

## Social Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi and its Relevance in Present Era : An Evaluation

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### Abstract

*Gandhian philosophy is so comprehensive that it has left no aspect of human life untouched. He was an applied philosopher who tried to understand the nature of man, society, civilization, religion and tried very hard throughout his life to put into practice the ideals that which he deemed to be highest. Gandhi called himself a practical idealist. He is an Idealist on account of his theoretical views of the fact that he believes in an ideal that is through and through spiritual. Mahatma Gandhi as a social philosopher visualizes such a society in which all round development of each individual can be achieved. Gandhi's ideal society is Sarvodaya which the betterment of all is possible. Like Marx Gandhi Visualizes a socialistic society which will be free from all kinds of exploitation and oppression and where there will be no government to govern the people, people will be governed by them. Such an ideal society is the ultimate good of the evolution of human society, because this is the only means to the solution of the problems of mankind. Gandhi's social philosophy as the doctrine of such an ideal society appears to be undoubtedly relevant today.*

**Key Words:** *Gandhian philosophy, Idealist, Sarvodaya, Swaraj, Non-Violence etc.*

### **Introduction:**

Gandhian philosophy is so comprehensive that it has left no aspect of human life untouched. He was an applied philosopher who tried to understand the nature of man, society, civilization, religion and tried very hard throughout

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his life to put into practice the ideals that which he deemed to be highest. Gandhi called himself a practical idealist. He is an Idealist on account of his theoretical views of the fact that he believes in an ideal that is through and through spiritual. But, he is practical philosopher because he always tries to put his ideas into practice. Naturally therefore, he comes to develop some views regarding society, state and similar other institutions. He tries to show in a concrete manner that his religious and moral views are not merely fanciful flights of the speculative faculties of a thinker that they could be put to use and practiced. He tries to show that society and state can very well be shaped in accordance with his philosophical and religious views. This paper is an attempt to find out the relevance of Mahatma Gandhi's social philosophy in the present era on the basis of secondary data and information and relevant books, journals etc.

**Discussion:**

Gandhi, it is true, never attempted to construct a system of philosophy since he was not a professional philosopher. He was mainly concerned with applying the ideals and principles that had become part of his life, and in which he had unflinching faith. When Gandhi said that social, economic, political and purely religious actions can not be divided into water-tight compartments, he was unconsciously constructing an integrated system. Indeed in Gandhi's thought one finds crystallized the implications of Hindu philosophical tradition the hard cover of Vedantic tradition as the dominant one which makes Gandhi called himself a Vedantin.

Many critics express doubts regarding the probabilities of experimentation in non violence but in order to comprehend Gandhian thought it will be essential to set aside the general pragmatic idea and approach the hub of the problems whence the utility of non-violence, for purposes of all kinds of health and permanent improvements will become transparent. There can, of course, be some practical doubt about the possibility of trusteeship. Progress is imminent in the attempts of making practical Vinobaji's campaign of Gandhi. Gandhi endeavored to discover the fundamental solution of all problems.

While evaluating Gandhian thought in general and his critique of

modernity in particular one can not afford to ignore its raw and rough message. Gandhi's Hindu Swaraj is gradually becoming relevant in a world which is in those of contradictions dilemmas and crisis thrown up by modern civilization. At the same time, Gandhism does not appear to be a typical reaction of the intelligentsia in many parts of the world to the travails of advancing capitalism.

Gandhi's non-violent social order is a challenge to all the contemporary theory basing the state on class war, force exploitation and human selfishness. His emphasis that means and ends are the two sides of the same coin and that the division between the two is artificial and wrong refutes the prevalent theory that the end justified the means. Gandhi was so particular about the moral soundness of the means that he would have refused the freedom of country if it was to be outcome of fraud or violence. Relating good means is to the good end. Gandhi revolutionized politics. He set himself resolutely against the principle which was rigidly followed by politicians in general and communist and fascists in particular. To the fascists, communists and modern politicians end justifies the means. To them means good or bad are immaterial, end should be achieved, and Gandhi repudiated such a doctrine. He was opposed to the artificial division of an act into two parts means and ends. He held that means and ends are inseparable.

Gandhi's ideal of Sarvodaya entails satisfaction of the basic material, social and spiritual needs of the poorest of the poor. Sarvodaya today does not represent a mere vision or utopian notion. It has been regarded in some circles as a dynamic philosophy, which can make possible the advent of a radically transformed humanity. The current wave of globalization necessitates a social order and geopolitical alignments based on synergistic elements of various philosophies. It is in this context that the concept of Sarvodaya has become relevant. The concept of Sarvodaya forms the basis of the economic, social and political thought of Gandhi. Sarvodaya may be regarded as Gandhi's distinctive contribution to Social philosophy.

Critics may, however, argue that even during the long period of 65 years of post independent India Swaraj of Gandhi's dream as poor men's swaraj has not been established. In place of poor men's swaraj rich men's swaraj has been built in India today. Poverty, unemployment, exploitation, violence and corruption

in all spheres of socio-political life have become burning problems of India today. So, according to the critics Gandhi's philosophy appears to be grand failure. But objectively considered it is to not the care. All those crises in our socio-political life have arisen not because of the inefficacy of Gandhi's philosophy but because of the negligence and non application of his philosophy by the followers of Gandhi.

It is befitting here to mention that Indian philosophy is not confined to intellectual and logical discussions alone, but it is said to be vitally connected with life. In Indian philosophy is not merely way of thought, but a way of life. So far as Gandhi is concerned it appears that his life is really a life of a philosophy, a life of Social philosophy. Prof P.T Raju rightly observes "Though Mahatma Gandhi is not an academic philosopher one can best understand Indian Idealism by studying his life and work. Though he does not give us a system of philosophy, yet his life itself is a system of philosophy. In him does the statement that Indian philosophy is a way of life and not merely a way of thought finds a worthy illustration."<sup>1</sup>

It is appropriate here to mention that Philosophy has to be understood and appreciated in the wider sense of the term in the larger interest of humanity. Philosophy is to be considered as proper guidance and words of wisdom to common man. Philosophers like Gandhi are guides of our society. Modern man need proper guidance and illuminating advice from practical social philosopher like Gandhi. At present, science has made tremendous development in various branches. But despite of rapid development of science and technology modern man is not really at peace, the reason is that science is not sufficient to make man fully happy and healthy. Modern ideologist S. Radhakrishnan has rightly observed, "Science has glorifies the external man. In the process, it has denigrated the inner man."<sup>2</sup>

In the age of science and technology man has become more self centred and perhaps more selfish. He is indifferent towards the higher values of life. Most of the people in the contemporary world feel that there is no necessity to lead a morally good life, because the large majority is immoral and corrupt. Unfortunately being unaware of his high moral and spiritual tradition is more attracted towards

western ideals of things.

Against such a background it may be appropriate to highlight relevance of Gandhi to modern man. Gandhi has developed an integral philosophy of life. He is not only a social philosopher but also a guide to social philosophers. He is one of the greatest men the world ever has produced has also highlighted his importance and uniqueness his following observations: "Gandhi united the destiny of India to that of the world. In our age he lived to demonstrate that the human spirit, when lit by a divine fire, is mightier than the mightiest weapon. For Gandhi politics was not opportunism or expediency. He wished to raise men to higher levels of moral action."<sup>3</sup>

Gandhi's approach to social philosophy appears to be more practical, dynamic and synthetic like ancient sages. His approach is not merely theoretical. In other words, there is no guilt between his theory and practical. It appears that he practices what he preaches. He suffers himself first, than he preaches suffering. In this contemporary world many social, political, economic, international and other factors have contributed to moral calamities. Gandhi's philosophy of universal love and simplicity may curb this malady, if our politicians and Social workers try to realize the significance of such a philosophy. In regard to the relevance of Gandhi's social philosophy it is befitting to mention that the importance of the ideal of non-violence as the basic principle of his social philosophy is internationally recognized. The best example of this recognition is that the birth anniversary of Gandhi is observed by U.N.O as the international non-violence day. U. Thant has rightly remarked, "Gandhi's faith in the efficacy of non-violent pressure as an agent for peaceful change is as justified today all over the world as it was in his time in India."<sup>4</sup>

#### **Concluding Observation:**

Social philosophy is the meeting point of philosophy and sociology. Social philosophy deals with human society not as it is but what it should be. It is concerned with such a society in which welfare of humanity in the true sense of the term is possible. Mahatma Gandhi as a social philosopher visualizes such a society in which all round development of each individual can be achieved.

Gandhi's ideal society is Sarvodaya which the betterment of all is possible. Like Marx Gandhi Visualizes a socialistic society which will be free from all kinds of exploitation and oppression and where there will be no government to govern the people, people will be governed by them. Such an ideal society is the ultimate good of the evolution of human society, because this is the only means to the solution of the problems of mankind. Gandhi's social philosophy as the doctrine of such an ideal society appears to be undoubtedly relevant today.

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