



## Relevance of Gandhian Values in Post-Independence India

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Mahatma Gandhi appears to be a paradox. On the one hand, he is regarded as a traditionalist whose ideas appear irrelevant in the context of modern society. On the other hand, some people regard him as a post-modernist who gave a critique of modern civilization and provided solutions to its problems. His booklet *Hind Swaraj*, published in 1909 apparently seems to be a defence of traditional Indian values. Some regard it as a nationalist tract. Others see it as a critique of modern civilization. Some are reluctant to regard Gandhi as a Post-modernist. As observed by Ajit Kumar Jha, "To describe (Gandhi) as a post-modernist is a gross misunderstanding of his philosophy. One of the basic assumptions of post-modernism is the principle of ethical relativism. The Mahatma whose entire life was dedicated to experimenting with truth believed in absolute truth."

Mahatma Gandhi was a freedom fighter as well as a social reformer. He attributed India's political slavery to social degeneration. Therefore, to him social reconstruction was indispensable for winning *Swaraj* in the true sense of term. Many who accepted Gandhi's leadership in the struggle for winning *Swaraj* attached less importance to constructive programme than winning freedom from British rule. But after independence from

colonial slavery in independent India people realise more than ever before the need for social reconstruction. Not only in independent India but also in the world outside after the second World War a host of people are found working for social regeneration on Gandhian lines. As pointed out by Antony Copley, "If all these individuals and movements that have been influenced by Gandhian ideals were to be listed it would read like a roll-call of the great moralists of the twentieth century and of its crusades."

Towards the end of freedom struggle Mahatma Gandhi was contemplating the transformation of Congress into an organisation for social rebuilding. While Congress basically remained a political party with commitment to social reconstruction, some of Gandhi's ardent associates like Vinoba Bhave, Kishorlal Ghanashyam Mashruwala, J.C. Kumarappa, Kaka Kalekar, Dada Dharmadhikari, Shankarrao Deo, Dhirendra Majumdar, J.B. Kripalini and Jaya Prakash Narayan (all of who except Jaya Prakash Narayan had been associated with Gandhi's constructive work in pre-independence era) took up constructive work and Sarvodaya after independence. At a later phase, following Gandhian line a number of social activists like Medha Patkar, Anna Hajare and his team, Aruna Roy and other have been doing social work.



Of all the associates of Mahatma Gandhi, Vinoba Bhave was regarded as his most befitting moral and spiritual heir. His Bhoodan movement which originated in response to the communist inspired Telengana revolution in south India resulted in the distribution of 12,00,000 acres of land among the landless peasants; it was a deliberate response to the challenge of communism. Communists like P.C. Joshi admitted that they had much to learn from the nature of Gandhi's appeal to peasantry. Jaya Prakash Narayan, another prominent Sarvoday leader who had played an important role in Indian public life and was a Marxian when Gandhi lived admitted that his quest for socialism ultimately landed him in Gandhism. He observed "The same old beacon lights of freedom, equality and brotherhood that had guided the course of my life and brought me to democratic socialism drew me onwards around this turning of the road. My regret is that I did not reach this point in life's journey while Gandhiji was still in our midst." Jaya Prakash found no contradiction between Gandhism and socialism and admired its moral and ethical basis, insistence on values, revolutionary technology in the shape of civil disobedience and insistence on political and economic decentralisation.

Gandhi preached political and economic decentralisation. The Government of Independent India have been trying to implement village uplift and Panchayati Raj, though they have not been very successful in these fronts. Without decentralisation it is not possible to establish an egalitarian society. GDH Cole went very near Sarvoday thought, when he observed; "I am neither a communist nor a Social Democrat, because I regard both as creeds of centralisation and bureaucracy, whereas I feel sure that a socialist society that is to be true to its equalitarian principle of human brotherhood must rest on the widest

possible diffusion of power and responsibility so as to enlist the participation of as many as possible of its citizens in the task of democratic self government."

Gandhi visualised the evils of overcentralisation and modern industrial culture and as a corrective suggested return to village life.

Gandhian technique of Satyagraha requires a high degree of moral integrity. Though it had been adopted as a weapon during our struggle for freedom, it had not been given a fair trial. The efficacy of Satyagraha as a technique of resistance to foreign invasion has not been tested. But Gandhi's advocacy of non-violence and peace holds good more than ever before when man has invented the most powerful instruments of destruction. When the devastation caused by the dropping of atom bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki was narrated by Jawaharlal Nehru to Mahatma Gandhi, the later observed that this wanton destruction had confirmed his faith in God and non-violence.

The way Mahatma Gandhi had resisted apartheid in South Africa later on became a part of wider struggle against colonialism and neo-colonialism. Gandhi's techniques were adopted by the leaders of new generation in Africa - Walter Sisulu, Oliver Tamb and Nelson Mandela.

Gandhi's ideas and principles are know all over the world. Volumes have been written on them. Though experiments in Gandhian ideas have not been always successful, yet if mankind is to live in peace and happiness in future, it can do so by following Gandhian principles.

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