

GANDHI'S IDEA OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

Shalu Chib¹ Palvi Thakur²

MPhil, University of Jammu, (J&K), India.

Department of hindi, govt. Degree college Chenani (j&k) India.

Shaluchib4444@gmail.com

Abstract:-

Justice is something for which human existence has an inborn longing to- something which comes to human naturally. The concept of social justice is a fair and just relation between the individual and society. This is measured by the explicit and tacit terms for public services, labor law and regulation of markets, to ensure fair distribution of wealth and opportunities for personal activities and privileges and equality outcome. In many societies, to see justice done is seen as something great, rare and sometimes, a miracle. In such a world, to come across someone who would be described as a personification of justice, would indeed be a miracle. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was an experience of a presence of justice for his times, as well as for the world today and was an pioneer of an era of democratic process and spirit who applied constructive work and non-violent as direct actions within the framework of Satyagraha.

Keywords: -

Satyagraha, Ahimsa, Religious thinker, Fate of women, Harijans, Dignity of labor, Constructive works.

INTRODUCTION

"Socialism is a beautiful word and so far as I am aware of socialism all the members of society are equal- none low, none high. In Individual body, the head is not high because it is the top of the body,

Nor are the soles of feet low because they touch the earth. Even as members of the individual body are equal, so are the members of society. This is socialism. In it the Prince and the Peasant, the wealthy and the poor, the employer and the employee are all on the same level. In the terms of religion there is no duality in socialism. It is all unity."

"I do not believe in the doctrine of the greatest good of the greatest number. The only real, dignified, human doctrine is the greatest good of all"

Gandhi. M. K

- The 'Man of the Millennium' M.K. Gandhi was born on Oct 2, 1869. Indeed the life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was a life full of experiment with truth. For the better part of his life after reaching

South Africa and later in India he kept himself engaged in fighting for the Justice. Gandhi believed in maxim simple living and high thinking. He was sure that the needs of everyone could be fulfilled but not the greed. Therefore one should leave aside all the material desires and try to live within minimum resources. He preached what he practiced and practiced what he preached. **Truth, Love,** and **Non-violence** had always been very close to his heart which was often reflected in his idea of **Satyagraha, Saravodya, Ahimsa,** etc. His methods came to be viewed by the people as being “bottom-up” rather than “top-down”, a fact that allowed the spread of rumors about Gandhi ‘**Baba**’ and ‘**Gandhi Maharaja**’(saint) rumors that would make Gandhi into mahatma. His justice was not only meant for himself or an individual or a community. According to him, if the right of even a single individual is compromised in the process of seeking Justice, the whole purpose is forfeited. Therefore, he believed in the principle of ‘Unto the Last’ i.e. if the person standing at the end in the line, the weakest of all, could be satisfied, everyone was satisfied.

- M.K. Gandhi was not a philosopher or a thinker in the traditional sense of the terms. He was a **leader of Indian National Movement** striving for its independence. He spent more than half a century fighting and struggling for the cause of **rights and independence of the people**. He wanted to establish such a society through ideas of Satyagraha and Swaraj where there was no confrontation between the freedom and progress of an individual and that of the society. When he talked of freedom he did not just mean freeing India from

the yoke of English but from yokes of every type. His actions were not guided by any conventional or prevalent set of ideologies but were well conceived and planned acc. to the principles in which he had faith. His economic, political, and social considerations were the result of his own experiences and experiments during his stay in South Africa and later his struggle for Indian Independence. Though Gandhi never wrote or spoke particularly on the subject of justice yet it can be seen as the ultimate end of all his campaigns and movements. Justice and specially the social justice may be seen as the sacred thread binding his all the ideas and though processes. A just state acc. to Gandhi could rest only on the principles and values of Truth, Love, and non-violence.

- Gandhi always considered **Satyagraha** to be a weapon of the strong and not of a weak person. Therefore he felt a great blow to his movement when somebody called it is a Passive Resistance. '**Satya**' means '**truth**' and '**Agraha**' means '**persistently holding on to it**'. Hence Satyagraha means persistently holding on to truth and this is what Gandhi actually demonstrated throughout his life through his deeds. Further he had an unshakable faith in god and insisted on the primacy of the spirit. Gandhi was of the firm opinion that a person who does not have faith in the existence of god cannot be a true Satyagrahi. Satyagraha is a moral weapon of fighting untruth with truth and violence with non-violence.
- Along with Satyagraha and belief in the existence of god Mohandas also considered **Swaraj** as to be an essential for seeking justice. Swaraj for him was not merely the change of the governmental power

from the British in Indian hands rather it meant self-rule and more truly control over one's mind and body. Only a person who enjoys liberty can serve the society as he or she is free to surrender one's self for the cause of others. He considered social justice and social harmony as to be two symbiotic virtues of a state, each leading to the others and eventually resulting in true Swaraj. Swaraj and Justice could be attained only when everyone was free to practice one's religion, have faith and worship acc. to one's own choice. For him an ideal state can be established only if the people understand and perform their duties. Respect towards ones duty in due course leads to truth and justice. He was of the opinion that the majorities must take initiative and try to inspire the minorities with their bona fides. Adjustments were only possible when the beginnings were made by the people who were more powerful rather than the other importance of spiritual equality of human being.

- Gandhi was of the **opinion that violence**, for that matter any form of injustice, inflicted on anyone, by anyone, was ultimately going to effect everyone, including the perpetrator himself or herself. As there is unity of life, actions of one are simply superficial in nature having an impact on the common spirit of life. Gandhi believe that justice encompasses both spiritual and material prosperity of all. For Gandhi justice was an end, an end which could be achieved only through just means. As truth is a righteous path, the pursuit of truth by non-violent means Satyagraha, which only can eradicate the evils from the society.

- Gandhi was a **Religious thinker** and his religious ideas cut across any particular religion. He believed that every religion had something special in it and no religion was superior to any other. Since every religion has its own distinct moral, spiritual concepts and values, a truly religious person is expected to respect all the religions equally. Therefore Gandhi did not appreciate the idea of inter-religious conversions but always encouraged one to follow one's own religion and adopt the changes which he or she liked in the other religion they intended to opt for.
- Gandhi also believed that the dream of a socially just order could also not become a reality unless **the fate of the women** changed and were treated at an equal footing with their men counterparts. The emancipation and empowerment of women had always been very close to his heart. Gandhi, in conceptualizing the ideal Indian womanhood, shifted the focus from motherhood to sisterhood, by negating women's sexuality. He accepted what he called the "natural division of labor" between the sexes and believed that women had a duty to look after the hearth and home. But from within their ordained spheres, they could serve the nation by spinning, by picketing at foreign cloth and liquor shops and by shaming men into action. He valorized women for their powers of endurance and self-suffering and spiritual and moral courage. In his opinion if women received education almost half of the problems of the world would themselves be taken care of. He believed that when women, who were called **Abala** becomes **Sabala**, all those who were helpless would become powerful. He attempted to raise the status of Indian

women in 1930's when the elections were held in provinces. Ticket were given to some prominent women to contest the elections. They were elected and offered ministerial positions. One such woman was Vijay Laxmipandit. Gandhi upheld the notion that the essence of femininity is superior to that of masculinity, which in turn is better than cowardice.

- Gandhi believed in **dignity of labor** and was convinced that a society where dignity of labor, to which Gandhi preferably called **bread labor** does not exist can never be just society. He believed

“The kisan or the peasant, whether as a landless laborer or a laboring proprietor, comes first. He is the salt of the earth which rightly belongs or should belong to him, not to the absentee landlords or zamindar.”

- Although he believed in the dignity of labor, equal opportunity of work, freedom of choices of occupation egalitarian distribution of wealth yet he never approved of economic discrimination and exploitation. He believed that justice should be delivered to poor millions by making such rules and regulations which make them to believe that they also belong to the society and be able to contribute their lot. He saw growing materialism to be the root cause of economic exploitation. He was opposed to conc. of wealth in a few hands. Though Gandhi was not against the private ownership of the property yet he believed that the property which was surplus to the needs of one was no less than stealing.
- Gandhi believed in the unity of all people irrespective of their caste, color, creed, gender or any other division. He opposed **Untouchability** and called it a crime against god and humanity .His

perception of caste system was that the untouchability was a blot on the Hindu social system. He observed that Hindu would die if untouchables lived and untouchables had to die if Hinduism was to live. He wanted to purify the hearts of caste Hindus from the evils of untouchability. He gave the socially depressed classes, a respectable name **Harijans** because of the oppression they suffered. The rest of Hindu society will earn the right to be called Harijans when they have atoned for suffering inflicted.”

➤ Gandhi’s **Humanistic values** were the result of his deeply rooted spiritual experience. He felt that one need not wait for particular events or opportunities to express one’s love and concern for the humankind. People should adopt and practice their humanitarian values and ethics in everyday life at every possible juncture. In his various movements spanning through more than half a century, the following different methods were intelligently and successfully employed by Gandhi for the cause of justice :-

- Going in for banning meetings, demonstrations and processions
- Ceremonial march
- Observance and Celebrations of National days and Weeks
- Resorting to pamphlets & newspapers
- Hartals
- Strikes
- Civil-disobedience
- Non-violent Non-Cooperation
- No tax campaign

- Courting imprisonment
- Peaceful picketing
- Peaceful raids
- Protest resignation
- Fasting & sometimes fast unto death
- Non-possession
- Constructive programmes

CONCLUSION :-

Gandhi was a remarkable non-violent social revolutionary who fought against injustice, tyranny and oppression of people. Gandhi's idea of social justice is directly related to his doctrine of Satya and Ahimsa. He believes that social justice can be achieved in India only if the people regard it to be as their **karma bhoomi** (the land of duty) and not **bhoga bhoomi** (the land of enjoyment). He felt that people should be able to distinguish between needs and wants. Gandhi's social philosophy is progressive and different. His justice is not associated with law only but with morality and ethics also. In order to promote complete social justice society has to change traditional undemocratic perceptions regarding women and Dalits. To overcome the social problems the application of Gandhian moral and ethical principles in day to day life will perhaps become more & more relevant. The thoughts and ideas of Gandhi have influenced millions of people who actually come across him in person or have read about him. The biggest and significant most virtue of Gandhi was that what he practiced was his theory and what his theory was he practiced. Today Gandhi is no longer with us, but his ideas are and continue to guide the humanity with all time relevant principles of love, truth and non-violence. Gandhi's idea of

justice as the critics courts of law but one can always be sure that whenever his type of justice is put to practice, if not a victory at-least a healing takes place.

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