

## Gandhian Satyagraha, Decentralization and Decision Making Consensus



### History

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### ABSTRACT

*Gandhiji is a practical mystic whose philosophy of life and whose political programme are, at once an inspiration to thousands and a puzzle to millions. "While his philosophy of soul-life can be understood in theory by any intelligent individual, and its Principles practiced by the ardent and resolute, aspirant, his political programme will remain a riddle until he is perceived as a figure evolving very naturally out of the long, long past of India and in a real sense embodying the forces which are moldings its present history." The central quality which is ever the principle of conduct of every true Satyagrahi is courage. At every turn, we need the courage of the soul that proceeds from our identification with the spirit within, which is one with the spirit of the Universe. In order to underline the principle of the decentralization of public power and economy Gandhiji gave the slogan of "Back to the Village's under Plato's inspiration, he maintained that every village should eventually become "a self-sufficient republic" Gandhiji wanted it to be a complete republic independent of its neighbors for its own vital wants, and yet inter dependent for many others in which dependence is a necessity Gandhiji always says "Independence must begin at the bottom. In this backdrop the paper will discuss about the Gandhian Satyagraha and philosophy of decentralization in India. Whereas India is a land of administration from its grass roots since from independence. Further the paper will analyses the Decentralization in India, its views as well as decision making process within the framework of Gandhian philosophy, Public policy etc., Finally the paper will conclude Gandhian philosophy and Decentralization relevance in India and in administration keeping in view the present administration pattern in regard to Decentralization.*

### Introduction:

Mahatma Gandhi is the father of Indian nation, coined the term satyagraha to describe his philosophy and practice of non-violence. Its root meaning is holding on to truth. Gandhi deployed satyagraha in companies for Indian independence and also during his earlier struggle in South Africa. In developing satyagraha, Gandhi was influenced by the conceit of Ahimsa in the Hindu Upanishads and the tenets of Jainism, as well as earlier theorists of nonviolent resistance and nonresistance including Buddha, Mahavir, Jesus, Leo Tolstoy, John Ruskin, and David Thoreau.

Satya is the Sanskrit word for "truth"; agraha means 'firmness. The two words combined may be rendered as "the firmness of truth. The term was popularized during the Indian independence movement, and is used in many Indian languages. It can also mean 'truth force'. Gandhi described it as follows; "Its root meaning is holding onto truth, hence truth-force. I have also called it love-force or soul-force. In the application of satyagraha, I discovered in the earliest stages that pursuit of truth did not admit of violence being inflicted on one's opponent but that he must be weaned from error by patience and sympathy. For what appears to be truth to the one may appear to be error to the other. And patience means self-suffering. So the doctrine came to mean vindication of truth, not by infliction of suffering on the opponent, but on oneself".

### 2. Principles for Satyagrahis

Gandhi envisioned Satyagraha as not only a tactic to be used in acute political struggle, but as a universal solvent for injustice and harm. He felt that it was equally applicable to large-scale political struggle and to one-on-one interpersonal conflicts and that it should be taught to everyone. He founded the Sabarmati Ashram to teach Satyagraha. He asked satyagrahis to follow the following principles:

- Nonviolence (ahimsa)
- Truth - this includes honesty, but goes beyond it to mean living fully in accord with and in devotion to that which is true
- Non-stealing
- Chastity (brahmacharya) - this includes sexual chastity, but also the subordination of other sensual desires to the primary devotion to truth
- Non-possession (not the same as poverty)
- Body-labor or bread-labor
- Control of the palate

- Fearlessness
- Equal respect for all religions
- Economic strategy such as boycotts (swadeshi)
- Freedom from untouchability
- On another occasion, he listed seven rules as "essential for every Satyagrahi in India":
- Must have a living faith in God
- Must believe in truth and non-violence and have faith in the inherent goodness of human
- Must be leading a chaste life, and be willing to die or lose all his possessions
- Must be a habitual khadi wearer and spinner

### 3. Rules for Satyagraha Campaigns

- Gandhi proposed a series of rules for satyagrahis to follow in a resistance campaign:
- Harbour no anger
- Suffer the anger of the opponent
- Never retaliate to assaults or punishment; but do not submit, out of fear of punishment or assault, to an order given in anger ;
- Voluntarily submit to arrest or confiscation of your own property
- If you are a trustee of property, defend that property (non-violently) from confiscation with your life,
- Must abstain from alcohol and other intoxicants
- Must willingly carry out all the rules of discipline that are issued
- Must obey the jail rules unless they are specially devised to hurt his self-respect
- Do not curse or swear
- Do not insult the opponent
- Neither salute nor insult the flag of your opponent or your opponent's leaders
- If anyone attempts to insult or assault your opponent, defend your opponent (non-violently) with your life
- As a prisoner, behave courteously and obey prison regulations (except any that are contrary to self-respect)
- As a prisoner, do not ask for special favorable treatment
- As a prisoner, do not fast in an attempt to gain conveniences whose deprivation does not involve any injury to your self-respect
- Joyfully obey the orders of the leaders of the civil disobedience action
- Do not pick and choose amongst the orders you obey; if you

find the action as a whole improper or immoral, sever your connection with the action entirely

- Do not make your participation conditional on your comrades taking care of your dependents while you are engaging in the campaign or are in prison; do not expect them to provide such support
- Do not become a cause of communal quarrels
- Do not take sides in such quarrels, but assist only that party which is demonstrably in the right; in the case of inter-religious conflict, give your life to protect (non-violently) those in danger on either side
- Avoid occasions that may give rise to communal quarrels
- Do not take part in processions that would wound the religious sensibilities of any community

### Decentralization and Consensus Decision Making

Gandhian model emphasizes upon decentralized social, economic and political system starting with village republics (Gramswaraj) organized upwards in a loose confederation from Gramsabha to Loksabha. Consensus decision making is another principle of Gandhism. It rejects the idea of majority rule and party system as the basis of democracy in order to avoid majority tyranny and division of society on party lines.

Decentralization became an important policy objective during the 1970's and 1980's as governments in Asian countries sought to create more socially equitable patterns of economic growth and to meet the basic needs of the poor and the increase of individual freedom. The new debate on administrative reforms in Asia is going over decentralization emerged from the failure of centralized planning and implementation to provide for equitable distribution of the benefits of development and from the realization that inequity creates political instabilizing and social strife. The administrative reform of most governments in Asia has been to pay greater attention to regional development by decentralizing development administration and planning. Since the early 1950's, control over development activities in most Asian Countries has been centralized in national government ministries and agencies. The world's value indicates decentralization is widely regarded as a necessary condition for social, economic and political development. Decentralist programs and reforms has generally been on democratic decentralization, that is, development is seen as requiring a measure of political autonomy to be devolved to institutions which local people may participate in and control. National development may produce social disorganisation and political instability by encouraging industrialization, urbanization, mobility, education, mass communication and meritocracy. Local government can ease the process of change by providing local leadership to win support for change by involvement. A principle aim of the administrative reform was to make appropriate services and development activities responsive to local wishes and initiatives by devolving or delegating them to local representative bodies. Thus, decentralization reform is designed to reflect unique local circumstances in development plans and their implementation. Throughout the Asian decentralization has long been regarded as a necessary condition of economic, social and political development. Nowhere in Asia has the conflict over treating local governments as an extension of the center while claiming that they should be autonomous been more prominent than in India. The emphasis in decentralist programs and reforms has generally been on democratic decentralization, that is, development is seen as requiring a measure of political autonomy to be devolved to institution which local people may participate in and control. The makers of the constitution, according to Gandhiji's ideology were not much satisfied with the working of the local bodies as institutions of popular government and therefore an article was included in the IV part of directive principles of state policy of the constitution of 1949 in Article 40. During the time of Mr. Rajeev Gandhi it was considered necessary to further the organization of these local units by inserting specific provisions in the constitution. The ideas of evolved culminated in the passing the constitution 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Amendment Acts, 1992 which inserted parts IX and IX A in the constitution.

### Lokniti or People's Policy

Walter Lipman terms 'Lokniti as 'Public Philosophy'. Politics is looked upon as an agency of service and not as an instrument of power. 'Raj' and 'Rajniti' (State and State Policy) will be replaced by 'Lok' and 'Lokniti' (Public and Public Policy; People in the local communities will have to find policy solutions to all their problems.

It may be noted that the Gandhian model of development is an autonomous one. After the country attained independence, Jawaharlal Nehru incorporated the Gandhian ideas in the Constitution. Further, socialist policies and programmes were also initiated in the country. Thus, Nehru's experiments have retained a Gandhian touch in India's developmental process. The Gandhian model of Sarvodaya is unparalleled in its universal, human and moral values. It is the forerunner in the growth with social justice concerns of the Cocoyoc Declaration, human touch of Dennis Goulet and the emerging human theme in economic development. The greatest challenge in human development today is to go back and experiment towards Gandhian dream of Sarvodaya through Antyodaya

### Evaluation of the Gandhian Model

India is still an agriculture oriented economy. Agriculture is the second main contributor to national income and more importantly two-third of the population finds agriculture as mere primary source of living. Today, when there is a crisis in our national character, Gandhism becomes all the more pertinent. The Gandhi bashing should not be a mere rhetoric in the battle for votes. As rightly said by Atal Behari Vajpayee way back in 1978, "We may all become fashionable Gandhians tomorrow. Nothing will be worse than paying Lip service to Gandhi's ideals and not applying them".

Development is of great concern to the underdeveloped countries consisting of new nations. Now, development is the movement of people from a less human condition it has a universal and human connotation. Development is not of one person or few people but of all people i.e. Sarvodaya. As such, a global effort at Antyodaya would lead to a balanced growth and a better world order for all. 'Think globally and Act locally' is an age-old adage. Even though Antyodaya demands this, global thinking must be followed by global action always.

Finally, development as a 'just change' basically involves change of values, change of context, and change of instrument. The change of values needed is from "Selfishness to 'need and 'war to 'peace, the change in context needed is from exploitation to democracy and sharing. The change of instruments needed is from centralized national bureaucracy to a decentralized one, participating management of all local, regional and global concerned. This is the dream of Gandhian humanism and logic of developmentalism too, which has been growing into an ideology of a just change" i.e. Sarvodaya through Antyodaya. If this ideology is effectively handled, perhaps it will solve the economic crisis that confronts mankind both at the national and global level today.

### Conclusion

It remains to be seen to what extent the new coalition Government in India will live up to its twin promises of thrust on 'Swadeshi' and 'Human Face' in economic development. A new human civilization needs to be built by using the Gandhian legacy in the best possible manner. Gandhiji always says "Independence must begin at the bottom. Thus every village will be a republic or panchayat having full powers. In this structure composed of innumerable villages there will be ever-widening. Life will not be a pyramid with the apex sustained by bottom.

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