Gandhian Morel of Political System in Comparision with Nehru's Mixed Liberal Socialist Model

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Abstract: *After independence we tried to adopt every model, every philosophy to make India a rich and developed country.Towards this end we adopted the lenthiest constitution and mixed democratic model etc ,but very conveniently ignored Gandhian model which is giving answers to all problem.Afresh look at the approach and adopting the Gandhian model is need of the hour.*

I.   Introduction

India has had that opportunity of galaxy of leaders who worked unceasingly for the country and its freedom.

Leader of Reanissience strongly believed that a strong social change is a prerequite for a political change and never openly demanded for political freedom of the country the British rather they tried to make the society healthy and strong by liberating the religion from its dogmatic and orthodox riuals and customs and redefined the religion in a brode framework. At the same time they strongly believed that religion is integral part of human life socially politically and even individually. As such they never tried to seggregate religion from human life and tried to libreate it from all its regidities. They wanted to make individual strong enough to take decisions and demand his or her own god. Gandhi was also reliasing the significance of upliftment of individual like predissors tried and followed the same path through different movements   like Harizano Uddharan, Chamaparan Satyagrahand Ahemdabad Mill Strike are some among them but unfortunately could not become successful completing the movement. Resulting masses always looking at leaders to run freedom movement and whenever the Brithish arrested the leaders the moverment was automatically stopped or dispersced. The attempts to make the individual strong and self sustained remind in complete as Gandhi was totally in demand for political freedom movement.

The movement has taken a new direction after the indepence under the leardership of Jawahar Lal Nehru and there was a monumental difference between these two leaders approach.

After independence, Nehru introduced a mixed liberal and socialist model which created great hopes of economic and social rejuvenation initially.1 But after nearly half a century of independence, the problems remained same and even intensified.

This failure of non-Gandhian models of economic and political development in India has led to considerable frustration and bewilderment, especially among the intellectual class which grew up in the liberal tradition of Nehru.2

With his deep insight into both history and contemporary reality, Nehru played a crucial role, during the freedom struggle as well as the InitIal nation building years of independent India.3

At the time of independence, India had its links intact with its age old traditions. The early years of free India were the years for institution building and laying the firm foundation of principles. "We are plunging into the world of science and technology and trying to organise knowledge. in such a way that commands more of the forces of nature and we are heldback not only by our poverty and underdevelopment but also by some inherited ideas and customs. There is no future for us without science and technology.4

Thus in the beginning itself the Indian leaders took India along a path different from that shown by Gandhi, whose philosophy was a judicious mixture of tradition and modernity. He was certain that there was no other way than socialism for the progress of India.

"I work for Indian independence because the nationalist in me cannot tolerate alien domination. I work for it even more because for me, it is the inevitable step to social and economic change. I should like the congress to become a socialist organisation and to join hands and with other forces in the world who are working for the new civilisation ".5

But Nehru, one of the most, or rather the most, important decision maker of independent India, occupying the Prime Minister's chair as he was and because of his tremendous popularity with the masses, which at the point of time rivalled even that of Gandhi, decided in favour of socialision combined with representative institutions. According to him in a country with rampart poverty and inequality, he could not think of any other solution than this. Aware of the limitation of both capitalism and communism, he wanted to avoid the demerits of

both. Thus, his socialism was inevitably tied to democracy. "I do not see why under socialism there should not be a great deal of freedom for the individual, indeed far greater freedom than the present system gives."6

But, under the influence of modern science and liberalism Nehru lost sight of a vital point about Indian life. The liberalism in the Indian context revolves around the ancient concept of dharma in which each individual is a vital part of society, who while maintaining his identity, is reciprocally dependent on other, and thus, the identity, of the society, as well, is maintained. In contrast Nehru's approach was to try and achieve his aim through democratic institutions, socialism, industrialisation and through complete individual freedom. According to him for the modern mind humanity is its God and social service its religion. "We have therefore to function in line with the highest ideals of the age we live in, though we may add to them or seek to mould them in accordance with our national genius. Those ideals may be classified under two heads ; humanism and the scientific spirit. There is a growing synthesis between humanism and the scientific spirit, resulting in a kind of scientific humanism." 7

He insisted that to build the foundation of modern India a scientific approach was not only necessary but indispensable. It had to be accepted as a way of life, an approach to be adopted even while dealing with problems of day to day life.

"We have to build India on a scientific foundation to develop her industries, to change that feudal character of her land system and bring her agriculture in line with modern methods to develop the social service which she lacks so utterly today." 8

His ideas were the outcome of his observation that in the long course of human history nothing had revolutionsed the conditions of human life more than science. The application of science and the scientific approach had greatly improved the standard of living of many and had got rid of many miseries.

"India must therefore lessen her religiosity and turn to science. She must get rid of the exclusiveness in thought and social habit which has become like a prison to her stunting her spirit and preventing growth." 9

Thus, he wanted to modernize India in all aspects. Not that he did not recongnize the ancient glory of India, but he felt that the past had no role in the present and especially in the future. As he said, "In a historical context a study of the growth of caste has some value; but cannot obviously go back to the period when caste began. In the social organisations of today it has no place left. This out look has to change completly for it is wholly opposed to modern conditions and the democratic ideal. The functional organisation of social groups in India may continue, but even that will undergo a vast change as the nature of modern industry create new functions and puts an end to many old ones." 10

Nehru was the chief architect of India and institution builder. His was multi faced personality : a great scholar, thinker, historian and author. As a political leader he did create in the Indian people an awareness of the outside world" and the significance of the events taking place there. As an intellectual he could break free of the immediate present and the past and visualize the future and his ideas influenced many inside and also outside the country. A humanist to the core, he championed the cause of humanity. He spent considerable effort on trying to convert has vision of a strong and confident India, into a reality. He aspired to integrate the universal values of freedom and social justice into the Indian polity.11

But despite his magnetic personality and the enormous love and respect he commanded from the masses, Nehru could not achieve as much as he wanted to.

He left no place for the past history and cultural heritage and tried to build the future as a progressive, modern, socialist and secular state. But nationalism, which is essential for a nation to prosper, has more to do with human emotions than logic. A nation driven by pride in its heritage and common identity of the people can attain great heights. This common identity is born out of the common experience, history, culture, religion, myths and rituals of the people.

Nehru saw the secular state as the natural accompaniment of science, in which he had strong and abiding faith, his outlook towards science, best illustrated in his remark that the steel mills and dams were the new temples of modern India, made it difficult for him to realize that the common man would much more easily identify himself .with the temples rather than dams or steelmills.12

Leaders like Gandhi and Vivekananda were aware of the distinction between the socio religious relations, the economic relations peculiar to a colonial system and the politico -judicial relation, a legacy of the British. Of these various relations, they accepted the preponderence of the socio religious one and tried to transform Indian society in terms of more robust religion believing in "life affirmation".13

For the Indian people, religion is too-important a part of their lives to be casually set aside. Inspite of the diverse backgrounds and different religions Indian people have a strong unifying feature best expressed in their common cultural heritage. As Nehru himself describes it-.

"The diversity of India is tremendous, 'it is obvious' but 'the unity of India' is no longer merely an intellectual conception form : it is an emotional experience which over powered me." 14

 In comparison, Gandhi's approach was to achieve a synthesis of cultures with a new identity in the form of sarvodaya. Sarvodaya as an ideal seeks to build a new society on the foundations of the old spiritual and moral

values of India. Its emphasis is on a moral approach to problems. It aims at a regeneration of the human heart and mind. It also pleads for a decentralization of power at the economic as well as political level so that people actively take part in a self government through co-operative action.15

The strong point about Gandhi's philosophy was that he saw life as an integrated whole and did not concentrate on the parts alone. In Gandhi's concept of the world order the central character is the individual around whom revolve the social organizations at the local, national and international level. Being a social reformer, he taught and practised what he preached, for the benefit of the human society and desired to spiritualize every aspect of human life. He always had in mind the benefit of the entire human race on almost all fronts be it social, moral or religious or political. This is what led him to reject the liberal democratic model, based completely on the western model, and adopted by India.16

A very important aspect of Gandhi's method was that he raised the principle of non-violence from the lower plane of the individual to a higher one of the society. Political and social order was to be established by following lokneeti, the rule of conduct to be followed by an individual in his social life that is ahinasa and Rajneeti; by establishing a Decentralised economy suiting the Indian conditions, was to help the individual in following the path of his dharma. In his own words "Independence must begin at the bottom. Thus, every village will be a republic or panchayat having full power. It follows, therefore, that every village has to be self sustained and capable of managing its affairs even to the extent of defending itself against the whole world. It will be trained and prepared to perish in the attempt to defend itself against any onslaught from without. Thus ultimately it is the individual who is the unit. This does not exclude dependence on and willing help from neighbours or from the world. It will be free and voluntary play of mutual forces. Such a society is necessarily highly cultured in which every man and woman knows what he or she wants and what is more, knows that no one should want anything that others cannot have with equal labour.

This society must naturally be based. on truth and nonviolence which in my opinion, are not possible without a living belief in God, meaning a self existent , all knowing living force which inheres every other force known to the world and which depends on none and which will live when all other forces may conceivable perish or cease to act. I am unable to account for my life without belief in this all embracing living light.

In this structure composed of innumerable villages, there will be ever widening never ascending circles. Life will not be a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom. But it will be an oceanic circle whose centre will be individual always ready to perish for the village, the latter ready to perish for the circle of villages till at last the whole becomes one life composed of individuals, never aggressive in their arrogance but ever humble, sharing the majesty of the oceanic circle of which they are integral units.

Therefore, the outer most circumference will not wield power to crush the inner circle but will give strength to all within and derive its own strength from it. "I may be taunted with the retort that this is all Utopian and, therefore not worth a single thought. If Euclid's point, though incapable of being drawn by human agency, has an imperishable value, my picture has its own for mankind to live. Let India live for this true picture, though never realizable in its completeness we must, have a proper picture of what we want, before we can have something approaching it. If there ever is to be a republic of every village in India, then I claim variety for my picture in which the last is equal to the first or, in other words no one is to be the first and none the last."17

This thought is analogous to the ancient Indian thought in which the Indian society was organised around the concept of dharma. Individual identity and gradual upliftment occurred through ashrama dharma and at the same time social order and stability was maintained through the varna dharma. Thus dharma allow the society to sustain itself and progress by providing order and pattern to its arrangements.

Thus, in Indian thought these is no structural dichotomy between the individual and society.

"In Indian thought society is a complex process comprised of various wholes within wholes, all engaged in a mutual exchange of services and operating at different levels in a unified field in which the higher whole encompasses the lower but never destroys it, a system in which each is seeking to articulate itself in terms of its own nature, temperament and level of development' which the individual, the family, the village and the state, classes and castes constitute instances of the wholes, the subjective, the objective, the ethical and the spiritual represent the levels, and the political economic and socio - religions are instances of the practices in terms of which these wholes operate at different levels."18

In the Indian thought everything has its unique place, every individual has his work, every caste its duties and functions and each of the functional unit is interlinked with the others. "Each whole is encompassed in the system by larger and larger wholes within a cosmic symphony, each has his own soul and function and all of them together produce rhythm which finds its expression in the many fold character of life in India". 19 Though it is assumed that individuals differ in nature and temperament, each, of them must strive to evolve himself and realize his soul through interaction with others. Hinduism, thus, insisted on functions instead of rights and duties and considered the whole of mankind to be equal. Yet there was a kind of social hierarchy but this was for functional purpose only, from the point of view of creation every one was equal. The renaissance leaders were

desirous of creating a society based on the fusion of values of this and the other world (four fold concept of dharma),in terms of the needs and aspirations of each individual in society.20

The individual society relationship is well explained by S. Sanyal. "A society is a systamatic unity of institutions and individuals. It is not an aggregate of particular men for in that case the society would have no identity of its own andone particular man might feel justified in dominating all others. It is not merely a. unity that depends on parts, for in that case, the removal of the criminal or a group of criminals would do away with society. It is also not merely an independent unity independent of particular men, for in that case it would be justified in sacrificing them indiscrimentely. It is not merely an interdependent unity for in that case individuals would not be independent enough to remake society and society would not be independent enough to sacrifice criminals.

Just like the analogy of drop of water and waves in the ocean each is playing its role maintaining their identity. Nobody is neglected in the whole each has its role. The meaning is that just as every drop, every wave and the mass of water in the ocean are inter-related, involved participating individual groups arid communities and the social whole perform their duties and obligations and sustain their identity and yet they contribute towards realisation of the totality of social development.22

The idea of community living and self government is quite old in India. Panchayat, as an institution of local self government at the village level had its origin in prehistoric ancient India. Asort of village council or an association of the residents of the village often consisting of the village elders panchanyat or Gramsangha performed administrative and   judicial   function . We find references to Gramsanghas in the Manusmriti, Kautilya's Arthashastra (400 B.C.) and the Mahabharata (Shantiparva). Valmiki's Ramayana speaks of the ganapada which was a sort of federation of village republics. Later during the 17th century   village commonwealths are mentioned in Sukra Nithi (Sukracharya's Nithisara). In fact, the institution of village panchayats in one form or the other, has had an unbroken continuity almost all over India and throughout her long history. Facts and fiction gathered round the institution. With the begnning of British rule in India came centralisation of administration and gradual erosion of surviving local self governing institutions.23

In January 1948 Gandhi proposed a plan in which each village panchayat would constitute a working party with an elected leader, fifty such leaders would elect a second grade leader who would coordinate their efforts and who would also be available for national service. Second grade leaders could elect a national chief to regulate and command all the groups.24

The Gandhian constitution for free India was drafted by S.N. Agrawal which envisage self sufficient, self governing village community with the village panchayats as the primary political units whose members were to be elected by the adults of the village. The panchayats would control the village watchman, patwairs (the keepers of village land records) the police and schools. It would also assess and collect land revenue, supervise co-operative farming, irrigation and interest rates, as well as Khadi and other village industries. Above the village Panchayat came the hierarchy of indirectly elected bodies, taluka and district panchayats each comprised of the sarpanchs of the next, lower panchayat. Members from the district and municipal panchayats would make up the provincial panchayat. Presidents of provincial panchayat would comarise the all India Panchayat whose president will also be the head of the state and of the government. Among the responsibilities of the provincial panchayats would be transport, irrigation, natural resources and cooperative bank. The national panchayat would be responsible for defence, curency, customs, running of key industries of ntinal importance and the coordination of provincial economic develoipment plans.

Against this background, it was only natural, that demands were, made in the constituent assembly for the reintroduction of the Panchayat systems of government at the local level, which had suffered considerable deterioration during the   British rule. A revived village life, with panchayats bringing democracy to the grassroots, was considered quite attractive by the congress members of the constituent assembly. But when it came to actually putting this idea down in the constitution, they back tracked and had doubts about the practical implementation and desirability of the idea in an age in which the most influential ideas were those of a welfare state. They opted for a Parliamentary system of the Government, both at the union and the state level, based on universal adult franchise. In the objectives resolution drafted and moved by Nehru there was no reference to panchats, nor did the constituent assembly deal with the subject in any detail.

In 1959, the concept reappeared in the form of legislation to decentralize powers. The system was called Panchayat Raj and was inaugurated with much fanfare. It created a three-tier system, giving some powers to the village councils, regional committees and district boards respectively. But the system introduced was a form of decentralization and not diffusion of power . The central and state governments still had sufficient powers to scuttle the idea This they did as the initial enthusiasm waned . In many cases elections to the panchayats, panchayat samitis and zilla parishads were held up in many cases at the will of the. state government, municipal boards were superceded by administrators for indefinite periods. Despite the so called decentralization, the power of the state government remained more or less the same, the capitalised system of planning and development was retained and the local bodies did not have any initiative in deciding priorities. The panchayat

raj institutions functional autonomy, in case of economic issues, was restricted to working out the local details of national plans decided by the planning commissions etc.

The Narasimha Rao government had taken an initiative to introduce Panchayati Raj in India, a process set in motion by Rajeev Gandhi when he was the Prime Minister. Whether the effort actually succeeds remains to be seen but even if decentralization takes place unless a diffusion of powers in terms of the Gandhian model of oceanic circles takes place, real progress would not be made.

What is certain, however, is that the Gandhain concept while maintaining continuity with Indian traditions provides a new perspective for restructuring social and political life, if implemented properly and with sincerity.

While assessing the relevance of Gandhi's alternative plan one should not be led by one's predislection, for such a judgement would not be reliable. Instead, an should be made to identify the essential in Gandhi evaluation and prescription especially in the light of the present circumstances. It must not be forgotten that though the problems facing mankind are many and varied and quite complex, at the centre of them lies man, who alone is responsible for the present mess that the collapse of the moral values system has caused.

Even if one does not accept this alternative plan of Gandhi, what should be -understood is that the main thrust of Gandhi's plan was the transformation of attitudes and values of the individual. Once the individual is redeemed it automatically leads to a beginning towards the rehabilitation of the society because the individual is an integral part of the society. The Gandhian alternative of oceanic circles may or may not be perfect, but if it is remembered that the kind of individual he is aiming for is precisely the key to the solution of most of the problems confronting human societies-for in the ultimate analysis it is the individual who has marginalised himself the fundamental truth of gandhi's ideas becomes clear.

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