagraha have no any relevancy but with the passing of time he proved how it was important of protection of life, Liberty and property . Even know also all those strategies are highly relevant in India. Still people of India frequently following those methods for the fulfillment of demands.

8. Concepts of Politics:

For Gandhi, politics is moral problem of value. Gandhi’s political thought stem from different traditions, but he had not agreed in to with any one of them. Gandhi did not ever to be an original thinker.

“Unless the moral and spiritual qualities of the people are appropriate, the best of political systems and constitutions will not work.” His political ideal based on ethical and spiritual grounds rising democratic values.

At present, we see that politics is routed deceit and dishonesty and is bound to create greater deceit and greater dishonesty. Hate must generate hate. Thus there is a need of ‘Moralize Politics.’ Gandhi’s Prophetic emphasis is ‘There is no politics devoid of religion.” He always used to put emphasis on his often repeated saying i. e, “Politics bereft of religion is a death trap.

9. Economy:

Gandhi’s economic philosophy is inspired by John Ruskin and he was immensely inspired, almost captured by his book “ Unto the Lost”. He had his own thought to economic problem of India. He believed that Industrialization rendered economic dislocation and infect was responsible for many present day economic problems. He wrote “Economic that hurts the moral well being of an a individual or a nation is in moral and, therefore sin.’ Again He repeated same belief, “that economic is untrue which ignores moral values.”

Gandhian economy still relevant to our time. He was not against machinery as such. He was afraid that use of machinery on large scale would result in technological unemployment. He extend Ruskin’s concepts of the equality of wages to all kinds of labour and equal distribution. The mad race in industrialization and urbanization has resulted in pollution of environment and Gandhi abundant of luxurious life.

In India, economic development has been mostly confined to the urban conglomerates. In the process, the rural India that comprises 700 million people has been given short shift. Gandhiji's
philosophy of inclusive growth is fundamental to the building of a resurgent rural India. He believed in “production by the masses” rather than in mass production, a distinctive feature of the industrial revolution. It is surprising, even paradoxical, that these days Gandhian philosophy should find increasing expression through the most modern technology! Now, it is possible to establish small-scale and medium-scale factories in smaller towns and remote corners of the country, thanks to the phenomenal innovations in communication and information technologies. New technologies have brought in widespread and low-cost electronic connectivity that enables instantaneous contact between industrial units and the sellers and consumers of their products. Location and logistics are no more a limitation or constraint for industrial development.

10. Decentralization in Democracy:

The concept of Decentralization occupies paramount importance in Gandhian Philosophy. Gandhi wanted political power to be distributed among the villages in India. He preferred the term ‘swaraj’ to describe what he called true democracy. That democracy based upon freedom. He calls panchayathi raj or village swaraj. According to Gandhi Decentralization of political power is the basic requirement for the success of true democracy. For him a decentralized democracy based on villages in which voluntary co-operation in the condition of dignified and peaceful existence.

Gandhian Democracy is still relevant in India. It is clear from the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments of Indian constitution that is related only with rural administration of India. One significant provision of this amendments is decentralization of power upto the rural level. It has already been implemented in India in 1992.

11. Education System:

Gandhi promoted an educational curriculum called ‘Basic Education’. He much emphasis on mother tongue should be the medium of education, women education.

Education through medium of the strange tongue breaks the concordance which should exits by mother tongue. Foreign languages made the kids crammers and immitators, unfit for original work and thought. Gandhi said ‘literacy in itself no education’. I would prefer the child education by teaching it a useful handicraft. It purpatusates in radical restructuring of the sociology of school knowledge in India in which the “ Literacy of the lower castes” such as spinning, weaving, leather work, book binding etc would be made central.
Gandhi’s educational system has got the minimum attention. It aims all-round development of human personality. for Gandhi, the true development of head, heart and soul are necessary for a satisfactory system of education. Gandhi wanted to construct small, self reliant communities with is ideal citizens being all industrious, self respecting and generous individual living in a small co-operative community.

12. Conclusions

To conclude, Gandhian philosophy is not only simultaneously political, moral and religious, it is also traditional and modern simple and complex. There is much in it that is not at all new. This is why Gandhi could say “I have nothing to teach the world. Truth and non-violence or as old as the hills. After many years of martyrdom, Gandhi is no more relevant on global level than before. His relevance in different fields is unquestionable unchallengeable. For the very survival of human being, it is a imperative on our part to an act open his advice because only on his relevance, we shall survive together or if we fail in our venture, we are bound to perish together.

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