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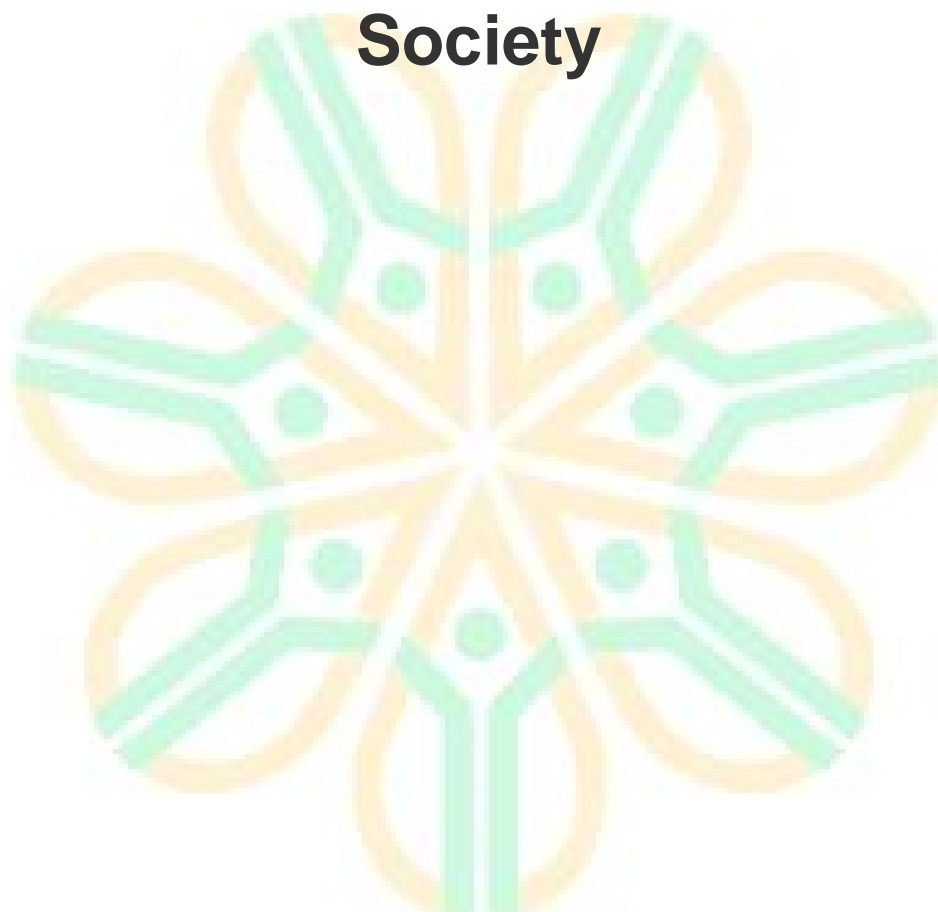
Gandhian Values in Today's Plural Society



National Foundation
for Communal Harmony

**National Foundation for Communal Harmony
New Delhi**

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for Communal Harmony

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Foreword

It gives me immense pleasure in presenting to you another collection of essays authored by Officers of the All India and Group 'A' services at Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration (LBSNAA), Mussoorie, under the aegis of the National Foundation for Communal Harmony (NFCH). These essays, presented in the form of a monograph are the outcome of the annual essay competition organized by NFCH for the officers being trained at LBSNAA.

The theme of the current collection, i.e. "Relevance of Gandhian Values in today's Plural Society", is critical given the crisis of confidence our society is facing in combating the rising instances of communalism and sectarianism, not to mention the raging violence against women and marginalized communities.

Albert Einstein, who needs no introduction, once observed "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". In today's times, when non-violence seems to be a relic only dusted and displayed in documentaries and the occasional socially-relevant film or work of fiction, this disbelief, that such a person as 'Mahatma' Gandhi actually lived, is widespread. Even so, as the noted environmentalist-turned-historian Ramachandra Guha commented, "despite these attacks from political

extremists Gandhi's ideas survived... emphatically asserted by social workers and activists"¹.

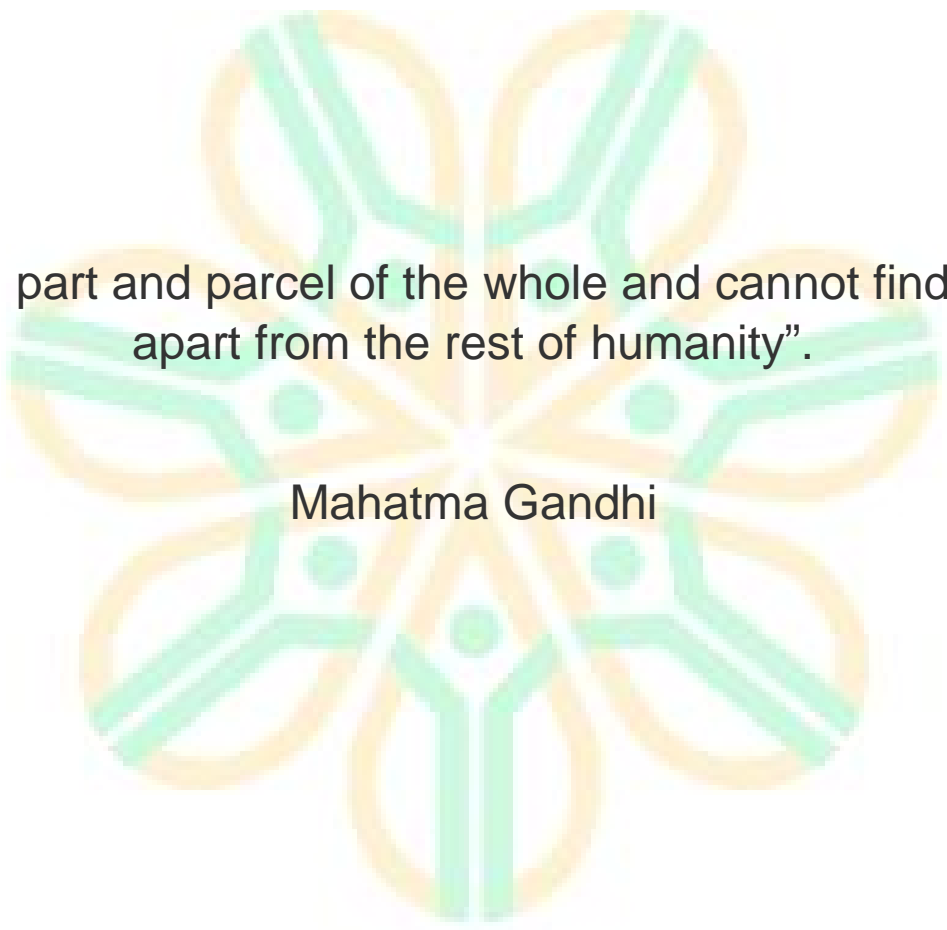
The primary task is of course, of understanding and assimilating Gandhian ideology into modern-day lives. As Guha has pointed out, Gandhi was first and foremost a contrarian, an opinion that is also confessed by Gandhi himself, as he wrote in the publication *Harijan* in 1933, "I am not at all concerned with appearing to be consistent... when anybody finds any inconsistency between any two writings of mine, if he has still faith in my sanity, he would do well to choose the later of the two on the same subject". This inconsistency was however a by product of the continual evolution of the Mahatma's thought process, and thus, the problem translates to one of evolution. Can we, today, evolve into Gandhis for this generation? Perhaps, by the time the reader reaches the last essay in this series, there may be some resolution of this question.

We are grateful to the essayists who have put in time and effort in repackaging, to use that word, Gandhian views and philosophy to make sense to today's readers.

National Foundation
for Communal Harmony

Secretary
NFCH

¹ Prologue: Gandhi from All Angles, Gandhi before India, Ramachandra Guha, Allen Lane, Penguin Books India, 2013



“I am part and parcel of the whole and cannot find God
apart from the rest of humanity”.

Mahatma Gandhi

National Foundation
for Communal Harmony

Cracking the Enigma named Gandhi

PINAK MISHRA

"The world will live in peace, only when the individuals composing it make up their minds to do so".

Mahatma Gandhi

Introduction

The abovementioned remarks by Gandhi, on the nature of human beings, found reflection in the Preamble to the Constitution of UNESCO which says "Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed". It goes without saying that Gandhi's philosophy has shaped the world ever since he espoused and practiced it with unrelenting conviction. His philosophy, which he practiced and lived was not confined to the freedom struggle of India but transcended all boundaries and provided the much needed conviction to generations of leaders throughout the world for a peaceful and nonviolent struggle for rights, dignity and existence. Gandhi's 'spiritual' method of protest and struggle subsequently proved to be a theory of conflict resolution. It is because of his nonviolent and peaceful methods that many conflicts which could have led to bloodshed and devastation were resolved peacefully.

The 'American Civil Rights Movement' and the 'Anti-Apartheid Movement' in South Africa are cases in point. Moreover, as humanity embarks on its journey forward, it is confronted with myriad conflicts- social, political, economic, moral, spiritual, and most importantly, the conflict of conscience. Overenthusiastic proponents of Gandhi would vociferously argue that Gandhism is the panacea for all conflicts. Notwithstanding the overemphasis laid on Gandhi and his high ideals,

it is safe to argue that, amongst other methods of conflict resolution, the Gandhian way can only be neglected at our own peril. Gandhian values are even more important in a plural society predicated upon different religions and ethnicities. It is in this context that the Mahatma's ideas become imperative, in a society marred by conflicts of various hues and genres. In this essay, an attempt is made to delineate the essence of Gandhi's philosophy in general and his views on conflict resolution in particular. This essay also tries to throw light on the anatomy of conflicts in a plural society and its analysis through the science of Gandhism. It also deals with the relevance of Gandhi's high ideals in explaining today's human predicament. Nevertheless, Gandhi has been subjected to severe criticism and his methods have been declared futile. A brief perusal of this issue finds space within the essay. Finally, an argument on why Gandhism cannot be averted concludes the essay.

Gandhi and Gandhism: An Overview

Gandhi, in his lifetime, neither advocated nor made an attempt to codify his thoughts. In other words, Gandhi never wished an '*ism*' in his name. His philosophy or what he loved to call 'his experiments with truth' was comprehensive in the sense that it took into account everything from the mundane to the transcendental. He wrote about hygiene and sanitation as seriously as he wrote about truth and nonviolence. Mahatma Gandhi was not a philosopher or a theorist in the strictest sense of the term. He was an observer, a restless soul continuously introspecting and experimenting. As he himself put it on one occasion, 'I have nothing new to teach the world, truth and nonviolence are as old as the hills'. Notwithstanding the gamut of his thoughts, his reflections on 'Ahimsa' and 'Satyagraha' merit discussion as both these concepts that Gandhi propagated are central to conflict resolution in a plural society. According to

Gandhi, truth and nonviolence are not merely political tools or tactics; rather, they are a way of life. Though, in the first instance, it encourages passive submission to injustice, at the same time it exhorts for an active struggle against the same. This struggle abhors physical violence and does not vilify the exploiter. Rather, it espouses compassion and self-criticism. As Gandhi succinctly put it 'hate the sin, not the sinner'. Gandhian thought is not restricted to the realm of politics alone. His noble idea of 'Sarvodaya' proves to be a potent weapon to resolve conflict emanating as a result of inequality. He finds peace incompatible with exploitation and inequality of wealth.

Gandhi's views on human nature are central to his understanding of conflict and conflict resolution. It is important to note that Gandhi was a deeply religious thinker and his views on God oscillated between his belief; "God is Truth" and "Truth is God". For Gandhi, religion represented the way human beings conceived and related to God. On a macro level, Gandhi's famous dictum, *sarva dharma sambhava* or the peaceful coexistence of all religions was a passionate conviction on his part in favour of a plural society. As someone who passionately fought against social injustice, racial discrimination and ugly social practices in South Africa first and then in India, he introspected on the ways of conducting a struggle. He was not satisfied with the traditional methods of rational discussion and decried the use of violence in conflict resolution. According to him, these methods appealed to what he called as 'body force'. He found flaws with both the methods and impressed upon what he called as 'soul-force' or 'truth-force'. For Gandhi, along with rational discussion, persuasion was the best way to resolve conflict. Such an approach would be based on peaceful, non-coercive and integrated methods, respecting the autonomy of everyone concerned.

Any discussion on Gandhi and his philosophy remains incomplete without a brief mention of his views on modernity. Although many philosophers and thinkers found merit in the modern civilization characterized by features such as rationalism, secularism, scientific culture and technological advancement, Gandhi on the other hand, was highly critical of western civilization and its product 'modernity'. His critique of modernity is central to his conceptualization of conflict. This discussion merits attention for the fact that the advent of modernity laid down the foundation stone of pluralism. Gandhi's devastating attack on the modern civilization and his subsequent explanation of the anomalies of modernity construe Gandhi's belief in 'modernity' as the root of every conflict in society. Articulate, Gandhi demolishes every aspect of modernity. He goes on to argue how various modern institutions and arrangements are the harbingers of social conflict. He further argues that since modern civilization is made up of 'brute force' or gives a premium to body over soul, it was driven by the two interdependent principles of greed and undisciplined self-indulgence. According to him these were precisely the reasons for conflict. As he succinctly put it, "The Earth provides enough to satisfy every man's need but not for every man's greed". Gandhi's critique of modernity explains conflict in every aspect of the society. The argument that Gandhi was biased in criticizing everything modern will be dealt with in a later part of this essay. A brief discussion of those of his major philosophies that appear to be within our scheme of things has been enunciated.

Society, Pluralism and Conflict: A Gandhian Perusal

Gandhi was positive about the universe and the cosmic spirit that guides it. He argues that it is the conditions that are subsequently created in the society that give rise to conflict. According to Gandhi, conflict is structural and not individual. He had a very positive conception of man. Gandhi argued that 'conflict' is desirable in

a society for it reminds the individuals involved in it of the deeper, transcendental unity of life. Conflict, according to him has a broad connotation. Gandhi finds conflict in almost all aspects of existence, viz. moral, spiritual, political, economic and social.

Before delving into the issue of conflicts in a plural society, a brief perusal of society vis-à-vis pluralism becomes imperative. Society is a composition of individuals. Its structural and functional differentiation has given rise to various groups and communities that jostle with each other for identity, power and resources. In this context, pluralism as a political theory explains the diversity that exists among different groups and communities. As various communities make an effort to coexist, they usually develop conflict. The degree of conflict increases from a homogenous to a heterogeneous society. Pluralism, in this context, emerges as a major philosophical strand that argues for the peaceful coexistence of the groups with different identities and worldviews. Moreover, it is important to note that a society is called as plural when its members have affiliations to different ideologies, interests, religion and ethnicities. It is the difference that pits one group against the other, giving birth to conflicts. For instance, a group with affiliation to a particular religion consumes or makes an effort to consume the religious space of the other. Such a process creates the dichotomy of 'we' and 'they'. The same dichotomy is applicable in the political and economic realm too, where a group usurps power and resources and thereby creates multiple lines of conflict via an involvement in a continuous process of bargaining. Although the pluralist argues that such a process of bargaining is a prerequisite for a democratic equilibrium, within such setups conflicts become inevitable.

Pluralism is an outcome of modernity. As society traversed from homogeneity to heterogeneity, pluralism threw up the possibility of the peaceful coexistence of different groups. It also gave birth to different political, social, religious, cultural and economic conflicts. Gandhi's critique on modernity is useful in describing the reasons for the same. It is not to argue that Gandhi critiqued pluralism; on the contrary, he was a champion of the philosophy of peaceful coexistence. However, we shall deal with each of these aspects through the Gandhian debate on modernity. We shall first list out the conflicts in different realms in a plural society and then make an attempt at its resolution through Gandhian values. To begin with, in a plural society there exist different religious groups with different worldviews. In such circumstances, religious fundamentalism, religious bigotry, social disturbances, communal disharmony, etc. are the manifestations of conflict. Similarly, political conflict is reflected in a centralized power structure, hegemony in decision-making and non-representation of the minorities. Social conflicts find reflection in the lack of educational advancement and social consciousness within one group as compared to another. A plural society is more amenable to conflict in the economic realm as is clearly reflected in the possession of scarce economic resources by a group at the cost of others. Cultural hegemony, in the form of a dominant culture forcing the assimilation of the cultural minorities into the dominant culture, is an example of conflict in the cultural realm.

Gandhi has an explanation for each of these conflicts. Taking the issue to a higher realm, Gandhi laments that modern civilization has given birth to moral conflict, resulting in a conflict in conscience. Gandhi attributes the 'conflict in conscience' to the faster tempo of life inherent to modern civilization. As a result, moral life suffered a profound distortion due to restlessness and instability. In a plural

society, the intensity is higher as there are competing groups which lack the nourishing sentiments of goodwill and mutual concern.

Confronting the Human Predicament: A Gandhian Intervention

As is evident, a plural society in its quest to accommodate different groups encounters conflicts in multiple domains. To start with, the prevalence of multiple religious groups becomes a source of conflict in a plural society which is manifested through religious fundamentalism, terrorism and communal riots. This condition is aggravated when religion is used as a catalyst to mobilize the masses and constructing political opinions. Religious bigotry, Gandhi argues, ensues from a shallow understanding of religion. Gandhian values forcefully argue that politics cannot be divested from religion. Religion, according to Gandhi, provides the moral canvass that makes politics more tolerant and less competitive. For instance, the relevance of the Indian social structure wherein religion is all encompassing is explained by the Gandhian value of '*Sarva Dharma Sambhava*' which emphasizes the peaceful and successful coexistence of all religions. Gandhi's personal intervention during the time of partition in Noakhali and Delhi to confront religious bigotry makes Gandhian values more important. Lord Mountbatten's exhortation of Gandhi as the 'one-man army' only reinforces his values of persuasion and nonviolent intervention in confronting such precarious social conditions.

Economic conflict in a plural society has its roots in the unequal distribution of resources that determine the life choices of an individual. In this context, Gandhi argued that there are three basic economic reasons that breed conflict within a society. First, when there is a conflict between capital and labour in the industry, between tenant and landlord in agriculture, and between city and village. We can

elucidate this argument by considering the example of 'left wing extremism' which is inimical to the unity and integrity of our society. These extremist groups comprise landless, exploited, and suppressed masses. The fruits of development, over a period of time, have been appropriated by a particular section of the people rendering the other half with little or nothing on which to survive. Gandhi was well aware of such problems; he exhorted the rich and the powerful to voluntarily abnegate resources and wealth to avoid a violent confrontation. Moreover, his principles of trusteeship, Swadeshi, bread labour, Khadi and village industries, and decentralization of wealth present a constructive program for encountering such conflicts as which occur in the economic system of a plural society. Even a brief perusal of the violent left wing extremism that has jeopardized the entire political and administrative machinery and has eulogized mindless violence in the name of liberating the people validates Gandhi's concerns about unequal development. Though the Gandhian approach of development has been criticized for its lack of far-sightedness, nevertheless, it is immensely relevant in encountering conflicts of such a magnitude.

A plural society faces political conflicts as well. The quest for power by competing groups renders the political process rudderless. Power is centralized by a particular group at the expense of the other group. A centralized system breeds dissatisfaction and resentment among those who are distant from the process of decision-making, resulting in political violence and invoking a loyalty towards primordial identities. Such circumstances lead to caste and religion-based conflicts. Exhorting the masses of a particular group to use violent means to establish their representation disturbs the social fabric. For instance, the use of caste, religion and ethnicities in Indian politics has proved detrimental to the process of development. In this context, the Gandhian values of 'Gram Swaraj' or village republic are relevant in

dealing with such crises. Gandhi's emphasis on collective decision-making and making the community or the village as the unit of governance can be considered important interventions. The successful implementation of the Panchayati Raj, which has brought about significant changes in many parts of the country, is a tribute to the Gandhian principles of 'Swaraj'.

Socio-cultural conflicts within a society are inevitable. The presence of numerous groups with myriad cultural attributes and elements makes Indian society vulnerable to conflicts. Over a period of time, our society has been confronted with conflicts along cultural lines as well. It is important to note that culture and religion overlap in a country like ours. Gandhi had a very clear understanding of such problems. Therefore, throughout his life, he advocated and propagated a 'Hindustani' culture which according to him is an eclectic mix of all the cultures of different groups. Gandhian values emphasize the civilizational aspect of Indian culture. His principles appeal to the moral and ethical elements of Indian civilization and argue in favour of the common elements that bind everyone together. In the present situation where culturally-motivated violence and hatred have become common, Gandhian values vis-à-vis cultural conflicts are indeed more than relevant.

Plural societies also create plural social conditions. The benefits of such socially beneficial measures as good education, good governance, and unfettered participation receive a setback when stronger and more powerful groups act in a hostile manner, relegating the less powerful to the bottom of the social ladder. The unequal education system that deprives a major percentage of the citizenry from partaking of the benefits of education is a glaring manifestation of an unequal social structure. Corruption by those in power and advantageous positions

undermines the social existence of many. Gandhi's 'Nai Talim' emphasizes on a uniform and equal education system, which in turn stresses on the importance of the mother-tongue, is relevant in dealing with the various problems occurring as a result of such a system. These also suggest a promising way to avoid conflicts within the society. Corruption in the society also leads to conflicting and confrontational social conditions. Such Gandhian principles as peaceful demonstrations, non-violent persuasion, and reinforcement of ethical and moral values can and has helped in the successful resolution of conflicts.

Relevance of Gandhism: International Experiences

Mahatma Gandhi and his words of wisdom have not only shaped the destiny of India, but have also transcended nations and nationalities. Among successful international applications of Gandhian principles is the culmination of the American Civil Rights Movement. Martin Luther King Jr. was an ardent advocate and supporter of Gandhian values of peaceful and nonviolent methods of protest. King's views on Gandhi are proof enough to ascertain the relevance of Gandhian values. On one occasion, describing its relevance King said, 'Mahatma Gandhi embodied in his life certain universal principles that are inherent in the moral structure of the universe, and these principles are as inescapable as the law of gravitation'.

Another important political struggle that had the indelible imprints of Gandhian values was the Anti-Apartheid movement in South Africa, led by Nelson Mandela. The South African society was experiencing the worst kind of suppression in the form of unbridled colonialism and racism. In such a scenario, a peaceful resolution of the conflict had become an aspiration of millions of Africans. Nelson Mandela emerged as the great leader, influenced by Gandhian values. In Mandela's own

words, Gandhi was "the archetypical anti-colonial revolutionary" who influenced the independence movement in South Africa.

Gandhian values also reverberate in the words of one of our contemporary political activists. Aung San Suu Kyi, a name synonymous with peace and nonviolence, underscores the relevance of Gandhian values in many ways. In a society where freedom is scuttled for personal gains and self-aggrandizement, Suu Kyi's perseverance and non-violent approach towards conflict resolution reinforces the strength of Gandhian values. Influenced by Mahatma Gandhi and his philosophy of nonviolence, Suu Kyi has made rapid strides in championing the cause of freedom and democracy. One of her most famous speech that bears a Gandhian element is the "Freedom from Fear" speech, which begins: "It is not power that corrupts but fear. Fear of losing power corrupts those who wield it and fear of the scourge of power corrupts those who are subject to it." The speech has the essence of Gandhian principle of Satyagraha where Gandhi denounces fear and exhorts Satyagrahis to be fearless in their pursuit of freedom and justice.

There are numerous political activists who have taken recourse to the eternal Gandhian values of peace and nonviolence in resolving conflicts. Peaceful political struggles and protests have proven successful on many occasions, thus saving humanity from bloodshed and mindless violence and simultaneously reinforcing faith in Gandhian convictions.

Gandhi and Gandhism: A Critical Appreciation

Gandhi and his philosophy have both blind supporters and staunch critiques. Almost all Gandhian values and principles have been subjected to criticism. Gandhi's vision was viewed as being intensely moralistic and inherently utopian,

romantic, and irrational. Gandhi's passionate exhortation to peace and nonviolence was attacked by many. For instance, a young Bhagat Singh denounced Gandhian values on the pretext that violence was necessary to 'make the deaf hear'. Gandhian values of conflict resolution were, it was argued, found wanting in many aspects. Communists' and radical social activists deplore Gandhian principles arguing that it calls for maintenance of the status quo. Gandhi's economic principles were criticized for their not taking into account the importance of industry. Trusteeship was abhorred by many as legitimating the concerns of the rich and the wealthy. Gandhi's views on caste and the role of women have also been criticized by Dalit scholars and radical feminists. Gandhi's vision, it is argued, blinded him to several other dimensions of human existence. He denounced the system of parliamentary democracy. Though Gandhi propagated monism and religious harmony, he exhorted his own 'Sanatana Hindu Dharma'. He was virulently critical of the modern civilizational values and ethos, undermined science and technology, and was critical of industry and machinery. Gandhi's impecunious view of human life prevented him from appreciating the central principles of modern civilization. Even the ideas of universal love and indivisible humanity which Gandhi cherished were criticized for their inconceivability in an interdependent world. Gandhi's overemphasis on the village and small communities and insistence on their way of life has the danger of leaving these communities too isolated and too parochial. Gandhi was too realistic not to sense this and was ambiguous in his views.

Conclusion

There are myriad ways to read and think about Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhi is an enigma to many. On the one hand, his values are viewed as the '*summum bonum*' of the world, the panacea to all problems, the weapon to fight all evils, the answer

to all questions threatening humanity. On the other hand, his principles have been challenged on numerous grounds. Notwithstanding the internal dialectic of his values, it is the firm conviction of many that his values can never be outdated irrespective of what people may say or believe. Contemporary society is riddled with conflicts along multiple lines. Gandhi's relentless emphasis on the human mind as both the source and the solution of a conflict makes his views more relevant. Even as we confront various conflicts, it is inadvertently the conflict of minds. It is in this context that Gandhi's approach is indisputable because it is ethical. He firmly believed that moral degeneration is the root cause of all evils, including conflicts. Therefore, Gandhi's simple recommendation about the acquisition of such moral values as truthfulness, nonviolence, love, self-control, forgiveness, non-enmity or friendliness, compassion, mercy, etc. are the best equipment discovered by any human being to resolve various types of conflicts. Gandhian values have been derided by many as being overbearingly moralistic and polemical; it has also been argued that they are binding and final and are not liable to change. However, Gandhian values are what Gandhi himself has described as 'experiments', and experiments are changeable. Gandhian values are not dicta or sermons; rather, they are simple reflections of life, as the Mahatma himself put it:

“The opinions I have formed and the conclusions I have arrived at are not final. I may change tomorrow; I have nothing new to teach to the world. Truth and nonviolence are as old as hills. All I have done is to try experiments in both on as vast a scale as I could do. In so doing, I have sometimes erred and learnt by my errors. Life and its problems have thus become to me so many experiments in the practice of truth and nonviolence.”

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Deconstructing Gandhian Values for Modern Meanings

S.M. THIYAGARAJAN

“The father of our nation lived for many values. But the value he died for is communal harmony” wrote Harsh Mander, a noted civil servant. Considered, arguably, as the greatest gift to humanity, Mahatma Gandhi’s values and thoughts, besides being relevant, become all the more necessary in a world ridden with conflicts characterized by animosity, brutality, dominance, manifest violence, so on and so forth. The need to study his relevance for conflict resolution is paramount because of our ignorance or, at times, the neglect of his values, which undeniably society is in dire need of at this stage. Perhaps we have vindicated Einstein who said “The generations to come will scarce believe that such a one as this ever in flesh and blood walked upon this earth”. The only mistake is in comprehending Einstein in the literal sense and thus disbelieving Mahatma Gandhi’s existence.

Mahatma Gandhi was just an individual, indeed a great one at that, who displayed the success of such values in his own inimitable style. The values he stood for are much larger than any individual. This is pertinent on two fronts. First, these supreme human values are relevant as long as humanity exists. Second, irrespective of one’s like or dislike for the Mahatma, a charismatic leader in his own right, it is the bounden duty of every human being to cherish these values and put them into practice. Even Mahatma Gandhi hated any cult formation and never vouched for any exclusive philosophy like Gandhism. To drive home this point, one can fall back on his dictum “What is possible for one man is equally possible for all”.

A basic grasp of his values becomes a prerequisite for examining their relevance in conflict resolution in a pluralistic society. All these values can be subsumed under an overarching umbrella term 'Satyagraha', initially a term coined by Maganlal Gandhi, in South Africa, and interpretable as 'Truth Force' or 'Soul Force'. Satyagraha forms the bedrock of the coherent theoretical framework for conflict resolution advocated by Mahatma Gandhi. According to Gandhi, Satyagraha was a means through which an individual could come to know what he is and what it means to evolve. It is essentially an unrelenting search for the truth. Broadly speaking, Satyagraha is built upon the edifices of truth and nonviolence.

At this juncture it is significant to know that the application of Satyagraha should be seen as a way of life and be contextually applied to conflict situations. This to Mahatma Gandhi was critical not only on pragmatic premises but also on moral and ethical grounds. Therefore, the question of relevance must be examined not only from a prudential viewpoint but on a much higher spiritual perspective, which is not to say that his methods are non-pragmatic.

Truth

Mahatma Gandhi explained truth as something that one believes true at a moment and it is equivalent to God. He felt that our existence is meaningful only to the extent that we are truthful. Truth, he said, is nothing but the inner voice. An unflinching adherence to and belief in truth allows one to honestly introspect and ensure that one does not indulge in actions contrary to the inner voice. The opposite is often seen in violent conflicts where people justify their stance by subverting the conscience. In conflict resolution, the relevance of truth assumes significance when truth is seen as being composed of many facets. To view just one facet and neglect others is improper. Staunch adherence to the truth will not

permit an individual to represent someone else's or some institution's views but instead makes him or her behave as an autonomous, fully responsible individual. Therefore, he or she ceases to be influenced by philosophies or thoughts that seek to inflict violence upon any individual or group. Before the individual starts acting he or she convinces himself or herself of the truthfulness of the cause. Adherence to truth also means recognition of the fact that every individual is a composite mix of good and evil, with the difference being one of degree. Thus, the individual also starts viewing things from the opponent's perspective. This helps in developing empathy and thus prevents violence.

Nonviolence

The criticality of nonviolence can be examined from its utility, and the non-utility of violence, as a method. To Mahatma Gandhi, violence perpetuates a cycle of vengeance. It suffers from continuity and reciprocity; it is impossible to distinguish between violence employed for noble ends and for not-so-noble ends. Thus, it becomes our moral duty to do away with any form of violence. This is inseparably entangled with truth wherein Gandhi states that it is impossible to decipher the absolute truth. As long as we believe that our convictions are true, we are truthful, but only after an honest introspection. This is also the case with others; thus, violence not only fails to fructify desired results, but is also detrimental as it exacerbates the unfavourable climate.

A great advantage of nonviolence is that it leaves no imprints of ill will, revenge, or bitterness. Consider its relevance in the light of the Coimbatore Communal Violence of November-December 1997. A Hindu police constable was killed by a Muslim fundamentalist group, the retaliation to which was the violence inflicted upon an area densely populated by Muslims by the Hindu group. The bitterness

and ill will was not reciprocated immediately but left an indelible impression upon the Muslims of that area. It was eventually reflected in the Coimbatore bomb blast which happened within a year. Even today, there is simmering discontent between the two communities amid active community policing. If one of the parties realized that violent actions were bound to be reciprocated the whole calamity could have been nipped in the bud.

The significance of nonviolence can also be examined in the light of what Gandhi did during communal riots in 1940. He was confronted by an angry young man that had lost his son during the communal riots in Calcutta. At that time, Gandhi was observing a fast in Noakhali. The young, Muslim man asked Gandhi how else he could avenge the loss of his son than by taking the life of a Hindu. Gandhi replied that he himself was a Hindu and offered his life to be taken. But, to make amends for the loss the young man had endured, Gandhi asked him to adopt a Hindu child and bring him up as per Hindu faith. The young man repented for his thoughts of vengeance.

A loss cannot be compensated by another loss. A wrong cannot be justified by another wrong. One cannot win by making others lose. To Gandhi, violence was a wrong that could never be justified. He saw violence as an alternative to cowardice, but did not prefer it over nonviolence. Also, one can resort to violence when his or her dignity or self-respect is in question, but only when one does not have the courage for nonviolence. Today it has been realized that dialogue is the only way forward to resolve conflicts. But a climate conducive to dialogue can be created only through nonviolence. For instance, years of peaceful talks between India and Pakistan were terminated by violence in the form of the Mumbai attacks of 26/11/2008.

Love

Mahatma Gandhi wanted mankind to return love for hatred. He always wanted to terminate the conflict, not the enemy. There were no enemies in his dictionary, only opponents. He even addressed Hitler and Jinnah using the term “dear” in spite of the opposing values they stood for. He believed “love is the subtlest force on earth”, that there is something in any man that can be loved -”the only way love punishes is through suffering”. The relevance of love as a means of resolving conflict can be exemplified by studying the effectiveness of Gandhian policing schemes viz. ‘Amma Pilupu’ and ‘Chellela Kosam’ in Andhra Pradesh. These schemes used to combat Naxalism fetched desirable results. The postcard scheme aimed at resolving the problems of women in the Naxalite households by providing each of them with the postcard and asking them to deposit the same in the collectorate with problems written on them. ‘Amma Pilupu’ was a scheme adopted in the intensely Naxal-affected northern districts of Andhra Pradesh, where ailing mothers of Naxalites were hospitalized for treatment. These approaches produced substantial results evidenced by the willing conversion of a few Naxalites.

Equality of Means and Ends

Gandhi’s faith in the equality of means and ends was unflinching. He believed that glory lay in the journey towards the goal and not in the goal itself. For some, the means were simply means, but to him means were everything. The Chauri Chaura incident is a well-known example of how Gandhi emphasized on the means and not the end. It helps examine the relevance of the equality of means and ends in conflict resolution. Had Gandhi allowed the violence to continue, may it have resulted in the British suppressing the movement on the pretext of violence? Also, people may have been caught in a no man’s land without a cardinal philosophy to practice.

The criticality of the equality of means and ends can be emphasized when seen through the prism of the kind of society we seek to produce. A violent society can never attain moral and intellectual progress. However, the equality of means and ends is not simplistic; it is a complex phenomenon to comprehend and practice. Fasting, as a means, can be considered to emphasize this fact. Gandhi undertook many fasts to wipe out untouchability, and bring communal riots to an end, during his time. On most occasions, it could be considered that fasting, as a method, is in earnest. Even otherwise, he cannot be blamed as the greater good is more significant. For instance, in the 1948 communal riots, Gandhi sought to convert the hearts of religious leaders through fasting and it yielded fruit. Some scholars blame him for moral coercion during that time, but it is a complex question of means and ends: he resorted to fair means, but it turned out to be “unfair” since coercion was involved.

But what could he have done ideally? One cannot expect him to ask for the continuance of violent behaviour over every issue. It also goes to show that moral means, undertaken with a pure heart, fetched moral ends even when one does not have complete control over events.

Trust

A corollary of the previous principle is trust, which people have on others. To Gandhi, unless there was reason to believe the contrary, trusting everybody by their word was a norm, admittedly even after being betrayed by many. He believed that by trusting a man we make him trustworthy; by distrusting him, we make him untrustworthy. We find that many conflicts begin with mistrust and are fostered by cycles of mistrust. There is always the associated element of suspicion

about the opponent that culminates in haste and misdeeds without the verification of facts. This may result in irreversible consequences. A glaring example is that of the LTTE which, because of mistrust, did not believe in peace agreements with the Sri Lankan government and as a result fostered cycles of violence and counter-violence.

Voluntary Suffering

Taking nonviolence to a higher plane, Gandhi believed in voluntary suffering. He based it upon the basic human value of empathizing with others. This by no means is equivalent to a passive and meek submission to the evildoer and is instead an active form of resistance against evil and a denial to submit before evil. It may even lead to the loss of one's own life. But Gandhi considered that such a voluntary loss of life would ensure the least loss of lives in the long run.

Further, it sets an example for others to emulate, and heightens the moral spirit of the society.

Its relevance can be exemplified by the following incident. During the racial conflict of Indians in South Africa, Gandhi's eldest son, Harilal Gandhi, was accused of Civil Disobedience and had to face trial in a court. Gandhi who appeared for him asked the court to adjudicate against Harilal. Further, he refused to accept punishments alternate to the most stringent one, which was a jail term. The judge was moved and quashed the case. This sent ripples across the Tamil community, for whom Gandhi fought, and enriched their moral spirit. Harilal himself was satisfied with his contribution to enriching their morale. The state, in this case the judge, was moved through conversion, not coercion. Thus it was a win-win situation for all.

The act of voluntary self-suffering also has the objective advantage of shifting public opinion towards oneself. On the other hand, the opponent will lose neutrals, and eventually supporters and allies. The recent movement launched by Anna Hazare can be stated as an example. Public opinion is the greatest asset one can possess during a conflict. Again, self-suffering is the cost one has to pay for adopting nonviolent means.

Absence of Fear

To Gandhi, nonviolence required more courage than violence. Fearlessness is also a prerequisite for other noble qualities like truth, reciprocating hatred with love, and self-suffering. Such fearlessness is born out of an unrelenting and indomitable will towards the cause and can be developed through determined, and constant, endeavour. While the fear of oppression is an easy proposition to understand, the fear of humiliation is something that needs careful examination. To safeguard self-respect and dignity, one prefers avoidance to facing humiliation. Arising out of this fear of getting humiliated is the instinctive infliction of violence upon the opponent.

In the conflict in Sri Lanka, for example, the fear of losing self-respect resulted in the LTTE's indulging in violence. The fear of humiliation led to mistrust and as a result the LTTE broke the peace accords repeatedly. Now, the violence has landed not only the LTTE but also the Tamils - whom they claim to represent - in a soup. It has lowered their stand at the negotiating table. Had they mobilized public opinion, rallied the people behind them, and bravely offered themselves up for humiliation and defeat, perhaps they would have been in a much better position. A nonviolent spirit instils in an individual the inner strength to assimilate humiliation. It also aids him/her in acquiring other noble qualities.

Adherence to Conversion rather than Coercion

To Gandhi, coercive methods were not only morally bankrupt but also unsustainable. Thomas Weber quotes Gandhi as saying, “Reliance has to be placed upon ability to reach the intellect and the heart.” It is only possible if conversion is resorted to, rather than coercion. Gandhi considered coercion as a product of violence and conversion as a resultant of nonviolence. This also becomes relevant in terms of peaceful conflict resolution in the long run. There is, however, an element of implicit coercion in such Gandhian methods as fasting, according to some scholars. But Gandhi, while admitting that fasting involves moral coercion, refuted this argument by stating that it should not be used for selfish interests and should only be used as a last resort.

Identification with Others

Gandhian values lay emphasis upon identifying oneself with others. This gives an individual the opportunity to look at alternate perspectives, from the prism of their welfare too. It would be impossible for an individual to inflict violence upon even the tiniest of organisms if he identifies himself with them and understands the pain the other person may have to endure. Had the opposing groups in Sudan only identified with each other, there would have been no bloodshed in Darfur.

‘Reform, Rather than Reproach’

Gandhi never believed in punishments. In contrast is the example of today’s Iraq which is not peaceful even after the hanging of Saddam Hussein. Again, only time can tell whether the peaceful Tahrir Square movement in Egypt will have been truly successful or whether the violent Libyan movement against Gaddafi succeeded. According to Gandhi, an eye for an eye would leave the world blind. Reforms should be administered through visible demonstrations of the reformist’s

belief in discipline and humility. Openness about intentions, chivalry, non-avoidance, non-opportunism, and a passionate but detached approach are also central to Gandhian Satyagraha.

Faith in Human Rationality

This is a critical element of Satyagraha and is significant when seen together with the concept of truth. To the extent that one believes that his/her conviction is true, he/she is free to propagate and practice any philosophy. But it should stand the test of human rationality. This is how Gandhi falsifies the actions of religious fanatics who, on the pretext of his true conviction, indulge in socially unacceptable behaviour. In his words, “wrong has no prescriptive right to exist merely because it is of a long standing”.

Values for Religious Harmony

Gandhi firmly believed that religion’s objective is to realize God. It does not matter what vehicle (different religions) one takes to reach the top of the mountain (God). He himself reflected the very idea of India where one can practice any religion but should die for the rights of another person’s religion. In that sense, global conflicts with religious undercurrents are a definite avenue for the application of Gandhian values. India is also witnessing religious conflicts time and again. The Gujarat violence of 2002, the Coimbatore violence of 1997-98, Kandhamal in 2008, and the recent Gopalganj incident stand testimony to this fact. The Gandhian values of religious cooperation, respect for each other’s religion, resorting to deliberations and dialog if conflicting situations arise, and having a holistic view of religion rather than skewed understanding, can all help in conflict resolution.

Further Gandhi saw God not as a mystical and speculative being but as a representative of a set of moral values. As per him, God is truth. God 'is' nothing else 'is'. Belief in -and recognition of- the fact that truth has many facets is essential. A religious person, while being entitled to follow any religion, should appreciate the fact that God is one and that everyone is entitled to tread his own path to reach Him. Therefore, the coexistence of different religions should be seen as a way of life. Gandhi was never a votary of forceful conversions. The violence in Kandhamal, alleged by many to be a product of an attempt at religious conversion, could have been prevented by adhering to this value which is not to justify the violence inflicted by Hindu fanatics by any means.

Faith

To Gandhi, 'faith is not a delicate flower which would wither away under the slightest stormy weather'. His values, to see the light of day, need a lot faith - faith in truth and nonviolence, faith in human goodness, faith in perseverance and so on and so forth. Gandhi however felt that faith is immaterial if not translated into action. Such adherence to strong faith is essential to practice his values and to resolve conflicts.

Forgiveness

According to Gandhi, definite forgiveness is the definite recognition of inner strength. The conversion of mankind - and not its destruction - is the dictum upon which the myriad of Gandhian values revolve. Forgiveness is a trait that needs to be cultivated in the present context to prevent the occurrence of violence and counter-violence.

Renunciation

Renunciation is everyone's prerogative, said Gandhi. Renunciation and trusteeship, which is a voluntary redistribution of wealth, can help in resolving economic conflicts arising out of inequalities in the present Indian context.

Humility

“Knowledge of the tallest scientist and greatest spiritualist is like a particle of dust” said Gandhi. It is with such resounding humility that one needs to cultivate values of nonviolence, for nonviolence is not possible without humility.

Tolerance

Tolerance is very significant in a pluralistic society which practices different norms and values. A healthy, well-informed and balanced criticism is the ozone of public life according to Gandhi. In the present day context, adherence to such a view can help in preventing conflicts.

Openness to learning

Gandhi believed that one should be open to all forms of culture but should not be swept away by any. Also, one should always be open to persuasion as man is incapable of knowing the absolute truth. This is critical in a pluralistic society.

Selflessness

Selfishness supplements chauvinistic undercurrents. Selflessness is a virtue that one needs to resort to in a pluralistic society to prevent conflicts.

Belief in Individualism

Gandhi believed in conversion not coercion. An individual with an “it’s possible” attitude is not influenced by the group dynamics within a chauvinistic community. Such an individual thinks beyond societal compulsions in his/her own capacity to avoid conflicts.

American Anti-racial Struggle

Gandhian methods have been emulated in conflicts occurring in many pluralistic societies. Martin Luther King Jr. established institutes for nonviolent resistance to racial segregation, to study Gandhian methods and to train activists in Gandhian methods. Drawing inspiration from Gandhi’s ‘Shantisena’ (meaning army of nonviolence), James Lawson, one of the popular instructors, established workshops in Nashville on the invitation of King. The activists internalized Gandhian values to the fullest and engaged in marches, non-cooperation campaigns, sit-ins, boycotts, etc. The struggle was an indication of Gandhi’s claim that nonviolence was not tantamount to cowardice; rather, it was an exhibition of the highest form of bravery. This exemplifies Gandhi’s relevance in conflict resolution in the 1960s.

This struggle not only lent a strong catalytic effect for the anti-segregation struggle but also turned history on its head, and for the better. It was a victory for humanity, one in which opponents were not brought down to their knees, subjugated, dominated, or humiliated. Instead, the victors accepted every humiliation, even death, at times.

Consonance with Effective Psychological Techniques

Psychology views accommodation, avoidance, collaboration, compromise, and competition as the different techniques for conflict resolution. Thomas and Killman view only accommodation and collaboration as producing a win-win situation, and other methods as dominant styles of addressing conflicts. This is very similar to Gandhi's method of arriving at a win-win situation. Gandhi believed in effective psychological techniques called negotiations even when he was a lawyer. Gandhian methods also have concurrence with bargaining, an effective psychological technique. As Gandhi said, one should compromise to an "irreducible minimum" in negotiations.

Gandhian methods address conflicts at all stages. In the pre-conflict stage, negotiations and arbitrations can be used. In the conflict stage, boycotts and non-cooperation can be used, while in the manifest conflict stage, usurping the power of opponent and hampering the functions of the opponent can be used. Thus, ascribing a scientific colour to his thoughts and techniques is not far-fetched. He believed that Satyagraha was a science in-the-making. Similar to psychology, Gandhi believed that a man is but a product of his thoughts. Thus the present world, which largely rejects unscientific prepositions, need not feel reluctant to adopt his methods.

Relevance in Different Traditions

Gandhian values are not only relevant within the Hindu tradition which is believed to be patient and passive. This is illustrated by the fact that his philosophies were formed in London, borrowed from John Ruskin's "Unto This Last", Henry David Thoreau's "Civil Disobedience" and Tolstoy's "The Kingdom of God Is Within You". Of the 250 books he had read, 200 were by western authors like Carlyle,

Shaw, Huxley, Shakespeare, etc. Danilo Dolci's struggle to resolve the conflict of exclusion in Italy made him the Gandhi of Sicily. Similarly, Lanza Del Vasto worked for conflict resolution in France, while Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan among Muslim tribesmen in northern Afghanistan. Thus it is quite evident that Gandhi's methods are relevant in pluralistic societies across all traditions.

Levels of Relevance

Gandhian values are relevant at all levels, whether individual, societal, national, or international. However, Gandhi viewed the individual as the ultimate unit for which to exercise of his values. He viewed that societal laws are not beyond one's ability to alter. He had an inextinguishable faith in individualism. As long as an individual has a high sense of righteousness, he can impress upon society to produce the desired changes. This is relevant in the present context as it is easier to bring about change in the individuals who make up a society; this in turn translates into change at the much larger national and international level.

Limitations

Like any other method, irrespective of its nobility, even Gandhian values and methods may not be always relevant in a pluralistic society. Martin Luther King's nonviolent resistance may have been interspersed with violence. When one of Gandhi's grandsons queried Nelson Mandela as to why he could not resort to nonviolence completely in resolving the racial conflict, prompt came the reply "This is not your grandfather's British India", implying that any movement requires a conducive environment. Fasting, as discussed earlier, is not agreeable to everyone as being the noblest of means. The habits engendered by the Quit India movement left indelible marks of indiscipline, according to some observers. Aung

San Suu Kyi has not been able to liberate her country through Gandhian means. The time taken to fructify desired results is seen as another drawback.

However, these drawbacks should also be seen in light of the counterarguments. First, why should patience and perseverance have a negative connotation? Doesn't the absence of these virtues display a short-sightedness in attaining immediate gains which may not be enduring? These values are relevant because even the common man can use them as powerful tools. Secondly, it also matters at what cost we seek to attain the desired results if it takes a heavy toll on humanity.

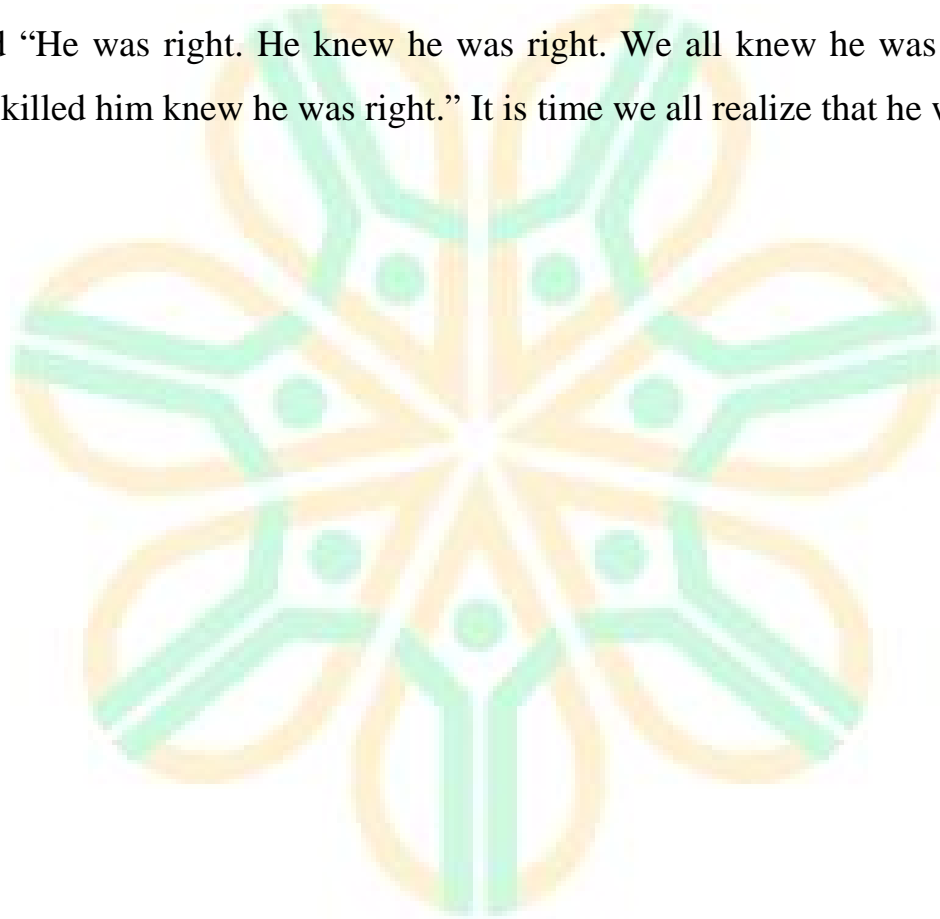
A Win-win Game

Gandhian methods assume great relevance since they result in a win-win situation. When one party is suppressed through violence, it generates feelings of hatred and vengeance. A party which, only for the want of superior power, may resort to submission may in the long run sow the seeds of greater violence. On the other hand, nonviolent methods which allow for enduring solutions through the creation of a win-win situation are a preferable proposition. Today's world badly needs Gandhi. True to the adage that 'anyone's absence instils the need for his presence in others' perhaps Gandhi would have resolved the ravaging violence and conflicts arising out of polarization in his own style.

The gentle colossus has given us values to uphold. An individual or party may finish first or last in the immediate run but humanity should finish second to none. Relevance of these values depends upon getting your priorities right and whether we believe in short term gains or in enduring, sustainable solutions to conflicts; whether we look to win-win situations as being zero sum games; whether we utilize the teachings of the greatest gift of God to humanity, or ignore them at our

own peril; whether we endorse the rejuvenation humanity has obtained from him or decline to accept it.

It is time to think ‘Yes we have to’ and recapture the spirit of Gandhi. Pearl S. Buck said “He was right. He knew he was right. We all knew he was right. The man who killed him knew he was right.” It is time we all realize that he was right.



National Foundation
for Communal Harmony

Re-Instituting Gandhi

PANKAJ DESHMUKH

Humans have always looked to the past to solve the problems of the present and to anticipate future contingencies. Mahatma Gandhi has always been a good reconciliatory of the past, present and future, since time and again, the relevance of Gandhian values is scrutinised, and surprisingly, they always come to our rescue. Gandhian values and techniques are most applicable when it comes to resolving conflicts in plural societies. A plural society is a society composed of different ethnic groups or cultural traditions, or in whose political structure ethnic or cultural differences are reflected. It not only contains ethnic contrasts but also includes economic interdependence and ecological specialization, i.e. the use of different environmental resources by each ethnic group. If we consider only the ethnicity criterion for defining a plural society, very few societies can be termed as plural societies. But the criterion of economic interdependence and ecological specialization makes almost every society a plural society.

The very nature of a plural society indicates multiple groups which are inherently different, yet interdependent. This difference may lead to a struggle between the groups culminating in a conflict. Since almost all societies are plural in nature, conflict is found in all societies. Hence, Gandhian values and techniques find universal application. Tolerance is an important Gandhian value which forms the bedrock of mutual coexistence. A tolerant society always welcomes people from various backgrounds and assimilates them.

The United States of America has assimilated people from all cultures, turning itself into a melting pot. This assimilation has, however, not always been a smooth

process and has led to conflicts. The efforts made by Martin Luther King for the emancipation of Afro-Americans were influenced by Gandhi. The Gandhian principle of tolerance helped in ending biases and bringing the Afro-Americans into the mainstream. This tolerance is becoming increasingly important as a conflict of ideologies is precipitating into a 'clash of civilizations'. Tolerance also becomes important in the era of globalization as we are a part of global village and are becoming increasingly interdependent on each other. The act of intolerance in one part of globe can lead to violence in another part.

The Gandhian principle of nonviolence complements the principle of tolerance. Both these principles coexist and it is impossible to imagine one without the other. Tolerance and nonviolence are the two sides of the same coin. Whenever a conflict arises in a plural society, it is necessary to handle it in a non-violent manner. When it is handled in a violent manner we are not being tolerant. According to Gandhi nonviolence is a potent weapon. It is weapon of the spiritually strong against the spiritually weak. It worked against the atrocious rule of the British, and, in a similar vein, it can work in a plural society wherein the powerful groups take on the mantle of the oppressor and commit atrocities against the weak. The principle of nonviolence is necessary to be followed by all sections of the plural society in order to ensure a peaceful coexistence.

In recent history there were many instances where the principle of nonviolence was used to find a solution to the conflicts in plural societies. Gandhi himself perfected this weapon against the discrimination being done to Indians in South Africa in the late 19th century. Nelson Mandela used the same Gandhian value of nonviolence in his struggle against Apartheid. The Gandhian value of nonviolence needs to be emphasized as the world today has more dreaded weapons of violence than ever in

the history of mankind. The nuclear arsenals present across the world today have enough power to destroy the entire earth. It is only by sticking to the principle of nonviolence we can avert such a catastrophe.

Another Gandhian principle, compassion, is an essential prerequisite for practicing both tolerance and nonviolence. In a plural society, it is very easy to be passionate along ethnic, religious, and communal lines. But it is much more difficult to be compassionate with an individual with whom our communal interests do not coincide. This lack of compassion for our brethren is the most important challenge today as we are under the growing influence of individualism and parochial communalism at the same time.

Gandhi had always emphasized the importance of basic human rights. In a plural society which is stratified, the strong oppress the weak to the extent of violating even basic human rights. There is discrimination against the weak and it is ensured that the weak stays in perpetual misery. Gandhi vehemently opposed the practice of untouchability which existed in the Indian society. The practice of untouchability denied basic human rights to the downtrodden sections of the society. Gandhi worked through his publication named Harijan to ensure that the practice of untouchability comes to an end.

In present times, various sections of the society are exploited to the extent of denying them their basic human rights. Be it children, the destitute, orphans, or the disabled, society has failed to give them their due share. It is only by imbibing the Gandhian ethos of compassion and recognition of basic human rights that this injustice can be undone. In a plural society, there is competition among the groups to use resources. Mostly, groups depend upon nature for these resources. Gandhian

values have always emphasized a harmonious relationship with nature. Today we find a competition to usurp the resources available in nature which has not only made nature bereft of resources but has also led to a conflict between tribal peoples and governments. Tribal populations have traditionally been the custodians of the natural flora and fauna. The development strategies of the government encroach upon the forests leading to conflicts.

The Gandhian principle of harmony with nature can give an effective solution to this problem.

The development models pursued at present by various countries lack sustainability; this is more so for developing countries like India. It perverts the symbiotic relationship with nature into a parasitic relationship. Gandhi underlined the fact that the Earth “has enough for everybody’s need but not for a single individual’s greed”. This crass oversight of sustainability may prove to be detrimental to our survival, and will be a source of future conflicts. Hence, the Gandhian ethos of sustainable development needs to be brought into the development paradigm.

While analysing the need for a harmonious relationship and also for sustainable development, Gandhian philosophy delves into the basic question of greed. The principle of Aparigraha, which means non-possessiveness, seeks the neutralizing of the desire to acquire and hoard wealth. It emphasizes on giving up material desires and, instead, to be spiritually rich. The practice of Aparigraha can ensure that material interests will not conflict as it emphasizes on neutralizing these material interests. Gandhi had always emphasized on the dignity of labour and was himself a strong practitioner of bread labour. Gandhian values insist that one must do

labour irrespective of one's socioeconomic position. The elite tend to invest capital and the labourers put in the hard work. This can lead to a conflict between the employer and the employee. This has been a consistent point of conflict found in all societies. The labourers have a feeling that they are being exploited by their employers as their work does not give them social status. By emphasizing the dignity of labour this feeling of being exploited can be effectively countered.

By re-establishing the dignity of labour we can ensure the participation of people in various developmental projects through 'shramdaan'. This will make development more participative. Disciples of Gandhi like Vinoba Bhave devised their own mechanisms to address social problems. To restore the dignity of labour and to remove large-scale poverty, Bhave gave the call of 'Land to the Tiller'. His conception of the slogan 'Sab Bhoomi Gopal Ki' reemphasised his belief in Aparigraha. Thousands of acres of land were donated by landholders to the landless thus preventing a future conflict. The concept 'Gram-Daan' ensured that every landless labourer in a village was given some land. This was done without any kind of legislation or interference by the government. The areas in the country which had inequitable distribution of land witnessed the rise of movements against landlords which in turn precipitated naxalism.

The democratic systems in a plural society may not reflect the functioning of a healthy democracy. They work on the principle of 'majority is law'. The numerically weak group may be subjugated by majority. This is a breeding ground for conflict as the grievances of weak sections are unheard and their aspirations remain unfulfilled. The parliamentary form of democracy adopted by plural societies like India inherently follow a top-down polity in which importance is given to top tiers while the lower tiers are insignificant. Though India has

democratic institutions at the village level they are short of resources to carry out the will of the people. This leads to negligence in governance in the peripheral areas which are mostly rural areas. The unmet aspirations of the citizens breed discontent against the government which cares solely for the interest of the dominant.

An effective solution to reverse this sorry state of affairs in a democracy is the concept of 'Gram Swaraj'. It envisages independence and self-rule at the level of a village. The Gram Sabha is the most important institution in the decision-making process. This is so because the flow of decisions is reversed from top-down to bottom-up. The decisions pertaining to development of citizens is taken by the citizens themselves thus displaying direct democracy. This minimizes not only conflict but also enhances their participation in democracy and thus strengthens it. It creates their stake in the process of development making it more inclusive and broad-based.

The Gandhian values of self-reliance and self-sufficiency are significant in plural societies. In plural societies there is much competition for limited resources. Self-sufficiency means creating multiple non-rival resources. Gandhi had always stressed on rural innovation and appropriate technology. For instance, it may not be possible in a country like India to provide LPG in every household, but it is definitely possible to have a clean source of energy without increasing the drudgery of rural women.

Gandhian values always had a special concern for women. While we define conflict in a plural society as conflict between communities, there is a conflict of interest in all societies whether developing or modern. This conflict is about the

rights of women. In many societies women are treated as second-class members and they do not enjoy the same status as men. Gandhi never considered women as a weaker sex or 'Abala'; rather he considered them as strong or 'Sabla'. Gandhian values have an impeccable element of equity and do not discriminate between the man and the woman. Gandhi considered women equal to men and believed that they are able to do all things which a man can do. The large scale participation of women in the freedom struggle bears a testimony to this belief. If the conflicts between various communities in a plural society are reconciled but if there is no equality between men and women then that society cannot be called a conflict-free society. Thus women's empowerment is the basic requirement for a conflict-free society.

Though the definition of a plural society acknowledges the presence of different ethnic groups, in actual practice the society is broadly divided on religious lines. Although all religions have coherence in basic tenets and principles, a selfish interpretation of these has led to conflicts between communities. To many, Gandhi is equivalent to a Hindu saint because his philosophy is rooted in the tenets of Vaishnavism. Though Gandhi does not separate religion from politics he never used religion to attain petty political goals. Gandhi's conception of religion is not to compartmentalize oneself as Hindu or Christian but to follow the universal religion of tolerance.

In his pursuit of tolerance Gandhi was criticized by his contemporaries but that did not matter to him. During the Khilafat movement it was said that the movement has diluted Gandhi's secular credentials and he is bringing religion into the struggle against the British. But his stand was vindicated by large scale participation by Muslims thus strengthening the freedom movement.

Gandhi's idea of secularism is not equivalent to minimal interference of state in religious practices. It goes beyond to equate secularism with tolerance. For Gandhi secularism is about giving up those demands of one's religion which are detrimental to coexistence. In a world of growing fundamentalism and communal intolerance Gandhian values become more apt than ever.

Another Gandhian value which is not explicitly articulated is courage. A Gandhian needs to be fearless and courageous. Today we find communities fearful of other communities. This fear has entered their psyche and they perpetrate violence against each other as a pre-emptive measure. This fear psychosis is dangerous for the whole society. Gandhi showed extraordinary courage during the riots in Naokhali. We do not need leaders who make outrageous comments on religious lines but instead those who are patient and courageous enough to follow the example set by Gandhi.

Another important Gandhian trait is effective communication. Today we find the communication revolution happening on the one hand and increasing communication gap between the communities on the other hand. Gandhi was able to communicate across the various cross sections of society. Today communities prefer ghettos and religious forums instead of open and secular forums for communication. This lack of communication leads to suspicion amongst communities against each other and this culminates in conflict.

Leadership is an inherent trait of Gandhi. Today we find the absence of principled leadership is an important reason for conflict in plural societies. The political leadership lacks conviction and it vacillates during the critical moments of decision-making. The leadership is involved in calculating petty political gains

instead of caring for the interest of the nation. Gandhi's leadership qualities spawn from his self-belief in the ideals of tolerance and mutual coexistence. This self-belief is absent in our political leadership.

One of the most prominent legacies which Gandhi has left for plural societies across the world is that plural societies should be in agreement about the rules of disagreement. It would be naïve to imagine societies without disagreement. But mature societies agree on the methods of disagreement which have nonviolence as their bedrock. Plural societies resolve their conflicts through deliberation, debate, and discussion. Deliberation is an important hallmark of plural and open societies. Through deliberation the essential levels of transparency are maintained and the feeling that one-sided decisions are being taken is removed from the public consciousness.

The media plays an important role in conflict resolution as it provides a forum for discussion and deliberation. It brings facts out into the open and moulds public opinion. Thus, independent media, along with responsible journalism, is a necessary precondition for conflict resolution. Gandhi himself communicated through newspapers and speeches with the citizens and was open to criticism from all sections of society.

Gandhi considered leaders as trustees of the society. He applied this concept of trusteeship in all walks of life. He considered social leaders, political leaders and also business leaders as trustees. A trustee does not have any self-interest while taking any decision, and instead, takes a decision in the larger interest of society. This idea of trusteeship needs to be practiced in all societies and especially in

plural societies. Trusteeship brings forward only honest leaders and disallows corrupt leaders who want to make personal gains from entering politics.

This concept of trusteeship when applied to business ensures that the entrepreneur works for the larger social benefit. This also prohibits the trustee from acquiring land from tribes or cultivators and removing them from their traditional lands. It thus helps in preventing a conflict between the haves and the have-nots. It builds a moral responsibility on the entrepreneur to redistribute the wealth acquired by his entrepreneurship skills to the less fortunate. It thus helps in bridging the yawning gulf between the rich and the poor. The concept of 'Aparigraha' in the corporate world can give rise to a battery of philanthropists who can donate their wealth to the fight against dreaded diseases like AIDS, and afflictions like malnutrition and thus restore the social balance. By lending a helping hand to the unprivileged we can decrease their discontent against the privileged.

Equality is an important Gandhian value which can be helpful in plural societies. The Gandhian conception of equality is not about equal treatment to all. It says that 'Equals be treated equally and unequals unequally'. In plural societies, not all social groups are on an equal footing. Some of them are historically disadvantaged due to various reasons. If this historical disadvantage is not corrected it may lead to discontent and conflict. The Gandhian ideal of equality tries to rectify this inequality by positive discrimination where a disadvantaged section is given extra benefits. The philosophy of affirmative action tries to bring those left out on the periphery into the mainstream.

This conception of equality becomes more important in a multicultural, plural society like India where the mainstream is occupied by the culture of the majority.

The cultures which are diverse from the mainstream get a feeling of being subjugated and dominated. This leads to the birth of secessionist tendencies leading to agitations and violence. This was witnessed during the Khalistan movement in Punjab and is being witnessed in Jammu & Kashmir and Northeastern India. An amicable solution to this problem can be achieved only by removing the historical disadvantage these regions suffered. By accelerating the pace of development in this region and by trying to bring their cultures into the mainstream we can ensure that their discontent is removed.

To Gandhi truth was equivalent to God. In a plural society where all groups have their own self-interest to safeguard, it is truth which takes a backseat. Self-interest prevails at the cost of truth. It is not that truth is absent from plural society, rather every fighting group has its own version of truth which it tries to propagate. This makes a situation worse. The truth is thus the first victim in a conflict. If everybody adheres to truth the conflict can be averted. Mutual coexistence and development can be the only truth confronted by plural societies and not distorted versions of history. History cannot be used to create another history filled with bloodshed. The reliance on the Gandhian values of truth, tolerance, and nonviolence can be a solution in the resolution of conflicts in plural societies.

It is only through the practice of Gandhian values that enduring peace can be ensured in plural societies. Gandhian philosophies have been helpful in diffusing tensions in various plural societies across the world. With the world coming closer it is turning itself into one big plural society. The entire gamut of Gandhian values, techniques, and practices find applicability not only in various parts of the world but also at world forums like the United Nations. Throughout the world the likes of Nelson Mandela, the Dalai Lama, and Aung San Suu Kyi have taken inspiration

from Gandhian values to not only resolve conflict in a plural society but further to make it a more open and just society. It is only by the right practice of Gandhian values that enduring world peace can be achieved.



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Questioning "Failure": Gandhi or Us?

MANNAN AKHTAR

“A regime which was self-serving, a regime which didn’t feel the pulse of the people and society, a regime which was dictatorial and tyrannical; the people rose against the oppression, a revolution brewed, no violence by the people, the regime unleashed their most inhuman repression but the truth prevailed. Ultimately the high and mighty had to bow down to the people’s wishes.”

This is the story of the recent Egyptian revolution. It is so similar to what happened more than half a century ago in our country that we can’t differentiate between the two. India and Egypt are two countries with societies very different from each other, –whether in terms of ethos, climate or culture, which represent the plurality of human races. Yet they were common in that they imbibed the principle of nonviolence and Satyagraha for their cause. They followed what was said by "Bapu", or Gandhi, “I won’t hate you, but I would not obey you when you are wrong. Do what you like I will match my capacity to suffer against your capacity to inflict the suffering- my soul-force against your physical or brutal force. I will wear you down by goodwill.”

Today, in a world where there is a rise of conflicts not only among nations but also among people and different societies, Gandhian values are seen to be receding into oblivion despite the success of Egyptian society. The advent of pluralism whether religious, economic, ethnic, social, or regional, with support from extremists, is tearing apart human society. The values of truth, sacrifice, and nonviolence are seen as concepts of antiquity. Is this the truth or is it just the opinion of a few? Are we becoming more conservative in our thinking? Can we exist without conflicts in

this plural society? Are Gandhian values still alive? And if they are, are these values still of importance in resolving the conflicts? These are some of the questions which pertinent to us.

The Gandhian values which we are talking about is soul-force or Satyagraha, “the Force which is born of Truth and [Love or] nonviolence”. Bapu said “In the application of Satyagraha, I discovered in the earliest stages that pursuit of truth did not admit of violence being inflicted on one’s opponent but that he must be weaned from error by patience and compassion. For what appears to be truth to the one may appear to be error to the other. And patience means self-suffering. So the doctrine came to mean vindication of truth, not by infliction of suffering on the opponent, but on oneself.” Thus a Satyagrahi is not only trying to change the mind of his opponent but also his own lifestyle and ethos. Satyagraha doesn’t imply that anyone is evil; it believes that the opponent is having an error in judgment and thinking which needs to be corrected by love and truth. It doesn’t propound hate for the other. It proposes that you hate the evil deed and not the evil doer. These values as we see are not in any way a relic. They are still found and further, are revered and cherished by people. Thus, while Gandhian values have not faded into oblivion, they may not be as easily visible as expected, and needed.

After the achievement of Indian independence, Gandhian values gave the world a new perspective. The same values gave the world a new weapon with which to fight wars – the weapon of Satyagraha. Western society used to resolve conflicts through physical force but this new force of Satyagraha was the one used by many countries of the East to gain independence in the middle of the 20th century. The likes of Julius Nyerere of Tanzania used the principles of Gandhi to attain independence for their countries. The American Civil rights movement and the

movement against Apartheid in South Africa are other examples which used the same values of truth and nonviolence to achieve their natural rights in the society. Such movements in India as the Chipko movement also used the same weapons quite successfully. It was simple, economic, and, above all, more conscientious than any physical means of war. It appealed to the society as a whole – it not only made people more courageous in being up against the oppressors, it also made them stand up against all kind of injustices - social, economic, racial, casteist, or religious - this formed the basis of soul-force. It meant equality not only with the people you are against but also among yourselves. It appealed to the populace, who adopted it for a just result.

So what is the reason that, even after the same values were so successful in the same plural societies of the 20th century, people are losing their faith in these methods and values in the 21st century? This question needs to be delved into deeply. Today, the world has changed and so have the nations and the citizens. The thinking of the populace has changed and they are now more materialistic, individualistic, competitive, ambitious, and achievement-driven. They have lost the essence of patience. As the nation is the representative of its citizenry, it has acquired the same property, viz. impatience. We no longer feel concerned about each other's welfare, except in commercial and business terms. Cooperation has been replaced by competition and consumerism. Much intelligence and energy are spent in this effort. Thus we see nations assuming conservative stands. Individuals have become more insensitive to others and so have the nations. They want their comforts at the expense of others even though the cost of it to the others may be quite profound. One community sees the rise of another as being at its cost. Thus, we see conflicts arising between nations, societies, religions, and regions.

At the international level, the social conflicts we see are those which represent the aforementioned reasons. Some of these which are most in the news are those between two different communities and societies. In most of these countries the conflict is because of economic greed like that of land, energy resources, etc. In some cases, it is driven by simple reasons of religion. Ethnic conflicts between communities, which are very much in the news nowadays, are always happening in plural societies wherein one community is not tolerant of others' views. Some of the recent ones are between South and North Sudanese, Uzbeks and Tajiks, and Houthis and Sunnis. In these conflicts, the major reason is again economic and regionalist, again an expression of pluralism, as one of the communities has progressed economically while the other has remained backward. Terrorism, although not an interstate or societal conflict per se, is again the child of reasons related to religion, oppression, etc., a manifestation of the differences between the different set of people. One of the most important conflicts which threaten the existence of humanity as a whole is environmental, viz. climate change. This problem has brought the plurality of the societies to the fore with different set of people having different problems and agendas and no one agreeing to others' viewpoints while others trying to impose their hegemony.

India has always been a country with a lot of diversity and plurality in its society. This diversity and plurality has always been cherished by our countrymen. The plural society in India is composed of a bevy of ethnicities, religious believers, regions, races, cultures, and communities. However, in recent times, in a country where the values of nonviolence and truth are ingrained into the society, a lot of conflicts have been seen. Some of the most infamous ones are the Gujarat pogrom, the border conflicts between the states, the rise of regionalism, demands for various new states, the increase of corruption, the rise of economic inequality, left

wing extremism, etc. Although the problems mentioned above are of the product of complex reasons, one reason common to all of them is that because of the rise of pluralism (and not plurality per se). Pluralism is a phenomenon which arises in a society composed of various groups which differ from, and compete with, each other in an unhealthy way, for resources and power. One of the major problems our country is facing today is the duality of an increasing gap between the rich and the poor, with the rich getting even richer while the poor become poorer. This duality is becoming the defining feature of the shining India and is prominently responsible for many of the problems like left wing extremism, insurgencies, etc.

While these are some of the reasons why people are losing belief in Gandhian values, most of them are internal and thus subjective. But there are other external factors also. One of these is the failure in recent times of Gandhian methods. Internationally, Aung San Suu Kyi, an ardent follower of truth and nonviolence, has been using these as tools for bringing democracy in her country but has not made any progress till now. The state of Tibet which by nature has been a follower of peace and nonviolence has had no impact on the Chinese society even though Tibet has been holding peaceful protests for the past fifty years. On the contrary, the Chinese have suppressed them and that too in a brutal fashion as was witnessed a couple of years ago when even the monks were beaten up.

According to some thinkers, in contrast to the outside world the failure of Gandhian values is more starkly visible within Indian society, inside the country which is the home of plural values and Gandhian values. Also, their failure is even starker because they blatantly reveal the face of regional discrimination in a plural society. One of them is the case of Irom Sharmila from the state of Manipur who is using the Gandhian method of fasting to fight for a cause which is just and real.

She is fighting by making sacrifices on her part to correct the error of the Indian government, i.e. imposing the draconian Armed Forces Special [Powers] Act, [1958] (which vests in the Army a number of unregulated powers) upon its own people. She is, however, part of a fringe group in an area about which the mainstream is less informed and concerned. This is again proven by the fact that Anna Hazare's strike was successful just because it was in New Delhi, the capital of the country. This is not to say that Anna's strike was right or wrong but to show the regional insensitivity present in the Indian masses about people from other regions (especially the peripheral region).

The same could be said to be the case for the poor and unrepresented tribal people of central India. When they had peaceful protests, no one was bothered as they were not part of the mainstream and did not represent any vested interests. Their problems were recognized only when they took up arms, thus giving legitimacy to violence rather than nonviolence. Some argue that the two cases expose a flaw in Gandhian methods, that they are not very useful if the number of people affected and protesting are less and their voices are not heard much outside their local realm. It also brings into focus the importance of a good leader and an effective human coordination chain to be in place for the Gandhian methods to be successful (which was incidentally the case in all the earlier examples of the countries of Africa, etc.).

Then, can we say that the world does not need or want Gandhism today or that it has lost its applicability to resolve the clashes seen in the present day societies? The answer is best represented by this couplet of [the western musician] Bob Dylan: "The answer my friend is blowing in the wind, the answer is blowing in the wind". The winds which are blowing today, both in the world and in our nation,

are also indicative of the strength of the Gandhian values in the human society. The force of truth and nonviolence has been shown to all and sundry. While the triumph of these values is based on ages-old principles of humanity, the fact is that they have been given a simple and modern expression by Gandhi. These values are inherent to human nature and will always appeal to the populace.

In recent years, Gandhian values have started to influence the society again in a strong way. The fact which we should not forget is that the world was as similar today as it was in Gandhi's time. The human society as a whole still had all the nations, religions, races, ethnicities, diversity of ethos, and beliefs, as it had in the fifties. Society was as plural at that time as it is today; it has as many conflicts today as it had during those days. However complex the problems of society are today, the answers to them are simple: the use of truth, love, and nonviolence, soul-force.

Gandhian values are still quite cherished as can be determined by the success and popularity of books, blogs, movies, etc. about Gandhi. Society may not be able to follow Gandhian values in the necessary way, but still cherishes them and always puts them on a high pedestal. All the values of individualism have always been there in humans; so have been the values of truth and nonviolence. Both are an integral part of human nature just like the two sides of a coin. It is just that one part has overshadowed the other. The public always needs a jolt to wake it up from its deep slumber. Gandhi provides the inspiration for the people that it can be done (it was also seen in case of the Indian public in recent times).

As for the people who think that wars and use of physical force are the way to go in a unipolar world, the wise words of Kingsman Brewster may be offered: There is no lasting relief from violence, only a temporary relief from hopelessness”.

Violence has until now not given any result in the world, it did not do so in the times of the Magadhan emperor Ashoka nor did it in modern times, as the US will stand witness (as it burned its hands in Iraq and Afghanistan by inflicting war rather than using peaceful means). Most of the conflicts which we have tried to solve with violence have only ended violently. As the adage goes, violence begets violence. The only solution to the problems the world is facing today is truth and nonviolence. The most relevant example is that of the [so-called] Arab Spring in which the people of countries like Egypt and Tunisia have overthrown their despotic rulers through the use of non-violent methods by the citizens. The dictators did try to use the army against them but the army found itself incapable of fighting the non-violent and non-retaliatory citizens. The soul force caused the change of heart in the opponent. This is what Gandhi did almost half a century ago in India's freedom struggle.

The Egyptian revolution, which was a faceless revolution, also disposed of the notion that it was critical to have a strong leader to succeed in a non-violent struggle. Instead, the emergence of social media played an important role as it united the people in the absence of a strong leadership. Thus, unlike earlier times, the need for a strong leader is not as apparent in today's times thanks to the advent of the Internet and technology. The fact that people who are less represented in the mainstream are not able to use them may not be entirely correct as Gandhian methods need a lot of time and therefore patience. In Gandhi's very words, "Inexhaustible patience is needed, if truth be brought home to anyone."

Gandhian methods, where used, may involve a long time period before the objective is realized. Patience is the sacrifice an individual has to make in Satyagraha. This was the case during the Indian freedom struggle; it was only

through small gains that India realized its ultimate dream. As for Irom Sharmila's struggle, she is on the right path and people are also gathering around her cause. She will definitely have the results. As Gandhi said, "A small body of determined spirit, fired by an unquenchable faith in their mission can alter the course of History."

Gandhi's values are not only important to resolve the problems faced by the global human society today but also those faced in particular by Indian society which is as plural as the world. The plurality of India is its a reality, but the growth of pluralism is a problem. Most of the conflicts in our society today have, overtly or covertly, been influenced by pluralism. These problems need to be solved by the application of Gandhian values. Abolishing untouchability and casteism are as important as they were during our struggle for Independence. Even today the practice of untouchability and discrimination is prevalent. Every day we hear stories of Dalits being beaten up for trivial reasons. The solution is the way shown by Gandhi, who believed that even thinking evil about someone is an act of violence and should be abhorred. Also the values which Gandhi preached should be imbibed in oneself to treat and help others before applying it to oneself. These values will help us get rid of antiquated practices.

Religious extremism, which is on a rise in our society, is also something Gandhi encountered in his lifetime. The values of tolerance he taught to us are still relevant. As he said, "*Ishwar allah tero naam sabko sanmati de bhagwan*" (god is one and let him give good thoughts to everyone).

Gandhi's thoughts on religious tolerance are the ones which are needed in our society so as to avoid incidents which mar our record as a secular state.

The main threat which our society is facing today has come from various inequalities: that between the rich and the poor, between communities, and between regions. These inequalities were seen by Gandhi as a major hindrance in our country's quest for unity and growth and led him to coining the term "Sarvodaya", meaning universal upliftment, or the simultaneous development of all people, and the equitable distribution of resources to everyone. Perhaps the tagline of our Eleventh plan, "Inclusive Development", was foreseen by Gandhi as it means the same as "Sarvodaya".

Just as in the time of Nehru, Gandhian values are still important to our policymaking. The first and foremost example which comes to mind is that of National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, or NREGA, which fulfils the ambition of providing a decent living for everyone. Another example is our nuclear doctrine emphasizes on "no first use" and just as a deterrent, i.e. not for aggressive posturing. Even our policy towards Pakistan has been of friendliness even though it has violated our rights many a time. Forgiveness is something which Indian society has always practiced Gandhi's words, viz., "The weak can never forgive; forgiveness is the attribute of the strong".

The principles of Gandhi are being adopted by our youth today and it can be said that, as a society, we are going back to our roots. This recent trend was especially felt when Anna Hazare, a Gandhian, used Gandhi's ideology and methods to awake the community for the campaign against corruption. Corruption conflict with the goal of development also resulted in our youth jumping onto the Gandhism wagon. Now since people are reading and learning more about Gandhi and trying to adopt his methods they should do it with total dedication. They should adopt the values of truth, tolerance, and nonviolence in their lives. The

gains which we had need to be consolidated as in essence it is the soul-force which will ultimately lead our country out of conflicts and towards development. Again to quote Gandhi, “Nonviolence is not a garment to be put on or off at will. Its seat is in the heart, and it must be an inseparable part of our very being”.

If human society adopts the principle of nonviolence it will mean that we have resolved all our internal conflicts and that humanity has reached a higher plane of civilization. Thus the Gandhian values of nonviolence and truth are not only the means but also the end to all the conflicts in the society today. Gandhian values will have greater relevance in the present world of modern science and technology that has produced geographical neighbourhoods but has become highly individualistic. In today’s world, the only way human society can grow is by using Gandhian principles otherwise we are doomed to destroy ourselves. Thus it is important that not only individuals, but society as a whole develop Gandhian ideals so that people can work with each other to develop a positive human relationship, build social capital amongst communities, races, ethnic groups, nations, and religions.

What we want to achieve in our plural society today is to form a way of life for us using Gandhi’s values and methods instead of these becoming just an aberration for achieving a goal. Then alone will we be able to remove all the conflicts that inflict our mind. Once the mind is free of conflict, human society will also reflect it and so will the world. It will be “Rama Rajya”, as envisaged by Gandhi, for human society, a world free of conflicts and full of truth and love for each and every human being. “My writings should be cremated with my body,” he said. “What I have done will endure, not what I have said or written.”

To end, it can only be hoped that the day comes soon when Gandhian values epitomize us so we don't need to read what he said and wrote, and his wish is fulfilled not only in terms of a conflict-free society, but also of his writings being cremated and his deeds enduring.



National Foundation
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The Difficulty of Inculcating Gandhi's Eleven Vows

KAPIL ASHOK SHIRSAT

Gandhi is not only a name; a leader; the father of the nation; but, beyond that, he is a value; a phenomenon which is relevant in today's disturbed world. The whole of Gandhi's life was based on certain values nurtured by his parents, wife, literature, education, and his own life lessons. His values have immense potential to address some of the issues and conflicts faced by today's plural societies.

Violence is one of the greatest challenges facing mankind. The solution to this lies in the nonviolence or *ahimsa* of Gandhi. He set an example for a nonviolent freedom struggle in India and Africa. He was well aware of the reasons for violence, e.g. communal disharmony, caste system, economic exploitation, political motives, family-clan disputes regarding land, property, etc. These reasons and the resultant violence remain the same even today. Gandhi believed in the equality of religions and good values therein. Though he openly followed Hindu Vaishnavism, he worked for the protection of minorities. For example, during the non-cooperation movement, he took up the cause of Khilafat. He argued for brotherhood between different religious communities. His ashrams were melting pots of different religions.

It is really sad to see communal violence in birthplace of non-violent Gandhi, i.e. Gujarat riots. It was a lesson for the state to maintain non-interference in religious matters. States should be protectors of the life and property of minorities. The Mohalla Committee model adopted by Mumbai police is based on the Gandhian approach of discussion among the prominent personalities of different religions.

Iftar meals during Ramzan, joint Diwali, Christmas, etc. celebrations, also advocated by Gandhi, are relevant in establishing communal harmony.

Although India has been free for almost 66 years, the **caste system** is still prevalent in some pockets of India. Gandhi and Ambedkar, two great personalities, have exactly opposite view on caste, with the former advocating caste and the latter totally rejecting the same. However, the goals of both these men were equality and social upliftment. Gandhi's advocacy of the caste system was based on the economic principle of division of labour, i.e. the distribution of work as per proficiency and merit. It is a natural process and this logic applies to SEZs, AEZs, Towns of Export Excellence, Textile Parks, etc. Gandhi equated caste with occupation and work. Since every occupation has different needs and problems, the distinction among people is unavoidable. Like Ambedkar, Gandhi too was totally against untouchability. For the repressed classes, he opened Harijan seva ashrams and expressed their concerns through his newspaper, also called *Harijan*.

He advocated **community decision making** for the larger benefit of community. But these Khap, i.e. caste, panchayats should take decisions based on the rule of law and human rights, and should give enough space for the individual to practice his/her freedom of faith. This if applied will solve the issue of honour killings in northern India and, at the same time, respect community feeling. He observed that women, across nations, religions, castes, classes, and families, had been subjected to deprivation. Gandhi, throughout his life, promoted the equality of women with men. In all his freedom movements, women participated actively and had equal status.

The equality of **women** in Gandhian movements has had such an impact on free India that women were given equal status, besides the right to vote and constitutional protection in several matters. Even developed countries not have such a history. He was also well aware that many conflicts in society are born of the deprivation, illiteracy, and poverty of women. Therefore, he advocated their economic empowerment through such self-employment as khadi weaving.

Gandhi's ideas on **education** were also liberal. He championed basic education for all. This corresponds to the principle of universal education put into practice through the *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* and the Midday Meal Scheme. He advocated value education, i.e. an education that distinguishes man from beast. This forms the basis for prayers, songs, and moral stories in primary education in India. Such education also laid the foundations for the peaceful, secular, democratic state of India.

Gandhi was also in favour of applied education. He said, "True education must correspond to the surrounding circumstance or it is not a healthy growth." This can address the issue of rampant unemployment in India, which is a country with a population in excess of a billion, with large sections in the working age group. If we have to reap this demographic dividend, we need to give people relevant education. For example, instead of typewriter or V.C.R. repair, I.T.I.s should focus on computer and DVD player repair training. Spiritual training was seen by Gandhi as an education of the heart, while western education was an education of the mind, and physical education the education of the body. If all three were provided simultaneously, they will create good citizens. He was for the amalgamation of madrasa/ashram education with modern education.

To him, “**poverty** is the worst kind of violence”. He was well aware that the greatest enemy of mankind is poverty, and that it can be tackled by self-discipline, self-empowerment, and work. His principle of ahimsa does not tolerate free lunches. To him, one has to work to earn. Modern day schemes in India like the NREGA are rightly named after Mahatma Gandhi. He understood poverty to be the main cause behind deprivation, malnourishment, crime, etc. and therefore it had the first priority, along with Swaraj. Even today, more than 60% of India’s population is poor. What is needed is the equal distribution of wealth and property. States should be benevolent towards both the rich and the poor in terms of the distribution of wealth. The rich should understand that the wealth they have amassed is of the people, and they should contribute to people’s welfare in a just manner. The rich should not give alms, but instead generate employment, because alms create laziness and degrades both humans and nations. Therefore, it is important to channel the money of philanthropists like Bill Gates and Warren Buffet through the employment model.

His ideals regarding the **economy** are also relevant even today. He believed in “Good Economics”, i.e. economics without exploitation of others, which did not hurt the morality of the individual and the spirit of a nation. This is extremely crucial in solving certain conflicts.

India’s stand in the WTO is based on Gandhian values of equal treatment (most favoured nation status), protection to those native industries which are supporting the lives of millions like agriculture, handicraft, textiles, etc. Here, India is playing a leadership role for the developing world in the form of G-77. The economic model propounded by Gandhi was village-based development. To him, India lives in its villages. Therefore, there is much need to take care of the villages by transforming them into self-reliant village republics. This can solve the modern

day problems of migration of labour, urban population explosion, migrant vs. son-of-soil clash, etc. Gandhi's concept of a village republic does not entail single, excluded, autonomous villages but instead, economically-linked villages. The PURA model devised by Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam draws its inspiration from Gandhian values.

At the individual level, in an economy, there should be sufficient work to fulfil one's needs of food and clothing. This is taken seriously by United Nations and given the highest priority in the form of UNMDG. According to Gandhi, occupation should be based on rights and duties, i.e. every individual shall have the right to occupation (Article 19 of the Constitution of India). At the same time, it should be just and fair employment. **Khadi** village industries were the core of his economy, and these are still relevant because they provide a secure livelihood to the poor, tribal communities, and women. KVIC, TRIFED, and NAFED were based on these principles.

Many conflicts in today's society stem from drug addiction and alcohol consumption. He considered it a waste of money, energy, and morality, because all these three are lost by men after consuming such substances. Therefore, **total prohibition** was vehemently advocated by him. In recent times, alcohol addiction is taking a toll on rural youth, and resulting in a loss of focus among young India. Therefore, prohibition is included among the Directive Principles of State Policy in the Constitution of India. A recent agitation of women's organizations through Gram Sabha against liquor shops was inspired by Gandhi's thoughts.

Gandhian values and political views revolve around **11 vows**. According to him, **Ahimsa** (nonviolence) “is not merely a negative state of harmlessness, but it is a positive state of compassion and love, of doing good to even the evildoer”².

Truth, to Gandhi, “should be truth in thought, in speech and in action”. It enables man to obtain what he wants. Asteya (Non-stealing) is also at the roots of his philosophy. This explains India’s position on the Israel-Palestine conflict where it advocates the returning of land captured by Israel to Palestine.

According to Gandhi, “Brahmcharya means control of all organs of sense”. This value if taught in school can solve the issues of rape, child abuse and dowry in this plural society. Aparigraha, meaning non-possession, which can be best seen in his own life, is an eye-opener for philanthropists.

Sharir-shram, meaning bread-labour, is another of his 11 vows. He believed in the Biblical “Earn your bread by the sweat of the brow”. This was the inspiration behind Bhaurao Patil’s ‘Kamvaa aani shika’ i.e., earn-to-learn scheme in Maharashtra. This also lends dignity to one’s own life. **Aswada (the control of the palate)** is necessary for healthy life. If followed, it will solve the issues of under and over-nourishment in society.

Sarvatra bhay varjaana (fearlessness) is useful for the individual to live his/her life as per his/her needs. Be it sports, policy formulation, implementation, eradicating crime; every aspect of life requires fearlessness.

² Young India, Aug 25, 1920

Sarva Dharma Sambhava meaning equality of religions was also followed by him. To him, every religion is special. They are complimentary and not contradictory. This became the basic structure of our Constitution and distinguished Indian society from its neighbours who are trapped in communal conflict.

The use of **swadeshi** or locally made goods is essential for the sustainable development of native industries. Today, in the times of global economic recession, each country is promoting protectionism to favour local industries. The US's stand in reducing the number of H1B visas to Indians working in software industries is one such example.

On **environmental issues**, Gandhi was very clear about environmental protection and conservation. He advocated Bhoot daya, i.e. love and compassion towards animals. His resistance to cow slaughter was merely a representation of abjuring violence against other life forms. He appealed to women to not use clothes and ornaments made by killing birds and animals. This appeal is made even today by environment protection agencies, and WWF.

He viewed rivers as the mothers and lifeline of humanity. He appealed to the masses to maintain their sanctity. Gandhi was a firm believer in nature cures or healing by the natural elements of air, water, light, and earth. This is relevant even today in that most of the societal conflicts are arising out of water and soil on which food security depends. Therefore, there is a greater need of soil and water conservation through community participation. He advocated a Man-with-Nature philosophy which is also adopted by such worldwide organizations as UNFCCC, UNEP, etc.

According to him, anyone who pollutes air and water sins against both man and nature.

Gandhi was a staunch believer in bringing decision making close to the people, or, in other words, the **decentralization of state**. He saw democracy in terms of PRIs and village republics. His political views were tilted in favour of Panchayats as against Ambedkar's views supporting a strong central/federal government. But, with the progress of time, it has been well realized that PRIs are vital to human development and the establishment of peace and prosperity. The recent initiative of social audits by the Gram Sabhas, which has solved the conflicts at local levels, also has roots in these Gandhian values.

Corruption, according to him, is a result of greed dominating need. There is enough for one's needs but not for one's greed, to paraphrase Gandhi. To eliminate corruption, there needs to be self-restraint. The recent agitation of civil society groups led by Anna Hazare and Aruna Roy is based on the Gandhian values of Satyagraha. They asked for peoples' right to information, for holding their representative accountable. The right to recall enshrined in some countries' constitutions is also close to the Gandhian belief in the supremacy of people. Performing one's duty diligently can resolve conflicts between the three organs of the state, viz. the executive, the judiciary, and the legislative. The question of judicial overreach can be resolved by the activism of the executive and Parliament.

There are, however, some **limitations to Gandhian approaches** in terms of resolving conflicts in plural society. The mobilization of the masses based on the principle of Satyagraha and nonviolence is quite difficult in reality. Masses are not well-trained to make sacrifices. It is quite evident from the various phases of our

freedom struggle that there was violence in many instances despite Gandhi's leadership. Instances include the Chauri Chaura incident of 1922 during the non-cooperation movement and the revolutionary activities of the 1920s and 1930s.

Gandhi's advocacy of vegetarianism also does not suit a protein-starved, food grain-scarce India. There is ample scope for fishing, poultry, and goat husbandry in India because of its climate and geography. Further, these provide better allied occupation to rural folks than handicrafts and Khadi.

Gandhi was quite apathetic towards industrialization since he considered it as a process of making man lazy, creating unemployment, and resulting in perpetual poverty of thought as well as action. But the Chinese model of economy favouring industry along with agriculture has challenged his belief. A country like India cannot afford to make demographics a liability instead of reaping the demographic dividend as the result of the absence of modernization, skill development, and industrialization. Gandhi's ideas regarding economic equality are good to discuss but difficult to realize. Even many so-called socialist states like China and Russia could not achieve economic equality. This is because "the survival of the fittest" (coined by Spencer.) is the basic rule of both nature and economy.

Regarding education as well, basic and value-based education, as propounded by Gandhi, need to be supplanted with modern, scientific, skill-based and applied education if we have to feed the hungry millions. The failure of Gandhian values lies not with Gandhi but with those who practice them. His philosophy remains the only hope in this conflict-ridden plural society. When something gets tough, only tough values like Gandhian values get going. Gandhi has something for everybody, whether individual or family or nations. Conflicts in society can be solved by solving the conflicts in individual minds. He has given solutions to such enemies

of the mind like hatred, anger, etc. through prayer, silence, and physical exercises like walking.

Further, he has given a message to families and communities to respect each other and observe *sarva dharma sambhava*. He even sought friendship between the oppressive British and Indians, something relevant even in today's times, to solve disputes between societies like India and Pakistan, Israel and Palestine, Serbia, China and Taiwan, etc.

Thus, Gandhian values are time-tested and can solve many such conflicts and challenges in a plural society as terrorism, crime, hatred, economic recession. What is needed is to inculcate these values in our thoughts and actions and lives. Only then his concept of Ram Rajya will become a reality.

The logo is a stylized, circular emblem. It features a central green figure that resembles a person with arms raised, surrounded by green and orange geometric shapes that form a flower-like or sun-like pattern. The entire logo is semi-transparent and serves as a background for the text.

National Foundation
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A Gandhian Dialectic for Conflict Resolution

ISHA PANT

With the advent of the 21st century, we are faced with a situation wherein the flow of ideas and people is happening faster than ever. We are deluged by a great diversity of cultures and thoughts. While this interaction is beneficial for the progress of human civilization, it may also lead to conflicts. In such a situation, it becomes important to properly address these conflicts and devise effective conflict resolution strategies. When it comes to conflict resolution, one name that inadvertently comes to the mind is that of Mahatma Gandhi. His nonviolent ways of conflict resolution have acquired a cult status in themselves. This essay looks into the effectiveness of various conflict-resolution strategies that can be derived from Gandhian principles.

The world is becoming increasingly plural with the change in migration patterns. But, what exactly is a plural society? In simple terms, a plural society is a one which has a smorgasbord of people belonging to different cultures, ethnicity, religion, etc. The seminal work on plural societies was done by the British scholar J. S. Furnivall. According to him, a plural society is one that is comprised of 'two or more elements or social orders which live side by side, yet without mingling, in one political unit'. His model of a plural society focuses on conflict as its key political consequence.

Conflict is the incompatibility (real or perceived) of goals or values between two or more parties in a relationship, combined with attempts to control each other and antagonize feelings towards one another. Conflict does not always have negative consequences; in some situations, it may lead to positive and creative social

changes. It all depends on the nature of the interaction between conflicting elements. There are three main sources of conflict according to Daniel Katz, viz. economic, value, and power conflicts. A fourth, and equally crucial reason for conflict is a lack of communication, or a misunderstanding thereof. Different groups may have different perceptions of truth. In such a situation it becomes extremely important that they share information and clarify their perceptions. A plural society usually has all these different kinds of conflicts and therefore the resolution process is highly complex and requires ingenuity. The methods of conflict resolution can either be long term or preventive in nature, or can be short term or curative. The former require greater effort from the members of the society and essentially require a change in attitude and world view. Gandhian methods usually fall in this category.

Changes in the demographics of different countries of the world have led to an increase in conflict between different cultural groups and hence increased the importance of conflict resolution strategies. We now see societies which were earlier insulated have people from various cultural and ethnic groups living as neighbours. These people are new to living in a plural society. On the other hand, there are countries like India which always had a rich and diverse cultural landscape. These countries have a mélange of ethnic, lingual, religious and cultural groups living together from several centuries. Different sections are more integrated in the society and their socio-cultural norms are well recognized. For instance, in India we have a separate Civil Code for Muslims in recognition of their differing cultural and religious norms. There are conflicts in both these sets of countries but the nature might vary.

The difference in these two sets of societies is that in the former there is a sharp divide between the old inhabitants and the new ones. These last mostly have a sense of alienation and the feeling of non-integration with the existing societal norms and values. Also, they are treated as encroachers especially when there is a shortage of economic resources and opportunities in the country. These sentiments can be easily misused by political opportunists. The recent move of the Obama government in imposing visa restrictions on professionals from abroad is a case in point. Another example is the ban on the veil by the French government.

Societies that have a history of pluralism usually do not comprise communities that feel alienated, though they may have the feeling of relative deprivation. But these societies are not free from conflicts either. The conflict occurs not due to alienation but due to competing claims on the history of the country; due to marginalization of certain sections of the society; or due to unequal distribution of economic and political resources in the country. In such societies, group identities tend to become stronger than any national identity which hampers the process of national integration. This may lead to more conflicts between these groups. If not handled well, a pluralistic society can contain seeds of disintegration. The fervent demand for autonomy by some regions of India is a case in point.

It is important to respect plurality of ideas. John Stuart Mill explained the importance of listening to diverse viewpoints. He argued that even if an opinion is false, the truth can be better understood by refuting the error. And, as most opinions are neither completely true nor completely false, he points out that allowing free expression in turn allows the airing of competing views as a way to preserving partial truth in various opinions. Dialectical method is thus an important tool of progress and conflict resolution. Gandhi was a firm believer in dialogue and

dialectic. He believed that societies progress when its members come together and present their diverse viewpoints. There should not be cases where some people's voice is suppressed by the dominant ones. It is important that the dialectical method goes unhindered in order to ensure the movement of the society in the forward direction. Gandhi's concept of Satyagraha fits in well here. Satyagraha refers to the force born out of truth and nonviolence. The Satyagrahi, keeping the onus on truth, seeks choices by which the truth may be examined, in partnership with the confronter. This interaction may go through many changes even as the dialectic is constructed.

This creative construction of a dialectic leads to the merging of two conflicting views to give rise to a third which is different from the parent views. Here the example of Ram Janma Bhoomi-Babri Masjid judgment by the Allahabad High Court can be given. Though it might not be the best judgment according to many but in a way it came up with a third solution by not giving the entire piece of land to any of the three parties involved in litigation. Dialectical process revolves around creative resolution of conflicts. The dialectical method is both a preventive as well as curative method of conflict resolution. A society which is open to discussion will have lesser conflicts and, when it does have conflicts, their resolution would be done on the basis of a dialogue wherein every competing claim would be given a fair chance to be heard. This is an ideal towards which all the plural societies should move to achieve greater harmony among their inhabitants.

The Gandhian concept of Sarvodaya is also extremely relevant in a plural society. Sarvodaya means 'welfare of all'. It can literally translate into the welfare of the downtrodden and the oppressed. A society should be such that people across the

board are able to enjoy civil and political rights and also the benefits of progress without any discrimination. But if the society explicitly or implicitly discriminates against some section of its populace then the feeling of discontentment will creep in. Therefore, it is important for societies to ensure that no group feels relatively deprived vis-à-vis other groups. But this is not usually the case. The feeling of economic and political exclusion is one of the biggest reasons for conflicts in a plural society.

For instance, the Sachar Committee on Social, Economic and Educational Condition of Muslims, constituted by the Government of India, found that Indian Muslims are backward on all the three factors. This of course is not the result of a deliberate exclusionary policy of the government; rather it is due to the lack of active steps taken by it to address the unique problems of the Indian Muslims. In a plural society, there can be no “one size fits all” approach. Different sections have different problems and aspirations. In situations like these, the concept of Sarvodaya gains greater importance than ever.

A Sarvodaya-affirming society is one that is based on truth and nonviolence. Satyagraha, holding onto truth and non-cooperation with evil, is its mode of resolving disagreements. Such a society, which might be termed a ‘nonviolent socialism’, is dedicated to complete equality, to uplifting each and every individual, irrespective of caste, religion, sex or occupation. It includes the ‘haves’ as well as the ‘have-nots’. It provides for the criminal as well as the upright citizen. Its primary goal is the inherent equality of all. This is a typical welfare society wherein the rights of one community do not encroach upon the rights of other communities. Equal distribution of resources will reduce the ground of friction between different groups within the society by reducing the feeling of relative

deprivation. This would create a healthy atmosphere for interaction between these groups.

Another concept rooted in the philosophy of Sarvodaya is that of decentralization. Gandhi strongly believed in the power of the people. He was the first national leader to mobilize the masses in such a great number. He considered it very important that all the stakeholders be a part of the decision-making process. Decisions made at the top for the masses hardly achieve success. In conflict-resolution as well, it is important that the members of conflicting groups be made a part of the conflict resolution process. If a handful of people take a decision for the rest without caring to know of their views, the conflict resolution process will be a failure. For instance, until recently the stand of the Government of India on Kashmir issue was that of strict non-involvement of the separatist elements in the peace and dialogue process. This led to a stalemate as the separatists have a considerable following in the Valley. However, realizing the fruitlessness of this approach, the government has slowly softened its stand on this issue. The interlocutors interacted with the separatists and there is a growing voice in the government quarters to include them within the fold of dialogue. This is totally in resonance with Gandhian philosophy.

Gandhi was not only a good leader but also an efficient strategist and a visionary par excellence. Plural societies usually have a majority and a minority. He believed that the minority should not only have rights but should also feel empowered. Hence, the perception of the minority, of living in a just and equal society, is very important. It is important that the minority should not suffer from undue fear of being persecuted by the majority. As pointed out earlier, several times conflicts arise due to perceived rather than actual discrimination. Gandhi understood this

very well and therefore was an ardent campaigner for the concept of *sarva dharma sambhava* or equal respect for all the religions. Also, he played a pivotal role in getting the Resolution on the Rights of the Minorities passed in November 1947 to assure the minorities that their rights would not be curtailed. It is important to recall that that was the time when the minorities in India felt very insecure due to the communal violence that happened during Partition.

Also, in order to gain the trust of people, Gandhi toured across the country to spread the message of nonviolence and the peaceful coexistence of various communities and sections of society. He sought to close all ranks: those caused by accidents of birth as well as those that were man-made. By his work for Harijans, tribal people, Muslims, and for women, including the so called 'fallen' women, Gandhi sought to bring all these groups together in one great movement for national self-respect. This is an important lesson to be learnt from Gandhi because today India is one of the most secular countries. Minority rights are well-granted in our country. We have an active media, civil society, and a judiciary, which generally support the rights of the minorities. But the country has not been able to manage its image well. Due to incidents like the Gujarat riots and violent attacks on Christians in Kandhamal in Orissa, the minorities feel insecure. Also, the lackadaisical attitude of the government in prosecuting the perpetrators of these violent crimes has further eroded the faith of these people in the state machinery. It is therefore important for the government to take active steps in this direction and regain the trust of the minorities.

The most important of all the Gandhian principles which is applicable in resolving conflicts in a plural society is that of *ahimsa* or nonviolence. In a world that often seems filled with violence and oppression, Gandhi's principle of nonviolence

seems a distant dream, but it is our biggest hope in realizing a conflict-free society. Violence and force can provide only a short-term relief from conflict. It is eventually non-violent means that lead to a peaceful society. It rejects violence as a means of resolving conflicts, and at the same time advocates nonviolent means of *Satyagraha* for social change. This principle originates from the oft repeated Gandhian dictum of “Hate the sin and not the sinner.” One who understands this well can rarely use force against the wrongdoer. Nonviolence is most often associated with the intent to achieve social or political change. Indeed, the desire to pursue change effectively may be a reason for the rejection of violence. At the level of an individual, a lot of grit and strength of character is required to develop this virtue. At the level of society, a lot of effort has to be made by conflict managers to get the different factions of society to inculcate and appreciate the virtue of nonviolence. But one has to understand that this method is successful either when all the conflicting groups understand the value of nonviolence or when one of the groups has immense patience to deal with violent retaliation by the opposing group.

It is important to realize that believing in *ahimsa* is not akin to presenting the other cheek forward when someone hits you. Rather, it means developing a thought process which is essentially inclusive, rationalistic and no-violent in nature. It is not cowardice but courage at its best. It would be wrong to say that Gandhi was ready to accept every humiliation simply to remain true to the idea of nonviolence. But it is hard to morally and psychologically defeat a person who is a true follower of the principle of nonviolence. Such a person is resilient and is able to face difficulties with greater equanimity.

Gandhi believed in embracing all the diverse cultures yet preserving the unique identity of each. He was open and eclectic in his approach to religion. Gandhi said, “Tolerance may imply a gratuitous assumption of the inferiority of other faiths to one’s own whereas ahimsa teaches us to entertain the same respect for the religious faiths of others as we accord to our own.” He did not believe in painting all the different cultures in one colour but in preserving their distinct identity. There are instances where societies try to uproot the differences between the various communities and mould the rest in accordance with the dominant culture. China did this by the Mandarin-ization of Tibetans. This is not an acceptable conflict-resolution strategy in a plural society as this would rob the society of its plurality and render it muted and devoid of its rich diversity. Gandhi was against such forceful conversion which he thought had the potential to destabilize the nation-building process.

The importance of Gandhian principles in resolving conflicts in plural societies can be understood from the wide spectrum of countries where these principles have been successfully used. Be it the Civil Rights Movement in the USA led by Martin Luther King Junior or the Anti-Apartheid Movement in South Africa led by Nelson Mandela, the applicability of these values is across myriad cultures.

Gandhi was deeply religious and this has been misconstrued by several people. They say that by advocating a link between religion and politics, Gandhi was essentially against a secular society. However, this view arises from a limited understanding of his political thought. By religion he did not mean the dominance of one single religion but something that transcends all the religions. To quote him, “Indeed, religion should pervade every one of our actions. Here religion does not mean sectarianism. It means a belief in ordered moral government of the universe.

It is not less real because it is unseen. This religion transcends Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, etc. It does not supersede them. It harmonizes them and gives them reality.”

This thought is behind the Indian concept of secularism which is not divorced from religion but has equal respect for all the religions. The success and failure of this concept are debatable but in a deeply religious society like ours, this is the most acceptable model of secularism. This model has been criticized by various Western political thinkers and analysts who believe that religion should be totally divorced from politics. However, recent happenings in these Western societies point towards the failings of Western secularism. For instance, in France the ban on wearing religious symbols in public raised a furore amongst the people there who thought it as a curtailment of their personal rights. The rationale given by the government was that France being a secular society cannot allow the display of religious symbols in public. This exclusionary thought process leads to greater rifts in the society as is palpable in these societies. The need for greater recognition of divergent religious and social customs and realities is greater than ever. This is where the Indian concept of secularism as advocated by Gandhi comes in.

As we have seen, Gandhian principles are effective in conflict resolution in plural societies. However, they are not all-inclusive in nature, and there are strategies beyond them that are also useful in handling conflicts in these societies. The first one is that of effective communication and the need to keep the channels of communication open. This is similar to Gandhian method of engaging the opponents in a dialogue but is different from it in terms of its scientific nature. Also, communication is a more general concept whereas dialogue is a narrower concept. In other words, dialogue occurs when there is a need to communicate, e.g.

in case of a conflict. Whereas, communication occurs whether or not there is conflict.

Gandhian principles talk little about communication patterns. But the communication pattern of a society is an important source of conflict and can become an effective conflict resolution strategy. As pointed out earlier, misunderstandings can lead to needless conflict. This happens when the lines of communication are blocked. These blockages need to be removed in order to arrive at a harmonious society.

The communication patterns of societies have been examined in detail by psychologists who have thereafter come up with empirical studies on how to improve the lines of communication between different cultural groups in a society. It is beyond the scope of this essay to underline the various factors of good communication. However, it is sufficient to say that it would be helpful to understand and follow them in order to maintain a healthy flow of communication within a society. Keeping the channels of communication open also helps in clearing misunderstandings between different groups. Further, the concept of creating superordinate goals has gained a lot of currency in the field of conflict-resolution after the seminal work of psychologist Muzafer Sherif. After conducting several experiments, Sherif concluded that two conflicting groups can be brought together by creating superordinate goals that are common to the two groups and can be achieved only by their mutual contribution and cooperation. These goals are helpful in dissolving petty conflicts.

Finally, in certain scenarios, conflicting situations can be resolved only by violent means. For instance, if one section of the society takes up arms against the other

community and is unwilling to relent, the state may have to resort to force to resolve this situation. However, this is a short-term method and cannot be continued for a prolonged duration.

To paraphrase Charles Dickens, we live in “the best of times” and “the worst of times”. It is for us to ultimately mould it any which form we want. We are not preceded by our essence but succeeded by it. We make our own future. We have Mahatma Gandhi to look up to in our quest to shape our destinies the way we wish. The relevance of Gandhian values cannot be discounted either now or in the coming future. At the same time, it is important that we learn from every other philosophy that can help in creating greater resonance among the different sections of a plural society which, by its very nature, requires an eclectic mix of values to keep its harmony intact. One needs to keep evolving the set of values governing the psyche of a society owing to the dynamic nature of the world we live in.

The self-image of a country is its indispensable moral, cultural and political resource. Every modern society wants to see itself as one that is successful in preserving the rights of its citizens and providing them a secure living environment. If this does not happen, the developmental process of the society takes a hit. The energy that pushes it forward goes haywire and no proper impetus can be provided to it. Therefore, it is essential that plural societies effectively reduce the numbers of divisive forces and create a peaceful atmosphere that is conducive to their advancement.

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National Foundation
for Communal Harmony

"You Can Melt Hearts": A Gandhian Perspective

RUGVED MILIND THAKUR

Why the sudden looking back at Gandhian values? After all, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was killed in 1948, and over 60 years have passed since then. But, in the globalised world of today, it is not only India but the whole world which is turning to Gandhian values. The reason is that we have several problems confronting us today, and the solutions to these problems are nowhere on the horizon. Thus, the world has to dig deep into history and look at the values put forward by Gandhi, and analyse if the foundations of our existing order were inherently flawed or, perhaps, by a course correction now we may live in a world much better than the one we are living in currently.

The U.S. Economic crisis of 2007-08 reignited the debate on the relevance of Gandhi. The western world saw a collapse of the economic system they had built up over the years. The market-driven system was thought to be self-sustaining but it did not turn out that way. The decline of the Communist regime in Russia had already eliminated one alternative to the existing problems. People world over felt that, perhaps, they had missed something which Gandhi had professed and which could be the true and long lasting solution to our present problems.

The same is also the case in India, with the only difference being that the problem here is more socio-cultural rather than economic. India has always been a plural society. But the developments in India since 1857 have created animosity between various communities that reside in India. Caste, religion, etc. have divided India rigidly and conflicts have always occurred along these lines. Gandhi, in his own lifetime, had to endure the pain of partition of India on religious grounds. Despite

his vehement opposition to the two-nation theory, and his numerous efforts to maintain India's integrity, Partition could not be averted.

It is often argued that the presence of the British in India was responsible for creating the rift in India's social fabric. The steps taken by British like creating Morley-Minto Reforms (1909) or the Communal Award (1932) were a deliberate strategy of divide and rule. Today, there is no foreign power ruling the country, but India is still divided. Perhaps it is time to learn from the "Father of the Nation" to prevent any more riots in this country.

Nature abhors uniformity. The solution to conflicts lies in people's way of thinking and in their sense of discernment. For this, Gandhi emphasised on education for all as a powerful medium of social change in the context of an emerging world civilization. In order to channelize inherent abilities, realising potential is necessary. Education has to be related to human life and emphasised as being an essential characteristic. Education also has to be value-oriented. The significance of education depends upon the realisation of values and their actualisation in human life. In order to be purpose-filled and meaningful, education should invariably cover the entire gamut of human life, and provide opportunities for development in the socioeconomic, religious, moral, mental and physical spheres. Gandhi laid the foundation for such a type of education which he labelled 'Nai Talim' popularly known as 'Basic Education for all'. His concept of basic education is based on the firm conviction that an equitable social order can be established through the development of the human personality. Gandhi wanted education which imparts some vocational or handicraft training for enabling people to become manufacturers/ artisans. In his words, "literacy in itself is no education". Gandhi wanted national education to be evolved along the following lines:

education must be imparted through the mother-tongue; and, there must be accord between the education a child receives at school and the environment at home.

Further, it must be so planned as to meet the ends of the majority of the people; the teachers in primary classes must be competent, and of good character right from the first standard/grade; and, such education must be free. Also, the overall control must be in the hands of the people so as to provide a uniting factor among all communities. In a free state like India, it is the responsibility of every citizen to maintain order within society. With the education pattern as described by Gandhi, there is greater emphasis on the value and relevance of education. An aware society will be better prepared to handle communal disputes. People will be able to comprehend the bigger picture and any attempt to influence them on communal grounds will be rejected immediately. It is often the uneducated who are used as the tools for raking up communal disturbances. When each person develops a holistic understanding of the dynamics of the society in which he/she resides, he/she will refuse to take even the smallest step which may have communally-disturbing consequences.

The universalization of education is a fundamental element promoted by Gandhi and is now taking shape in the form of Right to Education Act. With the Act, India will hopefully be able to achieve 100% literacy, but the relevance of education and value-driven education, as promoted by Gandhi, will also have to be realised. High moral standards must also be set by the leaders who play a significant role in diffusing tensions. Naokhali was an example of Gandhi leading from the front. Gandhi had, at that time, the respect of all communities. Thus, when communal violence broke out in Naokhali after the call for Direct Action Day was given by

the Muslim League in 1946, Gandhi himself reached the troubled area, lived there, and interacted with the people on a personal level to diffuse the tension.

Naokhali was an example of leading from the front by Gandhi at a later stage of his life. But even early on, when he was not as popular, he mediated between the workers and the owners of textile mills in Ahmedabad (in 1918). He was able to facilitate a compromise between labour and capital there. Other examples include the Satyagrahas at Champaran, in 1917, and at Kheda, in 1919.

These examples also throw light on Gandhi's values for a leader. Today, most of the leaders in society do not have the vision to grasp the bigger picture. They are content in developing their vote banks at whatever cost. Also, seldom do we see a leader who can stand above the conflict and provide a direction to the people.

Gandhi was an activist-theoretician, a quality which needs to be incorporated by the leaders of today. Being an activist without vision or being a theoretician without getting involved in the field is not the quality expected of people who have to provide conflict-resolving leadership.

Equality is another quality promoted by Gandhi, who understood that inequality is the basis for a large number of social conflicts. Through his day-to-day activities in ashrams, Gandhi emphasised on equality. According to Gandhi - "Economic equality is the master key to non-violent independence". Therefore we need to emphasise on equitable distribution and bridge the gap between the well off and the rest to avoid conflicts.

Gandhi wanted to solve the problem of communalism by pleading for and emphasising the cultivation and generation of generosity among the majority. Gandhi believed that, unless Hindus treat Muslims as their brethren and not as aliens, the latter will not develop a feeling of brotherhood towards the former. In his words, 'it would be a great thing, a brave thing, for the Hindus to achieve this act of self-denial'. But simultaneously Gandhi said 'it is essential for the minority to trust and treat the majority as their brethren'. He believed that it was the duty of the minority to assent to majority decision except where it offended their moral sense otherwise there could be no social life and no corporate social government. Gandhi considered it improper for a minority to hold the majority to ransom, or to otherwise exploit it.

Gandhi was "impatient for Hindu-Muslim unity", which, according to him, was the prerequisite for Independence. The lack of it most likely led to the partition of the country at the time of Independence. Even today, Hindus and Muslims constitute the two largest religious groups. Hindu-Muslim unity today will go a long way to resolve any communal conflict in India in the 21st century.

Such values prescribed by Gandhi are relevant even today. The political class is not able to attain the necessary consensus among the various sections of the society. Instilling the values of brotherhood between the people will help in resolving conflicts very quickly. Trust will prevent actions from being viewed through a narrow communal lens.

In India, caste exists along with the evil manifestation of untouchability which Gandhi fought tooth and nail. This element is present in some form or the other everywhere in the world. In the West, there is colour prejudice and racial

Apartheid between the blacks and the whites. There has also been class struggle, i.e. conflicts between the working class and the capitalist, between the haves and the have-nots. Equal love for all people brought into the light the problem of untouchability early in Gandhi's life. When his mother said that he cannot touch the boy doing scavenging, he questioned her, and thus began the revolt in his life. He was himself subjected to racial discrimination and became a victim of clear prejudices. Gandhi envisaged a casteless, classless, and egalitarian society. He attempted a rational interpretation of the functions of caste in ancient times. Unfortunately, the Indian society has degenerated into a caste-ridden social disorder.

The relevance and significance of Gandhian philosophy lies in the application of moral principles, viz. truth and nonviolence, to the problems confronted by a plural society. Throughout his life, he struggled to demonstrate only moral means as his primary consideration. His insistence on the purity of means indicates his recognition of a moral law. Gandhian values point out that the end cannot justify the means. The means must be as moral as the ends. Gandhi compared the means to a seed and the ends to the tree that grows therefrom. For him nonviolence was the means and truth was the end. A victory won by violence and treachery will retain violence and other evils within its bosom. Gandhi therefore embarked upon the revolutionary task of enunciating the principle of integrity of means and ends which presupposes truth and nonviolence to be the foundation of human life and social relationships.

Gandhi, during the struggle for Independence, had always ensured that the means were in line with the values he preached. The emphasis was always on nonviolence, Satyagraha, truth, etc. in all the movements spearheaded by Gandhi

like the Non-Cooperation Movement, the Civil Disobedience Movement, etc. The Naval mutiny in 1946 was also opposed by Gandhi as he felt that an independent India should not inherit such mutinous armed forces. This was at a time when Independence was not assured and a strong naval mutiny might have increased the pressure on the British Government to leave India.

In the present times as well, it is imperative that we focus on the means while we try to achieve progress. For example, it is imperative that we focus on equitable development and not merely on growing our GDP, as an imbalance in growth now may result in widespread inequalities in the future, thereby leading to conflicts.

Gandhi also gave the idea of Universal Religion. For him, religion “binds man to God and man to man”. While explaining the meaning of religion, Gandhi stated “is not the Hindu religion which I certainly prize above all other religions, but the religion which transcends Hinduism, which changes one's very nature, which binds one indissolubly to the truth within and whichever purifies”. He strove hard to find a common factor for the promotion of the religious tolerance and pointed out that religions are different roads converging upon the same point. “What does it matter that we take different roads, so long as we reach the same goal”, he said.

According to Gandhi, “in the modern context, religion has divided people instead of binding them together”. Some religions divide humanity into hostile camps, instead of uniting it, by emphasising the individual significance of the religion rather than the social side of life. They give undue prominence to personal development, discouraging the growth of social sense and imagination. They give utmost importance to contemplation more than action and theory more than practice. Any order built in the absence of moral values is immoral, irrational and

unscrupulous. Religious conflicts have been taken for granted because of the misunderstanding of religious teachings. Gandhi did not “believe in the exclusive divinity of Vedas. He also believed in the Bible, the Koran and the Zend Avesta which he stated are as much divinely inspired as the Vedas”.

It is this realisation among all others that is of prime importance today - that all religions effectively have the same goal, although the paths followed may differ. By appreciating others’ right to follow their own practices, people can reduce religious conflicts.

Gandhi held that “the truth or Satya is derived from the word ‘sat’ which implies ‘being’”. It is only the truth that exists in reality and nothing else; hence its attribution to God. Gandhi pointed out that God is truth but later he changed this version and said that it would be more appropriate and correct to say that truth is God. He maintained that his “uniform experience has convinced me that there is no other God than Truth”. To him, “God is truth and love, God is ethics and morality, God is fearless, God is the source of light and life” and also “God is conscience”. Indeed, “a devotee of Truth may not do anything in deference to convention”. Their improvement can only take place when they recognise that their welfare lies solely in the truth and are therefore ready to put above everything else the recognition and profession of that truth which has revealed itself to them. There is a need for every man to profess the truth that he is aware of and which he practices in his own life, avoiding falsehood. Nonviolence is the means to reach the truth which is the end. He felt that “nonviolence is the law of our species as violence is the law of the brute”. A brute tends to be violent because of the lack of understanding and realisation of truth.

For instance, if someone believes in God, he/she should not be afraid of telling the truth. If an individual convict is pointed out by the bystanders, many conflicts which erupt due to the power play of divide and rule may not get escalated and take the form of violent communal riots. Many conflicts that happen are blame games. Nobody knows the truth, and therefore the Truth has to be revealed in any and all forms to avoid conflicts. Politicians generally do not take religion seriously and disregard the methods religionists adopt for the control of people, e.g. by the exploitation of the poorer and weaker sections of the community. These methods are clearly inconsistent with the values of religion which usually do not find correct expression. Gandhi did not view religion as being separate from the rest of human activities. The central principle of Gandhian political philosophy is that the fundamental religions and the ethical values common to all great religions have to be incorporated in the political philosophy.

Certain political parties owe their existence to narrow, parochial vote banks. These parties will go to any extent to preserve and protect their vote bank even to the detriment of national interest. They use the name of religion, caste, etc. to divide people, thereby creating an environment of fear. These political parties then exploit the fear created among the minority groups for their own political benefits. But in the process, they leave a blot on the unity and integrity of the country.

The main theme of Sarvodaya in the 21st century will be same as extolled in the Sanskrit verse '*sarve bhavantu sukhinah, sarve santu niramaya, sarve bhadrani pashyantu, ma kaschit dukh bhag bhavet*' (may all be happy, all be free from illness, all see goodness, and none partake in any sorrow). Sarvodaya stresses on the duty of individuals to themselves and, beyond their immediate family, to the entire world.

The purpose of religion is internal purity of thoughts and right action towards others. Thus, religion plays an important role in getting people together, following the rules laid down by religious texts for maintaining accepted societal behaviour as well as helping a person to be at peace. Since every religion does the same, the concept of Sarvodaya should only be logical. However it has not worked out so; instead of a win-win situation for one and all, people have made it into an either-or situation. Following the values of Gandhi, every person following or professing any religion should have a deep look at the fundamentals of that religion and then try to evaluate whether the practices followed today are in line with the fundamental aims of the religion.

Nonviolence has been the hallmark of Gandhian philosophy. The U.N has recognised this fact by designating October 2 as International Day of Nonviolence. In a world that is afflicted by violence this philosophy of Gandhi was unique when it was initiated and it is unique even today.

Nelson Mandela is a follower of Gandhi, who utilised the Gandhian principle of nonviolence during his campaign against the Apartheid in South Africa. Martin Luther King was another great leader who found relevance in Gandhi's philosophy of nonviolence during the 1960s in his struggle for civil rights for all in the U.S.A. Martin Luther King commented, "If humanity is to progress, Gandhi is inescapable. He lived, thought and acted, inspired by the vision of a humanity evolving towards a world of peace and harmony. We may ignore Gandhi at our own risk."

It is worth comparing the results of all the above three struggles. All have come out with win-win results. India still maintains very good relations with England. Despite being under an oppressive rule and going through a long freedom struggle,

India decided to remain a part of the Commonwealth immediately after Independence. In South Africa the post-Apartheid arrangement involves both the oppressed and oppressor equally. The same is the case in the U.S.A. between coloured and whites. All these arrangements have yielded long term stable solutions and, in a way, have resolved conflicts in a mutually acceptable way.

Gandhi wanted a balance between rural and urban life. As Gandhi countered in a speech in 1934, “This cry of ‘back to the village’, some critics say, is putting back the hands of the clock of progress. But is it really so? Is it going back to the village or rendering back to it what belongs to it? He was not asking the city dwellers to go to and live in the villages. But I am asking them to render unto the villagers what is due to them. Is there any single raw material that the city-dwellers can obtain except from the village? If they cannot, why not teach him to work on himself, as he used to before, as he would do now but for our exploiting inroads?” Gandhi wanted rural development, co-operative farming in villages, small scale industries, and a strong Panchayati Raj system.

The focus on rural areas as suggested by Gandhi ensures that there is no forced migration from rural to urban areas. Those who prefer to live in villages may continue to do so without having to worry about their livelihoods. The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) is also named after Mahatma Gandhi in line with his values and vision.

But, unfortunately, there is today a large-scale migration from rural to urban areas in search of sources of livelihood. This is connected with the growth of slums in urban areas, problems of law and order in urban areas due to overpopulation, and, as a result, another source of conflict. In certain states there are insider-outsider

conflicts emerging these days. These can be avoided by following Gandhi's policy of focussing on rural areas.

Unemployment has always tended to be a prominent reason for conflicts. Forced migration is one reason for unemployment. Therefore, by keeping people in the villages and ensuring their progress we will not only ensure the overall development of the country but also remove another source of conflict in society.

Among the offshoots of Satyagraha are non-cooperation and civil disobedience. To Gandhi, it "is a protest against an unwitting and unwilling participation in evil. Non-cooperation with evil is as much a duty as co-operation with good." Non-cooperation can be a way to resolve the conflicts. This technique of nonviolent non-co-operation promotes individual relationships. On the other hand, strained and unjust relations in the socioeconomic scenario can be transformed into just and harmonious relations through the application of Gandhian non-violent non-co-operation. Non-violent non-co-operation can "secure the co-operation of the opponent consistently with the truth and justice". It seeks to "liquidate antagonisms" and transform human relationships. The transformation of the opponent can be possible through the "soul-force", manifested through self-suffering and persuasion.

However, there are several aspects connected to the personality of Gandhi which may not possibly be replicated in modern times. They may be relevant even today but only a man like Gandhi could implement them. Gandhi was a messianic leader. He did not achieve this overnight but had to work for it. He was a leader by example. His success in South Africa and the early successes on his return to India were responsible for his status. As a result, Gandhi had no trouble getting people to

follow his ideas and live by his values even though people did not understand them at first. One example can be found in the withdrawal of the Non-Cooperation movement in 1922 after violence in Chauri Chaura. Although people were not in agreement with Gandhi's move, they nevertheless agreed to go by his decision and the movement was withdrawn.

No person in India today has that kind of stature to influence people to follow the right path, especially if the path appears to be heading away from the goal. Thus, some of Gandhi's strategies would be difficult to replicate today. Gandhi has often been criticised for using his personal religion in his public activities. Gandhi used to draw upon tradition to appeal to the minds of the people. A similar approach today will be seen in coloured light. For a person to command the support of all communities, he must be seen above the religion to which he belongs. Use of religious methods to achieve secular or common goals will not be able to achieve the desired results.

Gandhi was a visionary. He was able to look into the future and plan his strategy. Such a visionary does not exist today in India. As a result people or leaders cannot see beyond the horizon when it comes to communal problems. People end up in confrontation on petty issues resulting in long term problems. Gandhi's ideas tend to bring up the debate of Utopian versus Practical. His idea of a Ram Rajya, where there would be no need to have even a police force as people would regulate themselves, is often seen as utopian. But Gandhi always said "My life is my message". Gandhi was a person who led by example. He gave practical outlook to his ideas. It is evident from Gandhi's statement "My life is a series of experiments with truth".

Gandhi was not a system builder. He gave practical orientation to the values he believed in. He led his life by the values he set. Simplicity was his mantra. The values enshrined in Gandhi's way of life also appealed to the people and they too would follow those values.

As far as the relevance of Gandhian values is concerned, it is evident in the Hindi film *Lage Raho Munnabhai*. It is aptly depicted in the movie that the values of Gandhi are relevant even today, whether the objective is independence or dealing with corruption, the values remain the same. The values can be applied in the various new circumstances facing the society today. There is need for a social scientist to combine scientific methods and theorize with the Gandhian values. We must see Gandhian values in light of the present and develop a way of life which is sustainable. Conflicts can be resolved by adopting Gandhian values. There just needs to be the conviction that you can melt hearts.

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National Foundation
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Conflict, Dialogue and Gandhian Satyagraha

ASHISH THAKARE

Introduction

The following essay looks at the applicability of Gandhian values in resolving conflicts in a plural society. The essay starts with understanding the meaning of “plural society”, and its features. Then, the essay briefly examines the problems facing plural societies today and why the conflicts faced by them remain intractable. Then the essay examines the Gandhian values that can help in seeking the resolution of conflicts in plural societies.

(1.1) “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way. A precarious time surrounds us now.”

These lines which open the novel A Tale of Two Cities by Charles Dickens may very well describe how the future will look back upon us. At one level we celebrate the diversity of human life, and, at the same time, there are numerous social conflicts - religious riots, ethnic conflicts, caste violence, and exploitation are all growing in incidence. While human society is progressing on various fronts, there is a growing feeling of suspicion and a lack of trust. While communication networks are bringing people closer, there is a constant refrain about the ‘enemy within’ and the affliction by the ‘us’ versus ‘them’ syndrome.

Plural Societies and Social Conflicts

(1.2) Plural Societies, though seemingly simple, are a difficult concept to pin down. At one level, a plural society implies the existence of many (identities?) in one society – like the existence of many religious and racial groups or the existence of many social associations. At another level, it also means a society which is diverse, in terms of culture, lifestyles, values, etc.

Today's world presents a very heterogeneous picture. No country today can claim to be socially homogenous. Nearly all countries exhibit a wide diversity in terms of being home to people of different ethnicities, racial origins, linguistic groups, religious affiliations, etc. These differences also manifest themselves in the political arena. Social conflicts arise out of various factors. Many a times, they have economic roots, but their manifestation is social or ethnic in nature. Today the modern nation state is the basis of sovereignty, but underneath this blanket of sovereignty is the feeling of loyalty to primordial identities. Often, these identities and their expressions threaten and even undermine national sovereignty.

(1.3) Since the end of the Second World War many countries in the world have seen their societies exhibit a greater plurality or diversity. Various factors like migrations conflicts, growth in communication and technology, and the all-encompassing process of globalisation have contributed to the marked growth of diversity across the world. These plural societies have in turn presented unique challenges. Often these societies face the problem of a majority-minority conflict. A recent example of this was the growing social conflict between the Malay population (which forms the majority in Malaysia) and the minority Tamil population, although Malaysia has long being a pluralistic and multicultural society. The Tamil population has argued that they are being systemically

victimised. These recent cases of cultural, and, subsequently, economic deprivation claimed by the Tamils in Malaysia have highlighted the growing crisis of managing a plural society³.

(1.4) On examining the nature of social conflicts in today's world, it is evident that most of the social conflicts have their underpinnings in such economic factors as control over resources, property, employment, and economic decision-making. As Furnivall pointed out "in the plural society, the only common meeting ground available to the various cultures (cultural groups) is the marketplace..."⁴ In recent times, it is this marketplace that has become the core area of conflict. And therefore, when we look for solutions to mitigate social conflict, we have to seek not only the economic roots of conflict but also economic answers.

(1.5) Some of the social conflicts have taken a very violent turn. The ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka which raged till recently was one of the bloodiest that the world has ever seen. Though the war in Sri Lanka is over, with the liquidation of LTTE, a lot remains to be done for the social issues in Sri Lanka to be completely resolved.

Many countries in Europe today face the dilemma of how to adjust to cultural diversity. The recent controversy raging in France was about the ban on the use of a veil in public by Muslim women⁵. Similar instances, e.g. about the wearing of turbans by the Sikh population, have occurred in many countries across Europe. The rising social tensions were also evidenced by the protests that broke out in

³ For more see Lal, Vinay; Multiculturalism at Risk – The Indian Minority in Malaysia; Economic and Political Weekly; September 2, 2006

⁴ As quoted in Rabushka Alvin and Shepsel Kenneth; Politics in Plural Societies – A Theory of Democratic Instability, OUP, 1999

⁵ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/sep/19/battle-for-the-burqa>

Denmark due to the printing of certain caricatures of the Islamic Prophet Mohammed in a newspaper.

(1.6) At the global level, social conflicts can be seen in the idea of a ‘clash of civilisations.’⁶ The period post the 9/11 terror attacks saw a growing gap between societies based on religious lines. The Christian versus the Muslim world, the growth of fundamentalism, and the constant fear of the ‘other’ are all the new contours in which social conflict is manifesting itself in a number of increasingly plural societies around the world.

(1.7) In India, social conflict has mainly occurred on the lines of caste and religion. Since India’s Independence, the country has witnessed numerous social conflicts along casteist, religious and ethnic lines. One of the most prominent forms of social conflict in India has to do with religion. The birth of India as a nation was marred by the riots following Partition. Since then there have been religious riots of varying intensities. The recent examples of the Anti-Sikh riots of 1984, the Bombay riots of 1992-93, and the Gujarat riots of 2002 have all challenged and damaged the secular and plural fabric of Indian society.

Another form of social conflict in India has been along the lines of caste, including inter-caste conflicts, atrocities committed on the backward castes, and the anti-Schedule Caste violence. The 2006 Khairlanji massacre in Bhandhara district of Maharashtra indicated the intermingling of caste-based violence with a land dispute.

⁶ The phrase was coined by Samuel Huntington in the work ‘The Clash of Civilizations’, where he argued that the modern conflicts in the world will be drawn on civilizational lines.

(1.8) Plural societies always face the tricky situation of managing their diversity while maintaining social cohesion. They have devised various ways by which these twin objectives may be achieved, the most important of which is democracy. For any plural society, democracy, and a democratic polity, becomes the most practical way of managing diversity, of giving a chance to every social group to represent itself in the running of the country and gain adequate representation in the governing of public institutions.

The concept and practice of a 'Consociational Democracy' indicates a concerted effort to manage deep ethnical, religious, and social divisions within a society. But these efforts have always met with challenges. In the past decade, there has been a growing threat to social plurality. As discussed above, there is an increasing tendency of homogenisation, the growth of xenophobia, and a spurt in ethnic, religious, and caste-based violence. Thus we see the emergence of conflicts which are challenging our social plurality, adversely affecting diversity and also violating human rights.

Gandhian Values on Social Conflicts in Plural Societies

(2.1) It is in this context that we can turn to Gandhian values to look for solutions for the conflicts of our plural societies. A thinker bases his thought on human nature and then builds on it using his/her conception of the society, polity, and economy. Gandhi's thoughts can be traced to his profound views on human nature. Gandhi evolved a deep and holistic view of human nature, which is crucial to understanding his views on society, polity, and economy. He believed in the essential goodness of human beings; that humans are moral entities and exhibit a tremendous capacity for moral action and moral development. He condemned

unrestricted individualism ‘*as the law of the beast of the jungle*’.⁷ Gandhi called for a perfect integration of each human being with the society. This view of Gandhi, of individuals being moral entities capable of being integrated with society provides a preliminary yet crucial insight to resolving social conflicts.

(2.2) Now, we will look at certain Gandhian values which provide an insight to resolving conflicts in plural societies in today’s world, rather than looking at Gandhi’s thoughts in a general way. Many thinkers have called for using ‘dialogue’ as an efficient means to resolve conflicts.⁸ The Gandhian ideas of truth, non-violence (*ahimsa*), and *Satyagraha* provide a deep insight on how to make this dialogue more effective. Dialogue, along with various democratic norms, provides a way to bring together various groups in a plural society. They provide the basic ground for various public institutions to work effectively by associating these various groups with them. But often these efforts do not yield adequate success as the process of dialogue is often fractured and non-inclusive. And it is here that Gandhian values become more relevant. Neera Chandhoke⁹ (2008) has argued that the Gandhian value of *Satyagraha* can enable a meaningful dialogue which will help in mitigating and preventing social conflicts.

Gandhi’s idea of *Satyagraha*, which includes his thinking on truth, non-violence (*ahimsa*) and civic action, provides us with both theoretical and practical tools to resolve conflicts in plural society. It also enables us to make dialogues more effective.

⁷ Gandhi M.K., Harijan (1939), 27th May; as quoted in Bajpai, Arunoday, Global Challenges, Global Gandhi and Global Gandhi in World Focus (August 2011), New Delhi

⁸ A prominent exponent of this idea is the political theorist Joshua Cohen, see Cohen, Joshua; ‘Deliberation and Democratic Legitimacy’; published in ‘Contemporary Political Philosophy-An Anthology’ Oxford, Blackwell

⁹ Chandhoke, Neera; (2008); ‘Quest for Justice’; Economic and Political Weekly; May 8, 2008; Mumbai

(2.3) The first cardinal value of *Satyagraha* is its emphasis on the idea of *truth and the pursuit of truth*. Gandhi argued that every individual, while being moral, had flaws in him/her which can however be overcome by the pursuit of truth. Gandhi held that there cannot be an absolute truth; rather, the insistence on absolute truth makes the process of dialogue nearly impossible. He argued that the purpose of any dialogue should be the honest pursuit of truth and said that truth will always have value in the sense of justice and inclusivity. The pursuit of truth strengthens and carries the dialogue forward; and encourages participants to seek justice for all. For Gandhi, *Satyagraha* was not only the means of political action but also a force for social change.

(2.4) The idea of *Satyagraha* also imposes a certain amount of *self-discipline* on its follower. This quality is very important, especially in the overcoming of irrational and violent elements during a dialogue. A seasoned practitioner of *Satyagraha*, through self-discipline, will be able to thwart any attempts to be provoked to violence and irrationality.

(2.5) Another important contribution of Gandhian values to the idea of dialogue in resolving social conflict is the emphasis on *participating in the quest for truth as partners and not as adversaries*. Gandhi strongly objected to the notion of ‘us’ versus ‘others’. He could never conceive of dialogue in such adversarial terms. This principle is especially pertinent today, when we see a growing divide between communities. Every process of negotiation or conflict resolution is seen through the prism of ‘us’ versus ‘them’. The practice of defining the opponent as ‘the other’ mars an honest dialogue process. To overcome this problem Gandhi suggested that any dialogue has to be conducted in the spirit of partnership. He said that the dialogue should be a joint effort to seek the truth and arrive at

reconciliation. This process in turn helps generate respect for participants in dialogue; it inhibits the unnecessary creation of the ‘other’ and reduces the problem of non-recognition that is often seen in plural societies whereby many groups may remain unheard or ignored.

(2.6) Gandhi’s notion of *Satyagraha* is based on the idea of equality. It believes in the equality of participants, ideas and space in voicing opinions. Unless dialogue is carried out on these terms of equality, it cannot yield the desired result. This idea is of crucial relevance when we look at conflicts between majority and minority communities in countries like Malaysia. A related principle is that of tolerance which helps build a healthy understanding of other viewpoints. The principle of tolerance is especially useful in resolving religious conflicts. Gandhi’s view of tolerance is not only just about allowing various viewpoints to exist; rather, he focuses on the building of interaction among various views, groups, and communities.

Comparing Gandhi and Rawls

(3.1) As we look at the issues of plural societies, another important scholar is John Rawls. Rawls in his work, *The Theory of Justice*, examines the question of justice and speaks about arriving at certain common principles applicable to our public institutions which can lay the foundation of social justice. Rawls, while acknowledging plurality in society, argued that there are certain universal ideas of justice which are applicable to all. Further, Rawls adds ‘Once these principles/ideas were arrived upon, then the society had achieved its notion of justice’. Like Rawls, Gandhi too emphasises on the need for public institutions to be governed by the principle of social justice. But, unlike Rawls, Gandhi did not believe that once certain principles are arrived at, they remain the same throughout.

Gandhi argued that the principles of justice that govern society should evolve through continuous dialogue among the various constituents of the society.

(3.2) A very important pillar of the principle of *Satyagraha* is strict belief and adherence to the idea of non-violence or *ahimsa*. Gandhi said that violence symbolises the arrogance of power and impedes the honest investigation of truth. Anyone who uses violence to stake a claim to know the absolute truth in that process destroys any possibility of arriving at a solution to conflict. The use of violence escalates conflict and crushes other viewpoints, thus hampering the dialogue process. The principle of non-violence also applies to the state. The state, especially in a plural society, cannot resort to violence to resolve conflict. The best way forward is to initiate a dialogue.

Thus we see that the Gandhian values of *Satyagraha*, truth, and *ahimsa* provide a new insight into the process of dialogue to resolve social conflicts.

Multiculturalism and Gandhian Values

(4.1) Multiculturalism has evolved in the past few decades as a method to manage diversity- cultural, social etc. Multiculturalism as a principle starts with the idea that humans are culturally rooted beings. Their actions and beliefs are determined or influenced by the culture to which they belong. Hence it is important to recognise this cultural element of human existence. Further, this acceptance makes diversity more acceptable. Multiculturalism also believes that societies can evolve only if they provide conditions for various cultures to intermingle. Most importantly, multiculturalism argues that each culture within itself is plural. This alone has helped various cultures to survive and evolve. Many countries today follow the principle of multiculturalism, e.g. Canada, United Kingdom, etc.

(4.2) Multiculturalism was thought to be the most workable way to manage social plurality and resolve conflicts. But, in recent years, there has been a weakening of the ethos of multiculturalism. Attacks on minority communities in Europe, banning of certain kinds of clothing and practices which signify a distinct cultural identity, the lack of tolerance for languages and customs of various communities all indicate the crisis that multiculturalism is facing today. This crisis was best exemplified when the British Prime Minister David Cameron said ‘multiculturalism is dead’¹⁰. Similar views were put forth by Nicolas Sarkozy, the French Prime Minister, and Angela Merkel, the German Chancellor. They were arguing in the context of the failure of multiculturalism to build a national identity, while preserving social diversity. This failure, they argued was seen in growing fundamentalism and terrorism.

(4.3) It is in this growing fear of the failure of multiculturalism that we can see the relevance of Gandhi’s emphasis on building a constructive dialogue which is constantly evolving. Gandhi did not believe in the compartmentalisation of social, political and economic life. Rather he argued that these are inter-related aspects of human life. The solution sought by many European countries to save multiculturalism is by trying to relegate the cultural aspect of human life to the personal domain and create isolated zones of cultural existence. But then this policy has led to growing suspicion among various communities. This in turn has taken the shape of the ‘us’ versus ‘them’ confrontation. Gandhi would be deeply troubled by such developments. He would call for a dialogue among various groups, a precursor to which would be the recognition of the diversity of human existence.

¹⁰ <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Europe/2011/0304/Why-Europe-is-turning-away-from-multiculturalism>

Conclusion

(5.1) Neera Chandhoke aptly summarises the contribution of Gandhian values of *Satyagraha*, truth and *ahimsa* when she looks at the issue of overcoming deadlocks in conflict resolution. She writes, “.....one, attention to the preconditions of dialogue contributes much to the establishment of moral standing of participants. Secondly, knowledge that our grasp over the truth is but partial, inculcates self-restraint on the one hand, and provides a powerful imperative to embark on a shared search for the truth, on the other. Thirdly, commitment to non-violence dissipates feelings of alienation and otherness, and makes persons more receptive to other opinions. All three components of Satyagraha encourage a spirit of dialogue. And as anyone who is familiar with the dynamics of plural and divided societies knows, getting people to speak to others, and persuading them that a readiness to compromise does not negate their moral standing, is an achievement in itself.”¹¹

(5.2) As argued in the earlier part of the essay, social conflicts have strong economic underpinnings. The current model of economic growth is based on a constant production in excess of what is required for human consumption. Today’s society is being driven by the ethos of unbridled consumerism. Most conflicts in plural societies are driven by an intense competition for scarce resources. Gandhi called for an economic system that was self-sufficient, one which was driven by needs and not greed. Gandhi was well aware that most social conflicts arise from a struggle for resources. To overcome this, he argued that the economic requirements of human beings should be at the minimal. Gandhi was critical of the West-driven modernity which focussed on instant gratification and was based on consumerism.

¹¹ Chandhoke, Neera; (2008); ‘Quest for Justice’; Economic and Political Weekly; page 45 May 8, 2008; Mumbai

While he agreed with the idea of progress that modernity spoke about, he was sceptical about its ability to be egalitarian and equity-based.

(5.3) Gandhi's thought has never been a prisoner of his times. It remains relevant even today because it seeks to engage with human life with complete honesty. Conflict resolution in a plural society is a delicate issue. It needs an honest dialogue carried out with strict adherence to the principles of non-violence, equity, and inclusiveness. It requires a process of dialogue which seeks to include all the stakeholders. The dialogue should be democratic, open, and provide space for all. It should be guided by the moral vision that Gandhi saw in every human being.

(5.4) Plural societies have to be based on the ethos of democracy, egalitarianism, and inclusion. Conflict resolution requires an honest recognition of various viewpoints. It requires an unflinching of pursuit of truth. Gandhi's idea of Satyagraha provides the necessary moral force that is required for conducting a meaningful dialogue to resolve conflicts. But at the same time, it should be remembered that social conflicts have economic roots, and we have to address these sincerely. Economic deprivation should be eliminated first before we can seek any resolution of issues. The state and its institutions should be representative and should reflect the concerns of all and not just one section of society, even if it is a majority. Gandhian values have to be understood and interpreted in the right spirit to seek solutions for a better new world.

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Understanding Human Nature: Gandhi's Key to Conflict

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Introduction

In the thousands of years of world history, only a few men have made an indelible impact on mankind. Some preached peace, some did social work, some pitched for national security and sovereignty, some advocated human rights and dignity, and some, respect and tolerance. But very few men combined all these views and ideas into one cohesive thought and saw life as one entity. Prominent or foremost among them was the Father of our Nation, Mahatma Gandhi. The journey of this most ordinary man, from being a practising lawyer to a Mahatma who could command millions of educated people and lead them in the most non-violent and truthful way, is an exemplary one. His weapon to resolve conflicts and counter discrimination was truth-force; his method, non-violence; his philosophy moral and ethical, and his strengths, *satya* (truth) and *ahimsa* (non-violence). He was a human being with all his follies and inherent contradictions, yet the world listened to him with full attention, and continues to take interest in what he said even decades after his death.

He was a visionary who foresaw many impending dangers that would be faced by a fast-evolving world like increase in conflicts leading to violence, communal disharmony, social disparities, and cultural degradation. He was able to provide answers to most of these problems through his tried and tested methods of truth and non-violence, which however went unheeded for many years. Now, the world is rediscovering him and his immortal ideas and trying to seek answers for today's problems. Gandhi's thoughts and ideas were revolutionary and continue to be so in the arena of human history. His life was his message to mankind. He was a thinker

as well as a doer. He was often criticised for his inadequacies but he came under no pressure to compromise on his ideals. It is this aspect of upholding his moral values that the world needs to learn from and imbibe if it intends to solve the problems which are staring at us straight in the eye. It is for this reason that we need to keep the precious legacy of Mahatma Gandhi alive both for our own times and for the future.

Gandhi's Concept of a Pluralistic Society

Gandhi was born in a Vaishya (Bania) family in Gujarat where he was exposed to the tenets of Hinduism, Jainism and Islam. As such, Gandhi has written a lot about religion or dharma, which is basically an ethnic-religious concept which underwent considerable modifications over the years. Dharma implies an ideal society which is non-competitive, and where each person does his or her own work. It speaks of the duties of the four *varnas* (castes) - Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra, and the division of labour that flows from this. However, the concept later became hereditary. Gandhi believed "caste had nothing to do with religion". He believed in the universality of religions and emphasized that all people are shudras who serve, and therefore nothing can be more important than becoming a shudra, so that one can genuinely serve.

Gandhi derived the notion of the discipline of 'spiritual self-perfection' from Jainism which has a pluralistic metaphysic and an extreme reverence for life. The spirit of "renunciation and compassion" in Buddhism and its advocacy of vegetarianism appealed to him greatly. Gandhi was extremely impressed with the liberal and modern views of Christianity. He also had a fair amount of practical knowledge about Islam. Gandhi said that he learnt from the Quran that only that person can fast who has inexhaustible faith in god. He also highly regarded the

egalitarian nature of the Muslim brotherhood. His concept of Hinduism was like an umbrella- a universal religion deeply rooted in Hindu culture. The exposure to all these religions made his approach quite liberal and accommodating as he espoused the ideas of a universal religion and of brotherhood.

This conceptualisation of Universal Religion, and also his crusade against untouchability, offered a great window of opportunity to resolve conflicts whether religious, cultural, or caste-based. Gandhi had to fight the battle against such conflicts in the social arena and then again in the political arena. For him it was a fight against that greater evil confronting mankind called Untruth. In the political sphere he always preached Hindu-Muslim unity because, for him, no single religion could claim to monopolise the Truth. Most of the conflicts in a plural society arise because of its diversity. However, Gandhi, along with Tagore, used to believe in Unity in Diversity. Tagore wrote: *“No one knows at whose call so many human streams came from nowhere in tremendous force and melted into the ocean. The Aryans and the Non-Aryans, the Dravidians and the Chinese, the Shakas and the Huns, the Pathans and the Mughals melted into one nation. The West has opened its doors today, all are bringing gifts from there, will give and take, will get together and bid farewell to none, in this great human ocean which is India.”*

Gandhi as a Peacemaker

The parameters of defining peace by the traditional approach vary from the Gandhian approach. In the traditional approach, peace was defined just as the absence of violence and the acceptance of unbalanced power relationships, inequalities, and lack of access to resources which may be associated with such a condition. In this approach, the peace-making process is driven by the heads of states or governments. Even though common people are the victims of war, they

are treated only as secondary parties to the conflict. They do not have any role in the peace process apart from accepting the provisions laid down in the peace accord. A major flaw of this approach is its weakness in resolving protracted, intractable, and deep-rooted conflicts. In such cases, the deployment of a multi-track approach is inevitable in order to have an amicable resolution of the conflict. A multi-track approach opens up various channels of interaction between the parties at conflict. It accommodates the initiatives of people from all walks of life and thus involves common people in the peace process, making the pluralistic society even more inclusive and representative.

The concept of peace has been changed from this notion of absence of violence to a positive one and is today considered to be an environment where people not only not struggle for their survival, but also strive to transform society and communities in order to achieve socioeconomic and political prosperity and well-being. In this broad concept, peace building means empowering people to become involved in non-violent change themselves, to enable sustainable conditions for peace and justice, to provide humanitarian relief, protect human rights, ensure security, establish non-violent modes of resolving conflicts, foster reconciliation, resettle the displaced, and support broad based education and economic reconstruction. Peace building or conflict resolution is an all-encompassing approach that includes conflict prevention, conflict management, and conflict transformation and is aimed at creating an environment of peaceful relationships and governance structures, addressing the root causes, and building institutions that can manage conflict without resorting to violence. Apart from the traditional peace process, it involves a participatory approach involving all parties to the conflict.

Importance of Gandhian Approach in Conflict Resolution

Gandhi developed a distinct framework to understand conflict and bring about sustainable peace. This was integrally related to his conception of human nature which was essentially good. He held that all human beings had the capacity to develop their full potential vis-à-vis non-violence, which he saw as an inseparable quality of human beings. He believed that all human beings belonged to god and further that the two are independent and inter-related. For him, the path to non-violence was not distinct from the path to god. Gandhi developed a human-centred approach for conflict resolution wherein non-violence was the most fundamental principle. Further, for Gandhi, excluding the use of violence was the best, “because humans are not capable of knowing the absolute truth and therefore not competent to punish”.

Gandhi held the view that a change of mind would definitely bring peace into the world. Through the Satyagraha movement he was trying to change the mind-set of his opponents. The success of the Indian freedom struggle proved the vast potential of Satyagraha, as a positive conflict resolution strategy, at a larger societal level which later imparted ideological capital to civil disobedience and non-violent movements across the world. Non-violent movements led by Martin Luther King, Jr, Dr. Nelson Mandela, the Dalai Lama, and Aung San Suu Kyi come under this category. Gandhi avoids the possibility of physical struggle with the other side and leads the opponents to negotiation by gaining mutual trust and respect. In this method, since there is no mutual hatred involved, an agreement can be easily achieved. Satyagraha is a reconciling process between the parties at conflict. It is a struggle for winning over hearts as well as a positive approach to vanquish the evil and hatred between the two parties. Such things are not possible between the parties at conflict during the course of a violent confrontation.

Gandhi developed a participatory conflict resolution strategy by involving all parties to the conflict. His extensive tours to areas in Bengal (Noakhali) during the Indian Partition are an example of this. He also organised prayer meetings to facilitate inter-faith understanding and communal unity, stemming from his belief in the power of a universal religion in uniting people and ideas. By involving all the parties at conflict in the peace process and cultivating the mutual understanding among various faiths, Gandhi successfully built peace in violence torn areas. The Satyagraha movements at Champaran, Kheda and Bardoli had economic connotations in the sense that these movements were trying to transform the economic basis of conflicts and violence. Gandhi's setting forth of the Swadeshi movement was highly constructive in that it intended to create employment opportunities while adhering to indigenous and eco-friendly technology. Also, it was conducive to end the dependency on the exploiters by boycotting their goods. Advocates of World System Theory and Dependency Theory hold the same notion on economic integration and the growing inequalities between regions and countries.

In today's world, the integration of markets on a global scale is also increasing the number of unemployed people, the pace of natural resource depletion, and environmental degradation. The Global Economic Meltdown witnessed recently also raises doubts about the positive outcomes of neoliberal programmes and has led to massive protest against these, besides the rolling back of welfare measures by the governments of the day. If anything, neoliberal programmes have led to an inequitable distribution of the benefits and have marginalised the poor. Mass displacement of migrants and their accommodation in new areas results in growing unemployment, crimes, and violent conflicts. In light of these developments, the

Swadeshi Movement offers an effective method for Conflict Resolution. Like the equal measurement of each side of the square, each individual needs to attain an equal degree of economic, social, educational and political freedom.

These four elements are the major determinants of peace and conflict. Having become enlightened through attaining the square of Swaraj, each and every person in society can be a responsible citizen. Such a society would be replicable model for sustainable peace and there can be no room for violent conflicts there. Alternative institutions were therefore entrusted the mission of building peace in the Indian society. The ashrams set up by Gandhi were the most effective institutions in attaining this supreme goal.

Violent conflict on a large scale erupts when most of the resources and benefits are appropriated by the dominant community. The equal distribution of resources and the equitable accommodation of all sections of society are vital for conflict resolution in such a condition. Toward this end, Gandhi set forth the ideals of Sarvodaya, decentralization of power and wealth, trusteeship, social harmony, communal unity, economic equality and the philosophy of *sarva dharma sambhava*.

Relevance of Gandhi in Contemporary Times

Albert Einstein wrote of Gandhi “*Generations to come, it may be, will scarce believe that such a one as this ever in flesh and blood walked upon this earth.*” In present times, if we can develop mutual trust and cooperation, we can build a society in which people would be encouraged to shed feelings of hatred and inclination towards violence. If all work towards these goals, relations would become harmonious on their own and the whole world will become a peaceful

place to live. Nelson Mandela once said, *“In a World driven by Violence and strife, Gandhi’s message of peace and non-violence holds the key to human survival in the 21st Century.”*

The countries all over the world are today engaged in armed conflict. The race for developing sophisticated weapons and the resultant brutality makes Gandhi’s principles most relevant. Here we must remember that non-violence is the weapon not for the weak, but for the strong and fearless and should promote this idea and aspect. The disciplining of the mind to remove all thoughts of hurting others only will help in developing a mind-set which will ultimately lead to peaceful co-existence. The stocking of nuclear weapons by countries also presents a massive threat to global peace. Over and above this, acute unemployment, poverty, and consumerism are also leading to environmental degradation. In such a desperate situation, we do find a direction and ideology in Gandhian methods which are increasingly becoming relevant for conflict resolution. The culture of violence and terrorism has resulted in the erosion of mutual faith and human relationships. For the sake of harmony, the bond between humans needs to be strengthened by mutual love, trust, understanding, appreciation, cooperation and accommodation.

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh referred to the relevance of Gandhi’s message in today’s times by saying *“Genocide, ethnic-cleansing, religions and territorial wars and the ever growing menace of international terrorism are afflicting many parts of the world. In this background, the Mahatma’s philosophy of peace, tolerance, and the interdependence of humankind is surely even more relevant than a hundred years ago.”* We see that the most important need of today is to establish a healthy environment of global peace. Though significant progress has been made, traditional instruments for establishing peace have increasingly become ineffective.

The most vicious challenge of today is global terrorism with its linkages to regional outfits which inflict suffering on innocent people and violate their rights of life and/or personal liberty. We have to take on problems of inequality, economic growth and conflicts that occur in the name of religion.

Even as we register an economic growth rate which is among the fastest in the world, we must ensure that the gains are not enjoyed by a mere few. Gandhi is being remembered more and more these days as people are tired of living in the midst of acts of terrorism, a race for arms, power struggles, the manipulation of patriotism and development to suit vested interests, unemployment, unrest, and violence. Over and beyond these, chemical, biological, and nuclear warfare are staring us on the face.

Conflicts can arise due to a clash of perceived interests - whether religious, ethnic, gender, economic or political in nature, and can be aggravated by growing interactions and wants, and are inevitable in human society. For conflict resolution, the relevance of Gandhian non-violent approach-Satyagraha is well known, as discussed above. As Martin Luther King Jr. wrote *“Gandhi was probably the first person in history to lift the love ethic of Jesus above mere interaction between individuals to a powerful and effective social force on a large scale”* Gandhi called Satyagraha the truth-force, love-force and soul-force, the right alternative to violent resistance. He had discovered that “the pursuit of truth did not admit of violence being inflicted on one’s opponent, but that he must be weaned from error by patience” and self-suffering. In Satyagraha, one must be prepared for compromise in a way that it does not involve the sacrifice of principles.

In 1950, Einstein said, *“On the whole I believe that Gandhi held the most enlightened views of all the political men in our times. We should strive to do things in his spirit, not to use violence in fighting for a cause and to refrain from taking part in anything we believe as evil, let us resolve to follow Gandhi.”*

The Concept of Non-Violence in a Pluralist Society

The relevance of Gandhi’s concept of non-violence can also be seen from his arguments about the preservation of natural resources and the environment. Through his non-violent techniques, he not only resolved the conflicts between factions of human beings but also between human beings and the natural world. According to Gandhi, the problems relating to the environment arise from man’s attempt to dominate nature rather than living in harmony with it. His focus on decentralization, simple living, use of renewable sources of energy, and production by the masses sought to protect the environment. As per Gandhi, *“there are enough world resources for everyone’s need, but not for everyone’s greed.”* Gandhi upheld an organic and holistic conception of reality that provided a moral justification for environmental concerns. The most crucial issue of social change is also related to the concept of non-violence.

Commenting on the Gandhian concept of non-violence, Martin Luther King Jr. said, *“...the people of India have demonstrated that non-violence is a powerful moral force which makes for social transformation. Sooner or later, all the people of the world will have to discover a way to live together in peace...man must evolve for all human conflict a method which rejects revenge, aggression and retaliation.”* The present society is facing the grave threats of terrorism, naxalism, extremism and regionalism. Social injustice, economic exploitation and political instability lead to such violence, the effective remedy of for which is not counter

violence but renewed non-violence. A non-violent socioeconomic-political disorder is the only solution to the problem. As Martin Luther King rightly said, *“Today, the choice is no longer between violence and non-violence. It is either non-violence or nonexistence.”*

Democracy, Gandhism, and Pluralist Society

As the world’s largest democracy, India enjoys the spirit and merits of democratic system. We have a huge electorate which decides who can rule and enjoy legitimate authority. We have a constitutional and judicial structure that can uphold our morals and maintain the discipline required for safeguarding both the society and the system. Our parliamentary democracy and the system of governance are delivering at full capacity in a political system entirely based on law and order. People have more freedom of expression and have learned to live with diversities and differences. People have access to all kinds of democratic tools and systemic functions in place. But, by and large, people have become weakened and have tired of upholding their values as they are constantly being put under economic and social pressures. They are slowly losing the grip of power, the self-rule which is the main ingredient of a democratic system.

India is a hugely populated country which is highly diversified. Violence of a communal and religious nature has become an everyday occurrence. The non-violent methods of conflict resolution are dwindling and terror and brutality has become all-pervasive. Attacks on temples, mosques, churches, and other religious place seek to disturb the peace and tranquillity of the nation as a whole. Mobocracy is a term used for a violent means of governance by a group of people who seek to gain power by illegal means. Many terror outfits in India have chosen the path of violence and are constantly spreading terror across the country.

According to Gandhi, *“The spirit of democracy cannot be established in the midst of terrorism, whether governmental or popular.”* Today terrorism has infiltrated into the daily life of individuals. Although mobocracy is not hailed as terrorism, the mob believes that anything can be achieved by violence and terror. Today in India, such forces have been largely politicised and are functioning as separate political outfits. Every group claims that they fight for justice and rights of the people and indulge in attacking the local administration and democratically functioning governmental bodies. Gandhi has rightly said that, *“Democracy and violence can ill go together.”*

Conclusion

The Gandhian way of understanding conflicts, and his methods for peace building, has hugely influenced contemporary peace initiatives across the world. Observing Gandhi Jayanti as an International Day of Non-Violence is a true tribute to the spirit of the Mahatma. Gandhi set up an alternative framework to look into conflict which for him was not just a law and order problem but also a reflection of the extant socioeconomic and political factors. He therefore appealed for a constructive approach to conflict resolution rather than resorting to physical violence. He further held that such a constructive approach should address the socioeconomic and political factors that led to the outbreak of violent conflicts across the world.

Democracy as looked upon by Gandhi in pre-Independence India was far different from what it is today. Had he been alive and been a part of the government after Independence, he may have left the world with much deeper thoughts on modern democratic theories, concepts and methods. The ethical tussle between the

principles of non-violent practice and mobocratic forces which seem to be dominant is shaping the theory of democracy in today's India. Time has witnessed the declaring of independence in other parts of the world. But the Indian War of Independence has a special place in world history. Humanity today faces the risk of complete annihilation in a nuclear scenario. In the words of Martin Luther King Jr. "The choice is not at all between violence and non-violence but between non-violence and nonexistence". The relevance of Gandhi will continue as long as there is a threat of war in the world.

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Satyagraha as the “Grammar of Anarchy”

GYANVIR SINGH

The South African leader Nelson Mandela and the Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe both led a political struggle in the 20th century in their respective countries and ultimately gained power. After they attained power, both of them faced similar questions and challenges, viz. how to integrate the country, and, how to build the nation so that it doesn't disintegrate? But their responses to such questions were totally different. South Africa and Zimbabwe both have similar plural societies with a black majority and white minority but the economic resources are owned by white minorities as they have been the traditional beneficiaries of the policies there. After Mr. Mandela assumed power in South Africa he adopted a policy of national integration which was based on resolving conflicts and decreasing the mistrust that different sections of the society had for each other. He believed that if he could surprise the white minority with love and inclusive policies and not resort to any retaliation for the Apartheid which was inflicted upon the black majority for years, he would be able to win the confidence of the whites. On the other hand, Zimbabwe could not be as innovative and is still struggling with such conditions as civil war and faces isolation at the world level. Mr. Nelson Mandela is an inspirational personality who is himself inspired by the Gandhian values of Truth and Nonviolence. Experiments by Mr. Mandela and his successor show the power of Gandhian thoughts in resolving conflicts within a society.

Such conflicts are a result of mistrust, breach of faith, disagreements and scarcity of resources. Disagreement can be in terms of facts, or of preferences of the individual, groups, villages, states, or nations. There are also conflicts resulting from ethnic issues like religion, race, language, caste, etc. Many-a-times, conflicts

are aggravated due to perceptions, since resources on earth are limited and modern society is consuming these at an unmatched pace. Often, we come across terms in the print and visual media like water scarcity, food insecurity, energy insecurity, etc. Such scarcity of resources results in a conflict of interest among communities and when such a conflict is aggravated due to such other reasons as caste, religion, and sect this becomes the reason for clashes in society and, sometimes, large scale riots are caused because of trivial issues which breed mistrust amid the community.

Gandhi always warned against rapid industrialization and the modern use of machines. He was not against the use of machines but against blind mechanization which was resulting in the displacement of labour and thus causing unemployment. He was of the view that such a “generated” scarcity of work within society creates the problem of corruption in the society, thus degrading the moral fabric of the society and causing long-term harm. Gandhi wanted to ensure the basic minimum needs for each individual in society and if machines could do so he faced no dilemma in accepting them. Also, an unintended consequence of increased mechanization was that the lifestyle of men became so fast that he became a cog in the machine. This resulted in reduced time for the man himself and thus affected his physical and emotional well-being. Thus the Gandhian principles of less use of machines and more insistence on the use of physical labour could have a constructing effect as there might have been lesser causes of conflict within society.

Gandhi propounded that industries and the industrialist should be organized on the basis of the trusteeship principle. He was of the view that as the industrialist draws from the fruits of labour of the man he should always think of the welfare of his labour first. He believed that the primary responsibility of the industrialist is not to

pay dividends to the shareholders but rather towards his employees and workers who toil for him. If the industrialist and the owners think and act for the welfare of the employees there will be fewer industrial conflicts. Also Gandhi believed that the exploitation of environmental resources by industries and society should be on a sustainable basis; as is often quoted, he held "There is enough for everybody's need, but not enough for anybody's greed". If we can follow such advice by Gandhi, many conflicts over environmental resources might not have escalated as rapidly in the modern industrial society.

The Gandhian model for political organization of the society was based on the principles of Gram Swaraj and Ram Rajya. Gandhi placed supreme value on the individual's freedom. He believed that an individual should be able to decide his own destiny. Gandhi had a problem with the modern model of development which also laid stress on individualism but in a different way. Gandhi appreciated individual freedom and individual autonomy but in his own unique way. He asks: "if the individual ceases to count what is left of a society? Individual freedom alone can make man voluntarily surrender himself completely to the service of society. If it is wrested from him he becomes akin to automation and the society is ruined; no society can possibly be built on a denial of individual freedom."

Gandhi writes that too much of individualism can be seen in the laws of the jungle.

He writes

"We have all experienced that unrestricted individualism is the law of the beast, of the jungle. We have to learn to draw a line between individual freedom and social restraint. Willing submission to social restraint for the sake of the well-being of the whole society enriches both the individual and the society of which one is a member." Thus, in the Gandhian understanding of individualism there is no

difference between the individual and the society, both are developing together, both are intermingling and both are complementary yet independent. In the Gandhian scheme of things, cooperation and not competition is the buzzword. Gandhi's ideas as regards collectivism and egalitarianism are expressed beautifully in the following words: "A drop torn from the Ocean perishes without doing any good. If it remains a part of the Ocean, it shares the glory of carrying on its bosom a fleet of mighty ships."

Thus, by stressing on the need for individual freedom and choices, but adding that the individual should be regulated by the moral fabric of society, Gandhi attempts to build a society where conflicts and disagreements are solved at the grassroots or the Village Panchayat level. Here, the power flows not from the top downwards but from the bottom upwards, and thus creates a window for the resolution of conflicts where they are most likely to arise. Also since Village Panchayats are the ones deciding their own affairs there is lesser perception of being ruled by aliens, and stakes for the local individuals in the governance process, thereby creating a participatory political system.

Gandhi was a firm believer in the truth, but he made allowances for the fact that his version of truth may not be the absolute truth. Truth is basically stating the facts as one knows them. By stating the truth one is free from any kind of blackmail as he has nothing to fear, nothing to hide and nothing to worry. Gandhi was a follower of the Hindu religion; he believed in the philosophy of Advaita but never insisted that the Hindu religion is the whole truth. He always believed that all religions have elements of truth. Gandhi believed that all the major religions of the world are preachers of the same values and they are the result of the same reasoning and moral values.

Gandhi studied much about world religions and his findings suggested that they all contained the same principles, the same search of the absolute truth. By accepting Gandhi's conclusions on religions, the world can save itself from religious fanaticism and religious conflict can be minimized. Often, religious conflicts are the result of mistrust at the grassroots level which can be solved by adopting the political and religious ideas of pluralism and Gram Swaraj demonstrated by Gandhi. In the globalized world of today, where every country consists of diverse population, we live in a multilingual, multi-religious society wherein decisions taken by governments affect all sections of the society, and any perceived bias on the part of the government can fuel discontent and conflicts. The Gandhian way of politically organizing society along the Village Panchayat model can be very constructive. As long as people feel that any decision has been arrived at with their participation, they have a stake in the governance of the country, and there will be lesser room for conflict, because conflicts often arise when one section of the society feels that the will of some other section/group/community/caste is being forced upon them. As all individual and groups value their freedom, nobody wants to be ruled against their will, be it politically or economically. Gandhi was against any form of centralised tendency or universalism. For Gandhi, "the highly centralized and bureaucratic modern state represents violence in a concentrated and organized form. The individual has a soul, but as the state is a soulless machine, it can never be weaned away from the violence to which it owes its very existence". Thus, Gandhi believed that since the state is an instrument of violence, it can't be honestly expected to resolve all conflicts without resorting to violence. Further, Gandhi could never support anything which violated his principles of truth and nonviolence.

Gandhi, during his lifetime, and his many followers, whether Indian or otherwise, have demonstrated the power of his ideals and values in the resolution of conflicts, in the methods of displaying disagreement and discontentment. Gandhi himself applied Satyagraha as a form of protest in South Africa when he found that the behaviour of the British colonialist was not humane. He reapplied the same principle during the Khilafat and Non-cooperation movements of the Indian freedom struggle. Gandhi employed the non-violent weapons of non-cooperation and civil disobedience to put forth his discontent with the state of affairs in pre-Independent India. Gandhi used to say "There are many causes that I am prepared to die for but no causes that I am prepared to kill for."

Gandhi opposed the idea of partitioning India because he never believed that humans can be divided on the basis of religion. To him, all religions were the search for the same truth so how could there be division among their followers. In the event of riots at the time of Partition, Gandhi showed the moral power of fasting. He took upon fasting as a self-purification method and thus he was able to reduce the extent of violence in Bengal. After Independence, there were many followers of Gandhi who chose to live and propound Gandhian ideals and values in society. Acharya Vinoba Bhave found the solution to the problems of land reforms and the forceful taking of land from the zamindars by the state in his Bhoodan Movement and once again displayed the application of the Gandhian model by appealing to the moral conscience of the landlords. Any law or rule, when applied by force, may be able to extract the desired results but once the source of the power is changed or the force is decreased that state of affairs returns back to the original, but if the solution to the challenge is found in a change of heart of the individuals and/or groups, such a solution will remain effective for the longest time as it is the result of change of hearts. Vinoba showed the power of this in his Bhoodan

movement. Similarly, the power of civil disobedience was shown by Nelson Mandela in South Africa, and by Martin Luther King Jr. in the United States of America, to resolve the conflict between blacks and whites. Both of the above leaders used Gandhian methods to lead peaceful protests against the discriminatory practices prevalent in the then governments and societies.

As a method of peaceful protest, Satyagraha and fasting have been used widely all over the world. Gandhi used them in the Indian freedom struggle. Many Gandhians have used them to impress upon the government what they believe to be right and just. For example, Potti Sriramulu fasted to death for the reorganization of states on a linguistic basis. Anna Hazare recently sat on fast for the passing of the Jan Lokpal Bill. Many political leaders across the world, e.g. Aung Sang Suu Kyi, Barack Obama, etc. all swear upon Gandhian values and believe that, if applied in spirit, these can solve many challenges of the world.

Satyagraha and fasting as methods of protest are basically about adopting peaceful and nonviolent means. Gandhi believed that modern states have so much power that any civil protest, if conducted through violent means, can be easily suppressed. But, if the methods are nonviolent and peaceful, the same can't be done though such methods may not produce any instant results. The method of Satyagraha is based on the philosophy that if someone believes some cause to be right and just he should be ready to die for that cause, and be willing to adopt methods of fasting. Inflicting pain or punishment upon oneself appeals to the conscience of the people since in all modern societies power finds legitimacy only by public opinion. If one is able to appeal to the public opinion and find favour with the majority of the population one can certainly influence the people in power as they always have to be guided by the public opinion. Otherwise, in democratic nations, they will face

public anger in the form of being voted out in the next election, or, in autocratic nations, they will see the revolts by the larger public as happened recently in the Arab world.

The same method of Satyagraha was adopted in state of Uttarakhand by the women in the Chipko movement where women, men and children used to embrace trees when the contractors came to cut them. Thus they sent out a clear message that they are ready to die for the trees, and that they are committed to save the environment. As a form of peaceful protest, Chipko movement stands out as a novel method of peaceful resistance.

But can Satyagraha be used for all purposes? Can one, just by resorting to method of fasting, blackmail the state to his whim and will as Anna Hazare was recently accused of? Dr. Bheem Rao Ambedkar was a strong critic of Gandhian methods of protest such as Satyagraha and fasting. When Gandhi resorted to a fast against the communal award in 1932, Ambedkar vehemently opposed any such method of blackmailing the state. To Ambedkar, this fasting was nothing but blackmailing the state to the whim and will of an individual. That the actions of the state can't be held to ransom by one individual's preferences was Ambedkar's opinion. Ambedkar called any such attempt "the grammar of anarchy". But the answer to above questions lies in the public opinion: what does the general public think of any particular movement? The amount of support or interest one's movement and appeal is able to generate will determine the success and failure of the movement. For example, Irom Sharmila from northeast India is on continuous fast for the past 10 years, for the repeal of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act in northeastern states, whereas Anna Hazare, through his appeal for a Jan Lokpal, has been able to

touch the life of individuals at large as the issue of corruption touches the lives of all individuals be they rich or poor, or of any religion, caste, or creed.

Thus, it becomes clear that any method of Satyagraha or fasting is not sure to succeed and it depends on the leadership of the movement, the strategy adopted by them, the extent of the interest and support the issue is able to generate among the wider public, and how much it affects the national interest. Any demand of secession or radical changes in the method of governance cannot be accepted and should not be expected to be achieved through methods of nonviolence as the modern state's existence and its use of force is to protect the sovereignty of the nation. Any challenge to it cannot be expected to be achieved by nonviolent methods in modern times. But in all democratic societies people will and should enjoy the right to adopt peaceful methods and forms of protest.

In modern times, the success or failure of any Satyagraha also depends a lot on the support that it gathers in the print and visual media. All mass movements thrive on the support that they are able to generate amidst the public. And the modern media whether print, visual or electronic, are a very important means of mobilizing the masses in support of or against some cause. Thus, modern media is an important determinant of the success or the failure of any mass movement. So any Satyagrahi should be very tactful in media management. The modern world is also connected through the Internet where any happening in one corner of the world is instantly broadcast throughout the world. In such a scenario managing social networking websites like Facebook and Twitter also becomes important as many revolutions of recent times spread instantly with the help of these.

The Gandhian ideals and values of truth and nonviolence, participative decision-making, and village self-rule when applied together can control the rising of conflicts at the grassroots level. To improve communal harmony at this level, we have to strike at the mistrust that is prevalent among the community. This requires greater understanding of each other among the communities, which can only happen when they become more and more integrated with each other. To increase such integration, we have to increase the stake of each community in the common life and resources and the appropriation of these resources should be on the basis of a participative decision that is reached only in the presence of all the stakeholders in the Village Panchayat. Once the community owns the decision that has been arrived at, there will be little chances of disagreement and conflict. But it has to be ensured that any discontent is addressed at the time of decision making. It must be made certain that no one community is suppressed or has to compromise all the time. To achieve such purposes, special allowances will have to be made for the vulnerable groups, and minorities, living in the area. When the minorities feel safe and unexploited there will not be any reason for fear among them and in such a case alone can we expect an inclusive society. We can expect an environment of harmony in such a society otherwise any feeling of discontent can be exploited by vested interests within the society. The Gandhian values and ideals of trusteeship, if imbibed in the heart and soul of the powerful and affluent sections of the society, can be very helpful in containing discontent and resolution of conflict in case it arises.

National Foundation
for Communal Harmony

Comprehending the Practicality of Gandhian Philosophy

MOHD. ALI

Prologue

On September 11, 2001, the Twin Towers, a significant symbol of American hegemony, were demolished by a suicidal attack, for which the Al-Qaeda claimed responsibility.

Earlier, on September 11, 1973, a coup in Chile headed by General Augusto Pinochet toppled the democratically-elected president Salvador Allende.

Even earlier, on September 11, 1906, at a mass protest meeting held in Johannesburg, Gandhi espoused the methodology of 'Satyagraha' for the first time.

The events of September 11, 1973 revealed a new world order which, directly or indirectly, trampled the legitimate aspirations of a hapless population and, later, offered justification for the entire act. Like Pontius Pilate who authorized the crucifixion of Jesus and avoided taking personal responsibility for it, the world washed its hands off any responsibility. The ends took over the driver's seat while the means were relegated to the unknown depths of a moral black hole.

When September 11, 2001 happened, the world was startled into realizing that the means through which ends are achieved are as important as the ends themselves. Possibly, the highhandedness of the USA in dealing with the minnows of the Arabian Peninsula and their uninvited intrusion into the complicated internal affairs of the Muslim world resulted in severe polarization and multiplied the magnitude of hatred. This was a warning to the world that the means to any end should be sustainable.

The august event of September 11, 1906 put forward as a beacon of hope an idea that inspired an enslaved race to fight the empire on which, proverbially, the sun never set. The method adopted demonstrated without any hesitation that the means are more important than the ends; if the means are good, the ends will also be good, however long it may take to achieve them. This is where Gandhian thoughts transcend the realms of time and space.

Satyagraha: An Innovative Art of War

The central idea of Satyagraha is the untiring pursuit of truth. The path of Satyagraha never traverses the territory of violence against the opponent. It never wishes the ill of others. At the same time, it is not a lifestyle espousing passive resistance, but a powerful weapon of direct action. Satyagraha stresses four basic ideas, viz. the use of soul of force; the abhorrence of physical force; the appeal to the heart, through the suffering of the Satyagrahi, in a bid to convert the wrongdoer; and, the means and ends are inter-convertible, i.e. a good result can only be brought about by good means.

Essentially, Satyagraha is a tool with which to analyze conflicts in society, devise ways to understand the inherent truth and being strong willed in opposing injustice in nonviolent ways. As John Bondurant pointed out, “Satyagraha became something more than a method of resistance to particular legal norms; it became an instrument of struggle for positive objectives and fundamental change.”

When an individual becomes convinced about the truth, it becomes imperative that he/she propagate that idea to other individuals and groups. This evolves into a mass movement and forces the government to take cognizance of the matter. As it

is truth that is being pursued, such action eventually translates into the overall good of the society.

Under the influence of globalization, every society is reinventing itself and reevaluating its own identity. The interests and concerns of each society undergo inevitable changes and realignments happen by implication, if not application. Society is no longer monolithic, but instead highly vibrant and dynamic. In such a rapidly-redefined, plural society, conflicts are bound to happen. A method to confront and allay these conflicts, one which has been tried and tested in one of the most plural countries in the world is, by all means, a candidate for consideration.

Exactly how this method gained much-needed popularity and acceptance needs examination. In this regard, Gandhi's life goes hand in hand with the phenomenon of Satyagraha, both in its essence and its evolution. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi began his career as a barrister of Indian Law and Jurisprudence in a sedate middle-class town, Porbandar. From that humble job, he grew into a worldly figure received and revered by millions. His success - if that term describes his actual objective - needs to be discussed and debated.

In 1893, he accepted a yearlong contract from a firm in South Africa. But the experiences of Gandhi there unleashed upon him a new truth and forced him to understand the true nature of the problems faced by the common, unprivileged man, and discover possible remedies. Gandhi was thus awakened to the call for dedicating himself for the attainment of social justice. But he had to think of a way to fight the rampaging racism, unacceptable prejudice and unexplainable injustice against the Indians in South Africa under the British suzerainty.

Gandhi had no option other than extending his stay in South Africa. He helped with the formation of the Natal Indian Congress through which the Indian community in South Africa was molded into a considerable political force. Gandhi's political thoughts began to clarify and the idea of Satyagraha emerged. He believed in unity and, to cultivate this, he first started the Phoenix Ashram and later Tolstoy Farm where people of any caste or creed could live together, share the same living place and a common kitchen. He understood that being united is the most important quality necessary to achieving victory. These settlements, devoted to his principles of Satyagraha, helped in the spiritual and political formulation of the ideology of promoting justice, peace and equality. But these did not keep him away from the service of the nation and he was promptly awarded the honor of Kaiser-e-Hind for his contributions in the ambulance service in 1915, in South Africa.

In 1915 again, when he returned to India, he already had witnessed the harshness and brutality of the British and had hands-on experience in dealing with these issues. He was no longer an ordinary barrister fighting in the court of law, but a crusader for human rights and equality in the global political arena. Fortunately, the Indian political scenario was also ripe for his activities with the Congress, primed by the moderates, and also, various issues with the authorities necessitated immediate attention. Soon after getting back to India, Gandhi got involved in the Champaran Satyagraha (1917), which was primarily an agrarian issue. After its victory, he led the Ahmadabad Mill strike (1918), a labor strike for wage hikes and in Kheda (1918) against the unjust taxation. Both were successful and Gandhi emerged as the leader of the masses. His Satyagraha against the Rowlatt Act, along with his relinquishing the title of Kaiser-e-Hind as a protest against the massacre in Jallianwala Bagh, Amritsar, garnered him much respect and popularity.

In 1920, when the Khilafat movement gained momentum in India, Gandhi saw the opportunity for ushering the Muslim community into the freedom struggle by offering support for this cause against a common enemy. Thus he was able to bring the Hindu and Muslim masses into one direction, i.e. the nationalist movement.

The non-cooperation movement begun by Gandhi was able to generate an unprecedented popular response as a result of which the thus-far political freedom struggle became a mass movement. This was also based completely on the principle of truth and ahimsa (nonviolence). When he suddenly withdrew the movement after the unfortunate Chauri-Chaura incident in 1922, he once again underlined the importance of the means in the fight for freedom.

The years following this also saw Gandhi's involvement in the combat against other social evils like untouchability and feudalism. In 1930, he came up with the innovative idea of Civil Disobedience where the unjust rule of the empire was to be opposed peacefully. For this, he opted to oppose the Salt Law and led the famous Dandi March to produce salt, which was perceived to be the common man's unavoidable need. Again, it was not the price of the object; rather, it was the significance of representing the common man's interest which influenced his decision. He withdrew the movement following the Gandhi-Irwin Pact which led him to believe that the British would not be more just and favorable.

However, he understood that the second Round Table Conference in London was a mock show and freedom would not be achieved without the greatest suffering and self-sacrifice. He expressed his failure with the words "on bended knees, I asked for bread and I have received stone instead". He was arrested and put in jail, but he

continued to inspire his fellow men in continuing the struggle. He worked tirelessly for the emancipation of Dalits and started publishing a weekly, Harijan, in 1936. When World War II began, Gandhi hoped that the British would grant freedom in return for help in the war. But once he realized that such wishes would not be fulfilled, he decided to be strong and steadfast in his actions. Thus, the 'Quit India' movement was launched in 1942, urging the people to come into the struggle, to do or to die.

But Jinnah's demand for a separate Muslim nation was a blow to Gandhi and he opposed this notion with all his might. But the horrendous massacre in Calcutta on Direct Action Day, 1946, made Gandhi rethink and realize that there was a huge rift between the two communities' leadership and separation of the states was inevitable. He accepted the truth but continued working towards the unity of the two communities. Even when the whole country celebrated Independence, Gandhi spent his time with unfortunate widows and weeping parents in Naokhali.

Thus, throughout his life, Gandhi expressed his ultimate dedication to truth and nonviolence and inspired millions to follow his philosophy. In brief, Gandhi's contribution was not limited to merely achieving freedom, but opened up a whole new way of life. Gandhi himself made it clear by stating "my life is my message".

We can thus rationally conclude that Gandhian values and principles evolved over a long period of time. Taking into consideration various historical events across the world, in essence these values are proven to be a tool for the resolution of conflicts within the setting of a plural society.

In contemporary times, the world is being transformed into a global village. The members of this global village are in fact a set of people from umpteen cultural, social and political backgrounds making it a plural population. In this sort of international order, whenever we think about societal interactions and their consequences, Gandhian values become one of the essential frames of reference.

Gandhism: Practicality in the Current Scenario

The biggest news these days is the persisting global economic crisis following the collapse of the Greek economy, which has affected most of the European nations and USA, raising government deficit and debt status together with the downgrading of Europe's credibility, ultimately impacting the financial world badly. The major issue behind this crisis was subprime lending, where debt was given to any applicant irrespective of their ability to repay the loan.

In direct contrast is Gandhiji's significant economic policy of 'Sarvodaya', meaning good for all. The idea of Sarvodaya is in turn directly related to the principles of truth and nonviolence and intimate cooperation among interested parties. It is also based on the moral and ethical values of Swaraj and Swadeshi production, which depend upon non-exploitation, non-possession, trusteeship, bread and labor, etc. This ideology, when put into practice, posits the creation of self-help groups whose ultimate interest is the betterment of all the members. This, if followed, can lead to a paradigm shift in the Western economic policies of today.

By trusteeship, Gandhi meant that the accumulation wealth is not a bad proposal, provided the accumulator keeps that wealth as a trustee to the society, meeting the society's necessities as and when time demands. That money is then in the safe hands of a good human being, thereby erasing any chance for conflict. Society thrives peacefully, with mutual trust and cooperation. Gandhi believed that "the

earth provides enough to satisfy every man's need, but not every one's greed". In this era of globalization, greed has overrun many ethical and moral values leading to an unfortunate, but not unexpected, crisis. The difference between the haves and the have-nots has become more stark and glaring; this could have been erased gradually but steadily if Gandhian principles had been applied.

To prove his point, Gandhi started Sewagram, where he tried to develop self-sufficiency, promote village interests, clean villages, eliminate untouchability and proper values in the society. He laid emphasis on the idea of rural empowerment, rather than the modern-day urban development.

Gandhi realized that the poor man's god is nothing but bread, and he gave much importance to creating newer work opportunities close to a person's residence. He knew that unemployment breeds not only physical starvation, but also mental and spiritual. He wanted to promote the universality of employment and chose khaki as a symbol since it characterized this universality. He also gave promoted animal husbandry and when he wanted to abolish cow slaughter, it was his economic common sense which prevailed rather than religious feelings.

He recommended a set wage and self-employment activities through voluntary efforts. He believed in and practiced the minimal use of material riches and considered being poor as a boon in itself, the so-called 'daridranarayan'. He wanted to put the poorest of the poor, the last man in the line, first on the development agenda, which forms the backbone of the idea of Antyodaya.

Gandhi was never against the application of modern technologies in production, but he wanted them to be used primarily to solve India's poverty rather than as a

means of accumulating wealth. He was thus a pioneer in the ideology of resource-based economics and he believed that 'Ram Rajya', a new social order of his dreams, can be achieved through this.

Gram Swaraj is an integral part of this kind of rural development where all the decisions are taken democratically by the members of that village. Village self-governance, a decentralized form of government where each village is responsible for its own affairs, was envisaged as the basic unit of Indian polity by Gandhi.

Gandhiji's concept of panchayat raj system has five tiers including village panchayats, taluk panchayats, zilla panchayats, provincial panchayats and all-India panchayats. This administrative system was pyramidal, whose broad base was composed of the numerous villages in the country. Those at the higher echelons were entrusted with guiding, advising, and coordinating the lower panchayats' activities, and thereby ensuring that the system remained efficient. Even so, it would be the basic units that would dictate to the apex. The village becomes the actual functioning unit of administration.

The Bhoodan movement was started by Vinoba Bhave in a true Gandhian spirit, to meet the challenges posed by the needs of the landless with the willing cooperation of the rich landowners. This was the inspiration behind the land reforms undertaken by many state governments, but is yet to reach an ideal level.

Our constitution's founders realized the relevance of Gandhian principles within the context of India's plural society and were instrumental in including these in the form of the Directive Principles of State Policy. While Article 40 of the constitution envisages the organization of the village panchayats, and Article 43

intends to promote cottage industries, Article 48 discusses organizing agriculture and animal husbandry scientifically. Deriving spirit and strength from this, in 1992, the Panchayati Raj system was given constitutional status in order to ensure higher levels of community participation.

The instance of higher participation of the citizens of Jammu & Kashmir during the panchayat elections held there, despite the repeated warnings issued by the terrorist organizations, shows that decentralization can be an effective solution. In reality, women were more conspicuous in taking part in such grassroots level democracy and thereby exhibiting their true desire for peace and progress.

Gandhi was keen on the issue of women's empowerment. The active participation of such women as Sarojini Naidu, Aruna Asaf Ali, Vijayalakshmi Pandit, etc. in the various mass movements that were part of the freedom struggle shows that women were in no way behind men, in terms of principles and the practice thereof. Gandhi was efficient in deploying women against the British during, for example, the picketing of liquor shops and the boycott of foreign goods. He knew that women could play a special role by keeping society united using a string of love and affection. He also believed that women could challenge such social evils as dowry, untouchability and superstitions much more effectively than men.

The present day status of women in India is two-sided. On the one hand, women in cities are free and working in divergent fields like politics, the service sector and industries. It is equally a painful truth that many women in the villages are still slaves to traditions and customs due to their ignorance. It is also imperative that the Indian woman should not forsake their virtues of chastity, fidelity, truth, nobility and goodness in the flash flood of western culture.

In the recent past, a lot of hue and cry has been made about the tabling of Women's Reservation Bill in Parliament, but there seems to be a lack of sincerity and honesty in the various perspectives presented. The political development of women would be incomplete without their inclusion in governance; this is not a favor due to them, but their right. It is only ignorance about the system and their lack of education which are hurdles for their entry into politics.

Gandhi realized the significance of education in the overall development of human beings. He formulated a unique method of education known as the Wardha School. This mainly incorporated ideas of vocational training and value-based education. Every individual had to acquire a minimum level of education constructive, innovative and sufficient to help earn bread for them and their family. Children are required to study and understand cultural, moral and ethical values from the very beginning of their education so that these can be imbibed very early in life and make them ideal citizens.

The Indian Constitution directs state governments to provide free and compulsory education for all children under the age of fourteen through Article 45. Now, it has become a fundamental right of the child to receive education, a shift which denotes the relevance of the Gandhian principle of education even today.

In India, the present state of unemployment is attributed to the population dividend but the fact remains that there is lack of either skilled laborers or education among available skilled laborers. The number of unemployed, educated individuals is increasing by the day, necessitating a rethink about the significance of the vocational training programme endorsed by Gandhi. The dissolution of values

among the educated is also on the rise due to the unending push for profit and prestige. Increasing urbanization, along with a non-value-emphasizing education, has resulted in the unprecedented increase in crime levels. This alarming situation demands immediate and effective management which again has been addressed by Gandhi long ago.

Literacy plays an important role in molding the personality of a human being and thus acts as the basis of the welfare of the state itself. Literacy enables a man to understand his culture and to achieve intercultural resolution. The ability to discriminate between good and evil is achieved through the exposure one gets through education and thus its immense value for the peaceful existence of the state.

In light of above discussion, the increasing menace of Naxalism can be analyzed. The major reasons behind this security threat are the development deficit, the lack of proper education and unacceptable economic policies. Skewed development programs, lacking the involvement of those for whom they were planned, along with the ignorance of the youth due to the lack of educational facilities - which prevented the internalization of the principles of nonviolence and peaceful coexistence - magnified the problem and ultimately pushed the struggle into the path of war and bloodshed.

The solution for this lies in the Gandhian principle of the empowerment of rural areas through uplifting agriculture and strengthening cottage industries. Recognizing the problems of the youth and tribal affairs is the need of the time. Gandhi had dedicated much of his time even during the freedom struggle for Dalit and tribal emancipation knowing that their improvement is an integral part of true

national freedom. He was influential in making it a part of the Constitution, as Article 46, which directs the states to promote the educational and economic interests of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. He started *Harijan*, an English-language weekly, to empower the Dalits, whom he called as children of Hari, or god. Such ideal treatment of marginalized populations can come good even in today's trying times.

Terrorism can best be defined as the systematic use of terror in a variety of ways for personal and organizational gain. The root cause of terrorism is essentially power wielded over the weak injudiciously, to gain economic or political benefits. To restore peace in the world whenever law and order is the issue, Gandhian philosophy is the solution wherein all sections of the society are treated equally before the law. If all citizens are sincerely treated equally and are able to secure the redress of their grievances through constitutional methods, terrorism might be curbed.

A related issue is the phenomenon of occurred recently in which people have been discriminated and treated as second class citizens on the basis of color and/or race. The rioting in England and the unfortunate events faced by Indian students in Australia show that even after much globalization, such petty issues are yet to be subdued. While acknowledging that Gandhi began his fight against racism in South Africa, we need to comprehend his intimate knowledge of the problem and his desire to address the same. Every court battle against racism in South Africa was in fact a gospel on that issue later appreciated by leaders like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Nelson Mandela. Dr. King once compared Gandhi to Christ and opined that Christ showed the way and Gandhi, in India, showed that it could work.

For Gandhi, religions were not watertight compartments; rather, they were the sacred water contained in vessels, whatever the shape thereof. He believed in spiritual secularism whereby no religion was defined but the essence from every religion was accepted with true faith. Gandhi often praised Christ as the true prince of nonviolence. At the same time, he used to recite verses from the Bhagavad Geeta to explain the importance of Dharma and Karma. For him, the Geeta was a spiritual reference in which he could get answers for any of his doubts. It was only natural for him to understand and appreciate the Koran and when the Khilafat movement gained momentum in India, he volunteered to support the cause. The greatest virtue of Gandhi was in adopting Ahimsa, the basis of Buddhism, as his weapon for the fight against the British Empire.

All this occurred despite Gandhi being a steadfast Jain. Thus, throughout his life, Gandhi showed an immense capacity to merge values from all religions for the betterment of mankind rather than using them merely as a measurement of human belief.

In the perfect state of communal harmony, each religion should be freely practiced without any fear or hatred. Gandhian ideology advocated that humans lift themselves above hatred and fear, at the individual level in order to effect a society-wide change. This Gandhian concept was accepted by the Constitution's creators, with secularism forming one of the pillars of Indian polity.

Many issues flare up simply because egotistic opponents refuse to talk across a table. What might have been a molehill is made a mountain by refusing to address the issue at the earliest. Gandhi was ready for talks in any tensed situation. This readiness to negotiate was one of the best tools for solving any conflicts in a plural society. For example, the Gandhi-Irwin Pact, also known as the Delhi Pact, was signed on March 5, 1931, between the Viceroy Lord Irwin and Gandhi. As a result,

Gandhi suspended the Civil Disobedience movement, and agreed to participate in the second session of the Round Table Conference. Although he failed to convince the British in London, his method of open-minded discussions displayed the right attitude desperately needed in today's conflicts.

By following Gandhian principles, we can be assured of an ideal world order. In the modern concept of welfare, the quest for peace has acquired a new urgency. The acquisition of modern engines of destruction as a means of ensuring peace cannot be said to be the ideal way. Peace is the rational aim of rational men. As per Gandhian principles, there is need to focus on practicable peace based on gradual evolution in human institutions, concrete actions and effective agreements. It cannot be done by one or two great powers by applying some magic formula. Peace has to be dynamic and capable of meeting the challenges of each generation. Disputes and conflicts will always occur, but nations can resolve these by submitting to a just and peaceful settlement. By thinking along the lines of the Gandhian principles of peace, optimistically, we can move towards the goal of universal peace.

Gandhi wanted humans to live simply and humbly; he himself did exactly the same. Gandhi held that individuals could be corrupted by power and that they should not let themselves "be entrapped by its pomp and pageantry". They had to remember that they were in office to serve the poor in India's villages. Gandhi's talisman to the administrators of free India is quoted below.

"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? Then you will find your doubts and yourself melting away.”

Conclusion

What made Gandhi different from other men was the discovery of a truthful and peaceful method of protest and his sincere faith in his method whereby he never gave up his ideals. This led Louis Fischer to comment that he preached what he practiced. Wherever a struggle for equality and social justice arises, Gandhi’s philosophy will always remain an inspiration in seeking solutions.

This is a time when the media and the public at large are trying to get in to the nitty-gritty of Gandhian ideals. Several stakeholders are trying to project the meaning of Gandhian principles. When problems abound, the time is ripe for introspection. Great care should go into telling apart wolf from the sheep. The thought of Gandhi’s principles being hijacked by vested interests is no longer just an armchair proposition but a real possibility. This can lead to the portrayal of Gandhi as being against politics, against development and against progressive ideas. We should realize that Gandhi is manna for the world and it is society’s responsibility to pursue his ideology, in its purest form. The realization of an ideal world order is not a myth. The obscured peace of our world can be restored by walking on the elite path of our Mahatma.

The share of the youth in the societal pie is increasing every day and, for greater stability in society, it is important to understand the ideals that are inspiring youth. That the youth are apolitical is a major problem that we are facing. The degeneration of political standards and the innumerable alternate preoccupations tend to give the idea that politics is evil and politicians are devils. The youth of the

country should look up to a man who was a politician with ideals and practical sense and get inspired to contribute towards nation building.

The practical of Gandhian ways is best illustrated by what Viceroy Louis Mountbatten said “In the Punjab, we have fifty five thousand soldiers and large scale rioting on our hands. In Bengal, our force consists of one man and there is no rioting.” As a military leader and an administrator, he humbly asked to be allowed to pay tribute to his one man boundary force.

To those who doubt whether Gandhi is a relic from the past, here are words from one of the greatest visionaries that modern India has produced. On hearing about Gandhi’s assassination, Nehru said “the light that shone in this country was no ordinary light.” In a thousand years, he predicted, “that light still be seen... The world will see it and it will give solace to innumerable hearts”. There is no doubting the Pandit’s words.

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Gandhi as a Human Beacon of Hope

K.V.S. CHOUDHARY

“... what may appear as the truth to one person will often appear as untruth to another person. But that need not worry the seeker. Where there is honest effort, it will be realized that what appeared to be different truths are like the countless and apparently different leaves of the same tree” – Gandhi¹

1. INTRODUCTION

Diversity is the hallmark of nature’s creation. Just as there are a number of varieties of species in nature, human societies are also mostly plural and marked by diversity in terms of language, religion, class, etc. Many of these differences evolved over a period of time and are mostly manmade. Diversity adds colour and variety to our lives and it, by itself, is never culpable for any conflicts.

Although conflicts are natural and actually lead to enrichment of society when properly resolved, there are a growing number of them producing destructive outcomes. We can see increasing intolerance, use of coercion and force and religious bigotry and fundamentalism leading to division of society, apart from the loss of valuable lives. In this context of increasing vengeance, the Gandhian values of truth and nonviolence have great relevance and their applicability in any plural society can be examined easily.

1.1 Understanding Conflicts: The Views of Mary Parker Follett

The ideas of Mary Parker Follett on conflict are worth much consideration. She urges us not to look at conflicts as avoidable outbreak of differences leading to the dissipation of energy but as a useful means of evolving together and enriching

society. Conflicts are therefore inevitable in a plural society marked by diversity. Instead of pushing them under the carpet in the initial stages and later finding them to be unmanageable, we must adopt a fundamentally different stance towards resolving conflicts.

Gandhi also used to stress on bringing differences to the fore instead of hiding them. This makes it possible to look at the conflict in parts, to the extent possible, so that useful solutions can be worked out. As Follett pointed out, a dominant attitude while approaching conflict resolution is always inimical to the overall interest of the concerned parties. A win-lose situation can bury the conflict temporarily but cannot resolve the matter permanently. The Gandhian values of accommodation and receptiveness can alone lead us to durable win-win solutions.

2. Gandhian Methodology Of Conflict Resolution: Satyagraha

Gandhi evolved his idea of Satyagraha through his experiences and experimentation in South Africa and, later, in the Indian freedom struggle. He considered Satyagraha as being more than a mere method. For him, it was an approach to life and an attitude towards society. Thus Satyagraha is practiced in tandem with opponents rather than being used against them. It emphasises that, if we can morally appeal to the conscience of the person concerned, it is far more effective than using violence or force. If the attitude of a large number of individuals towards Satyagraha can be changed, society can be changed from bottom-upwards and the greater dangers of wars and nuclear holocausts can be reduced. Even if such conflicts arise, they can be resolved more amicably.

2.1 Satyagraha as a Way of Life

Gandhi suggested that we must use situations that arise in day-to-day life to understand and develop the methodology of Satyagraha so that it can be used at a higher level later. We must learn to practice Satyagraha within our personal relations first so as to strengthen our conviction. Like charity, Satyagraha must also begin at home.

2.2 Conflict Resolution as a Process: Both the Means and the Ends Matter

Gandhi looked at conflict resolution as the dialectic process of arriving at the truth rather than attaining narrowly-defined goals. He therefore laid more stress on the process of resolution rather than the end product achieved. Gandhi strongly conveyed that it is ethically unfair to use violence against the other person because both do not know the absolute truth. It is naturally unjustifiable if it is proven that one party is wrong, but it remains unfair even if the other party is wrong as it cannot be said with certainty that one is right.

He stressed more on the duties rather than the responsibilities so that the other party could understand the seriousness of one's intentions. The fragility of the outcomes can only be reduced when both parties are involved in the process and are reasonably satisfied with the outcome. Based on this understanding, we can broadly divide conflicts as productive, when the parties are satisfied with the outcomes and take the end result as win-win situation, or destructive, when the parties take the result as inimical to their interests.

2.3 Dialogue as the Way Forward

Gandhi's approach to negotiations for resolving a conflict is worth taking instruction from. He always spelt out his 'non-negotiables', i.e. his values, clearly. These, e.g. truth, nonviolence and non-cooperation, are anchors which can never be shaken in any situation. However, accommodation in negotiations is also a virtue he possessed as can be clearly observed in the Poona Pact, where he agreed to greater reservation for Harijans in electoral assembly, and the Gandhi-Irwin Pact, where he agreed to discontinue the Civil Disobedience movement in exchange for certain concessions from the British.

2.4 Gandhian Ways of Nonviolent Conflict Resolution

2.4.1 Accommodation

Here we must put ourselves in the shoes of the other party and make the necessary adjustments. Most of the world's miseries and misunderstandings can vanish if more people start empathizing with others' feelings and alter their actions and behaviour accordingly.

2.4.2 Nonviolent Coercion

This can be demonstrated through the example of Gandhi's fasts. He felt that the Satyagrahi must undergo self-suffering with the conviction that the opponent's conscience can be touched through this 'self-purification'. At the minimum, a clearer vision of the path can be evolved through this process. Thus, the idea is not to change the behaviour of the people but their attitude which in turn can modify their behaviour.

2.4.3. Conversion

This is the most effective technique of conflict resolution as per Gandhian thought. Appealing to the morality of the other party and winning over his conscience is the essence of Satyagraha. However, the Satyagrahi must continuously make efforts to examine his own motives and make adjustments. Since the idea is not merely to assert but to create more possibilities, the Satyagrahi never misses an opportunity to make a compromise. Making a compromise does not indicate the weakness of the Satyagrahi, but only enhances the possibility for a lasting solution.

To summarise, the Gandhian values that remain relevant for conflict resolution are listed below.

1. **Faith in human goodness:** The inherent and unrelenting belief that all individuals ultimately have the conscience to be good and do good to others and that aberrations are temporary
2. **Truth:** It is the search for truth and the resoluteness to reach truth that can alone guide humanity towards a better and fulfilled world order
3. **Ahimsa:** It is much greater than its English translation, viz. nonviolence. It has a positive connotation and it implies doing rather than the mere negative implication of not causing bodily harm. It encourages loving and doing good to even the evildoer while resisting evil at the same time.
4. **The relationship of the means to the end:** Both are significant and equal in value
5. **Creative self-suffering:** This is a better and more pious approach as it not only purifies our conscience but also changes the attitude of the other party for the better
6. **Fearlessness:** The use of nonviolence does not amount to cowardice. It is the fearlessness to resist wrong, come what may, which matters most.

Hence, the methodology of Satyagraha is a confluence of all these values and it is way of life that goes beyond mere settlement of disputes.

3. Conflict Resolution in a Plural Society like India

In a diverse country like India, marked by numerous languages, religions, cultures, castes, etc., it is natural that differences arise on various grounds. But as opined by Nehru in his 'Discovery of India', there is something called Indianness which pervades the length and breadth of India and believes in diversity, accommodation and receptiveness to new people and ideas. It is no wonder that an innumerable number of religions, races and people came to India to be assimilated as one Indian whole while retaining their unique identity.

Nehru again rightly contends that India is akin to a fruit salad wherein the ingredient communities, cultures and languages are seen distinctly; yet, they produce a wholesome taste when eaten together. However, in recent years, we can observe increasing cases of destructive conflicts where there seems to be no light at the end of the tunnel. Some examples of such conflicts and the relevance of Gandhian values therein are discussed hereafter.

3.1 Communalism and Religious Fundamentalism

Gandhi's ideas on religion are appreciated in India as well as worldwide. He was a staunch believer in God and demonstrated in his practical life the role of religion in man's life. The striking point is that Gandhi always saw religion as a connecting theme rather than a divisive issue. He said that there are as many religions in the world as the number of human beings. He said that we must open all the windows in the house so that winds can flow in from all directions but still be firm enough

on our feet not to be blown away by any of them. He actually displayed a keen interest in learning from the various religions of the world.

He read various religious texts to understand their essence and maintained that the ultimate truth remains the same irrespective of variances in the written text. He could effortlessly recite verses from the Gita, Quran and Bible and his prayers were marked by bhajans and verses from multiple texts. He rightly understood the problem of religious intolerance and communal politics and tirelessly worked towards reconciliation till his last breath.

Communal tensions, which had been among the serious challenges before Independence, continue to be a grave threat even today. Gandhi led the way in showing remarkable courage in working for peace and the avoidance of bloodshed. When the entire British Indian Army and civil servants could not stop the bloodshed and massacre in the Punjab and when Nehru, Patel and Mountbatten were rendered helpless, Gandhi alone ensured that not a single drop of blood was spilt in Bengal. When he came to know that some violence took place in Noakhali, he risked his life to walk to those villages and attempt reconciliation.

When we look at the present day issues in India like the Babri Masjid dispute, the unfortunate Godhra incident-related killings, the riots in Kandhamal, etc., we cannot but appreciate the relevance of a Gandhian approach towards attaining peace. Unless we reach out to the victims, their families and address their concerns regarding the injustice meted out to them, we cannot halt the cycle of hatred and violence.

Physical wounds may heal more quickly than the emotional scars in the minds of riot-stricken victims. Gandhi would have walked to all those families giving them solace and strength as he wanted to do in the Punjab after he returned from Bengal. Though his dream that the separated Hindus and Muslims in Punjab's villages would reunite and live amicably remains unfulfilled, we must take strength from his conviction and work towards peace.

3.2 Intolerance and Parochialism

Economic growth, the spread of education and better transport facilities have brought people across states closer since Independence. Language barriers are also fading away with English emerging as the lingua franca. However, we can still see some instances of intolerance and parochialism e.g. in Maharashtra where the issue of language and regional identities are being misused to launch vicious attacks on people who migrated from other states. The Indian Constitution guarantees equal opportunities to all irrespective of language, religion, gender, region, etc.

In this regard, the Gandhian values of tolerance and receptivity are greatly relevant. The divisive campaign aimed at pitting our own countrymen against each other needs to be faced with lot more resoluteness. Political parties are somehow tempted to look at short-term gains, in terms of votes, and ignore the deeper impact of their hatred campaign. A greater vision is required and a mass awareness drive is needed to stress the point that only the free flow of people and resources across states can lead to economic integration and the overall development of the country's citizens.

3.3 Internal Security Issues

Naxalism, or left wing extremism, and unrest in the Northeast and Jammu & Kashmir are some of the burning issues with which our plural society is battling. In the case of Naxalism, discontent among the tribes living in disadvantaged, far-flung areas is the primary motivator. As Gandhi put it, though the opponent takes up arms under any misconception, vengeance leaves both parties worse off. Hence, armed retaliation cannot provide any lasting solution in these areas. Of course, the enforcement of law and order is absolutely essential to ensure that the writ of the state runs through these areas. But the careful building of trust by reaching out to the people through developmental work may be the best way out in this regard.

Northeast India also faces similar historical neglect and alienation due to which the identification of the locals with mainstream India is low. As a result, many splinter groups are exploiting this disconnect. The state must walk the extra mile in these cases both literally and metaphorically through tangible actions like building up infrastructure, devolving funds and powers to local bodies and gradually withdrawing the armed forces as well as the draconian legislations that have led to human rights' violations. Though the Kashmir issue is more complex with the interplay of external interference and internal neglect, the way forward lies in instilling confidence among those who bore the brunt of this interplay and lost their near and dear ones.

3.4 Reservation in Jobs: Conflicting Demands

The creators of our Constitution saw reservations as an affirmative action which could address the deep-rooted inequalities existing in a caste-ridden society. However, they looked at reservations purely as a short-term, transitory measure which can be dispensed with after ten years. In this time, the government would

have strived to educate and uplift weaker sections through multiple measures. Reservation in jobs was thus intended as one of the supporting gestures to the main task of ensuring socioeconomic equality.

Unfortunately, successive governments seem to have reduced their entire responsibility to merely reserving seats and ignoring more comprehensive steps towards addressing inequalities. Now, we can observe an increasing number of individuals fighting to be considered more backward than others. Political parties also give in to such narrow demands for their own short-term gains. Gandhi always stressed on the idea of ‘daridro narayana hari’, i.e. the lowest person is the actual God. He fought for the rights of the Harijans and the removal of untouchability in any form.

Though he conceded to the demand that more seats be reserved for the disadvantaged sections under the Poona Pact, he equally maintained that the long-term solution lies in going to every village and spreading the idea of social equality. We need to do the same even now, i.e. reach out to each of the Dalits and tribes in order to address the glaring gaps in terms of their education, health indicators and rural livelihoods.

3.5 Civil Society Activism: The Tussle over the Jan Lokpal Bill

A plural society like India has multiple stakeholders apart from the government and free market institutions in the form of civil society organizations. Within the government, there are different voices in Parliament and the Executive representing different regions, languages, caste groups, etc. A vibrant civil society is actually an indicator of a matured society and it is even more crucial in a diverse society like India.

The ongoing campaign by Anna Hazare for a specific version of the Jan Lokpal Bill and the discord within the government and civil society presents a classic case of how conflicts can arise and what can be done to arrive at an acceptable reconciliation. While many have lauded Anna's fast unto death as a truly Gandhian method, many others have accused him of subverting democratic institutions like Parliament.

While everyone readily denounces corruption and elaborates on the need to eradicate it, there seem to be few acceptable paths in this direction. Had Gandhi been alive today, he would surely have appreciated Anna's noble intentions and his peaceful method of pressing his demands. However, Gandhi also would have stressed on the need to compromise and value the opinions of others as well. He would have included more divergent interests and arrived at a pragmatic solution to the problem.

3.6 The Demand for Small States

Although Telangana is the most burning issue confronting the polity at present, there are many other demands, both latent as well as overt, for other small states. These include ones for the formation of Vidarbha, Bundelkhand, Harit Pradesh, Gorkhaland, etc. On the face of it, the continued neglect of these regions, the inadequate political space enjoyed by them and their consequent underdevelopment are the main issues leading to such demands. However, the lack of financial viability and the absence of political consensus are major roadblocks.

Looking deeper, however, we may realize that there is no guarantee that the ground reality of deprivation will be addressed through the creation of new states. Unless the Gandhian values of Gram Swaraj and democratic decentralization are

implemented in full measure, the mere formation of new states cannot guarantee tangible change. Although the 73rd and 74th amendments came into force almost 20 years ago, functions, funds and functionaries have not been devolved to the Panchayats in many states. If the Gandhian ideal of Gram Swaraj is implemented through decentralized local self-governance, the grievances of the people in these regions can be addressed substantially.

3.7 Language and Conflict

India is home to a large number of languages, both spoken and written. Gandhi rightly appreciated the richness of such diversity and encouraged that everyone learn as many languages as feasible. Although he felt that Hindustani could serve as the common link across the length and breadth of India, he was never averse to regional languages.

In fact, in his educational scheme of 'nayi taleem', he emphasized that the primary education of the child must take place in his/her mother tongue alone. He attempted to learn Tamil while he was in South Africa and even volunteered to teach written Tamil to immigrants there. Whenever he used to travel extensively to the villages, he always tried to speak in the local language. Gandhi's openness on the issue of language can greatly help us resolve any conflict regarding language.

4. Conflicts in the International Context

The world has undergone tremendous changes since Gandhi passed away. Gandhi himself witnessed one of the most colossal human tragedies when millions were killed in the Second World War. Observing the atrocities committed by the fascist regime in Germany, he felt that there was no alternative given that the situation had reached such an extreme stage. The use of weapons, coercive tactics and

militarization has only increased since then. However, Gandhian values inspired many like Nelson Mandela and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in realizing their objectives.

The efficacy of nonviolence and Satyagraha depend on the calibre of the persons who want to use them. Gandhian methodology requires complete internalization in addition to patience, perseverance and self-suffering. Today's world is marked by an increasing tendency to resort to force and violence to achieve stated objectives. Therefore we can see cycles of hatred, violence and atrocities committed against the weak. It requires a great deal of imagination to break these cycles of hatred and instil confidence among those who perceive injustice to have been committed.

4.1 Terrorism

This is one of the major threats facing humankind at present. There cannot be any lasting solution unless psychological and attitudinal issues are addressed. Gandhi strongly believed that God is no other than love, truth, fearlessness and conscience. He is beyond reasoning, logic and speech. Hence, God and religion are purely in the personal domain of any individual. Unfortunately, fundamentalists are using religion to divide communities and nations. The need of the hour is to believe in these Gandhian values and reorient others to put an end to bigotry.

Gandhi himself may have made a mistake when he undertook the Khilafat movement during the non-cooperation struggle to unite people against the British. We see how, later, the monster of communalism could not be tamed and it finally led to a traumatic partition.

4.2 The Fight against Dictatorial and Authoritative Regimes

Peoples' urge for representative democracies can be observed all over the world and especially, and notably, in Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, and nearby countries of late. However, unfortunately, people as well as the ruling regime resort to violence, leading to avoidable bloodshed and loss of lives. On the contrary, Gandhi demonstrated how to lead a nonviolent struggle against an imperial regime.

It is true that ruling regimes have become more violent and repressive since then. Even so, we must understand that the violent upturning of a dictatorial regime does not lead to the sudden imbibing of democratic values. Our freedom struggle is an example that liberal values such as tolerance, democratic decision making, gender equality and free and fair elections can be ingrained only over a period of time. Therefore, we need to encourage the deepening of democratic values in these oppressive regimes rather than laud the violent upsetting of a dictatorship.

4.3 Combating Climate Change

The mindless exploitation of natural resources and the consequent, irreversible impact on the environment, leading to global warming and change in climatic conditions is one of the crucial issues facing mankind. However, there is intense conflict among various nations in terms of fixing the responsibility for corrective action. Nations group themselves under various blocs like G-8, G-77, BASIC, EU, etc. to protect their interests.

Deadlocks result in various climate change conferences when nations stubbornly stick to their stand citing various reasons. Negotiations often hit a hard wall when many of them are not ready to budge from such a stance. Gandhian views on negotiation, as discussed earlier, are of crucial importance in saving the planet.

Most importantly, his view that “nature has something to offer for everyone’s need but not everyone’s greed” sums up the way forward in terms of the lifestyles adopted by many of us.

5. Limitations of Gandhian Ideology

There is a strong argument that Gandhian thought is less relevant because of changing times. Those who argue along these lines posit that situations and times have changed so much as to render Satyagraha out of sync with reality. Hence, for these modernists, Gandhian ideology seems too idealistic to be followed in dealing with practical situations. However, we must not forget that Gandhi himself was highly progressive and always believed in the continued refinement and correction of thoughts. For example, many criticize him for his so called antagonism towards the use of machines. However, he stressed repeatedly that he negates the usage of machines only to the extent that they render many unemployed when millions are suffering from dire poverty for want of productive work. He always marvelled at those machines which reduced the drudgery of human beings.

Gandhi never aimed at consistency or constancy in his ideas. He specifically wrote that if anybody notices inconsistency in his writings at various points of time, that person should consider only the later written words. Similarly, Gandhi himself would have suggested suitable adjustments in the conflict resolution process in a given situation.

Thus, instead of setting aside his theme of Satyagraha all at once, we must seriously consider it as one of the potent weapons for resolving conflicts. There may well be situations wherein the use of force may become unavoidable to save lives and property. However, given the frequency and intensity of violence

witnessed in the present day world, vengeance seems to have become the norm rather than the exception. Gandhian ideology conveys that the usage of force, either for revenge or to arrest more violence, must be adopted in the rarest of circumstances rather than normally.

The limitation of Gandhian ideology does not lie in its logic or in its application. It requires patience, time, perseverance and right-mindedness in order to attain the desired goal. First of all, a true Satyagrahi must internalize such an attitude so that he can deal with unforeseen situations with poise and the right temperament. Half-hearted attempts are more likely to be counterproductive.

6. Conclusion

Gandhi never considered himself infallible nor claimed himself to be a ‘mahatma’. He used to describe himself as someone in search of Truth and considered Satyagraha as one of the most effective means to live a more fruitful life. Thus, instead of attaching notions of value to his ideas, we must be thankful to him for making the whole world aware of an alternative mechanism of conflict resolution. Even if a few of us start considering Satyagraha as one of the approaches to any situation, Gandhi would be content.

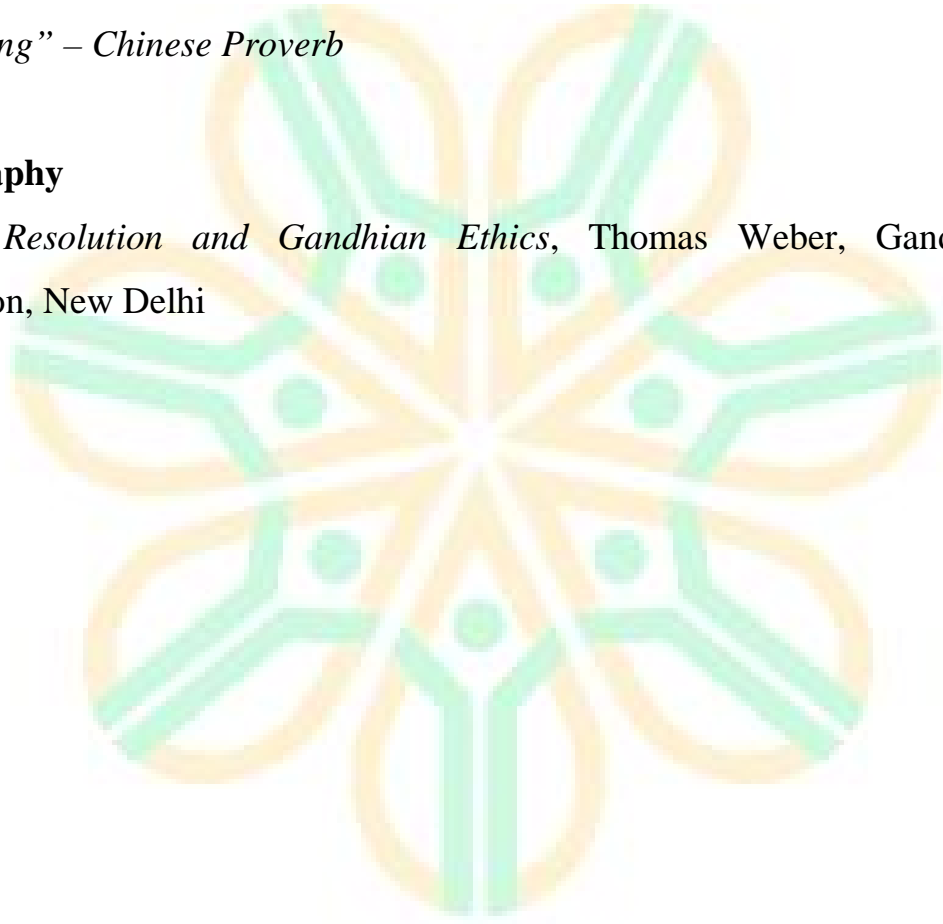
At the same time, acknowledging the limitations of Gandhian methodology only enhances its stature and makes it more acceptable to others. In a world marked by increasing sectarian violence and religious bigotry, and in a plural society like ours marked by increasing intolerance and religious fundamentalism, Gandhian values will remain relevant and even more so in the changing context. Gandhi was saddened to witness Partition and the associated bloodshed. The onus is on us to

leave no stone unturned in ensuring that such situations never recur nor any more lives lost in the name of religion.

“If we don’t change the direction we are going, we are likely to end up where we are heading” – Chinese Proverb

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Dusting Gandhi off the Shelf of History

INDIRA KALYAN ELESELA

The very name Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, or Mahatma Gandhi, is synonymous with nonviolence across the globe. Any reference to world peace, conflict resolution between groups and even sustainable economic development would be incomplete without a mention of his ideas regarding these. The International Day of Nonviolence is celebrated on the birth anniversary of Gandhi underlining his contribution to conflict resolution. Gandhi's values, as U.R. Rao said "...were ancient, eternal truths, as 'old as the hills', but he resurrected and revitalized them..." (Rao, 1963: XV) The historical context of his ideas was the colonial era and the then on-going freedom struggles in most parts of the world. His methods of ahimsa or nonviolence, civil disobedience and non-cooperation were employed not only in India but even by other countries like South Africa, USA, etc. in their struggles against apartheid or for civil rights. The situation in the Indian subcontinent was not limited solely to gaining independence from the British but also required harmony and peaceable methods of conflict resolution among the diverse communities and subgroups occupying the subcontinent. Gandhi insisted upon communal harmony, especially between the religious groups of Hindus and Muslims. He also considered at length the issues of caste and gender with respect to harmony and humanity.

The world today is completely different from that of the days of Gandhi. The technological leaps, cultural exchanges and unfettered mobility have shrunk the world to a 'global village'. Some argue that we are now more diverse due to the intermingling and interaction with different and far off societies and are enriched by the experiences. Some others like Levi Strauss, the anthropologist, say that we

are producing mass ‘monocultures’. In a society moving towards greater heterogeneity, conflicts arise due to differences and, in the case of moving towards monoculture - as is alleged in the case of globalization, conflicts spring from the domination of one by the other. Conflict resolutions based on Gandhian values remain relevant in either case because such a resolution is based on principles wedded to nonviolence and welfare of the lowest or most disadvantaged.

What is a Plural Society?

A plural society is characterized by the coexistence of distinct ethnic, religious or cultural groups. These societies in general believe in the tolerance of diversities and consider the same to be enriching social life. Often such societies provide the minorities freedom to sustain their cultures. Such a society offers a wide range of options or choices for its members; respects the distinct identity of each, and is against the imposition of a majority opinion. However, pluralism is far larger than a mere plurality of options; it is a complex web of interconnected and overlapping outlooks, ideas, objectives and practices. As the 2nd ARC¹² put it, “India was and is a mosaic of languages, cultures and ethnicities, not simply tolerating each other but accepting and harmonising all the diversities as part of the composite whole”. A plural society thus always has groups that have different and, many a times, conflicting interests, whether religious, economic, social or political. This is not to say that homogenous societies are free from conflict but only that in a plural society the differences between the groups themselves sometimes act as the catalyst for the conflict thereby bringing the conflicting issue close to the very identity of the groups involved. Conflicts arise when an incompatibility of interests is felt or becomes manifest. When these apparent or imagined conflicts of interest

¹² Mentioned in the Preface To The 7th Report Of the 2nd Administrative Reforms Commission- Capacity Building For Conflict Resolution

are not resolved, there is a threat of them being magnified into divisions between two communities or groups. In such cases, any conflicts of interest may be projected as endangering the existence of community as a whole. The development of communalism in India, leading to the Partition of India, is one example.

Gandhian values which empowered methods for conflict resolution include Truth, Nonviolence or Ahimsa, Satyagraha, Antyodaya and Sarvodaya, Fasting, Equitable distribution of wealth, Respect and mutual tolerance, etc.

Different Types of Conflicts

Conflicts arise in a plural society due to such various reasons as religion, ethnicity, economic issues, identity issues, cultural issues, etc. The absence of conflict in any society, whether pluralistic or otherwise, is a utopian concept. However the strength of a nation or a society lies in its capacity to resolve the conflicts in an amicable manner and thus progress towards peace. As per the 2nd Administrative Reforms Commission, the following types of conflicts exist in India, viz. Left-wing extremism, Land-related issues, Issues related to Scheduled Castes, Issues related to Scheduled Tribes, Issues related to Other Backward Classes, Religious conflicts, Political conflicts, Regional disparities, Conflicts in the Northeast, etc. A few of the more important conflicts are discussed hereunder.

Religious conflicts: Religion is an emotive issue and history is replete with examples of how religious interest can be manipulated to incite violence. The crusades of Europe, the demolition of the Babri masjid, the Godhra riots and the September 11, 2001, attacks in the US are all acts of mindless violence related to religion. Blaise Pascal, the mathematician-philosopher, rightly said that “men never do evil so completely and cheerfully as when they do it from a religious conviction”. Despite the unity that prevails among many communities in India,

Hindu-Muslim clashes have always been the toughest to contain and curtail. In fact, Gandhi strived to forge this unity all his life. He went to South Africa where, in relation to a case involving a Muslim, he realized that Indians in that country are divided on communal lines and determined to put in his best efforts in bringing unity among them. He wrote that, of the two things for which he devoted his life, one is the permanent unity between Hindus and Muslims. Indian history is marred by instances of communal clashes of which the most barbaric, and whose effects are still abiding, is the Partition of India in 1947.

However the more disturbing trend is that this kind of violence rears its ugly head sporadically even six decades after Partition. The memories of communal carnage by both the communities in Godhra are still fresh in the nation's memory. The bomb blasts in the religious places of Muslims in Maharashtra, allegedly orchestrated by the right-wing Hindutva organizations, reflects that the hatred between sections of these communities is still seething. Some political parties and religious organizations are keen on promoting the estrangement between the communities in a blatant disregard of the Constitution. The Gandhian mode of conflict resolution is the best way forward because it is rooted in the concept of morality. Gandhi never hesitated to put forward his viewpoint in a frank and constructive manner. He wrote the following, on Hindu-Muslim unity, in *Young India* (1927), "we may think we are living, but disunited we are worse than dead. The Hindu thinks that in quarrelling with the Musalman he is benefiting Hinduism; and the Musalman thinks that in fighting the Hindu he is benefiting Islam. But each is ruining his faith. For one man cannot do right while he is occupied in doing wrong in any other department. Life is one indivisible whole."

The Hindu-Muslim clashes occupy most of our attention due to historical reasons and also for the fact there have been more number of such violent acts among these two communities. The riots in Rudrapur in October, 2011, were the latest of the many acts of communal blindness. However, other communities in India like the Sikhs and Christians are also involved in violence. The clashes between the Meo Muslims and Gujjars in September, 2011, are another example.

The burning alive of an Australian missionary, Graham Staines, in Orissa, the attacks on nuns and Christians in Kandhamal, also in Orissa, and recent attacks on churches in Mangalore, Coorg, etc. by Hindutva organizations have created and magnified fears of a dominant majority. Gandhi wrote that, traditionally, the Musalman is seen as a bully and the Hindu as the timid one. In the case of Hindu-Christian¹³ clashes, so to speak, there seems to be a role reversal as the Hindu comes across as the bully. As communal violence is blind to any sense of dignity and respect for human life, these attacks have led to the raping of nuns and the displacement of thousands of tribal people, and created a fear psychosis among minorities. They also have spread insecurities among other minority communities.

Gandhi advised the majority community that it is not enough to learn the art of reading and writing but one has to learn the art of living on friendly terms with one's neighbours. He was more pungent when he wrote that the majority has no right to impose itself for might of the numbers or of the sword shall not be right. Right is the only might, appearances to the contrary notwithstanding¹⁴.

¹³ Hindu-Christian or Hindu-Muslim clashes refer to attacks in which some sections of these communities are involved and are in no way attempts to malign any community as a whole.

¹⁴ Harijan, August 10th, 1947 p 275

The relevance of Gandhian values in conflict resolution lies in the fact that he emphasized the use of non-violence and truth as the basic values. The failure on the part of any community involved in the violence is due to the fact they do not acknowledge that they committed a wrong. As a Chinese philosopher put it, the first step in resolving a problem is to acknowledge there is one. The influence of Christianity on Gandhi is quite clearly visible in his entreaty to confession, seeking forgiveness and commitment to nonviolence. Recognition of a wrong committed, and confessing or acknowledging it requires great courage. He thus says that the unity between two communities with enmity, e.g. Hindus and Muslims, is one for the men of mental strength and not for the weak. He also emphasizes seeking forgiveness from the ones hurt by our actions. He wrote after Partition that the majority communities in both India and Pakistan need to seek forgiveness from the minority community for the violence towards them. However, extant conflict resolution strategies are far removed from this ideal suggested by Gandhi. It is true that his methods are difficult and idealist in one sense. In fact he himself admitted that unity between Hindus and Muslims might not be possible in his lifetime but he would not cease from working towards it.

To dismiss the method as idealist is the greatest disservice we can do to the man we honour as the Father of our Nation. It is important to recognize that an attitude of confrontation and hostility will only breed further hatred and enmity. He believed all men are equal and have to live in a spirit of brotherhood. He often quoted the words of the Urdu poet Iqbal, “Mazhab nahi sikhata aapas mein bair rakhna”, i.e. religion does not teach us to bear ill-will towards one another. Gandhi believed in arbitration as opposed to reprisals as the best method of resolving conflicts. He wanted this to be made popular and obligatory. If conflicts can be resolved at the earliest and the lowest level by adhering to the truth, there is no

scope for violence resulting in the loss of life and property. The concept of *Mohali* committees suggested by the 2nd ARC as one of the measures by which to maintain peace is also rooted in Gandhian ideals.

Economic issues and Regional disparities: The 2nd ARC¹⁵ says that “the real problem in many of our states and regions is economic; the conflict is over resources but camouflaged in various forms of identity politics based on religion, on caste, on region, on ethnicity, on language and less frequently based on ideological divides. For example, the North Eastern region was neglected right from the very beginning”. The Gandhian values of economic self-sufficiency and village autonomy, trusteeship and co-proprietorship models, political decentralisation without state control and village republics are as important today as they were when he propounded his doctrine. The concept of Antyodaya (welfare of the least) is relevant even today in terms of the much-touted inclusive growth. He believed in simplicity of life for he recognized that *contentment with godliness is the greatest gain.*¹⁶

Gandhi’s spiritual inclination is clearly visible in his prescriptions for problem solving. He believed that the earth is capable of producing “for everyone’s need but for no one’s greed”; he believed that one should be mindful of the weakest, poorest and the most disadvantaged. He advocated renunciation and attached no significance to material wealth for he said that truth is the greatest asset one can have. The Bhoodan movement of Vinoba Bhave was also inspired by Gandhian values.

¹⁵ 2nd ARC in its 7th Report: Capacity Building For Conflict Resolution

¹⁶ Quoted from The Holy Bible

Gandhi's advocacy of village republics and self-sufficiency are not intended to make them isolated but instead to ensure that each village is balanced in its development. He encouraged village industries and also believed that machinery should be properly employed to prevent the displacement of labour. He envisioned village republics as *“the structure composed of innumerable villages, there will be ever widening, never ascending circles. Life will not be a pyramid with apex sustained by the bottom... but it will be an oceanic circle whose centre will be the individual always ready to perish for the circle of villages, till at last the whole becomes one life composed of individuals.”*

The concept of Providing Urban Amenities in Rural Areas, or PURA, proposed by the former President of India A.P.J. Abdul Kalam closely resembles the Gandhian concept of village republics. Again, the focus on developing rural areas to overcome urban congestion can also be seen as recognition of the importance of village republics.

The competition for resources has intensified in this era of neo-imperialism. Instead of nations now we have multinational corporations colonizing and exploiting natural as well as the human resources in the garb of development. There are innumerable cases of conflict between big business houses and people who have been living for generations on now-disputed land or resources. Multinational corporations are not the only ones involved but governments are also perceived to be alienating marginalized groups in the wake of development and thereby creating a conflict between the government and the governed.

The central Indian tribal revolts are partly due to deprivation of economic resources and partly due to cultural reasons. The popular movie 'Avatar' depicts

the struggle of the natives to conserve their wealth and culture against the rampaging quest for material glory. The recent protest by the tribal population of Niyamgiri Hill in Orissa against the proposed aluminium plant which will displace them and ruin their livelihood is a case in point.

It is sad to note that there is a parochial interest which guides our decision-makers. An example is the Union Railways Minister's focus on his/her own state while introducing new trains. Regional disparities also arise due to the fact that certain regions are neglected historically and even in the present. The case of the Northeast is a classic example. Even the 2nd ARC report acknowledges that the development effort in the Northeast began only in the 1970s, i.e. more than two decades after Independence. Within the states, there are islands of prosperity and poverty leading to conflicts and disturbing their internal stability and cohesion. The struggle for Telangana, Vidharbha, etc. exemplifies this trend.

The Gandhian values of equitable distribution of wealth and the concept of *Sarvodaya* are more relevant today in these conflict-ridden states. Also, the values of peaceful and nonviolent protest, within the means sanctioned by the Constitution, need to be adopted by those who are fighting for a separate state.

Caste conflicts: The caste system, despite many positive interpretations by scholars and even Gandhi, is an oppressive system for all practical reasons. It is based on the fact that humans are born into an unchangeable hierarchy. To exclude certain sections of society based on birth is reprehensible and inhuman. It prohibits mobility and, in the name of occupational specialization, has killed the creativity and progress of a huge section of population. Naturally, there have been, historically, many cases of caste-based violence in India. It is deplorable that, even

after a Constitutional ban on untouchability and the enactment of various laws relating to civil rights, discrimination continues to survive albeit in subtler forms. The cases of caste-based violence in recent times, e.g. the Khairlanji case in which the family of a Dalit was raped and brutally murdered, the violence in Mirchpur, Haryana, and the reports of postmen refusing to deliver to Dalit households in Madurai are all grim reminders of our failure to mature completely into an equitable society. Some years ago, a student in Hyderabad Central University committed suicide citing caste-based harassment by his professor. In 2008, during the protests over increase in OBC reservations, students from Delhi's AIIMS reportedly displayed posters addressing the backward classes which read '*apne aukaad mein raho*' (stay within your status), a stark example of how education has not brought about the expected change.

Gandhian methods are based on the appreciation of each individual's unique value and respect for each of them. It was his firm opposition to the inhuman practice of untouchability that led Gandhi to dwell in Dalit villages. He even took a break from active politics to work for the welfare of Harijans. Caste violence and discrimination can be curtailed if every individual realizes that he/she is made in the image of God and that God is impartial and righteous. A spirit of community, of brotherhood, can be inculcated only when one discards the false or imagined sense of superiority. It is not the preaching or rituals that confer the goodness on a man/woman but the willingness to recognize the value of each individual and the actual practice of love and truth.

Political Conflicts and Gandhian Values

These conflicts arise due to the fact that peoples' representatives cease to be so and, worse, turn into people exploiters. The recent 2G and Commonwealth Games scams, mining frauds in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, scams in Jharkhand, etc. are but a few examples of the innumerable acts of dishonesty and breach of trust committed by the political leadership. Gone are the days when ministers took up moral responsibility and offered to resign. Parties like the Shiv Sena in Maharashtra blatantly indulge in flaring up communal tensions, beating up non-locals and impose unreasonable restrictions on artists. However the political leadership lacks the courage and resolve to act against such rabble-rousers. The passivity is due to the fact that they do not want to antagonize their vote banks.

Gandhi advocated that a leader's life must be open for examination and he/she must be a person of integrity and truth. It is the lack of these virtues that is causing widespread discontent among the masses and turning them against the country's political leadership. Satyagraha, which is the commitment to truth, is a forgotten ideal today. Satyagraha incorporates sincerity, respect and restraint in it. It is utter self-effacement, greatest humiliation, greatest patience and highest faith; it is based upon some well-understood principles; and it must not be capricious. The common grievance today is that there is lack of information. Though the RTI Act has led to some improvement, the culture of secrecy, opacity and unwillingness to make decisions on the basis of shared information still prevails within our political system. Conflicts arise because of the gap between the expectations and aspirations of the people and the actions of their political representatives. The former chief ministers of different states are in prison, or in custody or facing allegations of bribery and disproportionate assets, reminding us of how far we have strayed from the path described by our nation's pioneering leaders.

Media and Gandhian values

Gandhi listed the role of newspapers as one of the reasons for the cause and spread of communal conflicts. He deplored that some newspapers engaged in a vilification campaign and incited violence. Clearly the cardinal value of truth was disregarded by these newspapers. The courage and the conviction of the media, in terms of abiding by the truth, are of great value to our present day society. The instances of paid news, corruption, unethical means to obtain news and the practice of conveying rumours and opinions as news is rendering the Fourth Estate insignificant. The recent events of the UK's News of the World being shut down after criminal breaches of contract, the connection of NDTV anchor Barkha Dutt with the infamous Radia tapes, and the refusal of Times Now to adhere to the guidelines of the Home Ministry during the November 26th attacks in Mumbai prove that the media is betraying the responsibility entrusted to it.

Women and Gandhian values

Indian society presents many paradoxes of which one pertains to women. We revere goddesses, preach many things about the respect for women but fail to practice. The instances of rape and assaults on women continue to grow. The majority of abuses are on women. Gandhi respected the immense contribution of women in the freedom struggle. He considered them equal to men and in fact held that they are more capable of sacrifice than men. This sense of equality and appreciation of the fairer sex, if inculcated, can eliminate the discrimination against women which is still prevalent. Also, we need to work towards providing a safer and more secure environment for the women to progress and succeed. Gandhi advocated that it is the dharma of a man to defend with his life the honour of his mother, sister, wife, daughter or, indeed, any woman. He used quite powerful words when he said that in a society of brave men, evidence of a completed rape

should be almost impossible to obtain. Not one man should be alive to report such a crime¹⁷.

Examples of Gandhian values applied for Conflict Resolution

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was inspired by Gandhian thought and the advocacy of nonviolence and Satyagraha is being carried on by the descendants of Dr. King. The country where Gandhi started his experiments with Satyagraha, South Africa, is another outstanding example. There, Nelson Mandela adopted the path of nonviolence and suffered with courage and commitment for liberation from an oppressive regime. The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, or TRC, was set up by the Government of National Unity to help deal with what happened under apartheid. Conflicts during this period resulted in violence and human rights abuses on all sides.

The Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission of Sri Lanka set up by the government of Sri Lanka, in relation to the resolution of the conflict between the Sinhalese and the Tamils, is another example of relevance of Gandhian values. The continued emphasis on negotiations, confidence building measures and peace talks with Pakistan despite their provocation, is another illustration.

Ansar Burney, a Pakistani human rights activist who raised funds to free sailors of Indian and Pakistani origin from pirates, invoked the spirit of brotherhood among the historically enmity-ridden groups. Also, Prisoners Swap Deals are a part of political actions undergirded by Gandhian ideals.

¹⁷ Young India, December 18, 1924, p411

At the regional level, we can cite the example of *Shramdaan* by the former Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, N. Chandrababu Naidu, apart from village resource centres in some states as ideas inspired by Gandhian values.

Fasting as a weapon of nonviolence

Fasting, as a protest against an injustice, awakens the sleeping conscience of either the loved ones, of the society or of the ruler. Fasting is not a means to force someone into action. A genuine fast is a direct act of resisting untruth; it is an immediate appeal to the conscience of the wrongdoer; and it relies on one's inner spiritual strength. In this sense, fasting epitomizes the meaning of suffering in nonviolent resistance as an eminently “transformative pedagogic act¹⁸”. Gandhi used fasting as a method of nonviolence. Drawing from various religions the importance of fasting for cleansing the inner self, he resorted to fasts at various times. He said that his fasts qualified him for achieving an equal and selfless love. It is much more significant than unfurling the flag or taking out processions. Fasts are meant to activate society, draw them out from their mental lethargy and channelize their energies into nation-building. Irom Sharmila from Manipur is fasting for many years now, perfectly imbibing Gandhian values, although unfortunately, results are yet to materialize. Anna Hazare went on a fast and succeeded in making the government take into account the interests of the people. Sukhdeo Thorat, former UGC Chairman, says that when there is no way left for following the constitutional methods for achieving objectives, there is justification for unconstitutional methods but the coercive forms of Satyagraha and fasting being on rise in recent times, in the phrases of Ambedkar it is “*nothing less than the grammar of anarchy*”. Noam Chomsky says that preaching nonviolence is easy than practicing it. Everyone will obviously be in favour of nonviolence rather than

¹⁸ M. K. Gandhi (1963), *The Way To Communal Harmony*, Navajivan Publishing House

violence but what is important is under “*what conditions and when*” is it practiced.

Conclusion

Conflict resolution in a plural society requires the application of principles tested through experiences. Gandhi’s principles or values assume relevance for the reason that they are a result of practical application and continuous experimentation and refining. They are not simply an abstract philosophy. *Lage Raho Munnabhai*, a popular Hindi movie, depicted how *Gandhigiri* is health-giving and life transforming as opposed to *goondagiri*. The movie conveyed that a conviction to stand by the truth at an individual level may soon spread and influence many others to embrace the path of truth and nonviolence.

Truth is an eternal value. It is the fundamental value on which all other values find their sustenance. Nonviolence is not passive but more powerful than the power of bombs and guns. It can be practiced only by men of courage and conviction and not by men of cowardice. Gandhi epitomizes the application of both these principles. He said, “*Use truth as your anvil, nonviolence as your hammer and anything that does not stand the test when it is brought to the anvil of truth and hammered with nonviolence, reject it.*” Gandhi practiced what he believed till the end and even at the expense of his life, subscribing that the truth of love, justice and humanity should be upheld at any cost; that this truth is even more precious than our very life. He upheld truth as a value not only worth living for but also worth dying for.

Gandhi’s philosophy, values and principles, though being overlooked by the practices of the world today, nevertheless hold ground for conflict resolution.

Conflicts will continue till we achieve ‘one man one value’¹⁹ in our socioeconomic life. Thus arises the importance of means as being as important as the end; and the means have to be nonviolent and based in love, truth, tolerance, goodwill and trust. His thought-provoking question on how a society can allocate its resources without criticizing the ends to which they are put to use is highly pertinent for the present day world driven by the maximization of wealth regardless of the means. The lack of such strong introspection has landed us in the economic crisis which refuses to blow away since its onset a few years back. Any harmony, ranging from between family members to between communities to between nations, is possible only when these elements are brought in practice.

Gandhian values underline how one can be religious and yet not fundamentalist. He drew upon the values of other religions and tried to achieve harmony. He believed in universal brotherhood, in the spirit of cooperation and tolerance. Such an approach is of immense significance in plural societies.

Encouraging small industries and handicrafts, providing gainful employment of rural masses and restraining overindulgence are values that we need to embrace if we are to achieve the goals of elimination of hunger, deprivation and other violations of human rights. To relegate Gandhi and his philosophy to the glorious annals of history and forget the application of his values is the greatest disservice we can do to him. If Gandhian principles are treated solely as an ideology we render them redundant. Idolizing a person and conveniently forsaking the practice of what is preached by him/her is a mistake made too often in the history of mankind. Whether we put Gandhi in this same category is a matter of choice. But there is no choice regarding the pain and loss due to the unresolved conflicts.

¹⁹ Expression used by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar

The Missing Gandhis of Today

AJAY PRAKASH

“An eye for an eye will make the whole world blind.”

Mahatma Gandhi

In response to a question by a journalist about what his message to the world was Mahatma Gandhi said cryptically, “My life is my message.” Nothing could be truer than that. What we know today as Gandhian values are nothing but luminous examples from his extraordinary life.

At another occasion, Mahatma Gandhi famously said, “We need to be the change we wish to see in the world.” No one ever has exemplified it more than him. He lived as he preached. In other words, he lived his ideals, and led by example.

India had been extremely fortunate to have a great leader like Gandhi at the helm of affairs during the pre-Independence years, for the character of the newly Independent-state was heavily dependent on the men and women who led it. If India today is a leading example of a multicultural, multilingual, multi-religious, plural state, the credit goes to our founding fathers, with Gandhi being the leading light.

If there was one place where Gandhi and his ideas could have flourished and grown, it was India, especially because the catholic bent of Gandhi’s thoughts found a striking parallel in the diversity and plurality represented by India. If Gandhi advocated peace, harmony, and brotherhood, his laboratory couldn’t have been any place better than India, for it is this country that has harboured people of every conceivable difference. But the crucial point is this, India celebrates

differences, not because it is imposed on us, but, as the cliché goes, “We are like this only!”

It is these deep-seated values of tolerance and brotherhood that Gandhi was tapping into. The so-called Gandhian values - peace, non-violence, tolerance, etc., are nothing but the very basic values of our civilisation. Gandhi was brilliant in that he recognised the need to promote them as something uniquely Indian vis-à-vis the values of Western civilisation as represented by the British. To the Indians, these values would serve to remind them of who they were, and who they ought to be. It is these values that represented the *idea* of India, as has been encapsulated beautifully in the title of political theorist Sunil Khilnani’s book *The Idea of India* (Penguin, 1997).

Today, the India that we see is riven by conflicts, especially conflicts based on identities. Today, the nation is more united politically, but more divided emotionally. Today, insular identities and narrow considerations have taken over the broad identity of being Indian. Communal pogroms, caste wars, and regional upheavals fill newspaper columns with alarming regularity. The political class looks askance as fringe outfits hold the nation to ransom, and there is a clear lack of leadership at various levels. Something is clearly not right with the nation. It is ironic that when the nation is economically and militarily more powerful than ever before, the national fabric is weaker than ever.

What explains this dissonance? Clearly, it points to a general anomie in society. The only explanation possible is a lack of such values in society as were part of our civilisation’s heritage, which we, collectively, have left aside. What Gandhi warned against is coming true. In aping Western civilisation and its appurtenances,

we have also discarded our own values somewhere. The Gandhian values of peace and sustainable living have increasingly become out of sync with the realities of the modern world. However, what has been understood to be Gandhian values (and its consequent unsuitability in the modern world) is in reality a blatant misinterpretation.

Today, Gandhi is a figure of hatred among quite a huge populace in India. These are the very people Gandhi was fighting in his time. Unfortunately, they have regained strength again owing to a variety of reasons. They blame Gandhi for emasculating India, for preaching pacifism, and, more importantly, for not letting the idea of India become an antithesis of Pakistan, that is, a Hindu India. These divisive forces were the ones which killed Gandhi – literally – and they are now hell bent on killing his ideas. But ideas do not die, people do. Gandhi's ideas are too deep seated in the Indian psyche for these fanatics to exorcise them permanently.

It cannot be denied that Gandhian values have taken a backseat today in Indian society. This is most unfortunate because we are becoming a mirror image of the West. The liberalisation of the economy in the early 1990s opened the floodgates to globalisation. It not only impacted the economy but also, and more importantly, the social fabric of Indian society. When a deeply traditional non-modern society like ours suddenly started modernising (in the Western sense of the word) rapidly, it caused schizophrenia among the masses – a dual consciousness. The response to it was atavistic, a retreat into the past. For many, this provided a vast army of unemployed youth who could be willing accomplices in building a new India, but an India that would exclude many.

It is not a coincidence that the worst communal pogroms and caste wars happened during this phase. The *Babri Masjid* demolition, the implementation of the Mandal Commission's recommendations and economic reforms happened almost at the same time. Religion, caste and new economy proved a potently combustible mix that changed several equations in India. At that point of time, i.e. in the early 1990s, India was undergoing a transformation; a situation not very different from the 1940s. What was needed was visionary leadership, a la Gandhi, which could show the way. But this was not to be. In point of fact the opposite happened. Since then, caste and religion have often been used to invoke the primordial instincts of people, and mobilise them along narrow identities.

It is now that we need Gandhi the most. In their 1975 book *Freedom at Midnight*, Dominique Lapierre and Larry Collins, recounted Lord Mountbatten's recalling how, when the entire Indian Army was unable to stop the riots in Punjab, Gandhi alone ensured that Bengal was quiet. Mountbatten called Gandhi his "one man army." Today, we are again in need of this one man army. More to the point, we need the strength of his ideas.

Today, a vast expanse of the country is in the midst of a war between followers of an extremist ideology and the government. Both sides have been making military moves and the consequences have been worse than even at any point under the British. If only Gandhi or one of his followers (like Vinoba Bhave) were alive, they might have reached out and found a solution. Unfortunately, Gandhi is not quite an interesting proposition to discuss these days in the corridors of power.

If Gandhi were not cremated, today he would be turning in his grave on seeing his nation (for whose freedom he gave up his life) blindly following the destructive

development path of the West, and spoiling the environment and ecology beyond repair. Today, a majority of the conflicts in the world (including those in India) are predicated on the scarcity of resources. This is a direct result of the kind of development path we have adopted (like there is no tomorrow). Gandhi stressed on the sustainability aspect of development. He was one for the 'natural' path of development, which was in harmony with the nature. He was horrified on seeing the West spoiling the environment. It is for this reason he suggested a self-sustaining village economy, in tune with the natural environment.

However, today, the Indian village is a hotbed of conflict. The increasing competition for resources has pushed urban problems onto villages. Most of the conflicts in Indian villages are predicated on the utilisation of scarce resources, but assume the form of identity conflicts. All economic conflicts are cloaked in communal, caste or some primordial identity terms. If only our leaders had paid heed to what Gandhi had been saying, things wouldn't have come to this. In urban areas, this competition often takes the form of communal riots. In any religion-based conflict, the economic establishments of a community are always targeted, be it the 1984 Delhi anti-Sikh riots, the 1992-93 Mumbai communal riots or the 2002 anti-Muslim pogrom. One of the aims is to finish economic competition from the other community.

Gandhi famously said, "Earth provides enough to satisfy every man's need, but not every man's greed." Clearly, the world has chosen to ignore this. It is not difficult to surmise that the way things are going, the consequences will be horrific. It is an urgent need to go beyond paying lip service to Gandhian ideals on his birth or death anniversary, and instead carry out an actual programme of mass awareness. Our younger generation needs to know that Gandhi is not just a name associated

with a holiday or currency notes, and that what he said still makes eminent sense, especially today when the world is tearing itself apart on petty issues.

Often, the question arises as to whether Gandhian values are still relevant, especially in a society which is now unrecognisable from what it was in Gandhi's time. What he said half a century back might not be relevant today in its entirety, but the substance of what he said can never become outdated. India needs more than ever to imbibe and follow Gandhian ideals. In a plural society like ours, tolerance is a sine qua non for nation building.

The thing one must understand about India before discussing anything further is that there is no *single* idea of India. As Shashi Tharoor very eloquently put it in his book *India: From Midnight to the Millennium* (Penguin, 1997), "The only possible idea of India is that of a nation greater than the sum of its parts. The singular thing about India is that you can speak of it only in the plural. India is fundamentally a pluralist state; its pluralism emerges from its geography, is reflected in its history, and is confirmed by its ethnography."

Sunil Khilnani also adds in his book *The Idea of India* (Penguin, 1997), "The idea of India is not homogeneous and univocal. In fact no single idea can possibly hope to capture the many energies, angers, and hopes of one billion Indians; nor can any more narrow ideas – based on a single trait – fulfil their desires. It may seem obtuse, even hubristic, to speak of *the* idea of India."

Thus, in a land that is plural in its very soul, nothing extreme can work. Any definition of India in narrow, singular terms is bound to fail. Thus, those advocating an insular definition of India, that excludes a vast mass of its own

citizens, are entertaining chimeras. To think that India can be a Hindu *Rashtra* of Hindi speaking upper-caste Indians is to delude oneself no end. But any mobilisation of people along such identities does incalculable harm to India's image as well as its secular fabric. The message that it sends to the minorities, whether religious or linguistic or any other, weakens the nation brick by brick. An incident like the *Babri Masjid* demolition undid forty years of nation building; Gandhi would have been mortified were he alive.

Gandhi was himself a very religious person. But his religion was not of the fundamentalist variety. As Gandhi himself said, "Religions are different roads converging to the same point. What does it matter that we take different road, so long as we reach the same goal. Wherein is the cause for quarrelling?" (*Hind Swaraj*, 1946) Gandhi understood that religion could also be a source of strength. It could also unite people irrespective of their individual faiths. It is precisely for this reason that songs of all faiths were sung in his morning prayers. He further said that, "All religions are true... Our innermost prayer should be a Hindu should be a better Hindu, a Muslim a better Muslim, a Christian a better Christian." (*Young India*, 1928)

Increasingly, the virus of fundamentalism is penetrating every religion. Instead of Gandhi's idea of religion being a source of strength, today, vested interests have made religion a source of discord. This virus has now afflicted all religions. Religious intolerance has become the norm. Myths are being perpetuated to fan venom for real or perceived grievances.

From a tolerant society, we have turned into a society of bigots and fanatics. For instance, few years ago, when the movie *The Da Vinci Code* was released, several

state governments banned it simply because some fringe Christian outfits threatened violence (they did not like the portrayal of Christianity in the film, even while the whole Christian world was busily lining up to see it). Similarly, some years back, Bangladeshi novelist Taslima Nasreen was driven out of her country because some of the Muslim clergy did not like what she wrote about Islam in that country, and the Indian government also became a willing accomplice to it. And the less said about the loony Hindu outfits, the better it is. And worse is the political class's inability to stand up to it.

Today, there are no takers for Gandhian ideals. In fact, the market has appropriated Gandhi's image and commoditised it, rendering it bereft of any of its radical potential. For instance, a movie like *Lage Raho Munnabhai* divests Gandhi of any of his powerful messages, and instead reduces him to a benign, avuncular, caricatured figure. Today, Gandhi has become a veritable source of soft power for India, but the sad part is that his teachings have been forgotten at home. It is anyway too much to expect from a political class which goes to any lengths to capture power, to understand the power of renunciation which Gandhi exemplified. In addition, for a country with great power ambitions, Gandhi becomes much less of a priority than arming itself to the teeth with nuclear weapons.

Today, sectarianism of all kinds is making a comeback. And this is because somewhere down the line, Indians forgot Gandhi's teachings of tolerance, brotherhood, harmony and non-violence. Today, we have become more conscious than ever of what divides us – religion, region, caste, ethnicity, language, etc. For many, it has become more important to be a 'this' or a 'that' than being a proud Indian. The project of building a nation predicated on Gandhian ideals has given way to opportunism and political expediency.

However, all is not lost. Every plural society faces conflicts. So does India. Even Rabindranath Tagore agreed that “the idea of India itself militates against the intense consciousness of the separateness of one’s own people from others, which inevitably leads to ceaseless conflicts.” This results from India’s remarkable heterogeneity. However, India’s diversity is its strength and not its weakness. As Shashi Tharoor eloquently puts it, “It is the idea of an ever-ever land – emerging from an ancient civilisation, united by a shared history, sustained by a pluralist democracy, but containing a world of differences.”

The differences can be managed, through the promotion of an inclusive state and a participatory democracy. When the Constitution was being deliberated, Nehru was able to push through the idea of universal adult franchise, empowering every citizen whether literate or illiterate, rich or poor, Hindu or non-Hindu, because this was what Gandhi had envisioned. If India survived the initial years as a united country despite many insurmountable odds, it was mainly because, much earlier, Gandhi had realised that the nation could remain united only when it gave enough freedom to every citizen of India. Gandhi’s genius could see that the state would have to embrace India’s principal social diversities, put people and communities together, and create ‘unity in diversity’.

The political scientist Benedict Anderson described nation states as imagined communities. “Imagined”, he wrote, “because members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the mind of each lives the image of their communion” (Anderson, 1983: 15). Most people think of their nation as a natural entity awakened by history. One of the principal tools of nation building is the selective rummaging, through history,

for events that can provide rallying sources or myths. But India is unusual in that it was created out of the values of its freedom struggle which stressed on a plural, composite and secular India.

This task was done by Gandhi. He united a disparate nation, made a Ladakhi feel comradeship with a Keralite, a Gujarati with an Assamese. He made non-Hindus, especially Muslims, feel a part of the national movement for freedom, by making everyone believe that the nation belonged to them as much as to anyone else. Partition was something that Gandhi could not avoid, but he made sure that India treated Pakistan fairly, and that Muslims in India felt as secure as they did earlier. If India chose secularism, it was born out of this very conviction that every citizen in India should consider this country 'home'.

It is a universally acknowledged fact that everyone in India is in a minority. There is no such thing as a 'typical' Indian. Even if a Hindu thinks he belongs to the majority, his caste and region automatically put him in a minority. If caste and language complicate the notions of Indian identity, ethnicity makes it worse. Gandhi understood this better than anyone else, which is precisely why he insisted on giving cultural freedom to everyone in India; this was later duly incorporated in the Constitution. It is for this reason alone that today no Naga or Mizo wants to escape across the border to China, (while, for instance, despite high development, the reverse is true in case of the Tibetans). If the nation is today united as one, we have to thank Gandhi for that.

The reason these examples from history are being ferreted out is to show that Gandhian ideals are not just some impractical, woolly-headed ideas, but very practical and implementable. Those ideals won Indians their freedom, and

influenced our Constitution, which by all objective accounts is one of the best in the world. If those ideals of truth, non-violence, peace, harmony, brotherhood, sustainable living, and rural idyll helped shape this great nation, they are relevant even now. In fact they are more so, because today society is torn by conflicts based on religion, region, caste and several other divisions.

Today, Gandhian ideals can show the way to build bridges between communities. Gandhi exemplified the idea of sacrifice and outreach. He lived among the untouchables and gave them self-respect and dignity. Today, when there are routine incidents of Dalit oppression and consequent violent resistance, Gandhi is sorely missed. If only community leaders took a leaf out of Gandhi's book, and reached out to each other, most conflicts would cease to exist, as the 'other' would no longer be the 'other' but one of 'us'.

In a speech at Victoria Hall, Geneva, in 1931, Gandhi said "I regard myself as a soldier – a soldier of peace." His entire life is a testimony to that. Just days before his death, he had planned to visit Pakistan on a peace mission. Unfortunately, he was assassinated before that could happen (this being one of the many reasons he was killed). If he had done as he intended there is no reason to believe that India and Pakistan would have fought any wars. Peace would have been the natural outcome. It is not too late yet to make amends.

Closer home, the conflicts that the very nature of a plural society engenders can be minimised if not eliminated if we followed the Gandhian values. If Gandhi were alive today, the first thing that he would do is initiate dialogue and build bridges, and usher in a spirit of give and take. Conflicts generally escalate when positions

harden and when there is an absence of dialogue. Gandhian values would ensure that this will not happen.

Also, Gandhi said “Victory attained by violence is tantamount to a defeat, for it is momentary.” Gandhian values impress upon the fact that violence offers no solution to anything. In fact, violence begets violence. The earlier that Indians of all hues and persuasions understand this, the better it is for the country.

Finally, to answer the question whether Gandhian values are relevant for resolving conflicts in a plural society, they are not just relevant but most imperative. It is essential that Indians rediscover the magic that Gandhi’s ideas encapsulated. Gandhi made everyone a stakeholder in any conflict so that any conflict turned into an opportunity. It is time that Gandhian values are reinserted into the national mainstream. Several of our problems will disappear simply by living the Gandhian life – ‘simply’ and ‘rightly’. Gandhi set great store in the idea of adopting the right means for right ends. As long as we are morally just, truthful and nonviolent, there will be fewer conflicts. In a mind-bogglingly plural society like India, that is perhaps the only way to resolve conflicts, and celebrate our diversity.

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रघुपति राघव राजा राम

अभिषेक अग्रवाल

जब भी मन में राष्ट्रपिता महात्मा गाँधी का ख्याल आता है तो मन में तरह-तरह के प्रश्न कुलाचेँ मारने लगते हैं। प्रश्न उठता है कि क्या अब भी गाँधीवादी मूल्यों की समाज में कोई प्रासंगिकता है भी या नहीं ? सत्य एवं अहिंसा जैसे मूल्यों की बात करना बेमानी है ? या फिर गाँधी के मूल्य केवल एक कोरा दर्शन बन कर रह गये हैं? इस तरह के तमाम प्रश्न मन को आंदोलित करते रहते हैं। सबसे यक्ष प्रश्न यह है कि बहुलवादी समाज के सौहार्द के लिए गाँधीवादी मूल्यों की कोई प्रासंगिकता है भी या नहीं ? ऐसे ही प्रश्नों के उत्तर ढूँढने की कोशिश हम अब कुछ शब्दों में करेंगे।

आधुनिक युग में समाज जटिल हो गया है और दिन-प्रतिदिन बहुलवादी समाज में अंतर्विरोध बढ़ते ही चले जा रहे हैं। अंतर्विरोधों में पर्यावरण, भूमि अधिग्रहण, जाति व्यवस्था, धार्मिक व्यवस्था एवं बाह्य आडम्बर, क्षेत्रवाद, गरीब एवं अमीर के बीच की खाई, बेरोजगारी, असमानता, राज्यों के बीच नदी जल विवाद, भ्रष्टाचार, भाषायी विवाद, अशिक्षा, लिंग विभेद, भ्रूण हत्या, असाक्षरता वैश्वीकरण एवं राष्ट्रवाद आदि प्रमुख हैं। अंतर्विरोधों की सूची इतनी लम्बी है कि इनका यहाँ उल्लेख करना संभव नहीं है।

प्रश्न उठता है कि क्या गाँधीवादी मूल्यों के जरिए इन अंतर्विरोधों को सुलझाया जा सकता है और साम्प्रदायिक सौहार्द की स्थापना की जा सकती है। गाँधी के मूल्य जितने प्रासंगिक आजादी के पहले थे, उतने ही आज भी हैं। बल्कि ये कहना चाहिए जटिल समाज में उनकी प्रासंगिकता और भी बढ़ गई है।

सत्य एवं अहिंसा को उन्होंने एक सशक्त हथियार के रूप में इस्तेमाल किया था। उन्होंने अपने आंदोलनों में सत्याग्रह का जमकर उपयोग किया और अभूतपूर्व सफलता प्राप्त की। आज जगह-जगह हिंसा जन्म ले रही है। चाहे वह हिंसा क्षेत्रवाद को लेकर हो या फिर भूमि-अधिग्रहण को लेकर हो, जाति-व्यवस्था को लेकर हो, या फिर असमता को लेकर हो।

इन सभी हिंसा की सबसे बड़ी वजह इंसान का लालच, असत्यता, अनैतिकता है। मनुष्य का लालच इतना बढ़ गया कि वह विकास एवं औद्योगीकरण के नाम पर वनों का अंधाधुंध दोहन कर रहा है।

गाँधीजी ने कहा भी था— “प्रकृति के पास मनुष्य की आवश्यकताओं को पूरा करने के लिए पर्याप्त संसाधन हैं, लेकिन उसके लालच को पूरा करने के लिए नहीं।” जाति व्यवस्था, वर्ण व्यवस्था आदि का गाँधीजी ने हमेशा विरोध किया। आज जाति एवं वर्णव्यवस्था को लेकर न जाने कितने आंदोलन हो रहे हैं और लोग एक-दूसरे की जान के दुश्मन बन गये हैं। जाति व्यवस्था में आरक्षण का मुद्दा सबसे जटिल बनकर उभरा है। आरक्षण को विकास के प्रमुख अस्त्र के रूप में इस्तेमाल किया गया था कि जो लोग विकास की मुख्य धारा में किन्हीं कारणोंवश छूट गये हैं, उन्हें मुख्य धारा में लाया जाये। लेकिन इसका दुरुपयोग हुआ है, यह सभी जानते हैं। इससे समाज के पिछड़े वर्गों के एक ही तबके को लाभ मिला है और इसी तबके की आने वाली पीढ़ी को बार-बार लाभ पहुँच रहा है, लेकिन जो लोग पिछड़े हैं वह वहीं के वहीं हैं। गाँधी का सपना राम राज्य का था जिसमें सभी लोग बराबर हों, किसी भी प्रकार का भेदभाव न हो। अगर गाँधीजी के सपने को पूरा करना है तो एक समतामूलक समाज की स्थापना करनी होगी जिसमें किसी के अधिकारों की उपेक्षा न हो। प्रमुखतः गाँवों के लोग जो पिछड़े हैं उन्हें उसका ज्यादा लाभ मिले, क्योंकि अभी भारत का हृदय गाँवों में बसता है। इससे भी साम्प्रदायिक सौहार्द की भावना का बीज समाज में अंकुरित होगा। गाँधीजी ने लघु एवं कुटीर उद्योगों की स्थापना कर, हस्तशिल्प, आदि पर बल दिया। इससे गाँवों के लोगों को पर्याप्त रोजगार के अवसर मिलेंगे और वे अपनी सांस्कृतिक विरासत को सुरक्षित रख पायेंगे। गाँधीजी ने अस्पृश्यता का कड़ा विरोध किया था। उन्होंने मानवता के सभी पक्षों का खुला समर्थन किया। यही कारण भारत के संविधान के अनुच्छेद 17 में अस्पृश्यता के अंत का उल्लेख है। लेकिन दुर्भाग्य यह है कि यह एक सिद्धांत ही बना रहा, कभी व्यवहार का रूप नहीं ले पाया। साम्प्रदायिक सौहार्द के लिए इसका अंत जरूरी ही नहीं है, बल्कि अनिवार्य है।

गाँधी के मूल्य में सदाचार एवं नैतिकता भी शामिल है। उन्होंने कहा अगर कोई परिवर्तन करना चाहता है तो पहले अपने आपको सदाचार एवं नैतिकता से युक्त करें और कहा— “जो परिवर्तन आप समाज के अंदर देखना चाहते हो, पहले उस परिवर्तन को अपने अंदर करो।” अर्थात् सबसे पहले हमें अपनी कमियों को देखना चाहिए। अगर ये सिद्धांत हर इंसान ने अपने मन में बना लिया तो भारत को 2020 तक विकसित होने से कोई नहीं रोक सकता। इससे भ्रष्टाचार के निदान में भी सबसे ज्यादा फायदा होगा। अन्ना हजारे ने गाँधीजी के पद चिह्नों पर चलकर दिखा दिया कि आज भी गाँधीवादी मूल्य कितने प्रासंगिक हैं।

अब बात आती है जाति व्यवस्था, धार्मिक व्यवस्था एवं क्षेत्रवाद की। इन सभी से साम्प्रदायिक सौहार्द की स्थापना में काफी मुश्किलों को सामना करना पड़ता है। लेकिन इन सभी को गाँधीवादी मूल्यों से आराम से निपटाया जा सकता है। इसके लिए नस्लभेद, रंगभेद, सभी को शिक्षा आदि के माध्यम से सुलझाया जा सकता है। गाँधी ने हिन्दू-मुस्लिम एकता पर बल देते हुए कहा है—

“रघुपति राघव राजा राम, पतित पावन सीताराम।
ईश्वर अल्ला तेरे नाम, सबको सन्मति दे भगवान।”

गाँधीजी ने प्रशासन के विकेन्द्रीकरण, शक्तियों एवं संसाधनों को समतामूलक वितरण एवं समाज के हर तबके तक सभी आधारभूत सुविधाओं की पहुँच पर सबसे ज्यादा बल दिया था। इसी से ग्राम सभा एवं ग्राम पंचायत के सिद्धांत का उदय हुआ था। संविधान में भी इन सभी राज्य के नीति-निर्देशक तत्वों के अलावा 11वीं अनुसूची में भी शामिल किया गया है जिसके लिए 73वां संविधान संशोधन किया गया था। अगर सभी व्यक्तियों को संसाधन सही मात्रा में पहुँच जाये तो बहुलवादी समाज के अंतर्विरोधों को सुलझाने में काफी मदद मिलेगी।

गाँधीजी ने सुशासन पर सबसे ज्यादा बल दिया था। इसकी प्रासंगिकता इसी रूप में पहचानी जा सकती है कि सरकार ने प्रशासन के हर क्षेत्र में सुशासन पर बल दिया है। सूचना का अधिकार, ई. गवर्नेन्स, आदि इसके प्रमुख अंग हैं।

अब हमें यह देखना होगा कि क्या गाँधीवादी मूल्य बिल्कुल निरपेक्ष हैं। अर्थात् उनके मूल्यों में कोई कमी नहीं है। हर आदमी से गलतियाँ होती हैं। गलती करना मनुष्य का स्वभाव है। ऐसी ही कुछ त्रुटियाँ गाँधी के मूल्यों में भी रही हैं। उन्होंने नारियों के लिए गृह-विज्ञान का सुझाव दिया और कहा नारियों को गृहकार्य में दक्ष होना चाहिए और अपने पति का सम्मान करना चाहिए। कहीं-कहीं उनके राम राज्य की स्थापना कोरा सपना नजर आती है। क्योंकि समाज में इतनी विसंगतियाँ हैं कि उनको इतनी सरलता से नहीं निपटाया जा सकता।

कुल मिलाकर यह कहने में कोई समस्या नहीं है कि गाँधी ने अकेले वो करके दिखा दिया जो कई लोग मिलकर नहीं कर सकते हैं। किसी विद्वान ने कहा भी था— “आने वाली पीढ़ी यह विश्वास नहीं करेगी कि हाड़-माँस का ऐसा पुतला इस संसार में हुआ था।”

उन्होंने विश्वशांति की स्थापना के लिए कई प्रयास किये और ‘शांति के नोबेल पुरस्कार’ के लिए उनका नामांकन कई बार हुआ था, लेकिन ब्रिटेन की वजह से उनको ये पुरस्कार नहीं मिल सका था। अभी हाल ही में नोर्वे की इस संस्था ने गाँधीजी को नोबेल पुरस्कार न दिये जाने पर खेद व्यक्त किया था।

अगर हमने समय रहते गाँधीवादी मूल्यों को महत्व नहीं दिया तो इस जटिल समाज में वैमनस्य अपने चरम पर पहुँच जायेंगे। गाँधी के मूल्यों को दृढ़ता से अपनाना होगा और ये मूल्य इतने प्रासंगिक हैं कि इनसे न सिर्फ बहुलवादी समाज के अन्तर्विरोध दूर होंगे, बल्कि समाज में एक साम्प्रदायिक सौहार्द का विकास होगा। साम्प्रदायिकता से विश्व के लगभग सभी देश प्रभावित हैं और भारत में भी यह पर्याप्त मात्रा में है। अतः इन सबके समाधान हेतु गाँधीवादी मूल्यों को अपनाने की जरूरत है। तभी भारत 2020 तक एक विकसित राष्ट्र बन सकेगा और सभी भारतीय गर्व से कह उठेंगे—

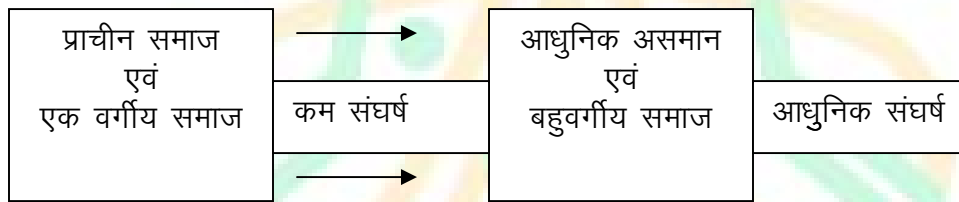
“सारे जहाँ से अच्छा
हिन्दुस्तान हमारा
हम बुलबुले हैं इसकी
ये गुलसिता हमारा।”

गाँधीजी के अमर सिद्धांत— एकमात्र विकल्प

दिनेश कुमार जंगिद

मानवीय सभ्यता के आरंभ से लेकर अब तक के पांच हजार वर्ष उसके विकास की एक असीम कहानी है जिसमें सफलताएं कम हैं और संघर्ष ज्यादा है। लेकिन इन्हीं संघर्षों से उसकी सफलताओं की भी शुरुआत हुई है।

दूसरे पुराने समय के समान एक वर्गीय समाज का विकास भी असमान बहुवर्गीय समाज में हुआ और इसके परिणाम स्वरूप विभिन्नताओं का जन्म हुआ, मतभेद बढ़े और संघर्षों का भी आगाज हुआ



जब आधुनिक समाज का बहुवर्गीय समाज में उद्भव हुआ तो संघर्ष बढ़े और उसके समाधान के लिए कई बार कई सिद्धांत एवं महापुरुष प्रस्तुत हुए। यह एक निरंतर चलने वाली प्रक्रिया है।

बहुवर्गीय समाज और उसकी समस्याएं— हमें यह भी समझना जरूरी है कि आखिर बहुवर्गीय समाज है क्या और उसकी समस्याएं क्या हैं।

एक ऐसा समाज जो भाषा, संस्कृति, भूगोल, इतिहास, विचारधारा, धर्म, विश्वास, प्रजाति धन आदि के आधार पर बंटा हुआ हो और इनके आधार पर जहाँ व्यक्तियों ने अपने अपने अलग समूह बना लिये हो वह बहुवर्गीय समाज है। आज का समाज धर्म के आधार पर हिन्दू, ईसाई, मुस्लिम, सिख, पारसी, यहूदी, बौद्ध, जैन आदि समूहों में बंटा हुआ है वहीं श्रमिक—पूँजीपति,

अलग-अलग भाषावादी, वैष्णव, शैव, शिया, सुन्नी, कैथोलिक, प्रोटेस्टेंट, काकेशियाई, अरबी, मंगोलाएड आदि हर प्रकार से समूहबद्ध है। विभाजन के आधार अधिकांशतः धार्मिक, भाषायी एवं प्रजातीय है।

जब एक ही जगह पर अलग अलग विचारधाराओं और विश्वासों के लोग एक साथ रहते हैं तो उनमें आपसी संघर्ष होना लाजिमी है, स्वाभाविक है और सामाजिक विकास की दृष्टि से कुछ हद तक आवश्यक भी है। मगर यही संघर्ष जब तीव्र रूप ले लेता है तो सब कुछ नष्ट भी कर देता है। आचार्य द्विवेदी इस बारे में दूसरे रूप में कहते हैं कि—

“जब तक व्यवस्थाओं का निरन्तर संस्कार एवं परिमार्जन नहीं किया जायेगा, व्यवस्थाएं तो एक दिन टूटेगी ही, अपने साथ धर्म को भी तोड़ देगी।”

अतः अधिक तीव्र संघर्ष पूरे समाज के लिए घातक होता है।

बहुवर्गीय समाज की समस्याएं— हम बहुवर्गीय समाज की समस्याओं के समाधान की बात करें उससे पहले हमें बहुवर्गीय समाज की समस्याओं से भी परिचित होना आवश्यक है। आज के बहुवर्गीय समाज में निम्नलिखित समस्याएं दृष्टिगोचर होती हैं।—

- साम्प्रदायिक तनाव एवं संघर्ष
- भाषायी संघर्ष
- प्रजातीय संघर्ष
- धार्मिक उप समूहों के आपसी संघर्ष
- कट्टरता बनाम उदारता का संघर्ष
- आधुनिकता बनाम परम्परा का संघर्ष
- जातीय संघर्ष (भारतीय समाज के विशेष परिप्रेक्ष्य में)
- लैंगिक संघर्ष
- राजनैतिक एवं आर्थिक संघर्ष
- नस्लीय संघर्ष

बहुवर्गीय समाज में संघर्ष एवं समस्याओं के कुछ कारण— बहुवर्गीय समाज की सबसे बड़ी समस्या परस्पर संघर्ष है। इन संघर्षों के पीछे कुछ कारण इस प्रकार हैं—

1. नृजातीयता— अधिकांश धार्मिक एवं प्रजातीय समूह अपने धर्म या प्रजाति को दूसरों से श्रेष्ठ समझते हैं और कई बार अपने विकास के साथ-साथ दूसरों का पतन करने की भी सोचते हैं। यही संघर्ष का मूल कारण है। फिर अपना विकास तो गौण हो जाता है और संघर्ष ही अपनी चरमसीमा पर पहुँच जाता है।
2. शोषण— अपने सर्वश्रेष्ठ होने के अहम के साथ ही धार्मिक—सामाजिक एवं आर्थिक रूप से अधिक सक्षम लोग दूसरे समूहों का शोषण करते हैं और शोषण का अन्ततः विरोध होता है। जो बाद में संघर्ष का रूप धारण कर लेता है।
3. असुरक्षा की भावना— अधिकांशतः यह देखा जाता है कि धार्मिक या प्रजातीय अल्पसंख्यक लोगों के मन में बहुसंख्यक लोगों से हमेशा एक भय बना रहता है। ऐसा कई बार बहुसंख्यक लोगों में से कुछेक के गलत व्यवहार के कारण भी होता है। जब असुरक्षा की हीन भावना घर कर जाती है तो ऐसे समूह के लोगों में कट्टरता एवं अत्यंत सामूहिकता का विकास होता है जिसकी परिणति सामाजिक संघर्ष में होती है।
4. भेदभाव— बहुवर्गीय समाज में संघर्ष का सबसे बड़ा कारण ही भेदभाव है। समाज में जातीय, प्रजातीय, आर्थिक आदि आधारों पर भेदभाव होता रहा है। शिया अपने को सुन्नियों से बड़ा मानते हैं तो ब्राह्मण अपने को शूद्रों से श्रेष्ठ समझते हैं। यूरोपीय सदैव काले लोगों से भेदभाव करते आये हैं। भेदभाव का चरम रूप अस्पृश्यता में प्रकट होता है जहाँ एक इंसान ही दूसरे इंसान को स्पर्श तक नहीं कर सकता। इस भेदभाव के कारण आर्थिक विषमताएं इतनी हो जाती हैं कि फिर, मार्क्स, के अनुसार, समाज में वर्ग संघर्ष उत्पन्न होता है। इस प्रकार बहुवर्गीय समाज में विभिन्न मतांतरों एवं नृजातीय केंद्रता के कारण एवं अपनी असुरक्षा के भय के कारण संघर्ष उत्पन्न होते हैं।

बहुजातीय समाज के समस्या समाधान अथवा संघर्ष समाधान में गाँधीवादी परिप्रेक्ष्य की प्रासंगिकता— अब हम बहुवर्गीय समाज में संघर्ष के समाधान की बात करते हैं। संसार में आज तक अनेक महान व्यक्ति हुए हैं लेकिन अगर किसी एक ऐसे व्यक्ति का यदि नाम लिया जाये जिसने धार्मिक—राजनैतिक—सामाजिक—आर्थिक पक्षों सहित जीवन के हरेक पक्ष को छुआ और उसमें सर्वश्रेष्ठ आदर्श रखने का प्रयत्न किया तो सिर्फ एक ही नाम आयेगा और वह है श्री मोहनदास गाँधी। ८ वनहीजए जीमतमवितमए ८ बंद ;बवदजमद्ध “मुझे करना चाहिए, इसलिये मैं करता हूँ” का कथन भले ही पश्चिमी दार्शनिक कांत का हो पर इस पर सदैव अमल गाँधीजी ने ही किया था। आचरण एवं चरित्र की शुचिता का सर्वश्रेष्ठ प्रदर्शन गाँधीजी द्वारा किया गया। समकालीन आधुनिक विश्व के वे प्रमुख व्यक्ति थे जिनकी कथनी एवं करनी में जरा भी अंतर नहीं था। उनकी यही बात उन्हें ईसा और बुद्ध की कोटि में लाकर खड़ा कर देती है। गाँधीजी ने जीवन भर कुछ सिद्धांतों का ताउम्र पालन किया और सबको इसकी प्रेरणा दी—

1. सत्य
2. अहिंसा
3. त्याग
4. किसी भी प्रकार के भेदभाव का त्याग
5. आर्थिक समानता
6. आत्म—नियंत्रण एवं आत्म—स्वतंत्रता
7. सहिष्णुता
8. सर्वधर्म समभाव
9. परोपकार
10. प्रत्येक मनुष्य का सम्मान
11. घृणा पाप से, पापी से नहीं।
12. आत्म—शुद्धि
13. साधन एवं साध्य की पवित्रता
14. सत्याग्रह
15. धर्म के आधार पर आचरण

गाँधीजी के यह सिद्धांत समकालीन बहुवर्गीय समाज के संघर्षों का एक मात्र मानवीय समाधान है।

सत्य— गाँधीजी सत्य एवं अहिंसा को भगवान मानते थे। और उन्हें सदैव अपने आचरण से सभी को सत्य का साधक बनने की प्रेरणा दी। आज के समाज में मात्र झूठ एवं दिखावा है जो संघर्ष का एक प्रमुख कारण है और औजार भी। गाँधीजी के बताये हुए सत्य मार्ग पर चलकर आज हमें सामाजिक संघर्षों से मुक्ति मिल सकती है।

समाज में संघर्ष के कई रूप होते हैं—

1. एक व्यक्ति का दूसरे व्यक्ति से संघर्ष
2. व्यक्ति का समूह से संघर्ष
3. समूहों का परस्पर संघर्ष
4. समुदाय एवं राज्य का संघर्ष
5. राष्ट्रों के मध्य संघर्ष

इन सब संघर्षों में प्रमुख कारण यह होता है कि एक व्यक्ति या समूह अथवा राष्ट्र सत्य का दामन छोड़ देता है।

2. अहिंसा— अहिंसा इस विश्व को गाँधीजी का दिया हुआ अमोघ अस्त्र है। उन्होंने न केवल सैद्धांतिक रूप से इसे दिया बल्कि बल्कि व्यवहार में प्रयोग करके भी एक उदाहरण संपूर्ण विश्व के समक्ष प्रस्तुत किया। उनकी अहिंसा एक कायर की अहिंसा नहीं थी बल्कि आत्म-बल से परिपूर्ण निडर व्यक्ति की अहिंसा थी। आज के बहुवर्गीय समाज में हरेक बात पर हम हिंसा पर उतारू हो जाते हैं। मानव सभ्यता के 5000 साल के इतिहास में 15000 युद्ध हो चुके हैं। गाँधीजी ने भारत का स्वतंत्रता संग्राम अहिंसा के अस्त्र से लड़ा और विजय प्राप्त की। अहिंसा के इस युद्ध में न तो किसी की क्षति होती है और न ही आपसी मनमुटाव। हमारे अंग्रेजों से संबंध आज भी अहिंसा के कारण ही प्रगाढ़ हैं।

सहिष्णुता— आज विश्व के तनाव और संघर्ष भरे माहौल में अगर सबसे ज्यादा किसी चीज की जरूरत है तो वह है सहिष्णुता।

आज हर व्यक्ति छोटी सी बात पर ही तुरंत गुस्सा हो जाता है और संघर्ष के लिए तत्पर हो जाता है। एक छोटी सी घटना भी लोग सहन नहीं कर पाते और झगड़ने लगते हैं। सामूहिकता की भावना एवं सहिष्णुता का साथ हो तभी संयुक्तता की भावना बनी रह सकती है वरना एकमात्र रास्ता अलगाव और संघर्ष का ही बचता है।

परोपकार— गाँधीजी के जीवन का आदर्श उनका एक प्रिय भजन था—

वैष्णव जन तो तेने कहिए
जै पीर पराई जाणे रे
पर दुःख उपकार करीजे
मन अभिमान न आणे रे

गाँधीजी परोपकार को मनुष्य का धर्म समझते थे और आज का बहुवर्गीय समाज इसे समझ ले तो संघर्ष स्वतः ही खत्म हो जायेंगे।

मानवीय व्यवहार— गाँधीजी सभी मनुष्यों के साथ श्रेष्ठ मानवोचित व्यवहार के पक्षधर थे। हर इंसान को इंसान समझने की भावना के कारण ही समाज के हरेक वर्ग में उन्हें बराबर सम्मान मिला। जाति, धर्म, सम्प्रदाय, प्रजाति की भावना से परे गाँधीजी ने सबको ईश्वर की एक जैसी संतान मानने की सलाह दी और हरिजनों के उद्धार के लिए अपने आपको समर्पित कर दिया। आज अगर उनके इस संदेश को हम समझ लें तो बहुवर्गीय समाज में संघर्ष का स्वतः ही समाधान हो जाये।

सर्वधर्म सम्भावः— गाँधीजी सच्चे सनातनी थे और प्रत्येक धर्म का उसी आदर भाव से सम्मान करते थे। आज के विश्व में धार्मिक—साम्प्रदायिक संघर्ष सबसे प्रखर है और घातक भी है। धार्मिक सहिष्णुता के गाँधीजी के मार्ग पर चलकर हम संघर्षों से तुरन्त मुक्ति पा सकते हैं। क्योंकि इस तरह के संघर्षों में परेशान केवल इंसान होता है—

हिन्दु भी खुश है यहाँ, मुसलमान भी खुश है इंसान परेशान, यहाँ भी है, वहाँ भी है। अतः सभी धर्मों के समान रूप से आदर की भावना संघर्ष समाधान का प्रमुख हथियार है।

साधन एवं साध्य की पवित्रता पर बल— गाँधीजी ने न केवल साध्य की पवित्रता पर बल दिया बल्कि साधनों की पवित्रता को भी उतना ही महत्वपूर्ण माना। गलत साधनों से प्राप्त किया गया साध्य समाज के स्थायित्व के लिए घातक होता है। आज हम धनी व्यक्ति या समूह का सम्मान अवश्य कर रहे हैं भले ही उसने गलत साधनों से ही धन कमा लिया हो। अतः इसके कारण लम्बे समय में समाज की स्थायी प्रकृति छिन्न-भिन्न हो जाती है तथा समाज में दुराचार एवं संघर्ष पनपता है। अतः साध्य की पवित्रता के लिए साधन की पवित्रता का गाँधीजी का मूल मंत्र वर्तमान संघर्षों को मिटाने में पूर्ण सक्षम है। जेहाद एवं धर्म के नाम पर हजारों निर्दोष लोगों की हत्या कतई जायज नहीं है। अतः साधनों की पवित्रता भी परमावश्यक है।

त्याग— गाँधीजी स्वयं एक त्याग की मूर्ति थे। सादा जीवन और उच्च विचार उनका ध्येय था। जीवन के संपूर्ण उत्तरार्द्ध में वे सिर्फ एक लंगोटी में रहे और लोगों को भी सादे जीवन की सलाह दी। उन्होंने प्राकृतिक संसाधनों के समान वितरण की वकालत की और हमेशा यही कहा कि— “प्रकृति के पास हरेक की जरूरत का समान है पर एक के ही लालच का नहीं।”

आज बहुवर्गीय समाजों में संघर्ष का एक प्रमुख कारण लालच एवं महत्वकांक्षाएँ हैं। अगर समाज गाँधीजी के इस मंत्र को जरा भी समझ ले तो समस्त आर्थिक संघर्ष भी स्वतः ही मिट जायेंगे।

सत्याग्रह— दुनिया को दिया गया यह एक ऐसा अमोघ अस्त्र है जो किसी भी प्रकार के संघर्ष को रोकने का एक सफलतम औजार है। भारतीय स्वतंत्रता संग्राम के दौरान यह अस्त्र सदैव बिना लहू बहाये विजय पताका फहराता गया था। अगर आप किसी के विचारों से या व्यवहार से सहमत नहीं हैं और सामने वाले का व्यवहार गलत, झूठा अथवा अत्याचारपूर्ण है तो अपने

हक के लिए दृढ़ता से उससे सत्य के लिए अथवा सदाचार के लिए आग्रह किया जा सकता है।

सत्याग्रह के प्रमुख लक्षण हैं—

अहिंसक	भेदभाव रहित
परमार्थ हित	जन सहभागिता
गैर-साम्प्रदायिक प्रकृति	
दृढ़ आत्म बल	
सीधे संघर्ष से बचाव	

आज के बहुवर्गीय समाज में विभिन्न समूहों के मध्य किसी मांग को लेकर होने वाले हिंसक संघर्षों को सत्याग्रह के माध्यम से रोका जा सकता है।

स्व-नियंत्रण— गाँधीजी यह मानते थे कि ऊपर से थोपा गया किसी भी प्रकार का नियंत्रण तनाव एवं संघर्ष का एक प्रमुख कारण होता है। वे तो राज्य नामक संस्था को भी बहुत कम मानते थे और व्यक्ति के स्व-नियंत्रण एवं आत्मानुशासन पर बल देते थे। आज उनका यह मंत्र समकालीन बहुवर्गीय समाज में जादू की छड़ी के समान संघर्ष समाधान में सहयोग कर सकता है।

नैतिकता एवं चारित्रिक शुचिता— गाँधीजी सदैव नैतिकता एवं आचरण की शुचिता के प्रबल हिमायती रहे हैं। अपने व्यवहार से उन्होंने समस्त विश्व के सामने नैतिकता के आदर्श स्थापित किये। उनका जीवन ही एक नैतिक संदेश था। वर्तमान समाज में हम छल, कपट, अहंकार, भ्रष्टाचार, अनाचार के दलदल में फंसे हुए हैं। लेकिन धीरे-धीरे यह बात लोगों को समझ में आने लगी है कि काठ की हांडी दुबारा नहीं चढ़ती है। आज गाँधीजी के आदर्शों से ही प्रेरणा लेकर हमारे सभी विद्यालयों में माध्यमिक स्तर तक नैतिक शिक्षा को अनिवार्य कर दिया गया है। अगर हरेक समाज में बच्चों को आरंभ से ही नैतिकता का पाठ पूरी दृढ़ता से पढ़ाया जाये तो भविष्य में किसी भी प्रकार के संघर्ष से बचा जा सकेगा।

स्वावलंबन एवं आर्थिक सहायता— गाँधीजी हरेक प्रकार की परतंत्रता के खिलाफ थे। वे व्यक्ति को हरेक प्रकार से स्वतंत्र रखने के हिमायती थे। आर्थिक स्वतंत्रता भी उसमें से एक थी। वे सदैव स्वावलंबन की वकालत करते थे और स्वयं चरखा कातते थे। उनके लिए चरखा आर्थिक स्वतंत्रता एवं स्वावलंबन का ही प्रतीक था। अगर हरेक व्यक्ति या समूह स्वावलंबी बन कर अपनी खरी कमाई पर ही ध्यान दे तो समस्त प्रकार के आर्थिक एवं वर्ग-संघर्ष भी खत्म हो जायेंगे।

समकालीन विश्व में गाँधीजी की शिक्षाओं की बढ़ती हुई आवश्यकता— आज समस्त विश्व बारूद के एक ढेर पर बैठा है और उसमें कभी भी कोई चिनगारी उसे नष्ट करने के लिए काफी है। आज विश्व में इतने तरह के अस्त्र-शस्त्र बन गये हैं, परमाणु हथियार बन गये हैं कि संपूर्ण पृथ्वी को एक बार ही नहीं बल्कि सैकड़ों बार नष्ट किया जा सकता है। मानव जाति को नष्ट करने के लिए आज किसी दैवीय प्रकोप या प्राकृतिक आसमानी कहर की जरूरत नहीं है, उसने खुद ही अपने मरने का सामान इकट्ठा कर लिया है—

आसमां कुछ भी नहीं
अब तेरे करने के लिए
कर ली है तैयारियां सब
मैंने मरने के लिए।

संपूर्ण विश्व हथियारों की अंधी दौड़ में शामिल हो गया है। देशों के मध्य परस्पर युद्ध हो रहे हैं जिसमें किसी को भी फायदा नहीं होता। विश्व दो महायुद्धों में करोड़ों निर्दोष लोग खो चुका है। अरबों-खरबों की धन हानि इन युद्धों से सदैव होती रहती है और दूसरी तरफ करोड़ों इंसान दो वक्त की रोटी के लिए तरस रहे हैं। ऐसे में आज समस्त विश्व को गाँधीजी के सिद्धांतों की याद आ रही है और इस आधुनिक बहुवर्गीय समाज में पुनः एक बार गाँधीजी के सिद्धांतों संघर्ष समाधान का बेहतरीन विकल्प माना जाने लगा है। विभिन्न देश अहिंसा एवं निरस्त्रीकरण की संधियां कर रहे हैं और संयुक्त राष्ट्रसंघ जैसी सर्वोच्च वैश्विक संस्थाओं ने भी अंतर्राष्ट्रीय स्तर पर विश्व अहिंसा दिवस मनाना आधिकारिक रूप से शामिल कर दिया है। विश्व समुदाय गाँधीजी को नोबल सम्मान न दे पाना अपनी सबसे बड़ी भूल मानने लगा है।

यह गाँधीजी के व्यवहार एवं सिद्धांतों का ही चमत्कार था कि वे जब अंग्रेजों के कट्टर दुश्मन होते हुए भी इंग्लैंड गये तो वहाँ की अधिकांश जनता ने उनका दिल से स्वागत किया। क्या कोई अपने दुश्मन का ऐसा स्वागत कर सकता है ? यह केवल गाँधीजी का ही चमत्कार था। यहाँ तक कि "आने वाले समय में दुनिया को यकीन नहीं होगा कि एक जरा सा हाड़-मांस का आदमी अपने आत्म-बल से इंग्लैंड को हराकर सत्य एवं अहिंसा का परचम समूचे विश्व में फैला गया।" उनका यह मंत्र युगों-युगों तक विश्व का मार्गदर्शन कर संघर्ष समाधान में अपनी भूमिका निभाता रहेगा।

उपसंहार— गाँधीजी के मूल्य अगर कुछ हद तक भी स्वीकार कर लिए जाये तो इस बहु-वर्गीय समाज के अधिकांश संघर्षों का समाधान हो सकता है। आज संघर्ष समाधान में सत्य, अहिंसा, सत्याग्रह एवं सहिष्णुता का कोई भी दूसरा विकल्प नहीं है। इसलिए गाँधीजी तब भी प्रासंगिक थे और उनके मूल्य आगे भी सदैव प्रासंगिक रहेंगे। उनका शरीर भले ही मर गया हो परन्तु उनके विचार सदैव अमर रहेंगे—

मैं फिर आऊँगा।।
तुम क्या समझते हो,
तुम्हारी इन टकटकी बंदूकों से
डर जाऊँगा ?
तुम्हारी इन तीन गोलियों
से मर जाऊँगा ?
हरेक मानव के मस्तिष्क में
मैं सदैव जन्म लूँगा
मैं फिर आऊँगा।।

गाँधीजी के अमर सिद्धांत समकालीन बहुवर्गीय समाज के संघर्ष समाधान के एकमात्र विकल्प है। क्या कोई अन्य विकल्प, जो मानवीय समाज के लिए नैतिक और स्थायी हो, नज़र आता है ?

गाँधीजी की विचारधारा— सारे विश्व के लिए है

—हिमांशु कुमार राय

जिस तरह हिमालय का आकर्षण दुर्निवार है उसी तरह महात्मा गाँधी का भी। गाँधी पिछली शताब्दी के हिमालय थे। हिमालय की तरह ही उनका व्यक्तित्व अमल-धवल और उदात्त था। उन्होंने न केवल भारतीय, अपितु अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय जनजीवन को अपने धवल स्पर्श से अनुल्बध्य उदात्तता प्रदान की थी। उनका राजनैतिक चिन्तन हो या उसे क्रियात्मक परिणति तक ले जाने का प्रयास, आर्थिक चिन्तन हो या उसे अमली जामा पहनाने का मामला, धार्मिक चिन्तन हो या उसे तद्धत् आचरण में ढालने की चेष्टा, सामाजिक सामरस्य की चिन्ता हो फिर राष्ट्रभाषा का प्रश्न वे सर्वत्र मौलिक और ईमानदार थे। कवि-दार्शनिक मो. इकबाल के शब्दों में, उनका जीवन-रस कर्म में समाहित था। गाँधी जी ने कहा था “मेरा जीवन ही मेरा संदेश है।” उन्होंने अंग्रेजी दासता के बन्धन से जकड़ी हुई भारतीय जनता के अंदर राष्ट्रीय चेतना के प्राण फूँक दिये। आज जबकि मानवता युद्ध, आतंक, घृणा और हिंसा से ग्रस्त है, गाँधी का जीवन-दर्शन उसे प्रेरणा शांति और प्रेम का मार्ग दिखाता है। वे सत्य, अहिंसा, अस्तेय आदि गुणों और सदाचार को अपने जीवन में उतारने वाले युग-प्रवर्तक महापुरुष थे।

इसके बावजूद, विवादों ने आज तक उनका पीछा नहीं छोड़ा। वे न तो ईसा मसीह की तरह अपने समाज द्वारा त्यक्त थे और न ही राम की तरह पूज्य। वे विरोध में, अविरोध में, साधारण में असाधारण थे, जिसे लोगों ने भरपूर प्यार दिया तो गोली भी मारी। सुकरात और ईसा की तरह अविवेकी के हाथों मरने के बाद भी उनकी लोकप्रियता में कोई कमी नहीं आयी। इसके उलट आयुर्वेद की औषधि की तरह समय के साथ उसकी तासीर बढ़ती ही गई वर्ना भूतपूर्व अमेरिकी राष्ट्रपति बुश यह क्यों कहते की अमेरिका में भारत की पहचान गाँधी के कारण है। कहना होगा कि ज्यों-ज्यों युद्ध की आशंका बढ़ती जाएगी, संशय और तनाव के प्रलयकारी बादल घिरते जाएंगे, त्यों-त्यों गाँधीवादी मूल्य प्रासंगिक होते जाएंगे।

मोहनदास कर्मचन्द गाँधी 1893 में भारत से दक्षिण अफ्रीका गये। उस समय उनकी उम्र 23 वर्ष थी। एक बैरिस्टर के रूप में उनका एक वर्ष का समझौता था। अहिंसक प्रतिरोध की ओर उनकी यात्रा दक्षिणी अफ्रीका की यात्रा के पहले हफ्ते ही प्रारंभ हो गई। जब उन्होंने निम्न श्रेणी के रेल डिब्बे में जाने से इनकार कर दिया तो उनके साथ यात्रा कर रहे श्वेत यात्रियों ने उन्हें मारिट्जबर्ग स्टेशन पर ट्रेन से नीचे फेंक दिया। गाँधी जी दक्षिण अफ्रीका में 21 वर्ष तक रहे। वहाँ वे प्रत्येक प्रकार के जातीय विभेदों का प्रतिरोध करते रहे और भारतीयों के नेता बनकर उभरे। वहाँ उन्होंने 1894 में नाटाल इण्डियन कांग्रेस की स्थापना की, एक साप्ताहिक पत्र इण्डियन ओपीनियन, 1903 में निकाला। जॉन रस्किन के बुकलेट भनदजव जीपे रेंज से प्रभावित होकर उन्होंने सर्वोदय का सिद्धांत स्थापित किया जिसे उन्होंने फोनिक्स फार्म में सर्वप्रथम क्रियात्मक रूप दिया। 11 सितम्बर 1906 को उन्होंने पहली बार 3000 भारतीयों के सामने 'अहिंसक प्रतिरोध' का सिद्धांत प्रस्तुत किया। इसे पहले उन्होंने 'निष्क्रिय प्रतिरोध' का नाम दिया फिर बाद में उन्होंने इसे सत्याग्रह नाम दिया। यह सिद्धांत जोहान्सबर्ग में काले कानून के विरोध में स्थापित किया। इस कानून के विरोध में कई आंदोलन हुए, जेल गये। टालस्टाय के साथ पत्राचार के बाद उनसे प्रभावित होकर गाँधीजी ने 'हिन्द स्वराज' पुस्तक लिखी जिसमें उन्होंने पाश्चात्य सभ्यता का विरोध और भारतीय मानस के अनुरूप एक वैकल्पिक व्यवस्था की स्थापना की। गाँधीजी ने बाद में टालस्टाय फार्म की भी स्थापना की। भारत में 1915 से लेकर 30 जनवरी, 1948 तक, जब उनकी हत्या कर दी गयी, उन्होंने पूरे भारतीय उपमहाद्वीप में स्वतंत्रता संघर्ष जारी रखा। इसमें गाँधीजी का सीधा उद्देश्य था कि हमें किस प्रकार के समाज का निर्माण करना है। उन्होंने अपने व्यक्तिगत और सामाजिक जीवन में सिद्धांत एवं व्यवहार में कोई अंतर नहीं रखा। उनका कहना था कि मेरा जीवन ही मेरा संदेश है। गाँधीजी के मूल्य व सिद्धांत 'सत्य' और 'अहिंसा' के सार्वभौमिक सिद्धांतों पर आधारित हैं जिसमें 'प्रत्येक जीवन की एकता' के विचार को लक्ष्य बनाया गया है। इसीलिए वे आज भी हमारे समाज के लिए उपयोगी और प्रासंगिक बने हुए हैं। उनके भाषण, लेखन हमारे लिए एक चिरस्थायी सम्पदा है। इसमें एक नई विश्वदृष्टि है जो अहिंसा, सतत विकास व खुशहाल जीवन पर आधारित नयी सामाजिक व्यवस्था प्रस्तुत करती है उनके विचार जितने उनके समय के साथ जुड़े हुए हैं उतने हमारे समय के साथ भी। आज का वैश्विक समाज सतत हिंसा,

भौतिकता उपभोक्तावाद, विलगाव, गरीबी व अधीनता, उपेक्षा और अन्यायपूर्ण धारणा तथा भोजन, ऊर्जा और अन्य संसाधनों के अभाव के साथ जी रहा है। आतंकवाद वामपंथी उग्रवाद अन्य निष्क्रिय प्रतिरोध इसी के परिणाम हैं। आज के वैश्विक समाज में अमीर और अमीर बनता जा रहा है, गरीब और गरीब बनता जा रहा है। आज भारतीय व वैश्विक समाज के विवादों का समाधान गाँधीवादी मूल्यों में ही है। यद्यपि गाँधीवादी मूल्यों व विचारों को विभाजित नहीं किया जा सकता परन्तु प्रस्तुतिकरण की सुविधा के लिए इसे नैतिक मूल्य, अहिंसक दृष्टिकोण, विवादों के समाधान के लिए राजनीतिक मूल्य, आर्थिक सिद्धांत, सामाजिक मूल्य, परिस्थितिकीय एवं पर्यावरणीय मूल्य तथा राष्ट्रवाद व अन्तर्राष्ट्रवाद आदि में विभाजित किया जा सकता है।

नैतिक मूल्य— गाँधीजी के लिए नैतिकता, मूल्य, धर्म, आध्यात्मिकता एक दूसरे में समाहित राष्ट्र हैं। वे कहते हैं कि “मैं नहीं समझता कि आध्यात्मिक नियम सिर्फ धर्म के क्षेत्र में प्रकट होते हैं और सिर्फ सामान्य कर्म में प्रदर्शित होते हैं अपितु ये अपने को आर्थिक, सामाजिक और राजनीतिक क्षेत्र में भी प्रकट करते हैं।” यदि अन्य विज्ञान मानव को यह बताते हैं कि विश्व ऐसा है तो नीतिशास्त्र यह बताता है कि किसी मनुष्य को किस तरह व्यवहार करना चाहिए। गाँधीवादी नैतिकता का प्रारंभ आन्तरिक मूल्यों से होता है जिसमें सबसे महत्वपूर्ण है सत्य और अहिंसा। ‘सत्य’ एक सार्वभौमिक सत्य है जो अपने में कई मूल्यों और सिद्धांतों को समाहित किए हुए है। सत्य सिर्फ शब्दों में नहीं, अपितु विचारों में भी तथा सत्य सिर्फ वैचारिक ही नहीं, अपितु आन्तरिक सिद्धांत जो ईश्वर है, सत्य को महसूस करने का अंतिम साधन है— अहिंसा। सत्य विश्व की प्रत्येक आत्मा को प्रेम का मार्ग प्रस्तुत करता है। गाँधीजी कहते हैं अहिंसा मानवता का सिद्धांत है और हिंसा पाशविकता है, क्रूरता है। मानव जाति अहिंसा के मूल्यों का परिचालन करके ही अपने आपको बचा सकती है। अहिंसा ही हिंसा को रोक सकती है। हिंसा को रोकने के लिए यदि बड़ी हिंसा का प्रयोग होता है तो मानव जाति बचेगी कहाँ। हिटलर को रोकने के लिए अमेरिका ने परमाणु बम तक का इस्तेमाल कर दिया। हिटलर ने सोवियत संघ के लगभग पाँच करोड़ लोगों को मारा। अमेरिका ने शक्ति प्रदर्शन करने के लिए हिटलर के मित्र राष्ट्र जापान पर परमाणु बम गिराया। किन्तु अहिंसा का साधन सबके लिए, प्रत्येक

जीवन के लिए प्रेम, भयमुक्त तथा अपने सत्य के लिए लड़ने व दूसरे के लिए भी संघर्ष करने का मार्ग प्रस्तुत करता है। यथार्थ जीवन में उन्होंने स्वीकार किया कि पूरी तरह अहिंसा संभव नहीं किन्तु उनका कहना था कि उसे न्यूनतम स्तर पर रखना मानवता का फर्ज होना चाहिए।

गाँधीजी का मानना था कि जहाँ प्रेम है, वहाँ ईश्वर भी है। प्रेम कभी कुछ पाने का दावा नहीं करता, वह सदा देता है। प्रेम सदा सहन करता है, वह कभी विरोध नहीं करता। कभी बदला लेकर संतुष्ट नहीं होता। वैज्ञानिक हमसे कहते हैं कि हमारी इस पृथ्वी की रचना करने वाले परमाणुओं के बीच यदि मिलानेवाली शक्ति मौजूद न हो तो यह पृथ्वी टूटकर टुकड़े-टुकड़े हो जाय और हमारा अस्तित्व इस दुनिया से मिट जाये और जिस प्रकार जड़ प्रकृति में मिलानेवाली शक्ति है, उसी प्रकार चेतन पदार्थों में भी वह शक्ति होनी चाहिए, और चेतन प्राणियों में मिलानेवाली शक्ति का नाम प्रेम है।

प्राथमिक सिद्धांतों— सत्य, अहिंसा और प्रेम से अनेक गांधीवादी व्यावहारिक मानवीय सिद्धांत निकले— साध्य और साधन की शुचिता अधिकार से ज्यादा कर्तव्य, पाप से घृणा करो पानी से नहीं, सच्चे धर्म का पालन आदि। महात्मा गाँधी ने साध्य और साधन में घनिष्ठ संबंध बताते हुए लिखा है— “साधन बीज है और साध्य वृक्ष, इसलिए जितना संबंध बीज और वृक्ष में है उतना ही साध्य और साधन में है। शैतान को भजकर मैं ईश्वर भजन का फल प्राप्त करूँ ऐसा संभव नहीं हो सकता, अतः यह कहना कि हमें तो ईश्वर को भी भजना है साधन भले ही शैतान हों, अज्ञानता जैसी बात है।” अतएव श्रेष्ठ साध्य की प्राप्ति हेतु श्रेष्ठ साधनों को ही अपनाना चाहिए। साध्य के साथ—साथ उसकी प्राप्ति के साधन भी उतने ही पवित्र होने चाहिए, अन्यथा एक की अपवित्रता दूसरे को भी अपवित्र और भ्रष्ट कर देती है।

आज के वैश्विक समाज में घातक प्रतिस्पर्धा का दौर है जो सामाजिक तनाव व बिखराव का सबसे बड़ा कारण है। गाँधीजी का कहना था कि “मानव जाति का नियम घातक प्रतिस्पर्धा नहीं अपितु जीवनदायी शक्ति है। भावना की उपेक्षा करने का अर्थ यह भूल जाना है कि **भाबन भाबनाशी** प्राणी है। यदि हम ईश्वर की प्रतिमूर्ति हैं तो कुछ लोगों के लिए नहीं अधिक लोगों

के हित के लिए भी नहीं, किन्तु सब लोगों के हित को— सर्वोदय को बढ़ाने के लिए हम बनाये गये हैं।” हमें अपने प्रेम का दायरा इतना व्यापक कर देना चाहिए कि वह सारे गाँव को अपनी भीतर समा ले गाँव को अपने दायरे में सारे जिले का समावेश कर लेना चाहिए जिले को प्रान्त का और प्रान्त को समूचे देश का— यहाँ तक कि अन्त में फैलते—फैलते हमारे प्रेम का दायरा सारे विश्व तक फैल जाना चाहिए। काश! इन मूल्यों का पालन मुम्बई में व आसाम में होता जिससे अपने ही देश के निवासी अपमानित नहीं होते।

आज पूरे वैश्विक समुदाय में ईश्वर उसके स्वरूप उपासना पद्धति, धार्मिक स्थलों पर दावों के कारण मानव समाज में तनाव हिंसा व युद्ध तथा दंगों की प्रतिस्पर्धा है। परन्तु गाँधीजी कहते थे “दुनिया के समस्त धर्म उसी एक बिन्दु पर पहुँचने वाले अलग—अलग मार्ग हैं जब तक हम एक ही लक्ष्य पर पहुँचते हों तब तक यदि हम अलग—अलग मार्ग ग्रहण करें तो उसकी क्या चिंता है ? एक ईश्वर में विश्वास हर धर्म का मूल आधार है। लेकिन मैं भविष्य में ऐसे किसी समय की कल्पना नहीं करता, जब इस धरती पर व्यवहार में केवल एक ही धर्म रहेगा। सिद्धांत की दृष्टि से चूंकि ईश्वर एक है, इसलिए धर्म भी एक ही हो सकता है परन्तु व्यवहार में ऐसे कोई दो मनुष्य मेरे जानने में नहीं आये, जो ईश्वर के विषय में एक ही कल्पना करते हों। इसलिए मनुष्य के विभिन्न स्वभावों तथा विभिन्न भौगोलिक परिस्थितियों की जरूरतें पूरी करने के लिए शायद धर्म भी सदा भिन्न ही रहेंगे। गाँधीजी का मानना था कि “मैं जगत के समस्त महान धर्मों के मूलभूत सत्य में विश्वास रखता हूँ। मेरा यह विश्वास है कि वे सब ईश्वर प्रदत्त हैं और मेरा यह भी विश्वास है कि वे धर्म उन प्रयोगों के लिए आवश्यक थे, जिनके बीच में उनका प्रकटीकरण हुआ था। मैं जानता हूँ कि अगर हम सब विभिन्न धर्मों के धर्मग्रंथों को उन धर्मों के अनुयायियों के दृष्टिकोण से पढ़ सकें, तो हमें पता चलेगा कि बुनियाद में वे सब एक हैं और सब एक—दूसरे के सहायक हैं। इन प्रयासों से हम आज के तनावों को, विवादों को सुलझा सकते हैं व एक सुखमय मानव समाज की रचना कर सकते हैं। एक अच्छे हिन्दू या अच्छे मुसलमान को अपने देश का प्रेमी होने के कारण अधिक अच्छा हिन्दू और अधिक अच्छा मुसलमान होना चाहिए। हमारे देश के सच्चे हित और हमारे धर्म के सच्चे हित के बीच कभी कोई संघर्ष हो ही नहीं सकता। जहाँ ऐसा कोई संघर्ष दिखायी देता

है, वहाँ हमारे धर्म में अर्थात् हमारी नीति में कोई दोष होना चाहिए। सच्चे धर्म का अर्थ है अच्छे विचार और अच्छा आचरण होता है। दो समानार्थक वस्तुओं के बीच तुलना करना गलत है। इस प्रकार, गाँधीजी एक व्यावहारिक आदर्शवादी और एक दुर्निवार्य आशावादी थे।

विवादों के समाधान में अहिंसक दृष्टिकोण— मानव समाज के अंदर विवाद अनिवार्य हैं क्योंकि विभिन्न हितों के बीच संघर्ष व प्रतिस्पर्धा होती रहती है जिसके पीछे धार्मिक, वैचारिक, लिंग आधारित, आर्थिक और राजनीतिक विभिन्नताएं सक्रिय रहती हैं। मनुष्य को सदैव अन्याय व गलत कार्यों का विरोध करना चाहिए। गाँधीजी ने कहा है कि “बुराई का विरोध करना मनुष्य का उसी प्रकार कर्तव्य है जिस प्रकार अच्छाई का सहयोग करना।” विवादों के समाधान के लिए गाँधीवादी अहिंसक दृष्टिकोण पर आधारित ‘सत्याग्रह’ की प्रासंगिकता सबसे महत्वपूर्ण है। मार्टिन लूथर किंग जू0 ने लिखा है कि— “गाँधी प्रायः इतिहास में पहले व्यक्ति थे जिन्होंने ईसा मसीह के प्रेम सिद्धांत को ऊपर उठाया और व्यक्ति और ताकतवार के बीच संवाद का माध्यम बनाया तथा इसे एक बड़े पैमाने पर सामाजिक शक्ति के रूप में बदल दिया।”

गाँधीजी ने सत्याग्रह को सत्य की ताकत, प्रेम की ताकत और आत्मा की ताकत बताया और हिंसा के प्रतिरोध का सबसे महत्वपूर्ण प्रत्युत्तर बताया। उनका मानना था कि व्यक्ति को अपने सत्य पर टिका रहना चाहिए, विरोधी का धैर्य व आत्मपीड़ा की सहनशक्ति प्रारंभ करने से पहले विरोधी सत्ता के साथ बातचीत करना अति आवश्यक है। उनका मानना था कि सत्याग्रह में ‘समझौता’ के लिए व्यक्ति को तैयार रहना चाहिए। सामान्य मनुष्य बहुत समय तक बलिदान के लिए तैयार नहीं रह सकता। गाँधीवादी अहिंसक दृष्टिकोण मानव समाज में विवाद को समाप्त करने के लिए समसामयिक विश्व में सबसे महत्वपूर्ण मार्ग है। जिसका सबसे ज्वलंत उदाहरण हमने “जन लोकपाल बिल” संबंधी आंदोलन में देखा। एक 80 वर्ष का बुजुर्ग अन्ना हजारे के सामने सारी ताकतों के बावजूद भारत सरकार को समझौते के लिए मजबूर होना पड़ा।

सत्याग्रह ऐसी शक्ति है, जिसका व्यक्ति और समाज दोनों उपयोग कर सकते हैं। जिस प्रकार उसका उपयोग घर-गृहस्थी व्यवहारों में हो सकता है, उसी प्रकार राजनीतिक व्यवहारों में भी हो सकता है। सत्याग्रह का सर्वत्र प्रयोग किया जा सकता है, यही उसके स्थायित्व का उसकी अजेयता का प्रबल प्रमाण है। पुरुष, स्त्रियाँ, बालक सब कोई उसका एक सा उपयोग कर सकते हैं। यह कहना बिलकुल झूठ है कि सत्याग्रह केवल निर्बलों द्वारा उपयोग में ली जाने वाली शक्ति है और इसका उपयोग वे तभी कर सकते हैं जब तक वे हिंसा का सामना हिंसा से करने की क्षमता प्राप्त नहीं कर लेते।

राजनीतिक मूल्य— गाँधीजी की सत्य के प्रति निष्ठा ने उन्हें राजनीति में आने के लिए प्रेरित किया। उन्होंने महसूस किया कि राजनीति सिर्फ राजाओं से सम्बद्ध नहीं है अपितु यह आम आदमी के जीवन को प्रभावित करती है। यदि मैं समाज सेवा करना चाहता हूँ तो यह राजनीति को छोड़कर संभव नहीं है। राष्ट्रीय आंदोलन की सबसे बड़ी देन समाज का राजनीतिकरण था। किन्तु बाद के दिनों में यह प्रवृत्ति कमजोर पड़ी। भूतपूर्व गृह सचिव जी. के. पिल्लई का मानना है कि उत्तर प्रदेश में नक्सलवाद इसलिए नहीं उभर सकता है क्योंकि बहुजन समाज पार्टी के नेतृत्व में दलित, शोषित व वंचित वर्ग का राजनीतिक संगठन मजबूत है जबकि झारखंड व छत्तीसगढ़ में ऐसा न होने के कारण यह समस्या बनी हुई है।

गाँधीजी राजनीतिक विचारों का सबसे महत्वपूर्ण पक्ष है— 'स्वराज' की अवधारणा। जिसमें रामराज्य या आदर्श राज्य की अवधारणा सम्मिलित है। इसमें सच्चा लोकतंत्र व ग्राम स्वराज की अवधारणा भी गाँधीजी ने प्रस्तुत की जो भारतीय परिवेश के लिए सबसे महत्वपूर्ण है क्योंकि आज भी भारत की अधिकांश जनता गाँवों में रहती है या सम्बद्ध है। गाँधीजी के लिए देशप्रेम का अर्थ था "पश्चिमी देशों का लोकतंत्र केवल नाममात्र का ही है, उसमें लोकतंत्र के कुछ तत्व अवश्य हैं। परन्तु वह सच्चे अर्थों में लोकतंत्र तभी हो सकता है जब वह हिंसा से रहित हो जाएगा। भ्रष्टाचार हिंसा का ही पर्यायवाची है। अर्थात् ये दोनों साथ-साथ रहते हैं। महात्मा गाँधी का मानना था कि पश्चिमी देशों का शासक-वर्ग जनता को प्रजा-सत्ता के पवित्र नाम से लूटता है। उनका कहना था कि यूरोपीय देशों व भारत दोनों का वास्तविक रोग

एक ही है।" गाँधीजी ने दावा किया कि भारत सच्चे लोकतंत्र का निर्माण कर रहा है जिसका अमूल्य हथियार सत्याग्रह होगा। तथा इसका स्वरूप चरखा, ग्रामोद्योग के जरिए प्राथमिकता प्रणाली, अस्पृश्यता निवारण, मद्य निषेध, अहिंसक तरीके से मजदूरों का संगठन और साम्प्रदायिक एकता होगी तथा सत्य और अहिंसा उसके मूलाधार होंगे। महात्मा गाँधी ने लोकतंत्र के अर्थ को स्पष्ट करते हुए कहा था "प्रजातंत्र का अर्थ यह समझना है कि इस तंत्र में नीचे से नीचे व ऊँचे से ऊँचे व्यक्ति को विकास के समान अवसर मिलने चाहिए, लेकिन अहिंसा के सिवा ऐसा नहीं हो सकता।"

महात्मा गाँधी ने अपने स्वराज्य की कल्पना करते हुए कहा "मेरे सपनों का स्वराज्य तो गरीबों का स्वराज्य होगा। जीवन की जिन आवश्यकताओं का उपयोग राजा और अमीर लोग करते हैं वहीं उस गरीब को भी सुलभ होगी। लेकिन इसका अभिप्राय यह नहीं था कि सबके पास उनके जैसे महल ही हों। सुखी जीवन के लिए महलों आवश्यकता नहीं होती। परन्तु गरीब को जीवन की संपूर्ण आवश्यकता की पूर्ति के लिए वे सभी सुविधाएं मिलेगी जो एक अमीर को प्राप्त होती है। गाँधीजी ने कहा कि मेरा स्वराज्य तब तक पूर्ण स्वराज्य नहीं होगा जब तक ये सभी सुविधाएं गरीब को देने की व्यवस्था नहीं हो जाती।"

महात्मा गाँधी ने लोकतंत्र के लिए सत्ता के विकेन्द्रीकरण को आवश्यक तत्व माना है। उन्होंने कहा कि सच्चा लोकतंत्र केन्द्र में बैठे चालीस आदमियों से नहीं चल सकता बल्कि उसे हर गाँव के लोगों के नीचे से चलना होगा। आज भारतीय राज्यों में यदि केरल को देखें तो वह सत्ता का विकेन्द्रीकरण सबसे अच्छे ढंग से हुआ। (मूल बजट का 40:) जिससे मानव विकास सूचकांक की स्थिति यहाँ कनाडा व पश्चिमी यूरोपीय देशों से प्रतिस्पर्धा रखती है। झारखण्ड व छत्तीसगढ़ में पंचायती चुनाव दो-तीन दशक बाद हुए हैं तो परिस्थिति जटिल बनी हुई है। महात्मा गाँधी ने व्यक्तिगत स्वतंत्रता को प्रजातंत्र का अनिवार्य मूल्य माना तथा व्यक्ति के आचरण पर राज्य के नियंत्रण के यथासंभव निषेध का प्रतिपादन किया। उन्होंने कहा "प्रत्येक व्यक्ति को मनचाहा कार्य करने की स्वतंत्रता दी जानी चाहिए, जब तक कि वह किसी दूसरे व्यक्ति को स्वतंत्रता, जीवन या सम्पत्ति को नुकसान नहीं पहुँचाता।"

स्वराज्य स्वतंत्रता का मूल उद्देश्य था। गाँधीजी की स्वराज्य की परिभाषा थी— ऐसा समाज जहाँ सबसे निर्धन की सुनवाई हो, समाज में कोई ऊँचा और नीचा न हो और पूर्ण सौहार्द हो, अस्पृश्यता और नशीले पदार्थों का कोई स्थान न हो और महिलाओं को पुरुषों के समान अधिकार प्राप्त हो। गाँधीजी ने हम सबको एक मंत्र दिया था और वह यह कि “सबसे निर्धन और निर्बल के चेहरे को याद करो और अपने आप से पूछो कि जो कार्य करने जा रहे हैं, उससे उसे क्या लाभ मिलेगा ? क्या उससे उसे अपने जीवन और भाग्य पर नियंत्रण प्राप्त हो सकता है ? क्या उससे भूखे और संतृप्त लोगों को स्वराज मिल जाएगा ?”

गाँधीजी ने ‘रामराज्य’ की अवधारणा रखी। इस अवधारणा में सम्पूर्ण लोकतंत्र देखने को मिलता है जहाँ रंग, जाति, धर्म व लिंग भेद नहीं होंगे। जहाँ सबको न्याय मिलेगा जो सर्वसुलभ, सस्ता व प्रभावी होगा। जहाँ धर्मपालन, भाषण व प्रेस की स्वतंत्रता होगी यह राज्य सत्य और अहिंसा पर आधारित होगा। जहाँ का समाज खुशहाल, प्रसन्न तथा आत्मनिर्भर होगा। आज भी वैश्विक समाज के राज्यों के लिए यह आदर्श प्रासंगिक है, जहाँ पहुँच कर उच्चतम मानव विकास सूचकांक अर्जित किया जा सकेगा।

आर्थिक मूल्य— महात्मा गाँधी अर्थशास्त्री नहीं थे, न ही उनके विचार अर्थशास्त्र के किसी नियम, सिद्धांत पर आधारित थे। गाँधीजी ने भारत की आँखों से देखा था। वस्तुतः उनके आर्थिक विचार उनके व्यक्तिगत अनुभवों से जुड़े थे। उनका यह विश्वास था कि सच्चा अर्थशास्त्र कभी भी उच्चतम नैतिक मानदण्डों के विरुद्ध नहीं जा सकता। गाँधीजी ने आर्थिक क्षेत्र में नैतिक दृष्टिकोण एवं शैली अपनाते हुए ‘मानवीय अर्थशास्त्र’ का समर्थन किया व रस्किन और टॉलस्टॉय की भाँति आर्थिक समानता के सिद्धांत को स्वीकार करते हुए कहते थे कि सभी लोगों को अपनी स्वाभाविक आवश्यकताओं की पूर्ति हेतु आवश्यक वस्तुएँ उपलब्ध होनी चाहिए। इस प्रकार वे “प्रत्येक को उसकी आवश्यकता के अनुसार सिद्धांत में विश्वास करते थे। गाँधीजी ने अर्जन, संचय एकीकृत सम्पदा एवं भौतिक उपलब्धियों को नकार कर अर्थशास्त्र और अर्थशास्त्र के नैतिक आधार को प्राथमिकता प्रदान की, साथ ही धन सम्पदा, पूँजी की आर्थिक जटिलता एवं निरंकुशता का विरोध व आवश्यकताओं के परिसीमन को

नैतिक विश्वसनीयता दी। गाँधीजी के अनुसार "आर्थिक न्याय भी एक आध्यात्मिक दायित्व है" और यही उनके सर्वोदय का मूल आर्थिक आधार है।

सर्वोदय का आर्थिक अर्थ है— सबका उदय। सर्वोदय की भावना गाँधीजी के आदर्श समाज की सर्वोपरि विशेषता है क्योंकि वे ऐसे समाज की कल्पना करते थे जिसमें सभी व्यक्ति अपने साधिकार स्थान प्राप्त करेंगे। महात्मा गाँधी ने 'सर्वोदय' का विचार जॉन रस्किन की पुस्तक 'अन टू दिस लास्ट' से ग्रहण किया था जिसने उनके जीवन को गहन रूप से प्रभावित किया रस्किन की इस पुस्तक से गाँधीजी ने सीखा कि "सबकी भलाई में ही व्यक्ति की भलाई निहित है।" रस्किन के विचारों से प्रेरित होकर ही गाँधीजी ने वकील और नाई के कार्य को समान मूल्यवान मानते हुए यह व्यक्त किया कि सभी को अपने कार्य के आधार पर जीविकोपार्जन का अधिकार है। गाँधीजी ने रस्किन के इसी विचार से श्रम का मूल्य पहचाना। सर्वोदय स्वराज का एक अभिन्न अंग है एवं राजनीतिक स्वतंत्रता सर्वोदय का ही एक अंग है। इस संबंध में गाँधीजी ने लिखा है— "मेरा स्वराज्य का स्वप्न गरीबी के स्वराज्य का है। उनके लिए जीवन की आवश्यक वस्तुएं वैसी ही सुलभ होनी चाहिए जैसे धनिकों एवं राजाओं के लिए। महात्मा गाँधी के अनुसार सर्वोदय के प्रमुख सिद्धांत जिनके प्रकाश में यह कार्य करता है—

1. आर्थिक व राजनीतिक क्षेत्रों में शक्ति का विकेंद्रीकरण
2. धनिक लोग अपने धन के केवल ट्रस्टी (न्यासी) होंगे
3. जनता के पास उपभोग के लिए कम से कम सामग्री होगी, एवं
4. सभी के लिए (चाहे वह धनिक वर्ग हों या बौद्धिक वर्ग) शारीरिक श्रम वांछनीय होगा तथा सभी एक-दूसरे के प्रति सद्भाव रखेंगे।

गाँधीजी ने बुद्ध के जीवन एवं गीता से प्रभावित होकर न्यूनतम आवश्यकता से अधिक संग्रहीकरण न करने पर बल दिया। उनके अनुसार धन संग्रह मानव जीवन की प्रगति में बाधक नहीं बने, यही अर्थशास्त्र की वैधता है। इस संदर्भ में गाँधीजी के शब्दों में "यदि मैं कोई वस्तु लेता हूँ अथवा रखता हूँ, जिससे मुझे अपने लिए किसी तात्कालिक उपयोग हेतु आवश्यकता नहीं है, तो मैं उसकी अन्य किसी से चोरी करता हूँ। यह प्रकृति का निरपवाद

बुनियादी नियम है कि वह प्रतिदिन केवल उतना ही पैदा करती है जितनी हमें आवश्यकता है। अतः यदि प्रत्येक व्यक्ति जितनी उसे आवश्यकता है उतना ही ले तो विश्व में गरीबी समाप्त हो जाएगी और कोई भूख से पीड़ित नहीं रहेगा।” गाँधीजी अर्थशास्त्र के नियमों को अधिक ठोस एवं सुरक्षित कृतियाँ मानते थे। गाँधीजी के अनुसार, प्राचीन आदर्श को बढ़ाने वाली गतिविधियों को सीमित करने की आवश्यकता है और इसी से वास्तविक उन्नति के कीर्तिमान को स्थापित किया जा सकता है। उन्होंने इस आर्थिक सत्य को स्पष्ट किया कि भारत को यूरोप तथा अमेरिका के देशों के समान भौतिकवादी दौड़ में नैतिकता का अन्त नहीं करना है। अमेरिका और यूरोप की भाँति स्त्रियों, पुरुषों एवं बालकों की मृत देह पर खड़ी करने वाली चिमनियों रूपी आधुनिक उन्नति स्वीकार्य नहीं है। उनका यह मानना था कि देश में आर्थिक समृद्धि बढ़ने के साथ-साथ नैतिकता का स्तर दिन प्रति दिन गिरता जा रहा है। यद्यपि गाँधीजी आदर्श समान वितरण प्रणाली के पक्ष में नहीं थे, किंतु व्यवहारिक दृष्टि से वे समान वितरण के साथ न्यायसंगत वितरण प्रणाली को स्वीकार करते थे।

गाँधीजी की मान्यता थी कि अर्थशास्त्र एक नैतिक विज्ञान है जो केवल सुख की अनुभूति में ही अपने आर्थिक चिंतन को सीमित नहीं करता है। व्यक्ति की कमाई का प्रयोजन केवल भौतिक सुखों की प्राप्ति ही नहीं है अपितु स्वयं का नैतिक एवं आत्मिक विकास करना भी है। इस प्रकार गाँधीजी का अर्थशास्त्र पूर्णतः सामाजिक न्याय एवं नैतिक आदर्शों की पूर्ति के लिए है। गाँधीजी धर्म के स्थान पर आध्यात्मिक शक्ति के पुजारी थे तथा यह मानते थे कि व्यक्ति अपने समस्त कार्य केवल धन से ही नहीं कर सकता। गाँधीजी मानवीय अर्थशास्त्र को नीति धर्म की शिक्षा देने के कारण सेवा नीति को समर्पित करते हैं। गाँधीजी के लिए इस सेवा नीति का क्षेत्र पाश्चात्य विचारकों की भाँति धन को केंद्रित मानकर नहीं अपितु धन की अपेक्षा मनुष्य को केन्द्र मानता था, क्योंकि उनके विचार में मनुष्य स्वयं धन है। इस प्रकार सेवा नीति के संबंध में गाँधीजी के विस्तृत विचारों से इसका मुखर अभिवादन होता है।

गाँधीजी के अनुसार, नैतिक विकास भौतिक आवश्यकताओं की वृद्धि में निहित नहीं अपितु अनावश्यक इच्छाओं को समाप्त करने तथा अपनी अधिकतम शक्ति को आध्यात्मिक गरिमा

प्राप्त करने हेतु लगाने में निहित है। इस प्रकार गाँधीजी का अर्थदर्शन भी अहिंसा से अनुप्रेरित है और यही उनके सर्वोदय दर्शन का सशक्त आधार है जो आर्थिक मंतव्यों की पूर्ति में अहिंसक वृत्ति का समर्थन करता है। गाँधीजी पूँजीवाद को शोषण के प्रतीक के रूप में देखते थे क्योंकि पूँजीवाद अतिरिक्त लाभ की भावना से बढ़ता है तथा शोषण की भावना को वृत्ति प्रदान करता है। गाँधीजी को अर्थदर्शन के "श्रम की महत्ता" का मूल आभास था। इसीलिए उन्होंने समानता के सिद्धांत का प्रतिपादन किया। गाँधीजी का आर्थिक चिंतन "अपिग्रह" की भावना से अनुप्रेरित व्यावहारिक उपलब्धियों का व्यग्र अनुभव है। गाँधीजी ने अपने आश्रम में श्रम निष्ठा को साकार रूप प्रस्तुत किया। गाँधीजी की व्यक्तिगत आवश्यकताएं लगभग नगण्य थीं एवं सम्पदा के नाम पर उनके पास "सेवा धर्म" था जिसमें नीति एवं नैतिकता दोनों समाविष्ट थे और उनके इसी आदर्श ने उनके आर्थिक चिंतन व मूल्यों के प्रत्येक पक्ष को व्यवहारिक रूप दिया।

गाँधीजी का न्यासिता का सिद्धांत सर्वोदय दर्शन का मूलभूत आर्थिक आधार एवं सिद्धांत है। संक्षिप्त में न्यासिता का सिद्धांत आर्थिक समानता के आदर्श से जुड़ा हुआ है। समाज में व्याप्त आर्थिक विषमता अनेक विकृतियों की जड़ है। गाँधीजी ने इसी आर्थिक विषमता (जिसमें धनिक वर्ग भौतिक सुखों को भोगने में लिप्त है तो निर्धन अभावों से पीड़ित है) को समाप्त करने हेतु आर्थिक समानता के आदर्श की अभिव्यक्ति की। प्राचीन भारत में भौतिक समृद्धि के चरम उत्कर्ष के पश्चात् लोगों के जीवन में त्याग भावना की प्रधानता थी। आवश्यकता से अधिक धन, सम्पत्ति संग्रह को उचित नहीं माना जाता था। गाँधीजी के 'न्यासिता के सिद्धांत' की व्याख्या भी इसी आदर्श पर आधारित है।

गाँधीजी ने जिन सिद्धांतों को अपने अर्थशास्त्रीय विचारों की कसौटी माना एवं जिन पर दृढ़ रहे थे वे आधारभूत सिद्धांत सत्य, अहिंसा व अपरिग्रह थे। न्यासिता के सिद्धांत की स्थापना के साथ ही गाँधीजी द्वारा आर्थिक व्यवस्था के संबंध में औद्योगिक क्रांति एवं परिणामस्वरूप उत्पन्न केन्द्रीकृत व्यवस्था का विरोध किया गया। गाँधीजी भारत को आत्मनिर्भर देखना चाहते थे। उन्होंने धर्ममय नैतिक आदर्शों के सहारे ऐसी अर्थव्यवस्था को अपना आदर्श स्वीकार्य किया

जो सामाजिक न्याय का समर्थन करती थी एवं जिसके कच्चे माल तथा निर्मित पदार्थों के विक्रय हेतु बड़े बाजारों की आवश्यकता होती है। और खोज की यह प्रवृत्ति साम्राज्यवाद एवं उपनिवेशवाद को जन्म देती है जो कि नैतिकता के विरुद्ध है। अतः हमें अपनी शक्ति इसी प्रयत्न पर केंद्रित करनी चाहिए कि गाँव स्वावलम्बी बने तथा उपभोक्ता सुविधा हेतु निर्माण एवं उत्पादन करे। गाँधीजी ने कहा "आप कारखानों की सभ्यता पर अहिंसा का निर्माण नहीं कर सकते, किन्तु वह स्वावलम्बी एवं स्वाश्रयी ग्रामों के आधार पर निर्मित की जा सकती है। शोषण हिंसा का सार है और मेरी कल्पना की ग्रामीण अर्थ-रचना इसी शोषण का सर्वथा त्याग करती है। इसलिए अहिंसक बनने से पूर्व व्यक्ति को ग्रामीण मानस वाला बनना होगा।"

गाँधीजी के सर्वोदय दर्शन की आर्थिक व्यवस्था का मुख्य आधार ग्राम्य आधारित गाँवों के स्वावलम्बी एवं स्वपर्याप्त अर्थव्यवस्था थी। अतः उन्होंने ग्रामीण विकास हेतु अनेक योजनाएं प्रस्तुत की। उनका यह विश्वास था कि यदि छोट-छोटे गाँव आत्मनिर्भर हो जाएं तो वे अपनी आवश्यकता की वस्तुओं का स्वयं ही निर्माण कर लेंगे और ऐसी अवस्था में ही लोकतांत्रिक मूल्यों से परिपूरित शांतिपूर्ण जीवन संभव हो सकेगा। इसके विपरीत बड़े शहरों में सत्ता एवं सम्पत्ति का केन्द्रीयकरण कुछ ही व्यक्तियों के हाथ हो जाएगा जिनको संग्रहित करने के लिए हिंसा का सहारा लेना होगा। अतः लोकतांत्रिक विकेन्द्रीकरण के लिए लघु उद्योगों पर आधारित स्वावलम्बी ग्रामों का निर्माण किया जाना आवश्यक है। इस प्रकार, गाँधीजी द्वारा "लोकतांत्रिक विकेन्द्रीकरण" का महत्वपूर्ण प्रस्ताव दिया गया जो स्वतंत्र भारत के संविधान निर्माण की प्रमुख कड़ी रही।

सामाजिक मुद्दे— गाँधीजी ने अपने जीवन के 54 वर्ष प्रत्येक प्रकार के सामाजिक भेद, मुख्यतया नस्लवाद, अछूतोंद्वारा, लिंग भेद व धार्मिक एकता के लिए लड़ते रहे। उन्होंने सदैव हिन्दू-मुस्लिम एकता के लिए संघर्ष किया। यह उनके स्वतंत्रता संघर्ष का हिस्सा था। स्वतंत्रता के बाद भारत एक धर्मनिरपेक्ष राज्य बना तो इसमें गाँधीजी का महत्वपूर्ण योगदान है। आज भी जब धर्मों के अनुयायियों के मध्य तनाव व्याप्त होता है तो गाँधीजी के मूल्य व जीवन हमारा मार्गदर्शक बनते हैं। गाँधीजी ने अछूत की समस्या के खिलाफ संघर्ष किया।

गाँधीजी कहते थे— “अस्पृश्यता हिन्दू धर्म को उसी प्रकार विषैला बनाती है, जिस प्रकार जहर का एक बूंद दूध को विषैला बना देता है।” वे कहते थे— “मेरे विचार से अस्पृश्यता हमारे जीवन को लगा हुआ एक अभिशाप है। और जब तक वह अभिशाप हमारे साथ रहता है तब तक मेरे ख्याल से हमें यही मानना पड़ेगा कि हम पवित्र भूमि पर जो भी दुःख हम भोगते हैं, वह हमारे इस घोर और कभी न मिट सकने वाले अपराध का उचित और उपयुक्त दण्ड ही है।” गाँधीजी के विचारों एवं मूल्यों का ही प्रभाव था कि स्वतंत्रता प्राप्ति के बाद भारतीय संविधान में किसी भी प्रकार की अस्पृश्यता को समाप्त कर दिया गया और आरक्षण के रूप में एक सकारात्मक सिद्धांत को अपनाया गया। प्रारम्भ से ही गाँधीजी ने महिलाओं के कल्याण व लिंग भेद मिटाने का कार्य किया व नारी समानता को स्थापित करने में सहयोग दिया। उन्होंने महिलाओं की एक बड़ी संख्या को राष्ट्रीय आंदोलन व रचनात्मक कार्यों में संलग्न किया। गाँधीजी का कहना था— “स्त्री पुरुष की जीवन संगिनी है, उसमें वैसी ही मानसिक शक्तियाँ हैं जैसी पुरुष में है। उसे पुरुष की प्रवृत्तियों से संबंध रखने वाली सूक्ष्म से सूक्ष्म बातों में भी भाग लेने का अधिकार है और पुरुष के साथ स्वाधीनता तथा स्वतंत्रता के उपभोग का समान अधिकार है।” विश्व इतिहास में गाँधीजी का समानता के लिए संघर्ष मानव जाति को प्रेरित करता रहेगा तथा किसी भी प्रकार के धार्मिक, जातीय, नस्लीय व सामाजिक ऊँची—नीचे के खिलाफ संघर्ष के लिए प्रेरित करेगा।

पर्यावरण एवं परिस्थितिकी— गाँधीजी अपने आस—पास के पर्यावरण और पारिस्थितिकी के प्रति बहुत ही संवेदनशील थे। भौतिकवादी सामाजिक व्यवस्था के विकास व बढ़ते मानव लोभ के विषय में उनका कहना था कि “पृथ्वी प्रत्येक व्यक्ति की आवश्यकता की पूर्ति के लिए संसाधन उपलब्ध कराती है किन्तु किसी व्यक्ति की लालच की पूर्ति नहीं कर सकती।” आज की स्थिति में धनी लोग गरीबों से कम असंतुष्ट नहीं हैं। गरीब आदमी लखपति बनना चाहता है और लखपति करोड़पति बनना चाहता है। गरीबों को जब पेट भर खाने को मिल जाता है तब वे अकसर उससे संतुष्ट नहीं होते लेकिन निश्चित रूप से उन्हें पेट भर भोजन पाने का अधिकार है और समाज को यह ध्यान रखना चाहिए कि इतना उन्हें अवश्य मिल जाय। गाँधीजी कहते थे हमारी सभ्यता, हमारी संस्कृति और हमारा स्वराज्य अपनी जरूरतें दिनोंदिन

बढ़ाते रहने पर— भोगमय जीवन पर निर्भर करते हैं। गाँधीजी सफाई, स्वच्छता पर विशेष ध्यान देते थे तथा कहते थे कि कोई भी व्यक्ति यदि कोई व्यक्ति कूड़ा—कचरा फेंककर धरती को गन्दा करता है तथा वायु प्रदूषण फैलाता है तो वह मानव व प्रकृति के विरुद्ध पाप करता है।

आज हमारे बीच गाँधीजी नहीं है। वह एक विचार और आस्था बनकर हमारे बीच से 79 वर्ष की आयु में जुदा हो गए। जबकि वे 125 वर्ष तक जीवित रहकर दुनिया की सेवा करना चाहते थे। चरित्र व नैतिक बाल से उन्होंने संपूर्ण विश्व को शांति और अहिंसा का एक नया मार्ग दिया। अलबर्ट आइन्स्टीन के शब्दों में “गाँधीजी जनता के ऐसे नेता थे, जिसने किसी बाह्य सत्ता की सहायता प्राप्त नहीं थी। वह एक ऐसे राजनीतिज्ञ थे, जिसकी सफलता न चालाकी पर आधारित थी और न किसी शैलिक उपाय के ज्ञान पर, बल्कि उनके व्यक्तित्व की दूसरों को कायल कर देने की शक्ति पर आधारित थी। वह एक ऐसे विजयी योद्धा थे, जिसने बल प्रयोग का सदा उपहास किया। वह बुद्धिमान, दृढ़, संकल्पी, नम्र और अडिग निश्चय के व्यक्ति थे। उन्होंने अपनी सारी ताकत अपने देशवासियों को उठाने और उनकी दशा सुधारने में लगा दी। वह एक ऐसे व्यक्ति थे, जिसने यूरोप की पाशविकता का सामना मानवीय यत्न के साथ किया और इस प्रकार सदा के लिए सबसे ऊँचे स्थान पर गए। आने वाली पीढ़ियाँ शायद मुश्किल से यह विश्वास कर सकेंगी कि गाँधी जैसा हाड़—मांस का पुतला कभी इस धरती पर हुआ होगा।”

स्वतंत्रता प्राप्ति के बाद गाँधीजी देश के पुनर्निर्माण में महत्वपूर्ण काम करना चाहते थे। उन्होंने कहा था “हिन्दुस्तान आजाद हुआ है, लेकिन अभी भी सिर्फ राजनैतिक आजादी मिली है। शहरों और कस्बों से भिन्न उसके लाखों गाँवों की दृष्टि से सामाजिक, नैतिक और आर्थिक आजादी हासिल करना बाकी है।” वे काँग्रेस को विसर्जित कर और लोक सेवक संघ का निर्माण करना चाहते थे— सत्ता की जगह सेवा करने के लिए। किन्तु उनके बाद राजनीतिक व राजनीतिक दल येन—केन प्रकारेण सत्ता प्राप्ति के साधन बन गए। हमारे नेता व मंत्री भ्रष्टाचार के दल—दल में धँस गए हैं। इन समस्याओं के समाधान के लिए हम लोगों ने माननीय अन्ना हजारे के नेतृत्व में आंदोलन को देखा, इस आंदोलन ने भारत सरकार को समझौते के लिए

मजबूर किया। आज की जटिल समस्याओं के समाधान में गाँधीवादी मूल्यों व सत्याग्रह की सफलता का यह सबसे बड़ा उदाहरण है।

व्यक्ति की उन्नति तथा समाज के सर्वांगीण विकास और कल्याण के अतिरिक्त आधुनिक युग में संपूर्ण मानवता एवं अन्तर्राष्ट्रीयता की दृष्टि से गाँधीजी का विशेष महत्व है। गाँधी जी वैशनावर थे, इसलिए उनकी दृष्टि थी— वैश्विक राजनीति, वैश्विक धर्म, वैश्विक अर्थनीति—यानी सबकुछ वैश्विक। आज संचार एवं यातायात के द्रुतगामी वैज्ञानिक साधनों के फलस्वरूप विभिन्न देशों में समय, स्थान की दूरी बहुत कम हो गयी है और सभी राष्ट्र एक दूसरे के इतने करीब आ गये हैं कि महत्वपूर्ण घटनाओं एवं कार्यों का प्रभाव प्रत्यक्ष या अप्रत्यक्ष एक देश का दूसरे देशों पर पड़ता है, अतः आज कोई भी राष्ट्र चाहे कितना ही शक्तिशाली क्यों न हो अन्य राष्ट्रों के पूर्णतः पृथक तथा उसके प्रभाव से मुक्त नहीं रह सकता। ऐसी स्थिति में संकीर्ण राष्ट्रवाद तथा अन्तर्राष्ट्रीयवाद से संघर्ष अवश्यमभावी था। अतएव 19वीं सदी में विश्व—मानवता को रक्त—रंजित कर दिया। इससे पूर्व 18वीं शताब्दी से लेकर 20वीं शताब्दी तक साम्प्रदायिक कट्टरवादी धर्मतंत्र ने मानव को मानव नहीं, बल्कि दानव बना दिया था। अतः अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय समस्याओं में हथियारों की बढ़ती होड़ अथवा आतंक का संतुलन, प्रदूषण, परिस्थितिकी विषयक असंतुलन और संसाधनों का ह्रास शामिल है। इन समस्याओं का कारण आधुनिक उपभोक्तावादी संस्कृति, अधिक उत्पादन की प्रतिस्पर्धा और मानव समाज का एक 'मंडी' या बाजार के रूप में सिकुड़ते जाना है। विकसित एवं विकासशील देशों के मध्य दूरी अभी तक बनी हुयी है। क्या छोटे बड़े सभी राज्यों को अपनी इच्छानुसार स्वतंत्रतापूर्वक जीवन व्यतीत करने का समान अधिकार है? विश्व में रंगभेद, जाति भेद, अन्याय, शोषण, अत्याचार का निराकरण कैसे किया जा सकता है? ये कुछ ऐसे प्रश्न हैं जिनके समुचित समाधान पर मानव जाति का सर्वांगीण विकास एवं उत्थान ही नहीं अपितु उसका अस्तित्व भी निर्भर है।" यही कारण है कि आज प्रत्येक विचारशील व्यक्ति किसी न किसी रूप में 21वीं सदी में वैश्विक संकटों का निराकरण कैसे किया जाएगा, यह सोचने को बाध्य हो रहा है।

अब यह देखना है कि गाँधी द्वारा उपयुक्त महत्वपूर्ण अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय प्रश्नों का समाधान कहाँ और कैसे हो सकता है। वास्तव में गाँधीजी के अनेक नैतिक सिद्धांत समस्त राष्ट्रों के पारस्परिक संबंधों और अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय समस्याओं पर उसी प्रकार लागू होते हैं, जिस प्रकार व्यक्तियों की पारिवारिक एवं सामाजिक समस्याओं पर। उनके एकादश व्रतों में से अहिंसा, सत्य, अस्तेय, अपरिग्रह, सर्वधर्म समभाव और अस्पृश्यता निवारण का अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय दृष्टि से विशेष महत्व है, क्योंकि ये सभी वर्तमान युग में जटिल विश्व-समस्याओं के समाधान का उचित मार्ग प्रस्तुत करते हैं। गाँधीजी ने "हिन्द स्वराज" नामक छोटी सी पुस्तक में नयी सभ्यता का वैकल्पिक घोषणा-पत्र लिखा था। उस समय उन्हें विज्ञान-विरोधी, प्रगति-प्रतिकूल या मध्ययुगीन बताया गया था लेकिन अब पुस्तक में वर्णित सच्चाई से मुख मोड़ना कठिन हो रहा है। आज लगभग सभी राष्ट्र सिद्धांततः यह स्वीकार करते हैं कि मानव जाति के अस्तित्व एवं उत्थान के लिए विश्वशांति अनिवार्य है, क्योंकि तृतीय विश्वयुद्ध के फलस्वरूप संपूर्ण मानवीय सभ्यता तथा संस्कृति का आमूल विनाश हो सकता है। वे ये भी मानते हैं कि युद्ध रोकने और विश्वशांति के लिए निःशस्त्रीकरण बहुत आवश्यक है। परन्तु फिर भी आज विश्व में तनाव और संघर्ष कम नहीं हो रहा है। शीतयुद्ध की समाप्ति के बाद भी परमाणु युद्ध का खतरा मानव जाति के सिर पर मंडराता रहता है।

गाँधीजी का विश्वास था कि वर्ग-विहीन समाज की स्थापना आपसी प्रेम, सहयोग और सद्भाव से ही हो सकती है, वर्ग-संघर्ष से नहीं। पिछले दस-पन्द्रह वर्षों से मार्क्सवाद का जो हथुआ हुआ है, उससे मार्क्सवाद के तरीकों के बारे में अनेक प्रश्न उठ खड़े हुए हैं। मार्क्सवादी-विचारक भी मानने लगे हैं कि क्रांति को स्थायी बनाना कठिन होता है। सोवियत संघ के पतन, जर्मनी के एकीकरण और कोरिया के एकीकरण के वातावरण ने भी शांतिपूर्ण तरीकों की महत्ता सिद्ध की है। यह सत्य है कि आज अधिकतर राष्ट्रों के नेता तथा शासक सिद्धांततः विशेषतः शांतिपूर्ण मार्ग को बहुत महत्वपूर्ण एवं आवश्यक मानते हैं तथा कुछ सीमा तक अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय क्षेत्र में उन्हें कार्यान्वित भी किया जा रहा है। संयुक्त राष्ट्र संघ तथा उससे सम्बद्ध विश्व स्वास्थ्य संगठन, शिक्षा विज्ञान तथा संस्कृत संबंधी संघ, अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय श्रमिक संघ, विश्व बैंक, अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय न्यायालय आदि अन्य संस्था मूलतः शांति और अहिंसा के सिद्धांत पर

आधारित है और इनका उद्देश्य मुख्यतः दरिद्रता, रोग, बेरोजगारी, जनसंख्या की वृद्धि, अशिक्षा आदि विश्व की सामाजिक आर्थिक एवं राजनैतिक समस्याओं तथा राष्ट्रों के पारस्परिक मतभेदों को शांतिपूर्ण उपायों द्वारा समाधान करना ही है। संसार के 53 नोबेल पुरस्कार विजेताओं ने दुनिया की तेजी से बदलती हुयी परिस्थितियों को देखकर एक सम्मिलित बयान में कहा था— “आज के इन्सान में जो बेचैनी फैली हुयी है, उसके पीछे दुनिया की आज की हालत है। अगर इसमें कोई परिवर्तन करना है तो मनुष्य जाति के सामने एक ही रास्ता है और वह रास्ता है— सविनय अवज्ञा गाँधी के अहिंसात्मक संघर्ष के हथियार का प्रयोग करें तो यह निश्चय है कि हम अपनी आँखों के सामने ही इस आफत से छुटकारा पा जायेंगे।” इतना ही नहीं परमाणु बम से भी बढ़कर विकास की गलत अवधारणा ने मानवता को न केवल विनाश एवं युद्ध के द्वारा पर लाकर खड़ा कर दिया है, बल्कि प्रकृति के साथ बलात्कार कर पर्यावरण का ऐसा संकट पैदा कर दिया है, जो परमाणु बम से कई गुणा अधिक खतरनाक है।

इस प्रकार, यदि मानवीय सभ्यता और संस्कृति की रक्षा और मानव जाति का अस्तित्व अभीष्ट है तो वर्तमान युग में सभी राष्ट्रों को हिंसा और युद्ध के घातक मार्ग का परित्याग करके अहिंसा एवं शांति का पावन मार्ग ग्रहण करना होगा। साथ ही मानवोचित गुणों के विकास के लिए विज्ञान प्रदत्त अपार शक्ति का विध्वंसात्मक उद्देश्यों में न लगाकर शांतिपूर्ण कार्यों के लिए सदुपयोग किया जाये तो दरिद्रता रोग, बेकारी और अज्ञान से मुक्त होकर अधिक सुखी और समृद्ध हो सकता है। इसमें थोड़ा भी संदेह नहीं है कि मानव जाति को अपने अस्तित्व की रक्षा के लिए अंततः यही शांतिमय मार्ग ग्रहण करना पड़ेगा क्योंकि इसके अतिरिक्त अपना अस्तित्व बनाये रखने का उसके समक्ष अन्य कोई उपाय नहीं है। इस संबंध में डॉ. राजेन्द्र प्रसाद का यह कथन पूर्णतः सत्य है कि “यदि संसार को जीवित रहना है और आपस की लड़ाई से टुकड़े-टुकड़े नहीं होना है तो उसे गाँधीजी की विचारधारा के अनुसार ही चलना होगा, जो भारत के लिए ही नहीं, सारी दुनिया के लिए है।”

गाँधीवादी मूल्य समतामूलक समाज के निर्माण का आधार

संदीप कुमार सिंह

....“नहीं दरिद्र कोउ दुःखी न दीना
नहीं कोउ अबुध न लछनहीना”

‘मानस’ की उपर्युक्त पंक्तियाँ महात्मा गाँधी के ‘रामराज्य’ की संकल्पना का आधार है। भारत जैसे बहुवर्गी समाज में रामराज्य की संकल्पना एक ‘यूटोपिया’ हो सकती है। परन्तु वर्गहीन समाज के निर्माण का प्रयास सदा जारी रहेगा। जहाँ तुलसीदास जी ने अपने साहित्य के माध्यम से एक वर्गहीन समाज के निर्माण की प्रेरणा दी वहीं मानस से ही प्रभावित होकर महात्मा गाँधी ने इस सपने को साकार करने का एक व्यावहारिक आधार दिया। महात्मा गाँधी का दर्शन एवं गाँधीवादी मूल्य इसी प्रकार के एक वर्गविहीन समृद्ध समाज के निर्माण की एक दृष्टि प्रदान करता है।

‘मानव होने’ से ‘मानव बनने’ तक की अपनी संपूर्ण यात्रा में मानव समाज ने नित नए सोपानों का निर्माण किया। सभ्यता, संस्कृति, समाज, उद्योग, विज्ञान वगैरह की यह यात्रा चांद से होते हुए मंगल तक विकसित हो चुकी है और इसके आगे भी जारी है। प्रकृति ने मानव को मानव के रूप में गढ़ा। परन्तु, विकास के इस क्रम में और संसाधनों को अपने हित में मोड़ने के लालच में मानव ने समाज के कई तरह के स्तरों का निर्माण कर दिया। और इस प्रकार से पत्थर युग से मशीन युग तक की इस यात्रा में मानव ने धर्म, संप्रदाय, जाति, लिंग, संस्कृति, आर्थिक आदि कई आधारों पर समाज को विभाजित किया कि इस प्रक्रिया ने असमानता, हिंसा लालच, भय, भ्रष्टाचार आदि को जन्म दिया।

अब प्रश्न यह उठता है कि इस प्रकार के अंतर्विरोधों से विभाजित समाज में गाँधीवादी मूल्य किस सीमा तक उपादेय सिद्ध हो सकेंगे। क्या गाँधीवादी मूल्य इन अंतर्विरोधों के दमन में सक्षम है। इन प्रश्नों के जवाब के लिए पहले हमें यह देखना होगा कि भारत के बहुवर्गीय

समाज के अंतर्विरोध कौन-कौन से हैं ? गाँधीवादी मूल्य क्या है ? गाँधीवादी विचाराधारा इन अन्तर्विरोधों के समाधान में कहाँ तक व्यवहारिक सिद्ध हो सकेगी।

यदि हम बहुवर्गीय समाज के अंतर्विरोधों पर अपना ध्यान केंद्रित करें तो हम पाते हैं कि ये सामाजिक, आर्थिक, धार्मिक, सांस्कृतिक कई स्तरों पर विभाजित है। भारतीय समाज में बहुधर्मों के लोग निवास करते हैं। एक तरफ जहाँ यही बहुलधर्मिता वैश्विक स्तर पर हमारी पहचान को निर्देशित करती है वहीं दूसरी तरफ समाज के विभाजन का कारक भी बनती है। भारत में हिन्दू, मुस्लिम, सिख, इसाई, पारसी, जैन, बौद्ध आदि विभिन्न धर्मों एवं सम्प्रदायों के लोग निवास करते हैं। साम्प्रदायिकता न केवल वर्तमान भारत की वरन् मौजूदा विश्व की ज्वलंत समस्या है। यदि हम साम्प्रदायिकता के कारकों की तरफ ध्यान दे तो यह मुख्य रूप से दो धर्मों के लोगों के बीच परस्पर धार्मिक कट्टरता, जड़ता एवं आपसी विश्वास की कमी तथा बहुसंख्यक वर्ग द्वारा अल्पसंख्यक वर्ग को सुरक्षा की गारंटी न दे पाना है। गाँधी मूल्य न केवल सामाजिक सौहार्द की बात करते हैं वरन् अहिंसा, परस्पर विश्वास एवं अल्पसंख्यकों की सुरक्षा की भी बात करते हैं। एवं इन मूल्यों को अपनाकर हम सभी सम्प्रदायों के सहअस्तित्व के साथ साम्प्रदायिकता की समस्या को दूर कर सकते हैं।

बहुवर्गीय भारतीय समाज का सबसे महत्वपूर्ण अंतर्विरोध है इसकी जाति-व्यवस्था। वैदिक काल की कार्य पद्धति पर आधारित वर्ण व्यवस्था ने कालांतर में जाति व्यवस्था का रूप धारण कर लिया। भारतीय समाज एक नहीं दो नहीं बल्कि हजारों जातियों में विभाजित हो गया यह जाति व्यवस्था का सबसे नकारात्मक पक्ष था इसका पदसोपानात्मक अनुक्रम में विभाजन अर्थात् प्रत्येक बड़ी जाति का अपने नीचे एक जाति का निर्माण कर लेना। जातियों का निर्माण वर्ण संकरता का परिणाम था परन्तु वर्ण के निचले पायदान पर रहने वाली जातियों के साथ समाज का अपमानजनक व्यवहार समाज की देन थी। भारतीय संविधान के अंतर्गत अनूसूचित जाति घोषित इन जातियों की स्थिति वर्तमान भारत में भी दयनीय है। गाँधीजी वर्णव्यवस्था को मानते थे परन्तु जाति व्यवस्था को नहीं। वर्ण व्यवस्था को मानने के पीछे उनका तर्क था कि वर्ण का निर्माण कार्य के आधार पर हुआ है एवं इससे एक पीढ़ी से दूसरी पीढ़ी में

कार्यकुशलता का स्थानांतरण। परन्तु वे जाति व्यवस्था एवं निचली जातियों के साथ ऊपरी जातियों द्वारा अपमान एवं शोषण का विरोध करते थे। उनका मानना था कि प्रत्येक व्यक्ति को अपना कार्य स्वयं करना चाहिए कोई भी हीन कार्य किसी विशेष जाति के लिए नहीं बना है। यही कारण है कि उन्होंने इस वर्ग का नाम 'हरिजन' अर्थात् 'ईश्वर के लोग' रखा तथा हरिजनोत्थान के लिए देशभर में आंदोलन चलाया। इस वर्ग के लिए मंदिरों में प्रवेश, निकृष्ट कार्यों से मुक्ति, राजनीति जीवन में सुरक्षित सीटों का प्रबंध तथा शिक्षा के लिए प्रयास किया। गाँधीजी की रामराज्य की अवधारणा एक वर्गविहीन समाज के निर्माण की अवधारणा पर ही निहित थी। इस प्रकार से गाँधीवादी मूल्य समतावादी समाज के निर्माण में सहायक है।

भारतीय बहुवर्गीय समाज की एक अन्य अंतर्विरोध लिंग के आधार पर विभाजन है। वैदिक काल के बाद भारत में महिलाओं की स्थिति में लगातार गिरावट आयी जो मध्यकाल में और बढ़ी तथा ब्रिटिशकाल में बंगाल के पुनर्जागरण के पूर्व तक बहुत ही बुरी थी। भारतीय समाज में न केवल महिलाओं की स्वतंत्रता बाधित थी वरन् बाल विवाह, बालिका हत्या, सती प्रथा एवं विधवाओं की स्थिति बहुत भयावह थी। पुनर्जागरण से मिली चिंगारी को गाँधी जी ने आगे बढ़ाया। पहली बार गाँधीजी के नेतृत्व में महिलाएं ने घरों से बाहर निकलकर स्वतंत्रता संग्राम में हिस्सा लिया। महात्मा गाँधी न केवल जाति के आधार पर सामाजिक विभाजन के विरोधी थे वरन् लैंगिक विभाजन का भी विरोध करते थे। यदि वर्तमान भारत पर दृष्टिपात करें तो कन्या भ्रूण हत्या, ऑनर किलिंग, दहेज-प्रथा एवं यदा-कदा सती प्रथा जैसी कुरीतियाँ व्याप्त है। अतः गाँधीवादी मूल्य न केवल इन कुरीतियों को दूर करने में सहायक है वरन् महिलाओं को एक सम्मानपूर्ण एवं समतापूर्ण जीवन देने में भी सहायक है।

भारतीय समाज का विभाजन केवल जाति, वर्ग, सम्प्रदाय या लिंग के आधार पर ही नहीं है वरन् यह आर्थिक आधार पर अमीर एवं गरीब के बीच का भी विभाजन है। यह शहरी एवं ग्रामीण भारत के बीच का भी विभाजन है। महात्मा गाँधी का विचार था कि "भारत गांवों का देश है" आज भी भारत की 70 प्रतिशत आबादी गांवों में निवास करती है। एक तरफ शहरों में निवास करने वाले अमीर लोग (रोजगार की तलाश में झुग्गी-झोपड़ियों में रहने के लिए बाध्य

लोगों को छोड़कर) सभी प्रकार की सुख सुविधाओं का लाभ उठा रहें हैं वहीं दूसरी तरफ ग्रामीण किसान आत्म हत्या करने के लिए मजबूर हैं। वैश्वीकरण ने तो 'इमर्जिंग इण्डिया' एवं 'पिछड़ते भारत' के बीच की खाई को और चौड़ा कर दिया है। देश की 70-80 प्रतिशत जनसंख्या 20 रु. प्रतिदिन पर गुजारा करने के लिए बाध्य है। बड़ी-बड़ी बहुराष्ट्रीय कम्पनियां ने न केवल बाजार पर कब्जा कर रखा है वरन् हमारे कृषि उद्योगों को भी प्रभावित किया है, जिसका संबंध सीधे ग्रामीण गरीब किसानों से है। गाँधी जी की कुटीर उद्योग की अवधारणा ग्रामीण भारत के आय वृद्धि एवं आत्मनिर्भर गांवों के निर्माण से थी। वर्तमान में हम केवल बड़े भारी उद्योगों पर ही ध्यान दे रहे हैं जिससे एक बड़ा तबका विकास की दौड़ में पीछे है।

इसके अतिरिक्त यदि देखा जाए तो भारत का संपूर्ण धन मुट्टी भर उद्योगपति घरानों के हाथ में केंद्रित है। उद्योगपतियों को लेकर गाँधी जी की अवधारणा 'ट्रस्टीशिप' की थी अर्थात् उद्योगपति स्वयं को उद्योगों का मालिक न समझकर ट्रस्टी समझें। इस प्रकार से हम देखते हैं कि गाँधीवादी मूल्य आर्थिक विषमता पर भी प्रहार करता है एवं यदि एक समान वितरण की बात नहीं करता है तो भी न्यूनतम आवश्यकताओं की पूर्ति की बात करता है तथा ग्रामीण भारत एवं शहरी भारत के बीच की खाई को कम करने की प्रेरणा देता है। गाँधीवादी मूल्यों के आधार पर न केवल हम आर्थिक विषमता को कम कर सकते हैं वरन् असंतोष को भी कम सकते हैं।

भारतीय समाज का अंतर्विरोध इसके भौगोलिक-सांस्कृतिक विभाजन का भी परिणाम है। भारत में 1800 से भी अधिक भाषाएं बोली जाती हैं एवं देश के भिन्न-भिन्न भागों में रहने वाले लोगों का रहन सहन, खान-पान कला आदि भिन्न-भिन्न है। यह सब मिलकर हमारी "मोजाईक संस्कृति" का निर्माण करती है। परन्तु भाषा भारतीय समाज को जोड़े का नहीं वरन् तोड़ने का कार्य करती है। यही कारण है कि कहीं तमिल देश की बात उठती है तो कहीं मराठी मानुष के नाम पर महाराष्ट्र देश की बात। स्वतंत्रता संघर्ष के दौरान गाँधीजी ने सभी क्षेत्रों को जोड़ने के लिए 'हिन्दुस्तानी' भाषा जो वर्तमान हिन्दी के करीब है का प्रयोग किया था, परन्तु आजादी के बाद लोगों की प्राथमिकताएं बदली एवं भाषा जोड़ने के स्थान तोड़ने का कार्य

करने लगी। यदि हम पुनः एक भाषा को अपनाने के लिए दृढ़ प्रतिज्ञा जो जाए तो निश्चित रूप से यह हमारे समाज के अंतर्विरोध को कम करने का माध्यम बन जाएगा। इतिहास गवाह है कि यूरोप के प्रत्येक नए राष्ट्र ने अलग होने के बाद अपनी एक भाषा का निर्माण किया एवं स्वयं को एक राष्ट्र एवं एक समाज में बाँधा।

सर्वाधिक महत्वपूर्ण बात जो कि किसी भी समाज के अंतर्विरोधों को दूर करने में सक्षम होती है वह है समाज के लोगों की अन्तर्दृष्टि एवं व्यवहार। गाँधीवादी मूल्य जिन बातों पर सबसे ज्यादा दृष्टिपात करते हैं वह है 'मानवतावादी मूल्य'। गाँधीजी ने सत्य, अहिंसा, प्राणी समभाव, प्रेम, करुणा, दया आदि मानवमूल्यों को सर्वाधिक महत्व दिया। वे लालच, भ्रष्टाचार, हिंसा अविश्वास, घृणा जैसे समाज को तोड़ने वाले तत्वों को शामिल करने की अपेक्षा रखते थे। ये ही वो मूल्य हैं जिसपर 'सर्वोदय' की अवधारणा आधारित है। यही वे मूल्य हैं जो हमारी संस्कृति के क्षरण को रोकती है एवं उसे अक्षुण्ण बनाए रखती है। भारतीय संस्कृति के "वसुधैव कुटुम्बकम्" एवं "सर्वजनहिताय सर्वजन सुखाय" तथा "सर्वेभवन्तु सुखिनः" की अंतर्राष्ट्रीय सद्भावना का आधार यही मूल्य है, जिन्हें गाँधी समाज के सभी व्यक्तियों में देखना चाहते थे। गाँधी जी की अहिंसा न केवल बहुवर्गीय भारतीय समाज के अंतर्विरोधों को दूर करने का माध्यम है वरन् यह बहुसंस्कृतिक वैश्विक समाज में शांति स्थापित करने का एकमात्र माध्यम भी है।

इस प्रकार हम कह सकते हैं कि गाँधीवादी मूल्य न केवल बहुवर्गीय समाज के अंतर्विरोधों को दूर करने में सहायक है वरन् यह एक समतामूलक समाज के निर्माण का आधार भी प्रस्तुत करते हैं। ये मूल्य न केवल बहुवर्गीय समाज बल्कि सम्पूर्ण विश्व के अंतर्विरोधों का समाधान प्रस्तुत करती है।

वसुधैव कुटुम्बकम्

राकेश कुमार

भशक्ति के विद्युतकण जो, व्यस्त विकल बिखरे हैं निरुपाय।
समन्वय उसका करे समस्त, विजयनी मानवता हो जाये ॥

जयशंकर प्रसाद

कविवर जयशंकर प्रसाद ने ये पंक्तियां 1936 के दौर में गांधीवादी मूल्यों से प्रेरणा लेते हुये लिखी थी, और ये सोचा था कि 21वीं सदी तक पहुँचते-पहुँचते दुनिया वास्तविक रूप में एकता सम्पन्न तथा मानवतावादी हो चुकी होगी। परन्तु वर्तमान विश्व की भयावह स्थितियाँ, प्रसाद की इस उम्मीद को तोड़ती नज़र आती हैं। अब दुनिया भले ही पहले से ज्यादा विलासी, आरामदायक, तीव्र तथा वैज्ञानिक हो गयी हो; परन्तु जिस मानवता, शांति, सुख तथा एकता की कल्पना हमारे पूर्वजों ने की थी वह या तो नज़र नहीं आती है या फिर आती भी है तो असमतामूलक रूप से नज़र आती है। इसी शांति और एकता का आभाव वैसे तो दुनिया के प्रत्येक राष्ट्र में दिखायी दे रहा है; परन्तु बहुलवादी समाजों में यह अपनी पूरी भयावहता के साथ नज़र आता है। इन गंभीर परिस्थितियों को मद्देनज़र रखते हुये आज के बुद्धिजीवी गंभीर परिचर्चा में मग्न है कि आखिर समाधान का क्या तरीका हो सकता है, कुछ कहते हैं— आक्रमण एवं हस्तक्षेप, तो वही कुछ बापू की लाठी में भरोसा रखते हुये गांधीजी के मार्ग को सुलभ एवं सही ठहरा रहे हैं। आइये एक गंभीर विमर्श करते हैं कि आखिर इन बहुलवादी समाजों में क्या भयावह विवाद एवं संघर्ष है, गांधी के मूल्य क्या हैं और वे कैसे इन परिस्थितियों के समाधान में सहायक हैं?

हम यदि इन बहुलवादी समाजों की परिस्थितियों पर विचार करना चाहते हैं, तो इसके लिये आवश्यक हो जाता है कि पहले यह समझा जाये कि आखिर बहुलवादी समाज होते क्या हैं? वस्तुतः साधारण रूप से हम इन समाजों को इस रूप में समझते हैं कि जहाँ पर कई प्रकार के लोग रहते हैं वे बहुलवादी समाज कहलाते हैं। वास्तव में ऐसा नहीं है। बहुलवादी समाज ऐसे समाज होते हैं जहाँ एक राष्ट्र के या एक राज्य के अंदर कई नृजातीय समूह के लोग

रहते हैं। नृजातीय का अर्थ प्रजाति, जाति, लिंग, भाषा धर्म, विचार, आस्था तथा मान्यताओं से है। अर्थात् वैसे समाज जहाँ उक्त विशेषताओं वाले कई प्रकार के समूह निवास करते हैं; बहुलवादी समाज कहलाते हैं। बहुलवादी समाजों का विकास एक एकरेखीय उद्विकास एवं विकास की प्रक्रिया के दौरान हुआ है। प्रारंभ में जब आदिवासी समाज थे, तब परस्पर संपर्क अत्यंत सीमित था, अतः एक स्थान पर एक कबाइली समाज ही रहता था। परंतु जैसे-जैसे सभ्यता का विकास हुआ, संपर्क बढ़े, आक्रमण एवं हस्तक्षेप बढ़ा तब धीरे-धीरे एक समुदाय दूसरे के निकट आने लगे तथा एकरूपीय समाज बहुलवादी समाजों में तब्दील होने लगे।

विकास की इस प्रक्रिया में सांस्कृतिक संपर्क अत्यंत तीव्रता से हुआ। कई समाजों में परसंस्कृतिकरण तथा परसंस्कृतिग्रहण की प्रक्रिया बढ़ी; एक समाज के लोगों ने दूसरे समाज के लोगों को कभी स्वेच्छा से या कभी मजबूरी से या फिर कभी संदर्भसमूह के रूप में स्वीकारना प्रारंभ कर दिया और बहुलवादी समाज उभर कर आने लगे। भारत; के वर्तमान स्वरूप को उक्त प्रक्रिया के एक सशक्त उदाहरण के रूप में देख सकते हैं।

बहुलवादी समाज का स्वरूप समझने के उपरांत एक तथ्य यह भी स्पष्ट हो जाता है कि आखिर एकरूपीय समाजों में विवाद या संघर्ष तुलनात्मक रूप से कम क्यों होते हैं? स्पष्ट है कि एक ही विचार तथा मान्यता हाने के कारण ऐसे समाजों में वैचारिक मतभेद कम होते हैं। परन्तु ऐसा नहीं है कि एकरूपीय समाजों में विवाद होते ही न हों। यहां भी विवाद है— हितों ;पदजमतमेजद्ध तथा लाभ का विवाद। परंतु ऐसे विवाद वैचारिक विवादों से ज्यादा खतरनाक एवं लंबी अवधि वाले नहीं होते, क्योंकि इनका उद्देश्य पूरा होते ही ये समाप्त हो जाते हैं। समस्या तो वैचारिक विवादों में है, क्योंकि ये एक तो लंबी अवधि तक चलते हैं, दूसरा समुदायों की मान्यताओं से जुड़े होने के कारण व्यक्ति इनको अत्यंत गंभीरता तथा जीवन-मरण के अर्थ से जोड़कर चलते हैं, जैसे— सांप्रदायिक दंगे तथा हिंसा।

आइये अब देखते हैं कि आखिर इन बहुलवादी समाजों में वर्तमान में कौन-कौन से विवाद तथा संघर्ष हैं। वर्तमान में ये बहुलवादी समाज मुख्य रूप से वैचारिक संघर्ष तथा हिंसा में

लिप्त हैं। प्रत्येक नृजातीय समुदाय अपनी मान्यता को श्रेष्ठ मानता हुआ दूसरे प्रजातीय समुदाय के ऊपर थोपने में मशगूल है। इस वैचारिक हिंसा के आधार, हालांकि प्रत्येक राष्ट्र में अलग-अलग है, और इनका परिणाम भी अलग-अलग दिखयी देता है। पहले वैश्विक परिदृश्य पर प्रकाश डाले तो हमारे पड़ोसी राष्ट्र श्रीलंका में भाषायी आधार पर संघर्ष है— लिट्टे तथा सिंहली आपस में कई वर्षों से संघर्षरत हैं, कभी तमिल अपने को श्रेष्ठ मानते हैं तो कभी सिंहली। तमिलों को अपने अधिकार चाहिये और सिंहलियों को राष्ट्र पर अपना वर्चस्व कायम रखना है। इस संघर्ष में न जाने कितने लोग मारे जा चुके हैं।

दूसरे पड़ोसी पाकिस्तान पर निगाह डालें तो यहां भी कभी शिया-सुन्नी, कभी धार्मिक कट्टरपंथियों की रूढ़िवादिता तो कभी सिंध व ब्लूचिस्तान जैसी क्षेत्रियता के कारण आंतरिक वैचारिक हिंसक संघर्ष दिखायी देते हैं। तीसरा पड़ोसी चीन भी ऐसी पीड़ा से पीड़ित है। यहां पर भी हान प्रजाति के लोगों के बढ़ते एकाधिकार के कारण अन्य प्रजातियों के लोग पीड़ित हैं तो समूचा तिब्बत आज पुनः अपनी संप्रभुता की खोज में चिंतित है।

यूरोपीय तथा अमेरिकी राष्ट्र भी वैचारिक संघर्ष तथा हिंसा से अछूते नहीं हैं। इन देशों में भी कभी-कभी नस्लीय भेदभाव दिखायी देते हैं। अमेरिका में रंगभेद है। यूरोप के इतिहास में जर्मनी में ज्यू लोगों के साथ हुए अत्याचार आज भी सबकी नजर शर्म से झुका देती है।

यदि अफ्रीका महाद्वीप पर नज़र डालें तो यहां वैचारिक संघर्ष तथा हिंसा का एक लंबा इतिहास दिखायी देता है। 19वीं सदी में दक्षिणी अफ्रीका में गोरे व कालों का भेद तो वर्तमान में सूडान, कांगो, नाइजीरिया के कबाइली संघर्ष। संघर्ष तथा हिंसा की ये कड़ी मिस्र के साथ भी जुड़ती नज़र आती है। मार्च-अप्रैल 2011 में मिस्र में प्रारंभ हुआ सत्ता संघर्ष भले एक आर्थिक व राजनैतिक घटना नज़र आती हो, परन्तु वास्तव में एक हिंसक वैचारिक संघर्ष ही है। इन राष्ट्रों की आर्थिक पिछड़ेपन की स्थितियां तथा मानवाधिकारों की पहुंच से दूरी यहां हिंसक संघर्ष को और ज्यादा बढ़ावा देती है।

इसी क्रम में हाल के महीनों में पश्चिम एशिया तथा मध्य एशिया के संघर्ष में देखे जा सकते हैं— तुर्की, ट्यूनिशिया, लीबिया, ओमान में कई माहों तक हिंसक प्रदर्शन और संघर्ष चले—सत्ताधारियों तथा विद्रोहियों के मध्य। वहीं दूसरी ओर इस्रायल तथा फिलिस्तीन के मध्य संघर्ष में एक अमरबेल की तरह बन गया है।

अंत में हिंदुस्तान को देखा जाये तो यहां भी विवाद, संघर्ष तथा हिंसा के कई उदाहरण दिखते हैं। नक्सलवाद एक लंबा वैचारिक हिंसक संघर्ष बन चुका है तो वहीं समय—समय पर होने वाले साम्प्रदायिक दंगे गांधी के इस देश को शर्मसार बनाते रहते हैं। उत्तर—पूर्व में चल रहे पृथकतावादी आंदोलन तो जम्मू—कश्मीर में विदेशी प्रायोजित आतंकवाद इसी वैचारिक हिंसा की एक श्रृंखला के रूप में देखे जा सकते हैं। भारत में ज्यादा विवाद होने का प्रमुख कारण यहां की वैविध्यता भी है। आज एक अत्यंत बहुलवादी राष्ट्र है जिसे कोई गलनपात्र, उमसजपदह चवजद्ध तो कोई अजायबघर की भी संज्ञा देता है। और यह भी कहा जाता है कि जब एक घर में कई बर्तन हों तो खनक होती रहती है।

आइये अब विचार करते हैं कि आखिर इन संघर्षों व विवादों के समाधान में गांधीजी के कौन से मूल्य किस प्रकार से सहायक तथा प्रासंगिक हैं। इसके लिए सर्वप्रथम गांधी के मूल्यों पर प्रकाश डालना आवश्यक है। गांधीजी के मूल्यों में सबसे सशक्त है उनका "अहिंसा" संबंधी विचार। गांधीजी अहिंसा के क्रम में वाणी की अहिंसा तक में विश्वास करते थे। उनका मानना था कि प्रत्येक व्यक्ति में "हरि" का निवास है। और जब सबमें भगवान है तो फिर कैसे किसी पर हिंसा की जा सकती है। वे केवल व्यक्ति की नहीं वरन् जीव तथा पेड़—पौधों पर भी हिंसा के विरुद्ध थे। गांधी ने स्वयं इस मंत्र का पालन करते हुए एक जटिल तथा लंबा स्वतंत्रता आंदोलन चलाया और अंततः विजयी भी रहे। अहिंसा के इस मूल्य का अगर पालन किया जाये तो बहुलवादी समाजों में हो रहे हिंसक—वैचारिक संघर्ष को रोका जा सकता है। अहिंसा पर चलकर गद्दाफी को मारे बिना भी प्रजातांत्रिक तरीके से सत्ता परिवर्तन हो सकते हैं, या फिर उत्तर—पूर्व में नागा तथा बोडो की मांगों को सुलह के तरीके से निपटा जा सकता है। वर्तमान में समूचा विश्व आतंकवाद से पीड़ित है। यदि आतंकवादी संगठन हिंसा का रास्ता

त्यागकर गांधी के मूल्यों पर चलें तो उनसे भी बातचीत करके उनकी समस्याओं पर गौर किया जा सकता है। ऐसी ही स्थिति नक्सलवादियों की भी है। गांधी भी चाहते थे कि तृणमूल अथात् आम-आदमी का विकास हो, नक्सली भी यही चाहते हैं बस दोनों का रास्ता अलग-अलग है। यदि नक्सली हिंसा त्यागकर अहिंसा का मार्ग अपनाएं तथा प्रजातांत्रिक रूप से अपनी मांगों को रखें तो सामाधान अत्यंत सरल बन जायेगा।

वर्तमान में एक बड़ा संघर्ष अमीरी तथा गरीबी के बीच चल रहा है। गांधी के "आत्मनिर्भरता", "कुटीर उद्योग", "स्वावलंबन", "स्वदेशी" तथा "ट्रस्टीशिप" जैसे मूल्यों के आधार पर ऐसे संघर्ष को रोका जा सकता है। नक्सली हिंसा हो या फिर तुर्की जैसे राष्ट्रों में सत्ता परिवर्तन का संघर्ष हो आधार अमीरी-गरीबी का ही है। गांधीजी मानते थे कि प्रत्येक व्यक्ति को अपनी उत्पादकता बढ़ाते हुए स्वयं को तथा राष्ट्र के विकास में योगदान देना चाहिये। इस क्रम में उन्होंने स्वदेशी तथा कुटीर उद्योगों को बढ़ावा देने की बात कही थी। यदि कुटीर उद्योगों को भारी बढ़ावा दिया जाये तो स्वभाविक रूप से नक्सली हिंसा जैसे संघर्षों को रोका जा सकता है। मार्क्स ने भी कहा था कि जब पेट भरा होता है तभी विकास होता है।

यदि नक्सल प्रभावित क्षेत्रों के रोजगार के अवसरों को अत्यंत तीव्रता से बढ़ाया जाये, जंगल और जमीन के संसाधनों पर उनके अधिकारों को बढ़ाया जाये तथा उन्हें आर्थिक रूप से स्वावलंबी बनाया जाये तो निश्चित रूप से वे पुनः राष्ट्रीय धारा में शामिल हो सकते हैं। ऐसी ही स्थिति उत्तर-पूर्व की भी है। बोडो तथा नागा भले ही अपनी नृजातीय पहचान के इच्छुक हों लेकिन मूल कारण उनकी आर्थिक पिछड़ेपन की स्थितियां भी हैं।

गांधीजी के एक अन्य मत "स्वदेशी" पर आज भले ही लोग प्रश्नचिह्न खड़े करते हों विशेषकर डब्ल्यू.टी.ओ. तथा वैश्वीकरण जैसी संकल्पनाओं के दौर में। परन्तु सही मायने में स्वदेशी का विचार आज भी प्रासंगिक है। यहां यह स्पष्ट करना आवश्यक है कि स्वदेशी का तात्पर्य यह बिलकुल नहीं है कि हम विदेशी उत्पादन या सेवा को अपनायेंगे ही नहीं। गांधीजी के अर्थों में स्वदेशी वास्तव में स्वावलंबन से जुड़ा हुआ है, जहां स्वदेशी का अर्थ यह है कि वरीयता तथा

यथासंभव हम स्वदेशी का प्रयोग करेंगे ताकि स्वावलंबी बन सकें। वैश्विक राष्ट्रों में तथा भारत में भी कई संघर्ष इस मुद्दे के कारण देखे जाते रहे हैं। विशेषकर जब कोई बहुराष्ट्रीय कंपनी अपनी फैक्ट्री जगह विशेष पर खोलती है तो वहां के लोग जमीन, रोजगार तथा पहचान संकट जैसे कारणों पर संघर्षरत् हो जाते हैं। इसी तरह स्वदेशी का मंत्र स्वयं के उत्पादन को कुटीर उद्योग के माध्यम से बढ़ाने में सहायता करता है, जिससे लोगों को रोजगार मिलता है तथा वे संघर्ष तथा विवादों से दूर रहते हैं। अगर स्वदेशी जैसे मत को अपनाया जाता तो शायद एनरॉन (महाराष्ट्र) जैसे संघर्ष न होते और शायद थाईलैंड जैसे एशियन टाइगर राष्ट्रों में आर्थिक संकट न आते और वहाँ 1996–2000 के दौर के संघर्ष भी न होते। स्वदेशी का मंत्र अंततः राष्ट्रों में रोजगार उत्पन्न का कार्य करते हुए राष्ट्र को आर्थिक स्वावलंबी बनाता है।

इसी क्रम में गांधी के शिक्षा संबंधी विचारों को भी देखा जा सकता है। गांधी जी ने अपनी वर्धा शिक्षा योजना के अंतर्गत— “नैतिक शिक्षा”, “मातृभाषा में शिक्षा” तथा “रोजगारपरक शिक्षा” पर जोर दिया था। वर्तमान समय में भारत जैसे बहुलवादी समाजों में संघर्ष का सबसे प्रमुख कारण युवा असंतोष, युवा भटकाव नयी पीढ़ी अंतराल जैसे मुद्दे भी रहे हैं। कभी युवाओं में क्षेत्रीयता के आधार पर संघर्ष दिखते हैं; विशेषकर एक क्षेत्र विशेष में रोजगार के असवरो के संबंध में या फिर मादकद्रव्य के सेवन की बढ़ती आदतें युवाओं को भटकाव की ओर ले जाती हुई संघर्षरत् बनाती है। ऐसी परिस्थितियों में गांधी के नैतिक शिक्षा संबंधी विचार तथा रोजगारपरक शिक्षा की मान्यता प्रासंगिक प्रतीत होती है।

वर्तमान के कान्चेन्ट कल्चर में यदि नैतिकपरक शिक्षा पर जोर दिया जाये तो युवा असंतोष को कम किया जा सकता है। इसी क्रम में यदि युवा नैतिक होंगे तो स्वभाविक है पीढ़ियों का अंतराल कम होगा; क्योंकि वे पुरानी पीढ़ी से अंतराल कम करने के लिए समय निकाल पायेंगे विशेषकर बुजुर्गों से बातचीत के लिये। और जब ये स्थितियां आयेगीं तो स्वभाविक रूप से असंतोष व भटकाव कम होगा तथा विवाद भी कम होंगे।

ऐसी ही स्थिति रोजगारपरक शिक्षा के रूप में देखी जा सकती है। रोजगारपरक शिक्षा के माध्यम से प्रत्येक युवा को आर्थिक रूप से उत्पादक बनाया जा सकता है। तथा संघर्षों को कम किया जा सकता है। रोजगारपरक शिक्षा से न केवल युवा स्वावलंबी तथा आत्मनिर्भर बनता है वरन् उसके अंदर एक प्रकार की सृजनात्मकता का भी विकास होता है जिसके आधार पर वह समाज में सदैव सकारात्मक संदेश प्रदान करते हुये समरसता के लिए प्रयासरत् रहता है। वर्तमान में आतंकी घटनाओं में लिप्त युवाओं में ऐसे ही आयामों का अभाव बना हुआ है और वे विवादों एवं संघर्षों में लिप्त हैं।

गांधीजी का एक अत्यंत प्रभावी मत मानवता तथा बंधुत्व के क्रम में था, जो भारतीय जाति व्यवस्था पर एक प्रभावी दृष्टिकोण के रूप में उभरकर आया, वह था— “हरिजन” मान्यता। गांधी ने सदियों से पीड़ित व शोषित निम्न जातियों को समतामूलक तथा मानवतावादी दृष्टिकोण से देखते हुये यह स्वीकार किया कि इनके अंदर भी भगवान का निवास है तथा इन निम्न जातियों को “हरिजन” की संज्ञा से नवाजा। इस क्रम में उन्होंने हरिजन पत्रिका संपादित की जिसमें उनके जाति संबंधी दृष्टिकोण प्रकाशित हुये। गांधी ने स्पष्ट किया कि उच्च जातियों को चाहिये कि वे इन निम्न जातियों को बराबरी तथा समानता का अधिकार प्रदान करें।

वर्तमान विश्व में भारत में जाति व्यवस्था अत्यंत पहचानमूलक आधार के रूप में काम करती है। तथा अत्यंत विकास के बावजूद आज भी शहरी समाजों में तो कम परन्तु ग्रामीण समाजों में जातिमूलक विभेद बने हुये हैं। आज भी दलित जातियों के लोगों के साथ हिंसक तथा अमानवीय व्यवहार की घटनाएं बहुधा सुनने को मिलती हैं। हालांकि इस संबंध में कई संवैधानिक तथा उपचारमूलक प्रावधान हैं परन्तु इन प्रावधानों का व्यापक असर कम ही दिखायी देता है। ऐसे में यदि गांधी के हरिजन संबंधी मूल्यों का अनुसरण उच्च जातियां करें तो जाति संघर्ष की स्थितियों को टाला जा सकता है। बिहार, उत्तर प्रदेश, राजस्थान तथा मध्य प्रदेश में जातीय गुटता तथा जातीय संघर्ष के दौरान व्यापक हिंसा देखने को मिलती है

और कभी-कभी तो समूची चुनावी प्रक्रिया इसमें संलिप्त नज़र आती है, जिससे जातीय विभेद और ज्यादा बढ़ने लगते हैं।

ऐसी परिस्थितियों में गांधी के "हरिजन" संबंधी मूल्य सर्वथा प्रासंगिक प्रतीत होते हैं। यदि इन मूल्यों में बंधुत्व तथा मानवतावादी मूल्यों को जोड़ दिया जाये तो निश्चित रूप से बहुलवादी समाज एक अत्यंत शांत व संपन्न समाज के रूप में विकसित हो सकता है। हालांकि सरकारी प्रयास इसी ओर रहते हैं, लेकिन कई दृढ़ व सामंती मानसिकता से ग्रस्त व्यक्ति इनको असफल करने की ओर प्रयासरत् रहते हैं।

"स्वराज", रामराज्य तथा प्रजातंत्र गांधीजी के विचारों की अत्यंत मजबूत कड़ी थी। गांधी ने इन विचारों के आधार पर अपनी राजनैतिक विचारधारा स्पष्ट की तथा उद्घाटित किया कि प्रत्येक राष्ट्र का दायित्व है कि वह प्रत्येक व्यक्ति के स्तर पर प्रजातंत्र का विकास करे। प्रजातंत्र में जनता का शासन हो तथा राष्ट्र में वे सभी गतिविधियां विकसित हों जिनकी कल्पना रामचरितमानस में तुलसीदास ने की है। ऐसी स्थिति में गांधी ने स्पष्ट किया कि राष्ट्र के मुखिया का प्रथम व अंतिम उद्देश्य जनता का हित होना चाहिए।

वर्तमान विश्व के कई बहुलवादी राष्ट्रों में सत्ता हेतु हिंसक संघर्ष जारी है। कई जगह सेना द्वारा हिंसक रूप से तख्ता पलट हो रहा है। पाकिस्तान, लीबिया, सूडान, कांगों जैसे देशों में ये आम बात बनती जा रही है। यदि ऐसे राष्ट्र गांधी के स्वराज्य तथा रामराज्य जैसी संकल्पनाओं का पालन करे तभी सत्ता परिवर्तन स्वभाविक एवं प्रजातांत्रिक तरीकों से संभव हो सकेगा तथा संघर्ष व हिंसा पर विराम लग सकेगा। वहीं दूसरी ओर जब स्वराज्य की संकल्पना ऐसे राष्ट्रों में विकसित होगी तो इसका एक सकारात्मक प्रभाव यह होगा कि प्रत्येक व्यक्ति स्वयं के हित में राष्ट्र का हित खोजेगा। इससे उस राष्ट्र के आंतरिक संघर्ष में कमी आयेगी तथा एकता का विकास संभव होगा।

इसी प्रकार गांधीजी के “भाषा संबंधी विचारों” को भी एकता उन्नयन के रूप में देखा जा सकता है। गांधी ने स्वतंत्रता आंदोलन के दौरान स्पष्ट किया था कि “हिंदी भारत की राष्ट्रभाषा होगी तथा इसके आधार पर राष्ट्रीय एकता का विकास होगा।” स्वतंत्रता के पश्चात् भाषायी आधार पर हिंदुस्तान में कई संघर्ष हुए विशेषकर हिंदी और गैर हिंदी भाषायी क्षेत्रों में। दक्षिण भारतीयों द्वारा अपनी भाषा को राष्ट्रभाषा बनाने तथा हिंदी भाषियों द्वारा हिंदी को राष्ट्रभाषा बनाने के मुद्दे पर व्यापक विवाद रहे। अंततः सभी भाषाओं (22) को राष्ट्रभाषा का दर्जा देकर विवाद समाधान करने का प्रयास किया गया; परन्तु वैचारिक संघर्ष आज भी कायम है।

अगर गांधीजी के मूल्यों का सम्मान करते हुए लोकतांत्रिक देश में लोकतांत्रिक तरीके से अधिकांश लोगों द्वारा बोली जाने वाली भाषा को एकमात्र राष्ट्रभाषा का दर्जा दे पाना संभव न हो तो कम से कम राजभाषा के रूप में पूर्णतः स्थापित करने के प्रयास पर तो विचार किया ही जा सकता है। इससे हिंदी भाषियों की स्थिति का भी सम्मान हो जायेगा तथा हिंदुस्तान की राष्ट्रभाषा रूपी अवधारणा को भी बल प्राप्त हो सकेगा।

गांधी के ऐसे ही भाषा संबंधी विचारों के आधार पर अन्य राष्ट्रों में भी जहां भाषायी आधार पर संघर्ष व विवाद बने हुये हैं, समाधान का एक मार्ग खोजा जा सकता है।

गांधी के सबसे सशक्त विचारों में दो विचार थे— “विश्व बंधुत्व” तथा “सर्वोदय”। वर्तमान विश्व आक्रमण तथा हस्तक्षेप की परिस्थितियों से ग्रस्त है। अमेरिका का इराक, कुवैत, अफगानिस्तान पर हमला, चीन का अफ्रीकी देशों में संसाधनों हेतु बढ़ता हस्तक्षेप, उत्तर कोरिया तथा द. कोरिया के आपसी मतभेद तथा चीन व जापान के द्विपक्षीय तनाव आज विश्व को निरंतर विवाद व संघर्ष की ओर लिये जा रहे हैं। ऐसी स्थिति में यदि हम महात्मा गांधी के विश्व बंधुत्व तथा मानवता के मूल्यों पर गौर करें तो ये मूल्य इन स्थितियों का विरोध करते दिखते हैं। गांधी ने बंधुत्व की भावना के अंतर्गत न केवल राष्ट्रीय वरन् अंतर्राष्ट्रीय बंधुत्व व एकता की संकल्पना की है। इन मूल्यों का अनुसरण कर प्रत्येक राष्ट्र अपने विकास के लिए दूसरे

राष्ट्रों में हस्तक्षेप से परहेज रख सकता है। भारत का गुटनिरपेक्षता तथा पंचशील का सिद्धांत वास्तव में गांधी व महात्मा बुद्ध के विचारों के आधार पर ही निर्भर है। यह राष्ट्र यदि इसी पंचशील के सिद्धांतों का पालन करें तो निश्चित रूप से वैश्विक संघर्ष को कम किया जा सकता है। इस रूप में गांधी के विचार पूर्णतः प्रासंगिक प्रतीत होते हैं।

ऐसा ही कुछ सर्वोदय के साथ है। सर्वोदय के अंतर्गत गांधी प्रत्येक व्यक्ति के उदय (विकास तथा उन्नयन) में विश्वास रखते थे। यदि प्रत्येक राष्ट्र सर्वोदय की नीति में विश्वास रखे तथा बंधुत्व की भावना का पालन करे तो न केवल प्रत्येक राष्ट्र का विकास संभव होगा वरन् वैश्विक संघर्ष भी रूक सकेंगे।

कई समीक्षकों का मत है कि गांधी के मूल्य वर्तमान में मात्र आदर्श हैं, वर्तमान संघर्ष को रोकने का सही मार्ग दण्ड, आक्रमण तथा कूटनीति ही है। वास्तव में देखा जाये तो एक सफल राष्ट्र के लिए ये तीनों तत्व आवश्यक हैं, चाणक्य (अर्थशास्त्र) ने भी इनको अनिवार्य बताया था। परन्तु ऐसा नहीं है कि ये तीनों तत्व ही राष्ट्र की नीति को बनाते हैं। अगर आक्रमण, दण्ड तथा कूटनीति से समस्याओं का समाधान संभव होता तो प्रथम विश्वयुद्ध के बाद दूसरा विश्वयुद्ध न होता। या फिर हिरोशिमा तथा नागाशाकी पर परमाणु हमले से अधिकांश विश्व शर्मिन्दा न होता। यदि हिंसा प्रत्येक आंदोलन का सफल मार्ग होता तो आतंकी सदैव सफल रहते और अब हिन्दुस्तान पर नक्सलियों का शासन होता। मैं और आप इतनी आज़ादी से घूम न रहे होते। और तो और शायद हिन्दुस्तान के आज़ाद होने का अभी तक इंतज़ार ही कर रहे होते। सार यह है कि दण्ड व आक्रमण भी जरूरी हैं परन्तु एक सीमा के बाद।

हालांकि गांधीजी के कुछ मूल्य हैं जो वर्तमान समय में बहुलवादी समाजों के संघर्ष को रोकने के क्रम में आदर्शवादी प्रतीत होते हैं, जैसे— “हृदयपरिवर्तन”। कई समालोचक भी मानते हैं कि आज की दुनिया में हृदय परिवर्तन एकमात्र कोरी बकवास है तथा ऐसी घटनायें न तो दिखती हैं और न ही इनसे संघर्ष रोके जा सकते हैं।

जबकि गहराई से देखा जाये तो हृदयपरिवर्तन के बारे में यह नहीं कहा जा सकता कि यह दिखता भी नहीं है। हां कम दिखायी देता है। जम्मू-कश्मीर में विगत वर्षों में लगभग बयान्चे आतंकियों ने आत्मसमर्पण किया है। नब्बे के दशक में कुछ कुख्यात डकैतों ने भी आत्मसमर्पण किये थे और आजकल नक्सली भी कभी-कभी आत्मसमर्पण करते दिख जाते हैं। ये विचार वास्तव में हृदयपरिवर्तन का ही प्रतिबिम्ब है। इसी के साथ गांधी के ये विचार भी प्रासंगिक लगने लगते हैं कि "प्रत्येक व्यक्ति में अच्छे व बुरे दोनों गुण होते हैं।" समाज को चाहिए कि अच्छे गुणों को विकसित होने का अवसर दें तथा बुरे गुणों को धीरे-धीरे खत्म करने के लिए प्रयासरत् रहे। इसी क्रम में भारतीय पुलिस व्यवस्था तथा न्यायप्रणाली में गांधी के "पाप से घृणा करो पापी से नहीं" के विचारों की प्रासंगिकता देखी जा सकती है। जिसके अंतर्गत प्रत्येक अपराधी को सुधारात्मक दण्ड का प्रावधान किया जाता है, ताकि उसे एक बार पुनः अपनी सकारात्मक सृजनात्मकता विकसित करने का अवसर प्राप्त हो सके। यदि गांधी की इसी भावना का अनुसरण समूचा विश्व करे तो शायद संघर्ष काफी कम हो सकेंगे क्योंकि फिर न तो ग्वांटानामों खाड़ी जैसी जेलें होंगी जहां इंसान को जानवर बनाने के प्रयास होते रहते हैं और न ही कोई तानाशाह जनता पर अत्याचार कर सकेगा। सीधे शब्दों में कहें तो चारों ओर शांति तथा समृद्धि होगी और बापू के स्वराज्य का मार्ग विस्तारित होगा।

गांधीजी के उक्त मूल्यों का अनुसरण कई राष्ट्रों ने अपनी अलग-अलग आंतरिक व विदेश नीतियों में किया भी है और वे सफल भी रहे हैं। भारत में गुटनिरपेक्षता तथा विदेशनीति के अंतर्गत पंचशील सिद्धांत, पहले आक्रमण न करने की नीति, भारतीय पंचायत प्रणाली, नरेगा जैसे रोजगारपरक कार्यक्रम; द. अफ्रीका तथा अमेरिका में कालों को वरीयता प्रणाली, जापान का शांतिपरक परमाणु कार्यक्रम, तथा भूटान की सुख एवं शांति की नीतियां। इन सभी नीतियों पर चलकर ये राष्ट्र इन सभी क्षेत्रों में आज सफलता के निकट है। परन्तु जिन स्थलों पर इन राष्ट्रों ने गांधी की विचारधारा को नहीं अपनाया है, उन स्थानों पर प्रायः संघर्ष एवं असफलता की स्थितियां देखी जाती रही है। फिर चाहे वो भारी औद्योगिकीकरण से उपजी समस्यायें हों या फिर अतिविकासात्मक नीतियों के कारण पैदा हुआ प्राकृतिक व आर्थिक असंतुलन हो।

आज भारत में उड़ीसा, पं. बंगाल तथा महाराष्ट्र में कभी भारी उद्योग या फिर कभी बड़े बांधों का विरोध तथा बढ़ते विवादों के मूल में कहीं न कहीं गांधीवादी विचारों की अनदेखी को समझा जा सकता है। वर्तमान भारत एक बार पुनः भ्रष्टाचार विरोधी आंदोलन से जूझ रहा है, नैतिकता, संयम तथा सदाचार जैसे गांधीवादी मूल्यों के अभाव में विधायिका व कार्यपालिका ही नहीं वरन् कभी-कभी न्यायपालिका भी संदेह के घेरे में आती रहती है। इन सबके कारण सिविल सोसायटी काफी मजबूती से उभर कर आ रही है। हालांकि ऐसी सोसायटियों का उभरना एक सफल लोकतंत्र की निशानी है परन्तु जब ये सोसायटियाँ, विधायिका, कार्यपालिका तथा न्यायपालिका में हस्तक्षेप करने लगती हैं तो स्थिति चिंताजनक हो जाती है।

यदि हमने प्रारंभ से ही गांधी के सभी विचारों को अपनाया होता तो शायद आज समूचा विश्व विवादों तथा संघर्ष से काफी दूर होता।

इतने दीर्घ, व्यापक तथा गंभीर विचार-विमर्श के उपरांत अब यदि निष्कर्ष की ओर विचार किया जाये तो कुछ तथ्य स्पष्टतः निखर कर आते हैं— प्रथम; बहुलवादी समाज आज निश्चित रूप से एक संक्रमण विशेषकर हिंसक, विवादास्पद व संघर्षयुक्त संक्रमण से गुजर रहे हैं; द्वितीय इन विवादास्पद स्थितियों का एक बड़ा कारक इनका एकरेखीय विकास, सांस्कृतिक संपर्क से उपजा संघर्ष तथा इन समाज की कुछ रूढ़िगत मान्यतायें हैं। तृतीय— ये समाज इन स्थितियों से निपटने के लिये जूझ रहे हैं परन्तु सही मार्ग को नहीं चुन पा रहे हैं कभी ये आधुनिक तकनीक से सफलता पाना चाहते हैं तो कहीं परम्परागत मूल्यों से। चतुर्थ— विवादास्पद स्थितियों से जूझने के जो आक्रामक तथा हिंसक विकल्प हैं वो आज क्या पूरे इतिहास में कभी भी कारगर तथा सफल नहीं माने जा सकते।

पांचवा निष्कर्ष सबसे गहरा तथा व्यापक है और वह है कि यदि इन विवादास्पद तथा संघर्षमयी स्थितियों से जूझना है तो समाज को एक बार फिर गांधीयुग की ओर लौटना होगा। गांधीवादी विचारधारा ही वह आश्रय है जहां पहुँचकर ये बहुलवादी समाज शांति और समृद्धि

की प्राप्ति कर सकते हैं। गांधी के मूल्यों पर रहकर ही समाज प्राकृतिक बनाम भौतिक विकास के मध्य संतुलन प्राप्त कर सकता है।

गांधी के विचारों के आधार पर नक्सलवाद, वैश्विक आतंकवाद, निर्धनता, बलात्कार, नस्लीय भेदभाव तथा प्रजातीय भेदभाव, जातिगत संघर्ष, लैंगिक भेदभाव तथा भाषाई संघर्ष से जूझा जा सकता है। अन्यथा उसी बर्बर स्थितियों में जीते रहेंगे जिनमें मानवीय समाज अपनी सबसे प्रारंभिक स्थितियों में जीता था।

सार संक्षेप में कहा जाये तो अहिंसा, संत्याग्रह, सर्वोदय, नैतिक शिक्षा, हरिजन संकल्पना, स्वदेशी, स्वावलंबन, आत्मनिर्भरता, ट्रस्टीशिप तथा कुटीर उद्योगों का उत्थान वे मूलमंत्र हैं जिन पर आज न केवल बहुलवादी वरन् सभी समाजों को आश्रित होना न केवल आवश्यक है वरन् अपरिहार्य है। इन मंत्रों पर चलकर ही ये बहुलवादी समाज वास्तविक अर्थों में रविन्द्रनाथ टैगोर के "वसुधैव कुटुम्बकम्" की संकल्पना को साकार बना सकते हैं तथा पूरी दुनिया मानवता और एकता के माध्यम से एक सुंदर, शांत, समृद्ध तथा सुखी दुनिया में साकार हो सकती है। और तब हम कह सकेंगे— "सुंदर है सुमन, विहग है सुंदर मानव तुम सबसे सुन्दरतम्"

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