



Mahatma Gandhi and Governance in India

Dr. Tanaji Pol

Associate Professor,

Sonopant Dandekar College, Palghar.

Associated with Centre for Central Eurasian Studies,

University of Mumbai.

tanajipol@gmail.com

Abstract

The aspirator for millions of lives within India and across the world, a great philosopher and the father of the nation mahatma Gandhi has contributed in diverse areas. His life sketch proved to be very motivating for the activities that he led. The author has tried to focus on the main theme of governance, the views of Gandhi in terms of running economy, handling the governance and administration activities within India. It also tries to reflect the philosophical contribution of Gandhi which is known worldwide. With reference to the ideas on economy and governance the author had tried to relate the gandhian concept of democratic decentralization to the 73rd constitutional amendment which stands for the rural local-self government. It also highlights the immense impacts of the philosophy of Gandhi on the governance, its relevance and the connection in contemporary time.

Keywords: Philosophy, Economy, Democratic Decentralization, Panchayati Raj.

INTRODUCTION:

Mahatma Gandhi the father of the nation is not only known India but across the world. Millions of lives are inspired by him and his philosophy was followed by many great leaders of the world. Gandhi was an architect of Indian national freedom struggle. It was with his entry into the movement only; the struggle against the British rule became the mass struggle. Before coming to India, Gandhi has already advocated struggle in South Africa for getting civil rights of Indians and blacks with a magical instrument of non violence. Born on 2nd October, 1869 in Porbandar, Gandhi studied law. He devoted his entire life for the welfare of others and getting freedom for India. 'Hind Swaraj' or Indian Home Rule, 'The Story of My Experiments with Truth', 'The Way to God', and 'Harijan' are his remarkable master pieces which had inspired millions of lives in the world. Unfortunately this national hero is assassinated on 30th January, 1948 at Delhi.

LIFE SKETCH & PHILOSOPHY OF GANDHI:

His father was a dewan of Porbandar and his mother was deeply influenced by Jain religion teachings especially by the tenets of self-discipline and nonviolence. At the age of 19 he left the home for the study of law in London. Then he came to India but due to difficulties in India to continue the profession he went



to South Africa in 1893 to represent an Indian merchant in a lawsuit. There he himself experienced discrimination against black. While travelling in the first class compartment of a train voyage to Pretoria; he was thrown out with his luggage and beaten up as he refused to give up his seat to a European passenger. Since he faced the humiliation he took up the challenge to fight against the injustice and this was proven as a turning point in his life. Since then the implication of his non-violence and Satyagraha evolved which were highly inspired by a world fame Russian author Leo Tolstoy. Also this had led to the establishment of political career of Gandhi. The main aim was to fight for achieving your rights in equal way, without facing any illogical discrimination on any bases.

In 1915 when he came to India, he led various Satyagrahas like Champaran Satyagraha, Kheda Satyagraha and Khilafat Movement for different reasons those ended up with the exploitation. He had embraced an ascetic lifestyle in his 30s age which was based on prayers, fasting and meditation. Later he led salt march as a Civil Disobedience movement, non cooperation movement and Quit India Movement in India against the colonial masters. Even he was arrested by British authorities in 1922 and was imprisoned for 6 years but in 1924 he was released for an operation. It was under the leadership of Gandhi only that the Indian national freedom struggle became the mass movement as the women; children from houses could come out and stood up with him against the exploitative rule of British.

Finally British granted independence to India but with two separate statehoods that is Republic of India and Islamic Republic of Pakistan. "Gandhi strongly opposed Partition, but he agreed to it in hopes that after independence Hindus and Muslims could achieve peace internally. Amid the massive riots that followed Partition, Gandhi urged Hindus and Muslims to live peacefully together, and undertook a hunger strike until riots in Calcutta ceased." On the evening of 30th January 1948 this great soul was assassinated on his way to an evening prayer meeting in Delhi by Nathuram Godse. Several people were followed on the street for his cremation process.

The philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi is very broad in nature and has a holistic approach. It revolved around the idea of non-violence and the tool of Satyagraha. He had faith on god and truth. The idea of the Ramrajya for which he vision for is totally based on the concept of love, humanity and ahimsa. Gandhi had vision for an ideal society where the moral force will guide the behavior of the individual and lead to the welfare of all. He was such a person who tried to inter linked religion, morality and politics with each other in ethical way. The entire life sketch of Gandhi and his broad philosophy had made him a national hero.

GANDHI AND THE SYSTEM OF GOVERNANCE - THOUGHTS ON ECONOMY:

According to Gandhi - "*Economic inequality is the master key to non-violent independence*".

Four principles of Gandhi have inspired the youth of India in pre-independence period. Simplicity, non-violence, dignity of labor and human values guides the functioning of economic activities which built a nation's economy. Work or Karma in this regards were the closest concept to Gandhi. Even anything eating without putting your labor would be considered as a theft. So after all it is the productive work which finally results into a development of a country. It not only provides the meaning to dignified life but also renders individual identity. He also threw light on the issue of poverty. "Poverty is violence against individuals, society and nature. Poverty and loss of freedom are not separate. A country can enjoy freedom only to the degree to which its poorest citizen is able to exercise his or her right".



GANDHIAN CONCEPT OF VILLAGE DEVELOPMENT:

"A society must be built in which every village has to be self sustained and capable of managing its own affairs..... Independence begins at the bottom." – M. K. Gandhi

A) Democratic Decentralization

It counts weight in the philosophy of the Gandhi for the governance of India. The idea of democratic decentralization has been varied from time to time. It was Gandhi's concept that country will develop only when the small unit of governance that is villages are self sufficient and well administered. He considered it as a Panchayati Raj or Village Swaraj/ Gram Swaraj. A small republic i.e. each village shall be self sufficient in its vital needs, and linked with the upper bodies non-hierarchically but at the same time shall enjoy the maximum freedom to take decisions related to the local affairs. "Gandhiji's, ideal society based on non-violence will be highly decentralized, both politically and economically. He was led to lay stress on the necessity of decentralization, because centralization as a system is inconsistent with the non-violent structure of society." The phenomena of centralization lost its meaning in democracy itself as it uses the force by ignoring the element of non-violence for getting things done sometimes. This creates lack of opportunities and makes life of the people more complex and cannot sustain for the longer time. So Gandhi favored the idea of decentralization in democratic way. He was of opinioned that the term Swaraj highlights a true democracy where political power is distributed among the villages of India and such democracy is based on the real participation of citizens.

B) Village Panchayats

For the better governance of villages, the vehicle of village panchayat has to be run by giving them autonomy. His tour to India convinced him villages can be governed in well manner with the principle of simple living and high thinking. "People are expected to take personal interests and turn up in large numbers at the meeting to deliberate problems and common interest such as village industry, agricultural production, obligation and planning." In his Panchayati Raj the gram has to identify the resources for the development of agriculture and small scale industry and they should be properly channelized. "Gandhian decentralization means the creation of parallel politics in which people's power is institutionalized to counter the centralizing and alienating forces of the modern state." So this is how each village will be responsible for managing its own affairs and will result into the creation of strong foundation of India's political system. Self sufficiency of villages will lead to not only economic growth of a country but also help to solve the socio-economic problems that hinder the general growth of an individual.

73RD CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT (RURAL LOCAL SELF GOVERNMENT) OF INDIA AND REFLECTION OF GANDHIAN PHILOSOPHY:-

The Panchayati Raj system has a long historical background in India. The Gram i.e. village was the basic unit of administration during ancient and medieval time when there were the rule of different dynasties. After India get independence once again the issue of importance of villages in governance was raised by Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhi believed to achieve inclusive growth and was against the mass production. He supported the production by masses especially the use of Khadi and development of several small scale



industries as they engaged into the skill oriented labor and provides employment to everyone. The impacts of Gandhian philosophy also get reflected in Indian constitution also. Article 40 of the Indian constitution highlights the provisions for villages as a unit of self government under directive principles of state policy.

With the gradual development the constitutional bill was passed with unanimity on 22nd December, 1992 in Lok Sabha and on 23rd December, 1992 in Rajya Sabha. It was ratified by 17 states and assented by president on 20th April, 1993 popularly known 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act (for rural local self government). The act provides 16 Articles from Art 243 - 243 O represents the three tier system for rural local self government with immense provisions. Gram Panchayat at village or grassroots level, Panchayat Samiti at Taluka level and Zilla Parishad at district level will be responsible bodies to conduct smooth, inclusive and participatory administration. This amendment had introduced a new relationship between national and local policy makers. This also applies to the 74th constitutional amendment which stands for the urban local self government. With these two amendments the governance of India has been smoothly conducted hierarchical with three tier systems for rural and urban areas followed by state government and national government at the apex level. "Gandhian philosophy to bring inclusive growth is most fundamental in building a resurgent rural India through Local Self-Government – institutions like the Panchayats, Municipalities, Autonomous District, Regional Councils – as it provides the essential means of empowering the disadvantaged and enabling them to overcome their poverty."

However, it has other side also. Gandhian concept of Gram Swaraj would have been more fruitful of people in the villages would have enhanced their desire to actively participate in governance, the meetings of the gram sabhas, and politics of villages in proper way; they would have performed their responsibilities efficiently. In spite of having mechanism there are lacunas and inadequacies in service delivery and getting results of development. Various malpractices and criminalization of politics hinder the growth of even a smaller unit. Barring these there are other issues also faces by these bodies. "There role in development process as institution of public participation, resources mobilization, diminished. There is need to have a fresh look as the working of Panchayati Raj system in India so that they could become vibrant institutions of democracy at grassroots level."

CONCLUSION:

Gandhi's thoughts and beliefs had vision for a unique political system which proved him different from the other leaders of the world. There is no iconic personality other than him who had given the message of morality and also implemented it in practical life. His contribution in political, economic, socio and cultural issues is commendable. He was not only a national liberator but also a social emancipator. The contribution and philosophy had left its footprints in India and had inspired the millions of lives not only in India but across the world. In this respect Mahatma Gandhi was a true national hero.



REFERENCES:

1. Bhatt, E. (2011). Towards Economic Freedom. *Timeless Inspirator - Reliving Gandhi* , p. 116.
2. Editors, H. (n.d.). *Mahatma Gandhi*. (A & E Television Network) Retrieved 02 June, 2019, 2010, from <https://www.history.com/topics/india/mahatma-gandhi>
3. kaur, A. (2018). Panchayati Raj Institutions and 73rd Amendment Act. *International Journal of Academic Research and Development* , 3, 203.
4. Qazi, G. N. (2011, January). Building a Resurgents Rural India. *Timeless Inspirator - Reliving Gandhi* .
5. Rathi, S. (2011, January). *Gandhian Concept of Village Development and India's Developments Policy*. Retrieved 02 22, 2020, from https://www.mkgandhi.org/articles/village_development.html.
6. Sharma, M. L. (1987). *Gandhi and Democratic Decentralization*. New Delohi: Deep and Deep.
7. Sharma, S. K., Singh, S., & Sarabjeet, S. (2008, octomber - December). *Gandhian Strategies for Democratic Decentralisation and Development: Dimension on Rural Development, Gram Swaraj and Savodya*. (Indian Political Science Association) Retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/41856465.pdf>.