

Gandhian Conception of Public Administration

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Abstract

Gandhiji wanted everyone to be free and fearless in life and his democracy was based on voluntary participation of free individuals and groups in common tasks and undertaking for achieving common ends. Gandhiji said that man is indeed the measure of things. Man is the supreme consideration. Gandhiji was a spiritual anarchist, that is one who imagined that a day would dawn when in the process of evolution, each one would be self-regulated and there would hardly be any necessity for a state or a government.

Gandhiji believed with Thoreau that government was the best which governed the least. He also knew by experience that however good or bad the system of government it would always be as the individuals composing it would make it. He wanted to decentralize every kind of power and awaken the village masses.

Keywords *People's initiative, Trusteeship, Decentralization, Anarchist, Adult, Suffrage, Dictatorial authority*

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Introduction

Gandhiji was like a mighty swimmer who plunged himself headlong in the turbulent waters of human life and went on battling with the currents during the whole of his eventful career.

He was an extraordinary visionary or dreamer belonging to the category of Prophets but discharging the function of a social scientist is the role of a practical man of this world. Gandhiji is being described as a "Practical idealist". While he believed in infinite potentiality of human progress, he was painfully aware of the immediate and present limitations. He dedicated his life to the cause of the needy and the hungry of the poor and the ignorant. He started with attending to the urgent animal needs of the body. He once said that even God could not dare to appear before the hungry except in the form of bread.

His approach to life was scientific, in that, he was always ready to learn from experiments. It was democratic in that he believed in the equal freedom of all individuals and aimed at the good of the vast masses without any distinction of caste or creed, race or sex, rich or poor. He was essentially ethical in outlook in that he believed that human relationship, whether it was between individuals or groups, between classes or masses or nations, ought to be based on love, on altruistic motives and should have equal regard for the good of others.

Gandhiji was by no means a Philosopher in the accepted sense of the word. But he evolved a dynamic philosophy of action. Since he kept his mind always open to new thoughts and new experiments he may be said to have been evolving even to the last day of his life. He had an integrated view of life and its problems. What was however unique in his case was that he did not merely theorize and preach but practised what he preached.

He claimed to be a humble seeker of truth. Gandhiji had clear and definite ideas about abstract truth or reality, he prized and acted upon the truths of life, truths of experience, the laws of daily life and the problems life offered. He was always busy dealing with facts, with situations and with experience, both internal and external which arise out of human relationship of myriad kinds.

Gandhiji, the seeker of truth, for whom truth itself—facts of life, experiences, loss of being and becoming—was God, had a method of seeking it. Realization of the truth of life and living according to the realized truth may be said to be the ultimate end. That would normally be the highest achievement of the human being. But, for Gandhiji that was the beginning and only an individual achievement to be superseded by a higher and a noble one, namely conveying to the whole of humanity his own

realization.

Thus his philosophy of truth of philosophy of action had social content as expansive and vast as humanity itself. Here comes Gandhiji's unique contribution to the methodology of the propagation of truth. He would realize truth and act according to truth at the risk of life itself. At the same time he would never force the truth of his realization on others by anything like coercion or violence. He would always proceed on the assumption that what was truth for him may not be so for others. Therefore he would rather suffer himself in the cause of truth than use any force or coercion to convert others to his own views. This was the secret of his private facts in the Ashram for small things as well as of the great public fasts he undertook to convince others about his own point of view. He wanted everyone to be free and fearless in life and his democracy was based on voluntary participation of free individuals and groups in common tasks and undertakings for achieving common ends.

It is obvious that Gandhiji was one of the greatest humanist the world has seen. There was a distinction regarding his humanism. It did not arise out of the usual considerations which form the basis of normal humanism. His humanism was the result of his spiritual and mystic experience of oneness of life and spirit. 'All life is one' Gandhiji declared. Thus it was not only humanity which was embraced by his humanism but the whole of the living creation.

The implication of this approach is that man should not be looked upon as the centre of creation nor is he to presume that the whole of this creation is meant for his pleasure and exploitation. The most advantageous distinction of man is that he has the capacity to introspect, review the situation, understand the secret of the revolutionary urge and to that extent help him to accelerate the progress of mankind.

'Man' however means different things to different social and other philosophers. To Gandhiji man was spiritual unit who had launched on a pilgrimage to perfection. Gandhiji conceded that perhaps man had not yet emerged from the crude state of animality, but what man sought consciously or unconsciously was the full development and expression of the inner spiritual core of consciousness and being so that he may be in tune and perfect harmony with the truth or universal spirit.

Gandhiji would test human evolution by the progress men makes towards that end. The upkeep of the body, the sharpening of the mind, the awakening of the aesthetic sense, the assertion of the conscience and the moral being and the awareness of the integral development of the personality are all necessary as means and disciplines.

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consideration. Gandhiji was a spiritual anarchist; that is one who imagined that a day would dawn when in the process of evolution, each one would be self regulated and there would hardly be any necessity for a state or a government .

Gandhiji believed with Thoreau that, Government was the best which governed the least. He also knew by experience that however good or bad the system of government, it would always such as the individuals composing it would make it. Therefore he laid the greatest stress on individual improvement.

Gandhiji said that if an administration is to be good, it has to be manned by officers who are selfless, able and incorruptible. The personal element is according to Gandhiji, the most important single element which can make or mar a system of administration. He did not mean that the systems should not be improved, but he would lay greater stress on the personal which run the systems. Even the improvement of systems has to be brought about by those who are sincere about the good of the people for those who are sincere about the good of the people for whose benefit administration is run.

It has also to be noted that Gandhiji held with Laski that our first duty is to be true to our own conscience. Thus it is not an external source or authority or government which should guide the citizen in his thoughts, feelings and actions but his own inner light. Gandhiji was positively of the view that the greater the regulation of the human mind and conduct by external authority, be it government, a convention in the formation of which there has been no free and voluntary participation by the individuals concerned, the greater would be the reduction of persons to the status of machines. It is, therefore, necessary that the conscience of each man should be enthroned as the best guide.

The state which is the centre and symbol of public administration is but always a means and never an end. The all-sided development and welfare of the people concerned is the real end. Gandhiji would never envisage the existence or continuance of any state which had not behind it the support of the people for whom it was meant. The sanction therefore, behind a state has to be the will of the people expressed through election by secret ballot. No arbitrary or dictatorial authority would be tolerated even for a moment under Gandhian dispensation. Gandhiji was for adult suffrage though there would be some slight changes in the age for eligibility to vote and to represent and hold office. He stood for decentralization of power and trusteeship. Gandhiji advocated the concentric circle idea in which each village would be a comparatively self sufficient unit.

Gandhiji's idea of real development centred around people's initiative and people's enthusiasm and not on the dependence of the people on the government, however good it might be.

To understand the Gandhian concept of public administration, it is absolutely necessary to decentralize every kind of power, to develop local initiative in rural areas, to teach them to be self-contained as regards vital needs and awaken the village masses to their potential strength to resist all kinds of exploitation which today all sapping the strength of village life.

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