

GANDHIAN PHILOSOPHY IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF VILLAGES

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Abstract

Gandhi's idea to develop the Indian society was based on his understanding of the society and hence based on the village system. Talking about the importance of village, he wrote in 1936, "I would say if the village perishes, India will perish too. It will be no more India. "He was aware of the realities of the village life and knew the plight of half starved masses of India. He often acknowledged the same in his, vivid descriptions of Indian villages. He wrote, "Instead of having graceful hamlets dotting the lands, we have dung-heaps. The approach to many villages is not a refreshing experience. Often one would like to shut one's eyes and stuff one's nose, such is the surrounding dirt and offending smell". His understanding of the plight of the people has been extremely well brought out in his writings, identifying his emphasis on removal of poverty overt aesthetics.

Concept of Rural Reconstruction

His concept of rural reconstruction is a comprehensive one, emphasizing on the economic, Political, social, educational, and spiritual dimensions. He ceaselessly insisted on a pattern of village life which will be man-centered and non-exploiting. The decentralized village economy should provide full employment to all on the basis of voluntary cooperation and work for achieving self-sufficiency in its basic requirement of food, clothing and shelter. In short, it can be said that rural reconstruction, according to Gandhi should not be merely concerned with raising the standard of living of village folk, though that was important. Talking specifically about an ideal village, he outlined the objectives of rural reconstruction.

The idea of an ideal village is that of complete republic independence of its neighbour for its own vital wants, and yet dependent for many others in which dependence is necessity. Such village will contain intelligent people. The first concern of the village should be to grow its own food. Then only all communities will live together in harmony.

The curse of untouchability, intoxicating drinks and drugs will not exist. Women will enjoy the same right as men. People in villages will not live in dirt and darkness as animal; No one will wallow in luxury. The village community should take up the responsibility for providing work to all able bodied people and every one will have to contribute his quota of manual labour.

Non-violence with its techniques of Satyagraha and non-cooperation will have the sanction of village community. The government of the village will be conducted by the panchayat of five persons annually elected by the villagers. Such an ideal society is "necessarily highly cultured because every man and woman

in that society knows what he or she wants and also no one should want anything that others could not have. Such a society will be an “Oceanic Circle” where the centre will be the individual who will always be ready to perish for the village, later ready to perish for the circle of villagers, till at last the whole becomes a life comprised of individuals”.

Affluence of people was not in Gandhi’s mind. He believed that there was sufficient to meet the needs of all people, but not their greed. He considered, that the type of development, Europe had achieved was the result of a systematic colonization and exploitation of both people and nature. In addition, it had contributed to imbalance in the levels of development of different areas, monopolization of benefits by a few families, and increase of poverty and violence. He, therefore, rejected not only supportive mechanism of development seen as bureaucracy, technology, and the elitist education, but also the whole idea of development as conceived by the builders of the western industrial society. Truth, non-violence, freedom, equality, full employment, bread labour, trusteeship, decentralization, swadeshi and cooperation were perceived as cardinal principles for rural reconstruction.

Values

The first four principles are the universal or core values, i.e. Truth, Non-violence, Freedom, Equality; the remaining, flowing mostly from them and are linked with his economic ideas. They were formulated by Gandhi to regulate initially the conducts of inmates of Satyagraha Ashram in 1930 and latter extended to the work for rural reconstruction.

Truth

He regarded truth as the source of Dharma. Hence there should be truth in thought, speech and action. The man who has realized truth completely has nothing else to know, because all knowledge is necessarily included in it. And that is why truth is perhaps the most important name of God. In fact it is better to say that truth is God, than to say God is truth. His concept of truth involves complete tolerance to those who differ.

Non-Violence

Gandhi considered nonviolence, besides, truth synonymous with God. He believed that non-violence has its own relevance in resolving conflict and is also related to reconstruction of society. Non-violent resolution of conflict is in accordance with his dignity of man’s spirit. He can save his spirit by observing non-violence, which is in tune with his spirituality. Another aspect of non-violence is progress. It binds people together, promoting, cooperation, harmony and unity and preventing destruction, contributes to development.

Freedom

Closely linked with truth and non-violence is freedom; without the freedom of body, mind and soul, the individual cannot attain perfection. It is used to indicate freedom to make a choice and to take a decision without which development of individual is not possible. This perfection can be achieved by acquisition of the capacity by all to resist authority, when it is misused. It makes people tolerant to other ideas.

Equality

It flows logically from the concept of non-violence, since non-violence and non exploitation is impossible without equality.

Gandhian Philosophy

A unique person or perhaps the greatest figure of the last nineteen hundred years as characteristically assessed by Louis Fischer, Mahatma Gandhi always insisted on Truth and Non-violence as the inseparable part of humanism.

“I have nothing to teach this world,
Truth and Non-violence are as old as hills”

With the present phase of globalization, this cannot be stopped, the third worlds needs to look into the evil effects of globalization. We cannot allow our fellow citizens to starve to lose their employment and to become destitute. It is Gandhi's Charkha that can save us from this predicament.

G - Generosity
A - Affection
N - Nonviolence
D - Dedication
H - Honesty
I - Integration

He said “Non-violence is the greatest force at the disposal of mankind. It is mightier than the mightiest weapon of destruction devised by ingenuity of man.”

He further said “I don't believe in shortcuts which involve violence. However much I sympathize with and admire worthy motives, I am an uncompromising opponent of violent methods even to serve the noble causes.”

Conclusion

The force of his words reminds us that we should not rest till we are able to internalize in ourselves the twin principles of Truth and Non-violence in our thought and action. We should be optimistic and hope that we would be able to overcome the present crisis facing the world. Gandhi is believed to have greater relevance in the present world of modern science and technology that produced geographical neighbourhood but became highly individualistic. We feel no longer concerned with each other's welfare, except in commercial and business terms. Cooperation has been replaced by competition and consumerism. Much intelligence and much energy are going in this effort.

Yet it seems more important than ever that an even greater effort be made to achieve positive and mutually helpful human relationship. This cannot be accomplished by harnessing technical forces but only through himself, working with other men based on Gandhian ideals. Nobel Laureate Rabindharanath Tagore has put it beautifully: “Every child brings the proof that God has not lost faith in man.” The whole song

expresses the truth that God dwells in everyone and in everything. This had touched Mahatma Gandhi deeply. The way to happiness and prosperity has never been through despair. Only the one who never despairs can have hope and enthusiasm in work. Just as we cannot live without the 'Sun' we cannot live without the 'Sun' we cannot live in 'peace' in the world Gandhi's twin ideals of Truth and Non-violence.

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