GANDHI AND HUMAN RIGHTS
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ABSTRACT: This article discusses the meaning of Gandhi and human rights. It is the responsible of the government and country’s Gandhi also took prominent part in the preparation of the charter of rights which formed an important part of the revolution on fundamental rights and economic change adopted by the Indian national congress at its session in Karachi 1931. the purpose of the resolution according to him, was to give some indication to the poor inarticulate India’s of the broad features of Swaraj.


INTRODUCTION: The level of a society’s well-being could be judged in terms of the rights that its members are guaranteed rather than the preferences that are satisfied or the need fulfilled. From the down of civilization the rights of man, derived from the laws of nature, from religion, from human experience and from observation and reflection, have a refuge against the arbitrary use or determined depredation by the human might, a rallying cry of resistance to tyranny and oppression with the passage of time these “Rights” gained recognition in a systematic way in different forms in various parts of the world.

The principle that every human being is entitled to certain rights is an idea which has been personally discussed by many philosophers throughout man’s career on earth. It has been upheld and defended in whole or in part, renounced and ridiculed, and subjected to endless debate. Mahatma Gandhi, who became renowned by his doctrine and practice of non-violence was an ardent advocate of this principles.

In simple words, human right are the right which every human being possesses by virtue of being a human. Gandhi’s techniques and practices fully reflect the fundamentals of human right. He preached and practiced the principle that ultimate sanction of authority and of public policy rests in the respect for the dignity of the individual and his welfare. He was, in fact, endowed with a clear vision of human right and human values. Each of the movements, big or small, were so devised so as to represent such values that are today considered to be the most important for human existence and human development. His thoughts and principles transcend their geographical location to be equally applicable everywhere on the earth.

The morality contained in them is so practicable and their appeal so universal that they can be easily called universal moral rights, which is conterminous with human rights- “His principal aim was to place man at the centre of all scheme of things, all values, all actions and all philosophies.

For Gandhi, life and history had no purpose beyond what human being put into them. The movements undertaken by Gandhi seek to establish that his field of action was dominated by human concerns which outweigh any other considerations by far.

The spirit of human rights in the Gandhian ethos and values is not restricted merely to the usage of the term ‘Human Rights’, rather there is an undercurrent of the philosophy of human rights in the work and words of Gandhi. The central evils against which he fought were racialism, imperialism, communalism and untouchability. In South Africa, he fought against the racially discriminatory policies of the whites. In India, as a reformer, he fought against the social injustices, tyranny and oppressions. Gandhi believed that the first condition of non-violence was justice in every department of life. He proclaimed nonviolence as the greatest and most active force in the world. The ethic of non-violence is the highest manifestation of belief in human equality and human right. He condemned British imperialism as it had resulted in political and economic subjugation of India. In his view the subordination of life to materialism had led western democracies to the exploitation of the colonial world.

Untouchability and the Women Empowerment: Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi is widely recognized as one of the twentieth century’s greatest political and spiritual leaders. Honored in India as the father of the nation, he pioneered and practiced the principle of Satyagraha-resistance to tyranny through mass nonviolent civil disobedience.

While leading nationwide campaigns to ease poverty, expand women’s rights, build religious and ethnic harmony and eliminate the injustices of the caste system, Gandhi supremely applied the principles of nonviolent civil disobedience, playing a key role in freeing India from foreign domination. He was often imprisoned for his actions, sometimes for years, but he accomplished his aim in 1947, when India gained its independence from Britain.

Gandhi’s views in respect of all religions and the gospel of brotherhood are widely known. His lifelong crusade against the elimination of untouchability and his respect for woman as equals demonstrate his universal respect for human being. He could never tolerate untouchables being treated as sub-human beings. He once wrote, “I am not born as an untouchable but have been for the last fifty years an untouchable by choice”.


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he declared firmly that “Untouchability is a crime” and championed the cause of the unapproachable and untouchables for the recognition of the most elementary human rights.\textsuperscript{11}

When the opportunity presented itself, he became involved with Vykom Satyagraha undertaken on behalf of the untouchables of Travancore in the spring of 1924, and pursued the movement for over sixteen months. The fight for human rights was the key to that Satyagraha. Gandhi realized that the human rights begin in small places, in the community one lives in, or in the neighborhood where one words. These are the places where human beings seek justice and equal dignity without discrimination. Unless these rights were observed, they can have little meaning elsewhere,\textsuperscript{12} the untouchables, who, constituted nearly 40 million people were denied even the ordinary facilities of life. The congress had accepted the removal of untouchability as a primary and necessary means for the goal of social equality in independent India. Therefore, when they came to power in 1947, they were obliged to execute their pledge. Article 17 of the Constitution Relating to the Fundamental Rights declared:

“Untouchability is abolished and its practices in any form Forbidden.

The enforcement of any disability arising out of Untouchability shall be an offence punishable in accordance with law.”\textsuperscript{13}

\textbf{Gandhi and the Economic Rights}: As for as economic rights are concerned, there is hardly any difference in what Gandhi propounded and what is enunciated in the declaration and convention adopted by the United Nations. He wanted an economic system which guarantees the minimum necessities of life to all. No one should suffer from want of shelter, food and clothing. He equated political and economic freedom and was deadly against economic inequality and exploration of the poor by the rich.\textsuperscript{14} he was appalled by the poverty to which most Indians had been reduced under the British rule. He once said, “India ought not to be drawn into the vortex of mad and ruinous competition which breeds fratricide, jealousy, and many other evils. England has sinned against India by forcing free trade upon her, it has been a poison for this country.” His model of economic development was based on Swadeshi which meant that every village in India become an almost self-supporting and self-contained unit, trading only for commodities that are necessary. The core concept of Swadeshi, that is, primarily using goods produced close at home and limiting one's demand and consumption, was subsequently woven into the philosophy of self-reliance, self-governing self-sustaining, Indian economic and political development put forward by Mahatma Gandhi.\textsuperscript{15}

The world is in ferment, man is underrated, disbelief exists in the ideals of equality, every nation is at daggers draws. In this the world envisaged by Gandhi? Gandhi always believed in the individual as the starting point of social regeneration. Human life was considered as an undivided whole.

Socialism of Gandhi was neither a gospel for the expropriation of the rich nor a programme for the nationalization of the means of production distribution or exchange. But it was based essentially on ideas of non-possession, trusteeship, non-violence, human equality and service of the poor.

Mahatma Gandhi says, “Socialism is a beautiful word and, so far as I am aware, in socialism, all the members of the society are equal, none low none high. In the individual body, the head is not high because it is at the top of the body. Nor are the soles of the feet treated lowly because they touch the earth. Even as members of the individual body are equal, so are members of the society.”

The seeds of true socialism as Gandhi explicitly states, are properly nurtured only when mankind nourishes equality in humans behavioural designs where the barriers of numerous differences apparent and, of course, not at all significant are ignored outright,\textsuperscript{16}

Gandhiji’s struggle to secure the goal of social justice did not begin in India. 21 years of his life were spent in South Africa, where he struggled untringly for the dignity of man and against social injustice. And there, he succeeded to a great extent. There is an interesting experience of Gandhi in South Africa, which has a great human touch. General Smuts, the great dictator, who exploited the people, indulged in racialism in South Africa, again and again put Gandhi to jail and made him suffer rigorous imprisonment. But Gandhi developed skills during his rigorous imprisonment. He learned from a cobbler, how to make leather sandals. When General Smuts called Gandhiji and told him that there was general amnesty and he was released, Gandhi presented General Smuts a small packet. He asked, “What is it, any bomb?” When he opened the packet, Smuts found a pair of sandals. Gandhi told General Smuts, “This is my parting gift.” On the occasion of Gandhi’s birth anniversary, General Smuts sent a letter on which he wrote, “I have worn these sandals for many a summer since then, even though I may feel that I am not worthy to stand in the shoes of so great a man.” The man who oppressed Gandhi and subjected him to rigorous imprisonment responded with such warmth. Gandhi always used to say, “Hate the sin, not the sinner.”

Again, considering socialism to be the most significant agent of truth and non-violence, Gandhi gives it a new dimension through which the idea of god as a living source emanates prominently:

“Truth and non-violence must incarnate in socialism. In order that they can, the votary must have a living faith in god. Mere mechanical adherence to truth and non-violence is likely to break down at the critical moment. Hence I have said that truth is god. This god is living force. Our life is of that force. That force resides in, who denies the existence of that great force, denies to himself the use of that inexhaustible power and thus remains impotent. He is like a rudderless ship, which is tossed about here and there, perishes without making any headway.”\textsuperscript{17} Admittedly, the living force within mankind as Gandhi gives a newer dimension, necessitates a social synthesis in humanity. Unless this is revaluated in terms of social chaos that has Become the order of the day, mankind cannot embrace massacres of human sense and sensibilities.

Gandhi gives highest priority to bringing about change in the social structure. A socialism is visioned as growing from non-violence and Satyagraha. In his own words, “This I do say fearlessly and firmly that every worthy object can be achieved
by the use of Satyagraha. It is the highest and infallible means, the
greatest force. Socialism will not be reached by any other
means. Satyagraha can rid society of all evils, Political, 
Economic and Moral.” In this connection, Gandhiji coined an
expression, ‘Constructive non-violence’ for including change in
the society. He says, “If you truly desire to extinguish the
volcano of hatred that is today pouring out its poisonous lava,
I hope you will join me in fasting in the true spirit. The fast
signifies much more than processions and flags hoisting
ceremonies.”

Once he said “In a violent war, the general of the army is
at the back in a closed tank well-guarded. But in my non-
violent battle, one who leads the struggle is at the fear of the
people to face the first bullet, if need be. And if the leader is
killed, probably his death could rouse and awaken the people
through his martyrdom.”

Nothing can be more effective than to suffer to induce
change. As Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, one of the founding fathers of
the constitution, said, “It is neither by mere counting of heads,
nor by chopping off heads that you can bring about a political
change. It is by taking reorganization of what is happening
inside the head and heart that you will be able to strengthen
the motivation for change.”

Throughout his life, Gandhiji propagated education of
faith, self-discipline, tolerance and human values to develop
cross-culturalism with respect for mankind as a whole and to
promote social transfusion. In his words, “The golden way is to
be friends with the world and to regard the whole human
family like members of one family. He, who distinguishes
between one’s own family and another’s mis educates the
members of his own and opens the way for discord and
irreligion.”

In the present world, full of hatred, in equalities,
discrimination, human degradation and erosion of values,
there is an imperative need to recapitulate and apply the
teachings of the Mahatma, who was a staunch believer
of human rights. (Based on “Gandhi ji’s Values” by
Sona Dixit and Arun Kumar Dixit).

CONCLUSION: In spite of everything we find that the Gandhian
philosophy encompasses the real spirit of human rights. The
core issue of all his efforts was the ultimate welfare of the
mankind. He stood for non-violence and truth which not only
promoted respect for the human rights of others but also aimed
at the development of the self in a way conducive to
attainment of a higher moral order. His ideals offered a
blueprint towards a non-violent world. It was because of such
qualities that a documents as significant as universal
declaration of human rights (1948) enveloped Gandhian
values which intended to offer a common standard of
achievements for all peoples and nations. The Indian
constitution is also framed in a way so as to uphold Gandhi’s
ideals. As a matter of fact, fundamental rights are a reflection
of human rights championed by Gandhi. If every nation began
to promote these articles, we would come to the Gandhian
conclusion that we must renounce war and violence and
become individuals, communities and nations: of non-
violence. The need of the hour is to connect human rights
movement with the global movement for peace and use the
strategies and wisdom of a Gandhian non-violence and push
for the transformation of the world.

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