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GANDHIAN PHILOSOPHY OF TRUSTEESHIP IN PAST AND PRESENT CONTEXT

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Abstract

This paper deals with the concept of Trusteeship propounded by Mahatma Gandhi. The author has taken into account the reasons behind the advocacy of Trusteeship by Mahatma Gandhi. Being strong follower of Indian philosophical thought and culture, Mahatma Gandhi showed that the idea of Trusteeship has roots in Indian culture of sacrifice and concern of others. The author says that being distressed by the then existing socio-politico-economical condition of the globe, Gandhi engineered the concept of Trusteeship. In nutshell, Trusteeship is meant transforming capitalistic society into egalitarian society by cutting off private ownership of every kind. It is to give back the share of one's wealth, which does not belong to him, to the society, which is in its turn indescribable, extraordinary thing, promoting cooperation brotherhood aiming at the upliftment unto the last. The author has pointed out the Gandhian opinion that the concept of Trusteeship gives the sense of humility and humanity, beings out non-violent state and a major instrument for Sarvodaya Socio-politico-economical basis of the society. It was Gandhiji's ambition to create a new social order based on the philosophy of Trusteeship, non-violence and non-exploitation. The author lastly point out that through the concept of Trusteeship Gandhiji taught the global society to preserve high moral values service to the society welfare of the community and maintenance of equality for the peaceful, joyful and harmonious livelihood of mankind. Therefore the concept of Trusteeship of Mahatma Gandhi, the author points out carries undoubted importance in 21st century i.e. present context.

Keywords: Trusteeship, capitalistic society, non-violence, non-exploitation, Sarvodaya,

"Out of my total wealth, what belongs to me is the right to an honorable livelihood no better than enjoyed by millions of others. Rest of my wealth belongs to the community or society and must be used for their welfare" – Mahatma Gandhai

Gandhiji had greater faith in self regulation than external control. He always insisted upon the voice within. He was also a great votary of cultural, spiritual tradition and its major ethics. Man is originally carries divinity in his persona. Man is not committed to 'original sin'. He is originally good but the situation compels him to commit sin. Man as it is taught by our vedopanisads, has to come out of the veil



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of *avidya* i.e. ignorance and to know his real self. Gandhiji believed in basic goodness of man having capacity to overcome his apparent weaknesses for that he presented "*ekadashvrata*" to be imbibed and followed. His entire teaching is based upon yamas of Yogashastra, being character building blocks. Ahimsa i.e. Non-violence and Satya i.e. Truth are being taken as the basic principles of his philosophy to be carried out by every person from his heart. Asteya i.e. Non-stealing, Brahmacharya i.e. Celibacy i.e. control over sense organs in general and sexual organs in particular and Aparigraha i.e. Non-hoarding are also equally important in human life to follow. To my mind all ventures of Mahatma Gandhi in social political fields were based upon the teaching of Bhagwad Geeta, Yogashastra, philosophy of Gautam Buddha and Bhagwan Mahaveer, which he got by way of heritage. Gandhiji correctly thought that entire management in any field must have a basis in love, trust and human goodness on which his concept of Trusteeship is tailored. Gandhiji was a strong pleader of voluntary decisions based on self inspiration to forsake ones' self interest.

"*Aatmanah Tu Kamay Sarvam Priyam Bhavati*" i.e. for fulfilling one's motives one likes everything, meaning thereby as people advocate; behind trade; industry and commercial activities there lays instinct of profit making force behind it. But it is not the whole truth there are certain noble works where more inspirational wellbeing of all is behind it. Same inspirational forces also lay down behind the idea of Trusteeship. Gandhiji's idea of Trusteeship is based on the culture of sacrifice and concern of others. Through the idea of Trusteeship Gandhiji advocated peaceful contented harmonious livelihood of all members of the society for which there was unlimited trust on human spiritual and moral values through which he pointed out the way for human and societal salvation.

Property of any kind i.e. money, land, intelligence or labour everyone who possesses that is not a master but trustee of it and work together peacefully for the betterment of the society to which they belong. From this point of view Gandhiji advised Mill Owners and Workers to come together leaving aside their self-interests on the background that workers want maximum price to their minimum labour while owners want to pay minimum wages taking maximum work done by workers. Both of them try to extract maximum advantage from their assets. Gandhiji criticized that industrialization; mechanization, modernity etc. have taught us only to grab but not to give. It supported only greediness; selfishness and profitness. There is absence of love, faith and idealism in the life and thought process of human beings. Modern man has lost his sense of proportion and equanimity.

Gandhiji favoured the idea that society should be built upon needs and not on greed, as greed has no limits while needs have. Each one should work accordingly to his capacity and receives things accordingly to his needs. Thus he defines economic equality means everyone should have enough according to his needs without self-deception. Gandhiji's idea of trusteeship is a holistic approach towards societal wellbeing. Once the idea of trusteeship takes the grip, the idea of philanthropy, gifts, donations etc. disappear from the society.

Principles behind the concept of Trusteeship

- Trusteeship meant transforming capitalist order of society into an egalitarian and thereby abolition of capitalism in toto.
- It does not recognize right to private ownership.
- In Trusteeship an individual is not to use his wealth for his selfish satisfaction disregarding interest of the society at large.

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- Through Trusteeship for decent minimum livelihood Gandhiji advocates limits on maximum income and the difference between minimum and maximum income (socially known as profit) should be reasonable and equitable.
- In Gandhian economics quantity of production and cost of production is to be regulated and percentage of profit must be kept reasonable.
- Through Trusteeship gap between rich and poor needs to be minimize to avoid class conflict and abolish in the course of time bringing them on same footing.
- The ultimate motive of Gandhiji to propound Trusteeship was to promote cooperation, brotherhood in the society aiming at upliftment of the last member of the society i.e. sarvodaya.

Our tradition, culture and vedopnishadic teaching did not allow Gandhiji to keep quiet-keeping finger on the mouth. He was distressed by the then prevailing social situation in the world in general and Indian situation in particular. Trusteeship as proposed by him is an outcome of it. There was an utter belief in his mind that everything upon the earth belongs to the God and only God and not to any individual. Consequently man is not an owner but only trustee of it. Gandhiji's idea of Trusteeship is too good to be true and can be implemented in its real spirit, on the background of its criticism that it is impracticable by many thinkers.

While it is important that all industries are made for profit it is equally important that how much profit share industry spends on the community and returns to the community. The contentment & happiness is returning the earned share of profit to society is indescribable. Through that we can give happiness to the world, which is an extraordinary thing. You are not the owner of the wealth that comes from your industry; but you are only the mean to get it back to the community.

Man thinks himself wise but greediness, accumulation of excess wealth, hoarding, theft, robbery, coercion; Gandhiji said does not spring from wisdom? Service rendered without sense of happiness does not make any sense. Concept of Trusteeship gives you the sense of humility & humanity. Industries must possess the human values & it should not be the pursuit of greed. We can say that it is a big thing that Mahatma Gandhi gave this legacy of values to the world through the concept of Trusteeship.

Trusteeship is one of the unique socio-economic doctrine of Gandhiji. An economic power of capitalist class is exploitative and goes hand in hand with political power. The reality of inequality and concentration on accumulation of money / capital in the hands of a very few led him to propound the doctrine of Trusteeship. He believed that Trusteeship could bring about non-violent state and become major instrument for decentralization of power and capital leading to welfare of the society. Socio-ethico-economic significance lays behind the doctrine of trusteeship.

Gandhiji's doctrine of trusteeship is not formulated for the sake of Industrialist, Mill Owners or Big Houses but it is equally applicable to middleclass, higher middle class and rich class also. That keeping sufficient money for their honorable livelihood they are expected to disburse their wealth to the society to which they belong.

The thought of Trusteeship is deeply rooted in the culture of Indian soil as we can see that Sir Jamshedji Tata established first charitable trust in the world in 1892 latter on which was portrayed by Gandhiji in doctrine of Trusteeship. The ultimate goal of making profit is not just to earn a dividend but to return to the people through which you become the unknown servitor to the people.



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The major thrust of Trusteeship is preservation of economic power for the benefit of society as a whole. It is a prelude to Gandhiji's ambition to create new social order viz. *sarvodaya*. He wanted to reconstruct society on the basis of his distinct philosophy of Trusteeship, Non-violence, Non-exploitation, Property relationships.

Philosophically Trusteeship is economic conscience. It is an instrument for breaking monopoly in every field of life such as economic, political, labour-owner relationship. Trusteeship is an answer to the crises of economics and industrial sector which works on removing disparity in above fields.

Gandhiji advised rich to exercise self restraint and austerity to relinquish hoarding instinct. Trusteeship is based upon non-violence, non-possession and economic equality. It also implies self discipline and self reliance they are all interlinked having philosophical and religious sanction.

- 1) The whole exercise Gandhiji undertook to remove disparities, inequalities based on caste and religion, income and wealth and distribution of commodities.
- 2) Application of the doctrine of Trusteeship would lead to abolition of private property which further leads to abolition of corruption, exploitation and greediness.
- 3) Trusteeship will also help to abolish the gap between haves & have-not classes.
- 4) Gandhiji believed that Trusteeship reduces & eventually eradicates disparity.
- 5) Trusteeship entails ethical upper-hand over production, distribution of commodities and profit making also.
- 6) Through the doctrine of Trusteeship Gandhiji wanted to reorganize society on economic equality, based on moral value.

Gandhiji advocated that the business without morals is a big sin. There should be a co-relation between personal values, ethics and corporate values. From their interrelations, one can understand the true nature of the business.

The concept of Trusteeship is based on human values and teaching the whole world about the preservation of high moral values, service, the welfare of the community and maintenance of equality. In that sense, the path laid by Mahatma Gandhi a hundred years ago, is very relevant to today's situation. I am sure that it will be lighthouse, showing a way to the world for many centuries to come.

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