CHAPTER – II

GANDHIAN PHILOSOPHY
Ever since the dawn of Indian-independence, Mahatma Gandhi has been reverentially called the Father of the Nation and, during the last ninety years, his name has been repeated on a variety of occasions by political parties as well as public institutions in, more or less, a ceremonial fashion. It was, therefore, a pleasant surprise to us that, after the recent Lok Sabha elections, the constituents of the ruling Janata Party decided to take a solemn pledge at Rajghat, "to endeavour earnestly to fulfil the task that Gandhiji began to serve our people and give our best to the weakest among them". These parties also promised 'to practice austerity and honesty in personal and public life'. In its election manifesto as well, the Janata Party had assured the people that, if voted to power, it would try its best to plan the nation's economic development on the principles of 'Gandhian socialism' based on antyodaya and the decentralization of economic and political power at the grassroots. It is hope that the boored vow taken by the ruling party at Mahatma Gandhi's Samadhi would be implemented not only in letter but also in spirit.

Even though the Mahatma's name has been mentioned with respect and devotion in India and abroad all these years, the intellectual class, as also the younger generations have often asked
whether Gandhiji's ideas were still relevant to our times. They have a feeling that his ideals do not fit into the modern age of science and technology and cannot, therefore, form the basis of our national planning. It is, however, curious that winds of change are now quite perceptible in the western countries and a number of articles and books have been published during recent years in Europe and America. These authors have begun to believe that Gandhiji is not only relevant now but is even ahead of our times. Sometime ago, Professor Morimoto of the Meijyo University, Japan informed that he was writing a thesis on Mahatma Gandhi and his firm conviction was that the Mahatma was 100 years ahead of his times. He remarked that this estimate was not based on a detailed study of Gandhiji's ideas in the context of modern thought.

Verindra Tarzie Vittachi, the well-known columnist of the American Newsweek, has been of late, writing a series of forceful articles to the effect that Gandhiji's views on different topics are finding increasing acceptance amongst the intellectuals of the west. For example, it is being recognized by the western democracies that the lasting solution to various social and economic problems facing us today lies in Gandhiji's diction "aim at meeting your needs, by reducing your wants". "It is true", observes Vittachi, "that the earth has always had and will have enough material resources to feed our need, but not our greed". The third report to the club of Rome expresses the definite
view that it is no longer practical for abundance for some and a global slum to co-exist.

Apart from the serious shortage of energy in the developed countries, for the preservation of which President Carter has announced several drastic proposals, the United Nations Conference in Argentina highlighted the ominous warning that the day is not distant when a drop of water will cost more than a drop of oil. It is true that the contention of the Club of Rome regarding limits to growth is now being challenged by several economists and scientists in various parts of the world. In his publication entitled 'The next 200 years, Herman Kahn, Founder and Director of the Hudson Institute, sees the future as 'incredibly bright' and hopes that people almost everywhere will be rich, numerous and in control of the forces of nature. Even so, the author concedes that eventually coal and oil energy will have to be replaced by solar energy and geothermal technologies.

**New Scepticism:**

In an article in the Time Magazine some ago, Frank Trippett observes that modern science and technology are no longer regarded as 'sacred cows' and the 'feeling of owe for scientific achievement is giving way to a new scepticism'. The layman is fast realizing that 'science and technology's dream wonders sometimes turn out to be night marish blunders'. Nuclear energy, which was hailed as a
miraculous gift of science to humanity, is now being viewed as a 'menace'. There is a distressing realization that the atom that can produce prosperity can also make war; a nation that has a reactor can eventually have a bomb. Many people in Europe and America are now convinced that it is only a matter of time before one of the countries accidentally spills a deadly dose of radiation across the entire countryside.

Dr. Schumacher of the United Kingdom, in his latest book *Small is Beautiful*, truly declares: 'Wisdom demands a new orientation of science and technology towards the organic, the gentle, the non-violent, the elegant and the beautiful'. He highlights Gandhiji's view that; in place of 'mass production' the world should plan for 'production by the masses'. Dr. Schumacher ardently pleads for 'technology with human face' and a study of economics 'as if people mattered'. He observes: "Man is small and, therefore, small is beautiful". "To go for giganticism is to go for self-destruction". In an issue of the Manas magazine, published from Los Angeles, Professor Diamond advocates national devolution of bureaucracy, common ownership and decentralization of the means of production. In his book entitled *Liberation and the Aims of Science*, Dr. Brain Easlea of the Sussex University calls for the immediate cessation of all technological prestige projects and the evolution of a science which would be
practiced only within a framework of love for man and respect, even reverence, for nature.

It is sometimes thought that the Mahatma was against machinery and modern technology as such. This is an entirely erroneous notion. Gandhiji prized every invention of science for the benefit of all. He was against the craze for machinery which rendered millions of human hands idle for want of gainful work. To Gandhiji, the supreme consideration is man. He visualized for Free India a simple but ennobled life by developing her thousands of cottages and living at peace with the world. To him, civilization in the real sense of the term rests, not in the multiplication, but in the deliberate and voluntary restriction of wants. This alone promises real happiness and fulfillment.

The Development Centre organization for Economic Occupation and Development (OBCD), Paris, in its thesis entitled ‘Towards a Re-definition of Development’ in which the editors term the present concept of development as ‘a misnomer’ and observe that the inevitable consequence of more rapid development was growing antagonism between the rich and the poor sections of humanity, and the perfecting of techniques of destruction for more effective than techniques of construction. It is being recognized that the Mega machine of industrial development, with its high coefficient of energy consumption, loans up before mankind like some Frankenstein whose
reactions and orientations can no longer be controlled by its creators or the apparent masters.

**No cultural imperialism:**

The editors have come to the definite conclusion that any development which divides individuals and sets one people against another is, certainly, senseless; it runs counter to any rational form of living together. They firmly reject the thesis that there could be a uniform model of development for all the countries of the world and assert: No people, no nation or state can have a monopoly of these achievements or should claim leadership for itself. Instead, each society should be able to find its own fulfillment. What is required is the restructuring of the system of capital accumulation and production, a redistribution of production resources and techniques and the abolition of economic imperialism. To quote Paul-Mare Henry: "The new world order can only arise from an ethico-political negotiation; it cannot be the production of a destructive confrontation. Ultimately, it is from this point alone that another type of development can begin.

Another book published by the UNESCO Press, entitled 'Culture, Society and Economics for a New World', pleads for a new way of looking at things and the adoption of new habits and new attitudes to facilitate the advent of a more equitable system for society as a whole. The editor of this valuable publication denounces cultural imperialism and strongly feels that "every nation has a right to its own
culture which it must develop in accordance with its particular traditions and within the context of the political institutions it has created. He adds: "It is the duty of other peoples, nations and states to respect such cultural integrity just as they should respect the country's territorial integrity". The learned editor also speaks of the danger of a technological imperialism and remarks that a people which did not develop its own technology was not capable of borrowing techniques from abroad. New ways of utilizing traditional manpower need to be evolved. The advantages in diversity maintains this UNESCO publication are not only cultural but also economic. They should not be considered as an obstacle to development.

This is precisely what Mahatma Gandhi had been pleading with the alien rulers during the pre-independence period. He observed: "while I admire modern science, I find that it is the old, looked at in the true light of modern science, which should be reclothed and refashioned aright". He added: I am convinced that if India is to attain true freedom and through India the world also, then, sooner or later, the fact must be recognized that people will have to live in villages, not in towns, in huts, not in palaces.... if man does not have this self-control, he cannot save himself". Gandhiji repeatedly told us that India must develop a socialism according to her own genius and cultural traditions; a blind initiation of the west would lead us nowhere.
This, of course, does not mean that India has nothing to learn from foreign countries. "I want to write many things", declared the Mahatma, "but they must all be written on the Indian State". He had expressed the same idea in these inimitable words: "I do not want my house to be walled in all sides and my window to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown of my feet by any".  

**Strategy of Satyagraha:**

Flowing from this fundamental principle of purity of the means for achieving noble ends is the Gandhian strategy of non-violent war. Bapu was willing to sacrifice everything for his country, but not truth and non-violence. He was convinced beyond an iota and doubt, if India achieved her political freedom through violence and bloodshed, she would also, sooner rather than later, lose her independence through the same process. He repeatedly asked the youth of India to shun violence and disruptive activities for achieving their rightful goals, Professor Arnold Toynbee, in his publication, surviving the future, also advises the younger people of various countries to resist their parents generation and to defeat them in so far as their ideas and ideals seem to be mistaken, but to do this in Gandhian spirit; do it without hatred.

Martin Luther King, the unrivaled leader of the negroes, followed in the footsteps of Gandhiji in his non-violent struggle against white oppression in the United States. In the Soviet Union, National
Laureate Sakharov, the eminent leader of dissident intellectuals, has been raising his powerful voice in favour of "the superiority of non-violence as a strategic weapon". The former Secretary-General of the United Nations, U. Thant, had also declared: "Gandhiji's philosophy has a meaning and a significance for beyond the confines of his country or of his time..." The history of the world through the countries conclusively demonstrates the futility of war and violence in political affairs. It shall be by passing Gandhiji's creed of Ahimsa, now or in the future, at grave peril to ourselves and the world.

It is fervently hoped that every nerve will be strained by the people to build up the new India of Gandhiji's dreams, in the coming decades, with a sense of mission and determination. People may not agree with every idea advocated by the Mahatma during his life time. He himself encouraged dissent and discussion. Nevertheless, there is now a growing recognition and appreciation of his basic ideas all over the world and India must heed his sound advice and guidance in a positive and constructive manner. Many years ago, the great French thinker, Romain Rolland, observed: "Gandhi has in some ways gone further even than the problems of the future". In this sense, he is "ultra-modern".

There is no doubt that Gandhiji is not and would never be a relic of the past; he is and will ever remain a signpost of the future. Towards the end of his public life, a cry was raised in some quarters
that the Mahatma had been 'buried alive'. Writing in the Harijan, sometime in December, 1947, Bapu himself declared: "So long as my faith burns bright, as I hope it will even if I stand alone, I would be alive in the grave and, what is more, speaking from it". When Shri Jaya Prakash Narayan administered the solemn oath to the leaders of the Janata Party in New Delhi on March 23, 1977, it was felt that the Mahatma was speaking in firm tones from his Samadhi.

Gandhian Socialism:

It was hoped that the sixth five-year plan was be framed in accordance with the basic Gandhian ideals and reflect the sincerity of the pledge taken at Rajghat. The quintessence of Gandhian socialism is bold decentralization of economic and political power so that our plans of development are, by and large, framed and implemented at the village level, for the people and by the people. These programmes must promote self-help and significance through community action and dependence on the Government ought to be reduced to the minimum. Furthermore, Gandhian planning should not only try to raise the living standards of the weakest sections but also strengthen human and moral values in national life. Austerity and simplicity should be the guiding lights all along the line. At the end of the Gandhian Plan which was published in December 1944, with a Foreword by Gandhiji himself, the Mahatma wrote in his own hand: plain living and high thinking. This
should, indeed, be the fundamental objective of our national planning in the future.

The Gandhian plan could be implemented in an effective manner only if there is an atmosphere of national solidarity amongst the people on the basis of equal respect for all religious. The Janata pledge taken at Rajghat included promotion of 'national unity and harmony by working together in a spirit of dedication'. To Gandhiji, a scholar state did not mean absence of religion, but sarva-dharma, samabhava. It is this equal faith in the basic principles of all religions which is the essence of secularism. In a big country like India, inhabited by people of different religions and language, such national unity based on democracy and true secularism is of paramount importance.

In the ultimate analysis, Gandhiji stood for self-confidence based on the Swadeshi spirit. Instead of aping the ways of the west in planning the social, economic and political life of India, and have to revive and rekindle faith in the cultural heritage and national destiny. People must always bear in mind these pithy and prophetic words of the Father of the Nation: "So long as we do not lose faith in ourselves, all shall be well India".

Women:

Gandhi aroused the women of Bombay from their torpor and created a great awakening among them, and they responded in ample measure. He stirred up their sense of 'tyag', 'seva', 'prem' and
'bhakti'. He realized that, if women were enlisted the men would come in automatically. He released the shakti of women and Government become afraid of women's resurgence. By harnessing this great, talent, dormant power of women, Gandhi achieved unprecedented awakening in the nation. He freed women for national service.

Gandhi also advised them against seeking special rights, which would reduce them to the status of Harijans. He held out the parsis as an example to emulate. They must seek no special rights but should grow by themselves.

One of the oldest women's organizations in the land is the Bhagini Samaj of Bombay founded in 1916 in memory of Gokhale. It invited Gandhi to preside over its annual gathering in February 1918. On that occasion he gave them wholesome advice in the task of uplifting Indian womanhood.

Gandhi said: "Your President, I really feel, should be a woman, though you may seek men's help or advice in your work. The samaj is dedicated to noble aim of women's regeneration, and in the same way that another's 'tapascharya' does not help one to ascend to heaven, men cannot bring about the regeneration of women. It is only through self-help that an individual or a race can rise.

The Samaj is at present kept going by the enthusiasm of Bhai Karsandas Chitalia. The samaj will come into its own when it
elects its office-bearers from among its women members and gives a better account of itself than it does today. Gandhi said that he could do nothing in the way of service to women without help from women workers. So long as women in India remain ever be little suppressed or do not have the same rights as men, India will not make real progress.

In traveling all over India, Gandhi had come to realize that all the existing agitation is confined to an infinitesimal section of our people who are really a mere speck in the vast firmament; crores of people of both the sexes live in absolute ignorance of this agitation. Full 85 percent of the people of this country pass their innocent days in a state of total detachment from what is going on around them. Gandhi said "if my sisters of the Bhagini Samaj will make a close study of the lives of these 85 percent of our people, it will provide them ample material for an excellent programme of work for the samaj".

What the authors of the various smritis have said about women can in no wise be defended child-marriage, the restriction on widows and such other evils owe their origin to the injunctions in the smritis. Women's being placed on a level with sudras has done unimaginable harm to Hindu society. The imperfection of the smritis comes from interpolated passages, that is to say verses inserted by persons accepted as smritikaras in the period of our degeneration.
The longest part of our effort in promoting the regeneration of women should be directed towards removing those blemishes which are represented in our shastras as the necessary and ingrained characteristics of women. In order to make the attempt women have to turn pure, firm and self-controlled as Sita, Damayanti and Draupadi. If this materializes such modern sisters will receive the same homage from Hindu society as is being paid to their prototype of yore. Their words will have the same authority as the shastras. It is shameful of the stray reflections on them in our smritis and will soon forget them. "I pray to God that the Samaj might soon produce such women as I have described above", cherished Gandhiji.

Their first attempt should be directed towards awakening in the minds of as many women as possible a proper sense of their present condition. Gandhi was not among those who believe that such an effort can be made through literary education only. Women should be made aware of the sad realities of their present conditions, without in the first instance, giving them any literary education.

Women is the companion of man, gifted with equal mental capacities. She has the right to participate in the very minutes detail in the activities of man and she has an equal right of freedom and liberty with him. She is entitled to a supreme place in her own sphere of activity as man is in his. This ought to be the natural conditions of things and not as a result only of learning to read and write. By sheer
force of a vicious custom, even the most ignorant and worthless men
have been enjoying a superiority over the movements. Much of the
work does not yield appropriate results. The lot of the people of the
country is like that of the penny wise and pound-foolish trades who does
employ enough capital in his business.

Man and woman are of equal ranks but they are not
identical. They are a peerless pair, being supplementary to the another,
each helps the other so that without the one the existence of the other
cannot be conceived, and, therefore, it follows as a necessary corollary
from these facts that anything that will impair the status of either of them
will involve the equal ruin of them both. In framing any scheme of
women's education, this cardinal truth must be constantly kept in mind.
Man is supreme in the outward activities of married pain and, therefore,
it is in the fitness of things that he should have a greater knowledge
thereof. In the other hand, home life is entirely the sphere of woman
and, therefore, in domestic affairs, in the upbringing and education of
children, women ought to have more knowledge. Not that knowledge
should be divided in to water-tight compartments or that some branches
of knowledge should be closed to anyone; but unless courses of
instruction are based on a discriminating appreciation of these basic
principles, the fullest life of man and woman cannot be developed.

There are many fruitful fields of activity before the members
of the Bhagini Samaj for devoting their energies to the field for work is
so vast that, if resolute application is brought to bear thereon, the wider movements for reform may, for the present, will be left to themselves and great service can be done to the cause of Home Rule without so much as even a verbal reference to it. It is my Gandhi’s earnest prayer to the Association that its members should give prominence to quiet and un-obstructive work in whatever it does.

In the following year the Bhagini Samaj presented him with a purse of Rs.24,000 which he returned to the Samaj for the promotion of women’s welfare activities. With this money the Samaj established a Seva Mandir at Vile Porie of which Gandhi laid the foundation stone in 1929, urging the members of the Samaj to work sincerely for the uplift of women.  

Rowlatt Bills:

Hardly had ten days elapsed since his operation for piles in Bombay on 20th January 1919, when Gandhi began to be agitated over the publication of the Rowlatt Bills. In a letter to O.S.Ghate, he said: “The new bills for the preservation of internal tranquility are damnable and no stone may be left unturned by us to kill the measures”.

From his sick-bed he sent a message to a public meeting held in Bombay to protest against the Rowlatt legislation. He said that if the Rowlatt Bills were passed into law, the Montford Reforms, whatever their value, would be absolutely worthless.
Besant, who had come down to Bombay for a day, tried in vain to dissuade him from any plan of mass civil disobedience over the Rowlatt Bills.

Before leaving Bombay on 9th February, Gandhi wrote letters to Madan Mohan Malaviya and Srinivasa Sastri, in both of which he indicated the line of action he had in mind. To Malaviya he wrote: "The Viceroy's speech is disappointing. I hope that all the Indian members will leave the select committee as, if necessary, even the council, and launch a country wide agitation. Even if you held a hundred thousand meetings all over India what difference would it make? I am not yet fully decided, but I feel that when the Government bring in an obnoxious law the people will be entitled to defy their other laws as well. If we do not now show the strength of the people, even the reforms we are to get will be useless. In my opinion you should make it clear to the Government that so long as the Rowlatt Bills are there you will pay no taxes and will advice is to assume a great responsibility. But unless we do something really big they will not feel any respect for us. And we cannot hope to get anything from people who do not respect us".4
References:


