



Spirit of Nationalism in Mahatma Gandhi's Political Philosophy & Relevance in the Modern World

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Abstract— All of us know that the political influence of Gandhi ji in Indian politics and freedom movement remained one of the key determinants during 1917-1947, which is known as the Gandhian era of Indian freedom struggle against British Colonialism. Most of the scholars agree still today that Mahatma Gandhi made a substantial and crucial contribution to Indian 'Nationalism.' Actually, the idea of nationalism in his political spirit was born out of his experience of remaining and working strongly against the colonial discrimination with natives of the country as well as people residing from abroad including Indians in South Africa, consequently, the critical behaviour of the Britishers compelled Gandhi's desire to instill the spirit of nationalism within himself. Truly, Gandhi's ideas on politics, truth, purity of means, Non-violence, Satyagraha, and secular perspectives on religion have since contributed to the development of the spirit of nationalism among all Indians. Therefore, Gandhi's nationalistic spirit and other perspectives on women's rights, rural development, decentralized democracy through the empowerment of Gram Panchayats, and the ideal of 'Ram Rajya' have also all contributed to the rise of nationalism in India. On the contrary, the idea of nationalism became more popular among all people as well as freedom fighters (both-liberalists & extremists) from the various segments of the Indian society or social classes, pressure groups, and religious leaders, and it was greatly influenced by the spirit of Gandhi's political philosophy such as: 'Non-Cooperation Movement', principles of 'Non-violence' and 'Satyagraha', the boycotting of the British discriminatory policies against Indians, and the active participation of the Indian masses into the freedom movement in the wake of 1920. Now through his entry as a successful agitator after getting the success in 'Champaran Satyagraha' in the year of 1917 in favour of indigo producer farmers, Gandhiji became a well-known political figure of the freedom movement throughout the country. Meanwhile, the political environment in the country emerged as a massive oppose in lieu of the 'Rowlatt Act' passed by the Britishers, which was called a black law in the historical journey of colonial rule in India. As a result, due to the protest by Indian masses, a big massacre at Jallianwala, Amritsar on 13th April, 1919, compelled the Indian freedom fighters like Gandhiji to take an active and effective step to oppose this brutality of the colonial government. The present research paper makes a theoretical review of the spirit of Gandhi's political philosophy in the perspective of nationalism in India and its relevance in the modern world.



Keywords— Nationalism, Colonial Rule, Discriminative Policies, Indian Freedom Movement, Spiritualism, Satyagrah, Non-violence, Jan Andolan.

I. INTRODUCTION

Actually, Gandhiji has always been identified as a powerful leader of colonial India by many scholars and historians, who remained a dominant figure of the Indian Freedom Movement from 1917 to 1947. Gandhiji was born on

October 2, 1869, at Porbandar, a town in the state of Gujarat, which is presently located in the Kathiawar district. His father was 'Diwan of Rajkot Riyasat' and he belonged to a well to do family. Gandhiji got formal elementary education from Porbandar and Rajkot. At the age of 11

years, he went to Alfred High School, Rajkot and passed his matriculation in the year of 1887. However, he took admission at Samaldas College at Bhavnagar in 1888, but he left it very soon and went to London for the study of law in the same year and took admission in Inner Temple of London, Gandhiji became a law graduate (Barrister) in 1891 and enrolled in London High Court for the law practice. Now after the completion of his degree as a law graduate from London, he returned to India back and established his legal practice as a Barrister in Rajkot, Gujarat. Meanwhile, to argue in a case for the 'Abdullah Sheikh Firm', Gandhiji left for South Africa in 1893 and spent 22 years there. Here it is noteworthy to say that the British government's 'Apartheid Policy' in South Africa against South African aboriginal people and Indian residents, compelled Gandhiji to stay and fight against this discrimination based policy. In this regard, Mahatma Gandhi embarked on 'Satyagraha' to defend their rights, and at the later stage, he succeeded in pursuing the British government to stop the policy of discrimination against these people residing in South Africa for many years. Moreover, the Britishers also removed all the other forms of discrimination against Indians living in South Africa through laws. Consequently, all these efforts made by Mahatma Gandhi, enhanced his socio-political reputation, and very soon he became a very popular and dominant political figure of anti-colonial movements in South Africa as well as India.

Thus, Gandhiji played a crucial role to combat all types of discrimination in South Africa. Now ensuring that all situations are under control and favourable to Indians residing in South Africa, Gandhiji returned to India on 9 January, 1915. Besides, he understood the political situation of the country and became active to create an anti-British environment to combat the discriminatory policies and practices of the British government. As a result, a sense of 'Nationalism' emerged in response to the shifting anti-British sentiments among farmers, agricultural and industrial workers, students, and members of other social classes throughout the country. Some of the scholars agree with the fact and state as: "Mahatma Gandhi's charismatic personality created a demonstration effect on various societal segments, which in turn led to the national freedom struggle and also strengthened the spirit of nationalism among all Indian masses." In this regard, Gandhiji was a major contributor to the growth of the 'Non-cooperation Movement' during the years 1920-22. Later, in the year of 1930, Gandhiji sparked protests like the 'Civil Disobedience Movement' and 'Quit India Movement' in 1942 with the slogan of 'Do or Die' which eventually evolved into mass movement or Jan Andolan.

II. GANDHI'S POLITICAL SPIRITUALISM

As we know, Gandhiji had a great sense of inherent spirituality, which he got from his mother. Nobody can deny the fact that Gandhiji always and in every way stressed on a positive relationship between politics and religion. In the broader perspective, he was instrumental in bolstering the spirit of nationalism with political spiritualism in order to improve the impression of nationalism among all people. Actually, his spiritual aspect of human life remained keenly associated with religion, which was also the foundation or milestone of his politics. In this perspective, Gandhiji said: "Politics without religion is a sin". He further pointed out that the majority of human issues will be resolved naturally if religion and moral principles are incorporated into politics. Therefore, the promotion of human rights was the primary goal of this way of thinking. Likewise, developing the essence of spirituality and working toward the advancement of humanity or human welfare were the other goals of human life. Gandhiji also remarked: "Religion is an intrinsic aspect of politics, where the truth, non-violence, humanism, morality, sacrifice, love, and self-confidence among the people belonging to different strata of society were the components, which gave origin to the ideology of nationalism." Conversely, Dr. Rajender Prasad, the first president of Independent India very rightly stated: "Mahatma Gandhi's efforts have been proven conducive to refuting the politics which was an interwoven yarn of falsehood, far from the truth and reached at the meanest state of mind of the politicians. He never made any attempt to mobilize resources by unfair means. The morals and spirituality of Gandhi's teachings have influenced people's perspectives on nationalism." Accordingly, 'Satyagraha' is perhaps an effective and trustworthy spiritual weapon that is founded on compassion for people. All types of hatred behavior for opponents is strictly prohibited and not reflected in it. Therefore, Gandhiji was correct when he stated as: "Satyagrah is a philosophy that we would like to live by and die for." In this regard, Gandhiji consistently employed the elements of 'Satyagrah', which comprised the basic structure of Gandian philosophy such as: civil disobedience, dharna, social boycotts, boycotts of foreign commodities, favour of swadeshi and strike all types of violence. Gandhiji accelerated the rise of nationalism in India by utilizing all of these elements, and also its effectiveness in various regions of the country was multifaceted including the broader perspective of nationalism throughout the country.

III. GANDHI'S SPIRIT OF NON-VIOLENCE

Gandhiji was actually a fervent supporter of 'Non-violence', which states that we should treat everyone with

kindness and refrain from hurting them verbally, in words, or in deeds. According to G.N. Dhavan: "The non-violence is such a method which prepares the route to find the truth." Therefore, it is a logical way of thinking that incorporates morality and spirituality to determine what constitutes right and incorrect human behavior. These sentiments have always provided a significant boost to the spirit of nationalism, which has been steadily increasing.

IV. GANDHI'S CLASSLESS SOCIETY

The idea of a 'classless society' created by Mahatma Gandhi from an Indian viewpoint, still today is known as a milestone in the history of social justice. Basically, Gandhi's idea of a classless society was founded on the human right to equality and his belief in a society free from all types of discrimination. Moreover, Gandhiji always believed that 'Dalits' have the same rights to exist as everyone else. Despite some problems, he adamantly opposed the evil of untouchability and social inequality practiced by the upper classes with the 'Dalits', because it was absolutely a violation of human rights. Therefore, all of these ideas about caste or a society without classes have contributed significantly to the establishment of nationalism in India's rural and urban areas. A large number of scholars still today admit the fact that Gandhi's contribution to social justice theory shall remain a part and parcel of political theory of justice in Indian perspective for ages.

V. GANDHI'S DREAM OF PANCHAYATI RAJ

Mahatma Gandhi always gave a due emphasis on the idea of 'gram- swaraj', which also consistently prioritized decentralization of authority through the 'Panchayati Raj System' in order to advance and ensure rural development. Actually, Gandhiji referred to this system as 'Decentralized Democracy', which, as Mahatma Gandhi said, is nonetheless a genuine democratic form of government. He stated: "It is a decentralized democracy, which reflects the spirit of the people." Since millions of Indians used to live in the nation's millions of villages, it was actually a need of the hour at the time. All of Gandhi's ideas turned out to be supportive and helped to solidify the nationalist movement's steady rise in India. To conclude, we can point out that Gandhiji had seen the dream of national building through the realization of Gram Swaraj.

VI. GANDHI'S STRESS ON PURITY OF MEANS

Gandhiji fundamentally asserted that all human beings should be treated equally and granted their rights. In this regard, he always stressed on the purity of means. He also

concluded the fact that moral values in human life are crucial to the welfare of mankind on this planet. Then, and only then, can the sense of true nationalism grow among the various social classes. Here, it is also important to highlight that Gandhian political philosophy was founded on morality and the purity of means. He always used the principle of 'non-violence' to organize the National Freedom Movement. On the contrary, he abandoned and withdrew the national movement whenever it was influenced by any kind of violence. In this regard, it is true that when the 'Non-Cooperation Movement' in India was in full swing, then due to violence at Chora-Chori on 5th February, 1922, Gandhiji immediately decided to abandon the mass movement. However, most of the freedom fighters criticized Gandhi's decision. Nevertheless, we can't deny the fact that Gandhi made a substantial contribution to global politics for peace, spiritualized politics, and reaffirmed the majesty of Indian society, whose culture benefited humanity. Actually, Gandhiji exerted every effort in pursuit of political, social, spiritual, and economic goals for the sake of humanity. In this way, he made all efforts to fortify the sense of nationalism with the broadening of spiritualism among Indians from various social classes, which is also a fundamental principle of Gandhian political philosophy.

VII. GANDHI' SPIRIT OF SATYAGRAHA

Most of the scholars agree with the fact that Gandhi's spirit of 'Satyagraha' and 'Non-violence' has been his most notable contribution to Indian politics. The Sanskrit term 'Satyagraha' translates to 'Satya' and 'Agraha,' which stand for 'Right and Justice' and 'the request,' respectively. Gandhiji claimed that the freedom movement of India was made up of various forms of non-violence for 'Right & Justice.' In this perspective, violence had no place in the 'Satyagraha,' and Gandhiji never even criticized his opponent. He advocated the fact that a true follower of the 'Satyagraha' never behaves like a coward, rather than he faces the danger non-violently. Therefore, the spirit of 'Satyagraha' is an essence of Gandhian political philosophy.

VIII. GANDHI'S CONCEPT OF RAM RAJYA

All of us know that Gandhiji created the ideal of 'Ram Rajya' for India in his book 'India of My Dreams,' where caste, creed, sex, religion, color, and wealth are all irrelevant and all distinctions are eliminated. Here, the people own the land and the state. In this regard, Gandhiji said: "The Ram Rajya will pave the path for swift and affordable justice for all the needy people." He further stated that the well-being and welfare of all the people should be the first priority for the state. Gandhiji also

formerly supported complete freedom for the press, other institutions, and the expression of opinions. As a result, he created a vision in which everyone may live a happy, independent, and free life. All of these diverse perspectives on 'Ram Rajya' have been shown to be helpful in fostering a sense of true nationalism among individuals from various social classes or segments of Indian society. Likewise, he also attempted to create a secular society in an effort to gain the trust of people from various geographical areas of India. In letter and spirit, he studied the many religious texts of Islam, Christianity, Jainism, Hinduism, and Buddhist philosophy. In order to create social stability and religious harmony among Indian masses and the community, Gandhiji always believed and emphasized on the fact that religion might be employed as a social control mechanism. His secular perspective on all religions proved to be a determining factor in bringing together individuals from all faiths and religions, which worked as a catalyst for the rise of the true spirit of nationalism in India.

IX. GANDHI'S PERCEPTION OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Gandhiji consistently worked to advance women's development in both rural and urban areas so that they might be considered active participants. He advocated for women's equality and vehemently opposed the Indian society's evils like dowry system, polygamy, child marriage, and purdah regime. He consistently supported intercaste marriage, widow remarriage, and women's education across all social classes. These pro-women development plans have all led to the inclusion of women as a driving force behind the rise of nationalism in India. Gandhiji believed that women are the better half of the Indian society, therefore, without their active participation, any mass movement can't be successful. Keeping the fact in view, Gandhiji gave a due weightage to women participation in 'Dandi March' during the 'Civil Disobedience Movement' in 1930 and also during the 'Quit India Movement' in 1942.

X. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Now we can point out that Gandhiji played a vital role during the freedom struggle of India. After the successful experiment of 'Satyagraha' in South Africa, he returned to India in 1915. Meanwhile, Gandhiji entered into the Indian freedom movement through the 'Champaran Satyagraha' in 1917. Actually, the spirit of Gandhian political philosophy remained always based on the principles of 'Non-violence' and 'Satyagraha'. However, Gandhi's all three mass movements were abandoned due to violence, but Gandhiji did not make any compromise to his moral principles.

Moreover, Gandhiji emphasized on the purity of means and favoured any violent task. Despite this, he was a major contributor to the rise of 'Nationalism' in India. Most of the scholars agree with the fact that Gandhi's ideas on truth, Satyagraha, Non-violence, and a secular perspective on religion have been shown to be a cementing factor in bolstering the spirit of nationalism among all Indians. Gandhi's ideas on rural development, such as giving Panchayati Raj more authority and ending the 'Dalits' untouchability, have helped to drive people from all social classes. His secular perspective on religion proved to be a powerful factor in attracting all individuals from all segments of the society. He also gave a due stress on the women participation into all spheres of life including politics. However, in spite of his persistent efforts, the partition of India gave him a great setback. Nevertheless, nobody can deny his substantial contribution to accelerating the genuine and powerful spirit of nationalism in India, in spite of some drawbacks and viability of his ideas.

XI. RELEVANCE OF GANDHIAN PHILOSOPHY

Today we are living in the era of global village, where there are a lot of problems raised by human beings as well as due to the advancement of science and technology. In the current global scenario, there are some serious challenges such as: terrorism, political instability, blind nationalism, boundary disputes and political issues, which is a great cause of concern. Regardless, Gandhian political philosophy remains relevant today offering some valuable lessons and provides a framework for building a more just and peaceful world. In this perspective, non-violence is a sustainable pathway to sustainable peace and harmony among all nations. Gandhian principle of 'Satyagraha' or truth is very essential for building trust and fostering ethical leadership. Moreover, Gandhi's commitment to social justice still inspires human rights movements to establish a more just global society. Today most of the problems correlate with the ethical issues. Gandhian philosophy has shown us a pathway to humanity and social justice, where there is no place for cruelty, violence, injustice, social discrimination, blind nationalism and human rights violation, rather than it provides a socio-political framework of the just and classless society with the ideal of 'Ram Rajya'. To conclude, we can point out that Gandhian views inspire us to resolve all conflicts peacefully.

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