

MAHATMA GANDHI'S DREAM OF NATION BUILDING THROUGH BASIC HUMAN VALUES

Dr. Sunanda S. Shelake, Department of English, Jaysingpur College, Jaysingpur, Kolhapur,
Maharashtra, INDIA

The word 'value' comes from the Latin word 'valere' which means 'to be valuable'. Basic human values refer to the basic inherent values in human beings. They include truth, honesty, loyalty, love, peace, tolerance, humility, etc. They are called values because they bring out the fundamental goodness of human beings and society at large. These values guide us to consider the human element while interacting with other people. These values enable us to live in harmony with the rest of the world. They are universal in nature because they are shared by all people regardless of religion, nationality, or cultural background. Mahatma Gandhi was called *mahatma* (the great soul) as he tried to use these values as the instrument in the process of nation building.

Gandhiji had aimed at two basic objectives during his life. He wanted to achieve 'Swaraj' and 'Sarvodaya.' In pursuing these aims he advocated non-violent means. Gandhiji coined the term 'Satyagraha' for the struggle he had started in South Africa. He defined this term 'Satyagraha' in his same titled book saying that 'Satyagraha' is the force which is born of truth and love or non-violence. Non-violence does not mean only tolerance but it is a force through which evil and injustice could be countered. It is a weapon to resist and fight against injustice and untruth. It is a way of life with the human values of truth, justice, and love. In Indian tradition non-violence has been regarded as the highest morality (*Parama Dharma*). All Indian religions attached great importance to it in the moral and the religious life. Where there is the law of non-violence, there is no jealousy, no crime. As a result, there is peace, the positive moral virtue. It is also the essence of the social good.

Gandhiji dreamed of a society where all cherish good will for others. In such a society there would naturally be no room for injustice or discrimination towards any individual or group. In such a society there will be a social ethic wherein the good of the individual and the good of the group would be alike. He was greatly influenced by the 'Gita' and the 'Upanishads'. He considered 'Gita' as a true guide and dictionary of daily reference. He wanted his life to be exemplified by the concepts of self-purification and a feeling of complete surrender of all actions and their fruits to God. It could lead towards the selfless life. Here the researcher would like to explore Mahatma Gandhi's dream of building nation on the foundation of human values.

Gandhiji believed in humility as the basic human value. A humble person is not himself conscious of his humility. In born humility can never remain hidden, and yet the possessor is unaware of its existence. Humility should make the possessor realize that he is as nothing. We the common people imagine us to be something and there is egotism. If a man who keeps observance is proud of keeping them, they will lose much of the values in life. Our existence is purely momentary but if we shatter the chains of egotism and melt into the ocean of humility, we share its dignity. Gandhiji believed that to feel we are something is

to set a barrier between God and ourselves. It is just like ceasing to feel that we are something is to become with God. As per the Indian philosophy, a drop in the ocean partakes of the greatness of its parent. This drop is dried up as soon as it entered upon an existence independent of ocean. So, we say that life on earth is a mere bubble. A life of service must be one of humility. If we are humble then only, we could sacrifice our life for others. True humility is to endeavour entirely towards the service of humanity. The same is the case with ourselves. As soon as we become one with ocean in the shape of God, there is no more rest for us. God is continuously in action without resting for a moment. So Gandhiji said ‘Labour itself is God – *Shram hain Shree Ram hamara.*’ So, humility is another great human value imbibed by Gandhiji until his last breath. All the myths of India had plentiful human values in them. Truth always wins is the core summary of all the myth and it is the one shape of all human values. While summarizing Gandhi’s works Mehta J.K. says, ‘We have repeatedly said that God, Truth, Love, Simplicity, Non-violence, Beauty are all one and the same.’²

Gandhiji suffered from a lot of injustice and oppression during his life in India and South Africa. He reflected deeply on the nature and mechanism of oppression and reached to the important conclusion that all oppression was ultimately based on the co-operation of its victims. The victims are also the cause of increasing oppression. The British ruled India with Indian help. In the *Jallianwala Bagh* massacre it was the Indian soldiers who fired on innocent civilians. If the victims of oppression had the courage to refuse to co-operate, the system of oppression would not last long. Their masters formed the illusion that they possessed at the power. The victims needed to break the hold of illusion and stand up for their freedom and dignity. The victims were trampled because they themselves behaved like worms. In a way, here was the birth of non-cooperation.

Gandhiji promised India freedom within one year if its people agreed not to co-operate with the government. He wanted the Indians not only giving up their perks and privileges but also their jobs and education in government schools. This was a very difficult task, obviously asking the impossible. This was a way of fighting with non-violence policy. He rejected violence on several grounds. Violence harmed and destroyed human life and property. His principle of ‘Ahimsa’ was based on active love. Non-violence referred to an individual’s manner of thinking, judging, leading their personal life and above all resolving their difference. He believed that non-violence will act silently, slowly, will take time perhaps generations, but in the end, it will be successful in producing beneficial result.

Gandhiji has the rare honour of being called as the father of the nation. No other Indian political leader was honoured with this title. He loved India as a father. Jana Anand very aptly says,

“Love is reckless in giving away, oblivious as to what it gets in return... Law of Love was the only way to harming.”¹

He did to India what a father generally does to the children. A father creates or makes his child, gives on identity to it and cares for it. Gandhiji created a nation, gave it or

defined its identity. For nearly twenty-five years, he conducted carefully planned campaigns that mobilized people in different parts of the country and created among them a sense of brotherhood. He nurtured India's self-respect and pride. He was protective, patronizing, and playful in his relations with his countrymen. He rebuked and praised the people wherever needs. He fasted occasionally which punished both himself and his countrymen to stop them from bad behaviour. He trained, tested, and brought together a team of talented men and women. He used their diverse talents for common purposes as the head of an Indian joint family would.

As a father worries about his children, Gandhiji worried deeply about the future of the country. In these ways he shaped the political frame of the country. Due to his role as a father of the nation at first those who were close to him began to call him Bapu. Afterwards all the countrymen started calling him Bapu, an endearing and informal expression for father. Thus, he occupies a unique place in India. As a father tries to imbibe the human values in his children for their better future. Gandhiji recognized that Truth, peace, tolerance, love, and non-violence are the pillars of Indian civilization and he decided to build India on these foundation bricks of the moral values. These pillars are the moral values of India adored all over the universe. If human beings had not imbibed these values, we could not be called civilized. We would still have existed as the primitive hunter people. Tushar Gandhi puts a very relevant rhetorical question. He says,

“Bapu is gone, it makes no difference to him whether we remember or forget him. We can discard him but if we discard Goodness, Love, Peace, Truth, Humility and Non-violence will we survive?” 3.

Gandhiji also declared that he was not the only exponent of truth, peace, love, and non-violence. These values have existed for millions of years. They are as old as the rivers and mountains. As a responsible father of India, has lived by these values and expected others to do the same. He firmly believed that reform of the individual is the reform of the society. He firmly believed that the happiness of the individual formed the constituent part of the happiness of the whole. He believed that it is the function of the Panchayat to revive honesty and industry, to teach the village to avoid disputes and ensure speedy justice with non-violence. Gandhiji re-established brotherhood. His quest for truth lies behind all his socio-political activities and movements. He believed that morality is the basis of things and truth is basis of all morality. His basic values in life were truth, love, and non-violence which he preached and practiced in his daily life. This attracted a lot of people irrespective of caste, class, creed, culture, and gender.

Gandhiji used the mythological and religious symbols which even the illiterates from Kashmir to Kanyakumari could understand. He used prayer meetings and projected himself as a man of virtue and could put across the terms like ‘ahimsa’, ‘brahmcharya’, good conduct and truthfulness as an apt form of prayer. Irrespective of their religion, people used to mass together for the prayer meetings. He insisted upon Hindu-Muslim unity. He believed in simple living and high thinking. It was due to his right principles, right approach and right

values which helped him to come closer to the people. His autobiography plentifully portrays his wrestling the moral dilemma. He is unabashed in discussing his moral tussles. It was his inner strength, strong moral values, belief in God and faith in humanity that made him the leader of India. Truth was the beauty of his life. He had firm faith in the spiritual power of India. His sense of sacrifice and service was a part of his moral values. He believed the power of love. His nonviolence included not just avoiding violence, but encouraging love.

Gandhiji believed in Indian philosophical ethics where he believed to avoid the forced industrial and urban development pursued by the colonial state. Instead, he believed that India's future lay in its rural heartlands. He advocated self-sufficient village communities that were marked by interdependency and social cohesion. In Africa, he established an ashram near Johannesburg called Tolstoy Farm where he would put into practice his ideals imbibed from Tolstoy. This was a society composed of rights and responsibilities with individuals fulfilling their respective economic and social roles to the benefit of all. This type of integrated, interdependent social unit was a blending of all the virtues of simple rustic life which was devoid of the social conflicts and tensions that marred advanced industrial societies.

REFERENCES:

1. Anad, Jana, 'Gandhi's Leadership', Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Mumbai, 1999, (P. 27)
2. Mehta J K: Gandhian Thought: An Analytical Study. Ashish Publications, New Delhi 1983.(p. 130)
3. Ed. Beitzel, Terry & Langare, Chandrakant (2021), Rethinking Mahatma Gandhi: The Global Appraisal, RAWAT PUBLICATIONS, New Delhi, 2021, Preface p.xxii.