

GANDHIAN PHILOSOPHY: AN ALTERNATE METHOD FOR PRACTISING LIBERAL DEMOCRACY

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Abstract: Liberalism tends to see the role of democratic governments as minimal. Though liberalism has made tremendous advancements today, it is subjected to constant criticism by many. The main objection is that the individualistic ideal favored by liberalism is inimical to the consciousness of a communal life, which is the crux of democracy. In this context, the Gandhian ideal of democracy, which favors liberalism, comes into play. The method envisaged by Gandhikeeps the individualistic ideal intact but without being anathema to communal life. For him, the political form is a concrete expression of the soul force. In a democracy, everyone is his master. His ideal of swaraj meant participatory democracy, which is the remedy for the ills of negative liberty found in the context of democratic societies.

Introduction

In considerable measure, “liberal democracy” tends to occupy center stage in today’s Western political thought. Though it is a composite phrase, combining “liberal” and “democracy, ” the two terms have been conflated into what is popularly called the “liberal idea.” This conflation is highly evident in globalization, fueled by the idea of neo-liberalism, where ‘democracy’ is being sidelined. Here, the place of democracy in its true sense gains significance. If democracy does exist to protect liberalism and libertarianism, then what kind of democracy do we need, and from where can we find that true ideal? This leads us to speculate about Gandhi’s religious philosophy and democratic ideals based on religious values. The paper is an attempt to highlight the method envisaged by Gandhi, which is highly significant in the context of clearly understanding what liberal democracy is. Many object to the fact that religion has a role to play in politics, especially in the program of neo-liberalism. The paper attempts to see how and why the religious philosophy of Gandhi and the method he suggested are essential for realizing the proper ends of liberal democracy.

I. Features of Liberal Democracy

Liberalism has a long history in the course of Western philosophy. Beginning with Hobbes and Locke in the defense of natural rights, the liberals generally considered the role of democratic government to be minimal. Over time, the notion of individual freedom has come to be equated with “negative liberty” – or the freedom to be left alone with only limited allowance made for “positive liberty” mainly on the level of voting rights (Dallmayar, 2017, 10) Aspects of democratic minimalism can be found among the firmly committed democratic political thinkers like Robert Dahl. For him, modern governments do not require traditional, i.e., ethical principles in personal lives, but external or procedural checks to restrain oppressive tendencies. (Dahl, 1985, 19). Here, he agrees with the writings of James Madison, the noted thinker on democracy. Another example of a minimalist democracy is in Giovanni

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Sartori's text, *The Theory of Democracy Revisited*. Here, he prefers to leave terms like political morality, social morality, etc., to bring in the pursuit of individual interest through pressure groups and political parties, which he explains in a new coinage, 'demo –power. (Sartori, 1987, 12-13). Again, continuing the same line of thinking, William Riker concludes that liberal democracy is the only kind of democracy feasible in our world.

However, despite its essential advocates in its varying phases of development, liberal democracy has been criticized by many. Theoretically or philosophically, the most severe criticism came from the pragmatic side, mainly from John Dewey. To quote Dewey, "The clear consciousness of a communal life, in all its implications, constitutes the idea of democracy." (Boivert, 1988, 58). For Dewey, democracy as an ideal for community life is not a mere provision for a minimal state that leaves citizens alone. Such an individualistic ideal damages the kind of associated living which is democratic.

Liberal democracies feature constitutional protections of individual rights from governmental power. It may be seen as a compromise between liberal individualism and democratic collectivism. Unfortunately, despite its noble ideals, liberal democracy is facing an identity crisis today. It cannot be confined to the politico-economic sphere but has even permeated the socio-cultural sphere. In this context, Emmanuela Ceva's minimal characterization of the liberal project is worth mentioning. "The public order is, therefore, justified to limit the arbitrary power of individuals and to secure cooperation among them, as free and equal persons, in pursuing their different and possibly conflicting life plans on terms they can accept on moral grounds. All participants in the public order hold a moral claim right against the institutions constitutive of that order (the state's institutions) that all social and political rules be justified to them." (Emmanuela, 2016, 16)

What is needed today is a de-constitution of the present structure of power. Indeed, such a de-constitution of power can be very well found in Gandhi's social theory and praxis, rooted in his religious philosophy. It protects individualism but never at the cost of communalism.

II. Gandhi's Concept of Democracy

Religion is the key to Gandhi's social philosophy and political practice. Gandhi designed a well-knit unity of thought and action. The very element that Gandhi emphasized as the ultimate infallible guide to human action was the moral or spiritual of love, goodness, and truth – expressed in and through non-violence in individual and collective behavior. For him, the universal element of all religions is the ethical one. He firmly believed that man's social life, i.e., the myriads of social relationships, including the political, ought to be guided by goodness or virtue, which is the essence of his being. For Gandhi, the political form is a concrete expression of the soul force. In his view, democracy is an applied religion of non-violence.

Gandhi has reanimated the ancient view of democracy. He has re-interpreted democracy in the light of non-violence in his conception. His central thesis is: "Science of non-violence can alone lead one to pure democracy." (*Young India*, 1920, 3). It is one of his most original contributions to contemporary political thoughts and practices.

In defining democracy, Gandhi uses both positive and negative methods. (Grover, 1996, 200). i.e., he first states what democracy is not and then positively states what democracy is. In negative terms: (1) Democracy is not dictatorship, (2) It is not mobocracy, and (3) It is neither slavery nor mastery over others. In positive terms, he says : (1) democracy is equal opportunity for all, (2) In democracy, everybody is his own master, (3) Democracy is poor man's swaraj, and (4) there is no suppression of minority opinion. Gandhi realized it was an uphill task to pinpoint the exact nature of democracy. However, he defines it as follows: "Democracy must in essence mean the art and science of mobilizing the entire, physical economic, and spiritual resources of all various sections of people in the service of the common good of all." (Ibid., 1920, 3).

For Gandhi, democracy means much more than the people's government—the rule of the

masses. Political liberty also stands for physical betterment, economic equality, and spiritual emancipation.

Again, Gandhi believed that people's liberty should not depend on the will of an individual. In his view, democracy is not the rule of one but the government of the many. The fundamental principle of democracy is the dignity and freedom of the individual. Equality of the individual is yet another motto of Gandhian democracy. In other words, democracy, as conceived by Gandhi, defends individuality, preserves the spirit in man, and protects his liberty, equality, and fraternity.

III. Gandhi and the “Liberal”

When we use the term “liberal” regarding Gandhi, we depict the political ideal that calls for greater civil, political, and economic freedoms for the individual and minimum government control.

Gandhi emphasizes the development of the individual's character in instituting systemic reform to bring about the best conditions for liberalism in society. For him, liberalism can be genuinely realized not by improving state political machinery but by the voluntary participation of individuals. S.P. Verma observes:

The widely accepted method or technique for bringing about change in a liberal democratic system is through discussion and debate, which helps to some extent in assuring an adaption of the machinery of the state to the changing will of the citizens, but does not go far enough. Gandhi believed that even the best democratic systems could go wrong if it was not kept in perpetual restraint by a widely awakened society, which was possible only if there was within the society a strong group of selfless, even self-effacing, people who could challenge the ‘democratic government’ whenever it went wrong. (Verma, 1998, 147)

Anuradha Veeravalli makes further observations on Gandhian views of state sovereignty:

For Gandhi, the problem of sovereignty in the modern nation state is one of putting in place institutions that awaken ‘the masses to a sense of their capacity to regulate and control authority’. In other words, to provide space for dissent in the face of the abuse of authority rather than to advocate subjection to it is the principle that determines the relation between the individual and the state. It therefore intrinsically rejects any interpretation of sovereignty in terms of a theory of power or the capacity of enforcement. (Veeravalli, 2014, 55).

A unique feature of Gandhian liberal democracy is that he considers it a corporate discipline. It is the discipline of the community. In his view, liberal democracy is self-rule or self-government. Self-government means continuous effort to be independent of government control, whether it is a foreign or national government. “Self-government can only come through self-effort.” (*Young India*, 1920, 4). Self-government (swaraj) depends entirely upon our internal strength and ability to fight against the heaviest odds. In Gandhi's view, liberal democracy means self-restraint. It implies self-control. It demands discipline, moral training, and a culture of head and heart. It stands for ethical discipline.

In light of the above picturization of Gandhian views, it can be said that the malaise of the present system of liberal democracy is nothing but the pursuit of self-interest and self-indulgence of man at the cost of shared ethical commitments. His idea of swaraj discloses a conception of democracy, which is sharply at variance with the interest-based models of liberal democracy. Without blandly fusing the individual and society or subordinating one another, his thought could hold the elements in fruitful balance. Achievement of swaraj involves self-transcendence and diligent training in the ways of freedom.

To Gandhi, it would be notable that Mill defends individual liberty mainly because it is essential for a greater collective understanding of truth. Gandhi insists that such an understanding is only possible with moral development. For him, this fact alone is enough

reason for social institutions to emphasize moral development centrally. More controversially, it thus follows, given both the aforementioned liberal emphasis on public justification and Gandhi's particular metaphysical understanding of truth, that for Gandhi, the state must play an active role in promoting certain religious understandings for the liberal project to be realized.

IV. The Method *Envisaged* by Gandhi for Liberal Democracy

For Gandhi, politics was a vehicle to reach out to people. He sought to legitimize politics by involving people. Some liberals wanted to protect their politics from the people, believing the masses to be irredeemable. Here, the liberals need to have a fresh look at Gandhian principles. Gandhi believed that the essence of democracy lies in protecting individual rights and freedoms.

What is to be observed here is that the Gandhian concept of swaraj is so far from the modern conceptions of freedom, the positive and negative liberty. Negative liberty bears traces of individual-centeredness, and positive liberty lacks what may be called self-restraint. Ramashray Roy points out that Gandhi has squarely faced the dilemma of positive and negative liberty. The central point of Gandhian Swaraj was the emphasis on self-rule as a transformation process – whereby people are able to rule not so much over others than over themselves. (Ray, 1992, 192)

The argument concerning liberty can be set against the background of democracy. The difference between Gandhian democracy, i.e., swaraj, and the liberal–minimalist conception of democracy, has been highlighted by Ronald Tercheck in his essay, *Gandhi and Democratic Theory* (Panthem, 1986, 308). At the beginning of the text, he rightly makes it clear that democracy for Gandhi was not merely procedural or “minimal” but sustentative in the sense of being grounded in a nonoppressive way of life. For Gandhi, democracy is a regime not organized or imposed “from the top down” but one “from the bottom up.” It is clear from his emphasis on village life and village self-government (gram panchayats) as well as on economic decentralization and village industries like khadi. Gandhi believed that the means of production (at least the necessities of life) should be in the hands of people and not be alienated from corporate elites. It leads to cultivating cooperation, dispositions like the struggle for mutual service, and civic virtues like interpersonal tolerance or recognition. Tercheck saw Gandhi in India as a parallel to Dewey in America regarding the necessity of dialogue and tolerance in promoting democracy.

Tercheck presents Gandhi as an opponent of the dominant model of democracy found today in some societies. It is mainly because Gandhian democracy demands freedom and independence, which can only be sustained through ethical dispositions cultivated over time.

Thomas Pantham has presented an argument along similar lines in his article “*Beyond liberal Democracy: Thinking with Mahatma Gandhi*” As Pantham points out: “Gandhi repeatedly criticized the liberal democratic model, its objectification and technocratization of the political and its concomitant “; alienation of the people’s political rights.” (Pantham, 1986, 334). The alternative which he found was swaraj which in addition to self-rule also means “participatory democracy.” Genuine democracy at once protects individual freedom and social justice, which is possible only through ethical ways. It is clear from Gandhi’s statement.

I value individual freedom but you must not forget that man is essentially a social being. He has risen to the present status by bearing to adjust his individualism to the requirements of social progress. Unrestricted individualism is the law of the beast of the jungle. We have learnt to strike the mean between individuals, freedom and social restraint. (*Young India*, 1920, 198)

Liberalism needs to be practiced based on accepted norms of principles and whether

liberalism is possibly devoid of state power. It can be said that devoid of state power; liberals may find it difficult to find the means to practice their principles. Many liberals, by the time Gandhi died, had lost political ground and preferred to closet themselves and their principles (Mitra, 2019, 13).

The failure of liberal democracy may happen when liberals cherish the dream of capturing power at the top and then changing the nature of the game for the sake of the people. However, this approach only worsens the situation further, enabling the capture of the levers of the state. Nevertheless, the kind of liberal democracy that Gandhi dreamt of lies in village republics.” He wanted democracy to grow at the grassroots with self-governing “village republics,” where people could hold their own government accountable (Mitra, 2019, 14).

An empirical analysis of the efficacy of civil resistance in the 20th century across the nations shows that non-violent methods are highly successful in changing authoritarian regimes as violent revolutions (Chenoweth, 2008, 44). “Liberals may have lost Gandhi along the way as they lost their own intellectual moorings, but Gandhi still provides a way for the liberals to rediscover their own roots and reclaim the lost political grounds.” (Mitra, 2019, 14).

Non-violence is the pivot upon which the Gandhian political ideal moves on. Violence affects society and its people while leaving institutions of injustice in place. “The focus on people rather on the nature of institutions, inevitably raises the personal state, entrenches the divisions, thus intensifying the conflict. This approach of escalating conflict, on the one hand institutionalizes violence in society”. Gandhi, therefore, sought non-violence as a political force that was accountable (Mitra, 2019, 36). It helped to reorient the nature of politics, which helped to see those holding power as legitimate political opponents, thus paving the way for healthy cooperation with the political opponents.

The salient feature of Gandhian satyagraha was the central role of the individuals engaged in political action to renounce and sacrifice, moving towards self-discipline. It helped the activists focus on the moral values underlying political protests. “The staging of the non-violent protests with discipline and dignity rendered the instances of civil resistance into a more persuasive form of direct action than either physical violence or other kinds of overt coercion and intimidation involved in traditional forms of mass action” (Mantena, 2012, 455-56). Gandhi always wanted to see that the means justified the end.

Today, democracy is an arena where claims of the majority are used to steamroll over minority, dissenting voices. However, in its true significance, democracy is the domain where debate and managing political differences should occur. Gandhi envisioned the possibility of the state power slipping into authoritarian regimes. “While apparently doing good by minimizing exploitation, (state power) does the greatest harm to mankind by destroying individuality, which lies at the root of all progress.” (Bose, 1935, 412) His firm conviction is that if the state suppresses capitalism with violence, it will be caught in the coils of violence itself and will fail to develop non-violence.

Today, liberals cherish the victory of science by breaking “taboos,” which perhaps include religious pronouncements. Liberal paradigms like tolerance, justice, democracy, pluralism, and market economics dominated the 20th century. With increased access to political power, they relied heavily on the state to pursue their policies, losing sight of their apprehension about the nature of the state.

Unlike today's liberals, Gandhi viewed politics as a vehicle for human upliftment through non-violence as the means and truth as the end. However, many 20th-century liberals could not cherish in principle either the method of non-violence or its practical application in the satyagraha or other mass mobilization programs.

For Gandhi, modern-day liberals demand that religious truth claims conform to the methods of science. When they fail, they should be kept separate from the public sphere, which hinders attempts to give reverence for truth a central place in society. After all, Gandhi thinks of truth as being much broader than the prevailing scientific notions of the concept. For Gandhi, Truth stands for the ideal of the metaphysical, the noumenon but that which anyone

can realize.

Suppose liberal democracy is to gain its true import today. In that case, they must see the Gandhian ideal that politics is a vehicle to reach out to people, help secure justice, reconcile differences, and inspire them to find themselves as active moral citizens. Indeed, it can be said that the liberal emphasis on secularism has paradoxically led to an undermining of pluralism insofar as this emphasis has perpetuated a narrow understanding of how religion should conform to truth. This perpetuation has made faith communities less receptive to the truths advanced by others.

The key to the success of a liberal democratic society is to find democracy as a platform for egalitarianism and not simply majority rule. “Democracies can survive only when this egalitarian aspect is preserved, without which majoritarian democracy will inevitably degenerate into mobocracy.” (Mitra, 2019, 47).

For thinkers like Gandhi, a proactive approach towards religion on the part of the state is conducive to religious communities existing in a way that aligns with core liberal principles. Even about religion (and not just the state), Gandhi saw non-violent practices as the key to adequately developing democratic structures. What is at stake here is to think if the Gandhian religious understanding were adopted as an official and procedural “background” position that comprises a broader context the state can refer to in realizing an ideal liberal society that can be more realistically pursued.

Gandhi’s words seem to echo the libertarian sentiments. This is clear from the following words:

The State represents violence in a concentrated and organized way. The individual has a soul, but as the State is a soulless machine, it can never be weaned from violence to which it owes its very existence... I look upon an increase of the power of the State with the greatest fear, because all the while apparently doing good by minimizing exploitation, it does the greatest harm to mankind by destroying individuality, which lies at the root of all progress. (Gandhi, 1987, 312).

Gandhi insists that the abovementioned problems make us suspicious of economic and military power concentration. For him, the liberal reverence for individual freedom demands no less. Indeed, to Gandhi, liberals intended for their economic systems to be organized so that individuals could make the most significant possible number of decisions, which is a fact lamentable in its irony.

In keeping with conventional liberal understandings, Gandhi stated that the individual’s place is exalted in society. This is seen most clearly in his approach to pursuing social change. As Gandhi’s associate and biographer, N.R. Malkani, noted: (Gandhi) insisted that real change is inner and mental attitudes. Without such a fundamental change, no tensions could be eased, and no human problems could be solved. Therefore, he concentrated his attention on individuals. (Malkani, 1972, 116)

Elsewhere Malkani observed:

According to (Gandhi) human progress is generally due to the individual and not to a group. It is the individual who knows the good, realizes it in himself and relates it consciously or unconsciously to the good of others. In fact the good of man is not a political or social question but a philosophical question, which only individuals can understand (Malkani, 1972, 120).

Again, to quote Bose: “Instead of producing quickly and in great bulk by centralized technology, and then taking a roundabout way of expensive distribution, Gandhi’s idea was to organize production and consumption as close to one another as possible. This is the essence of his theory of (a) decentralized economy through which men and women can attain a measure of economic freedom never guaranteed to them under opposite conditions.” (Bose, 2012, 24-25). For Gandhi, a centralized economic system is antithetical to the widespread

attainment of individual liberty. “Ultimately, the roots of Gandhi’s suspicion of industrialism lay in his central preoccupation, the liberation of the human being... Outsourcing one’s daily needs to others, and soon to unseen hands far away, meant the inevitable rise of dependency and erosion of self-determination.” (Niranjan, 2013, 105). To authenticate with Gandhian words:

I suggest that, if India is to evolve along nonviolent lines, it will have to decentralize many things. Centralization cannot be sustained and defended without adequate force... Rurally organized India will run less risk of foreign invasion than urbanized India, well equipped with military forces. (Gandhi, 1939, *Harijan*)

V. Contemporary Debates on Gandhi’s Liberal Democracy

In the context of the discussions on liberal democracy, Charles Taylor’s views on radical pluralism get center stage. In “A Secular Age,” Taylor observes that radical pluralism can be a sum total of cultural, religious, philosophical, and scientific developments leading to a “buffered self” setting off an age of authenticity (Taylor, 2007, 475). Here, the individual can explore diverse expressions of good without conferring to any external demands. This unpredicted explosion of pluralism is characterized by a public space where varieties of belief and unbelief jostle” (531). The context of globalization and the emergence of a public space inhabited by people of public reason necessitates a critique of Gandhian lines.

It is a fact that Gandhi never made watertight compartmentalization of religion and politics, for he prefers what may be called a spiritualization of politics. Spirituality and religion ensure the moral bedrock for guiding human action and using public reason. Gandhi always initiated the ways through which individual and social transformations took place. Gandhi’s views may be an internal self-restraint imposed by public reason upon individuals.

Reflecting his views on the future of the nation, Gandhi observes: “We have two choices..... either to introduce the Western principles of Might is Right or to uphold the Eastern principle that Truth alone conquers...” (Gandhi, 1920, 7)

Truth is to be discovered by every person situated in the background culture through his or her own comprehensive doctrines.

Gandhi indeed identified Truth as God. However, his scheme of religion also allows the conception of relative truth. This distinction between absolute and relative truth is significant because it indicates the need for a corrective process of experimentation with our own experience, and this presupposes our readiness to admit our errors openly and learn from them (Taylor, 2007, 160). Thus, it may be argued that Gandhi’s views on liberal democracy, which has its foundations in religion, could accommodate the possibilities of a contemporary plural public space where religious and secular perspectives intersect.

Self –transformation is one of the key ideas of Gandhi’s Swaraj (self-rule). “The pilgrimage to Swaraj consists of societal transformations and individuals attaining self-mastery through self – discipline and self-restraint. (Gandhi, 1925, 177) Again he says, “Swaraj has to be experienced by each one for himself” (Ibid., 53).

In the contemporary times, Gandhi’s attribution to liberal political thought is much debated. Nicholas Grier (2003) and Sanjay Lal (2016) argue that Gandhi was a reformed liberal. In their view, Gandhi’s views resolve the dispute between liberals and communitarians in the Western political tradition. But there is an alternative view as held by Grey and Hughes (2015) who saw Gandhi as a devotional practitioner of Truth seeking rather than taking non-violence as a civic virtue. At most in their views Gandhi was a friendly critic of liberal democracy with the implication that he was not a supporter of those institutions. (Grey and Hughes, 2015, 391)

One line of argument in the debate interprets Gandhi’s political ideal as enlightened anarchism (Allen, 2019, 2). In other words, his ideal of state order is one in which all coercive uses of state power- or lawful violence-are unnecessary. However, Gandhi’s enlightened

anarchist ideal contradicts the liberal ideal of state order grounded in justice as strict compliance with justifiable norms of coercion exercised, keeping peace and lawfulness. In this context, there is an appropriate distribution of coercive power from the local to the federal levels of citizens' participation. Participation in such diverse civic activities requires virtue-based politics, which is very well seen in Gandhian thoughts. Gandhi would appear then as a civic constitute analyst, with the rightful use of political coercion and lawful violence as an enlightened anarchist. This line of argument properly contextualizes Gandhi in the debates on political liberalism.

However, the above thesis poses an altogether different issue: whether Gandhi had attained two contradictory political ideals, one anarchist and the other constitutionalist. One way of approaching the problem is to state that Gandhi was a political pragmatist, willing to separate his private devotional aspirations from his public ones to create a new liberal constitutional order in India (Parel, 2008, 45). However, textual evidence proves that Gandhi could have been more pragmatist. An alternative way of addressing the problem is to seek a relationship between anarchism and constitutionalism as ideal and non-ideal (Allen, 2009, 2)

Communitarians contend that liberals are committed to an ontologically false conception of the self as unencumbered by social attachments. Such a conception of the self underwrites a morally neutral procedural liberalism (Grier, 2003, 72). It fails to consider that, to a considerable extent, the values, aims, and ends of those communities they are members of constitute individual selves. However, procedural liberalism lacks any solid account of the importance of civic virtues and their relationship to core liberal values like individualism, diversity, and tolerance. Grier uses this analysis as consistent with Gandhi's critique of the modern West as "unstable and violence-prone (83). Taking clues from Bhiku Parekh, he observes: "Gandhi's modern liberal emphasis on proceduralism stripped of any rules substantive account of civic virtues leading only to hedonistic dissipation or the clash and mutual cancellation of personal and national." (Parekh, 1989, 83) In Grier's view, Gandhi's reformed liberalism attributes axiological primacy to the virtues over rights as abstractions from virtue (75). Hence, to be morally empowered to realize and radicalize liberal values, individuals must be self-disciplined and self-transformed.

It is interesting to note that Grier could list a few contemporary liberal thinkers, Stephen Macedo (2003), William Galston (1995,1991), and John Rawls (1994), who endorse some version of this position. All of them agree on civic virtue's importance in realizing liberal values. Gandhi's non-violence aligns with the fundamental liberal ideal of peace through toleration. Grier goes to the extent of saying that Gandhi's non-violence is the fractional equivalent of Rawls' liberal virtue of civility. Grey and Hughes' interpretation of Gandhi regards non-violence as a non-neutral political practice of individuals seeking Truth through diverse paths.

Agreeing with his views with Grey and Hughes, Sanjay Lal interprets Gandhi as positing Atman(self) as distinct yet connected to other beings within the disordered world (Lal, 2016, 381). In fact, he reiterates Grier's interpretation of non-violence as a civil virtue in so far as the self-discipline required for non-violent experiments in truth by different individuals in a way specific to the traditions of a particular community (40). Lal's efforts would seem to characterize Gandhi as a reformed liberal.

It is worth noting how different scholars see Gandhi's central notion of Atman (self) in the context of liberalism. Grey and Hughes would like to see Atman's universally connected and socio-relational nature, while Lal finds Atman as the basis of Gandhi's synthesis of liberalism and communitarianism.

In his discussions of Gandhi's political thought, Anthony Parel finds Gandhi a pragmatic Indian liberal constitutionalist. In this context, he makes a distinction between "non-violence as creed" and "non-violence as policy" (Parel, 1989, 122). The former is available only to a few individuals, whereas the latter Gandhi did expect from the average citizen. Again, civic non-violence, which is to be practiced by every citizen, permits the lawful use of violence to maintain public order and exercise the right of self-defense. It may be argued that Parel's

reading of Gandhi is correct; therefore, his political philosophy sounds much more liberal.

In Gandhi's scheme of internationalism, nonviolence is a function of states limiting violence internally and externally to its uses for public order and self-defense. Gandhi observed that any state lacking the ability to defend itself could not be a responsible state (53).

It is a truism that Gandhi's formulation of liberalism is too complex. On the one hand, there is the religious/devotional spirit running through all of Gandhi's thoughts; on the other hand, there is the issue of liberalism. It may be contested that though Gandhi is not a political theorist in the strict sense of the term, he is the one who clearly and fully endorsed liberalism. Gandhi's pertinent contribution towards liberalism or liberal democracy (to be more specific) is that he suggests that every citizen will facilitate a gradual movement toward the ideal state order where lawful violence becomes increasingly unnecessary. His views on international relations are generally endorsed by liberals, in which states and people are free and independent of imperial domination.

In discussing Gandhi's liberal democracy, it must be maintained that Gandhi stood for the importance of individual duty to carry out personal and collective service. The service to society and living in harmony in the community with nature and God leads to personal Swaraj (self-rule) or demonstration. The primary role of Gandhi's democratic idea is the moral agency of subjectivities, both the individual and the community, as opposed to an aggregative system of self-interested individuals based on rights and in need of protection (Mishra, 2015, 206-207). It may be said that Gandhi's democratic ideal starts with individual emancipation and leads to social emancipatory democratization. It is essential to examine Skaria's observations in this context. "Gandhi proposed a spiritual root for democracy. He reestablishes the linkage between liberty and equality through fraternity, an actively and politically constructed category, "neighborliness" (956).

Gandhi defended the liberal values he supported and used the free press for social and political struggle. In his view, public opinion is the tool to reduce the abuse of political regimes (Jain, 2009, 36). Indeed, he was an actual defender of minority rights against the dictatorship of the majority and defended individual freedom, maintaining that under democracy, individual liberty of opinion and action is jealously guarded but in connection with the independence of the community by basing his ideal of democracy on people and community as opposed to state and power. He advocated a minimal state and a radical decentralization of political power to the local dimension.

The epistemologies involving categories into the construction and validation of knowledge born in struggle, of ways of knowing developed by social groups as part of their resistance against the injustices caused by capitalism, colonialism, and patriarchy take over the emancipatory force of Gandhian views as a critical account of the liberal theory. They tackle the theory of democracy to include liberalism only as an emancipatory force rather than a defense of negative liberties.

Conclusion

Gandhi envisaged a comprehensive politics of life that exceeds the pluralism and tolerance inscribed in Western liberalism. On the one side, there is a multipolar front of political, social, and religious activists and professionals wishing to pull the future of politics towards the idea of religion, nation, economy, and people. On the other side is an equally diverse front of those who defend intercultural dialogue in search of social relationships and the dignity of people. Democracy is the best way to meet the challenge, and democratization implies the democratic pillar into the liberal constitutional pillar in bringing civil society through various participatory forms. Gandhian liberal democracy is, perhaps, the best model to put into practice the above idea.

Gandhian liberal values include equality and liberty for the individual and the right of conscience. Liberal society today comes very close to Gandhian ideals. Whereas liberalism has instituted reforms for the best conditions of the individual, Gandhian ideals emphasize the

development of the individual above all else. When a state actively incorporates a religious language in the ways Gandhi envisioned, it can justify its actions to members of a diverse society. Non-violent characteristics among the people are essential to Gandhi, for its members are to be free. However, to realize such freedom, the state's overt promotion of religious ideas becomes necessary.

As a philosopher, Akeel Bilgrami, despite being an atheist, does not entirely reject the scope of religion in playing a critically instructive role in our times. He writes: "Religion is primarily a matter of belief and doctrine, but the sense of community and shared values it can sometimes provide in contexts where other forms of solidarity- such as strong labor movement- are missing, and it sometimes provides a moral perspective for a human politics as it did in the liberation theology movement in Central America. (Bilgrami, 2018) Bilgrami's observations on the weaknesses of the domination of liberal politics and the solution to find a theoretical framework by which one can go past the constriction of possibilities that liberalism and the regulatory constraints of social democracy have forced on modern societies.

The above discussions on Gandhi make us think about what democracy is when we all say that we are the citizens of a democratic country. Liberal democracy, to realize its whole purpose, must include both terms, i.e., liberal and democracy. Liberalism and democracy share a special relationship as liberal democracy, which is the sum of more than just its two parts but that which explains the true purpose of democracy. Nevertheless, in the modern context, the democratic element is increasingly sidelined, giving way to negative or positive liberty. Here, Gandhi's ideal of democracy, which is at once individualistic and collectivistic (i.e., protecting the rights of all), finds significance. Swaraj is the best example of the reconstitution of power. Such reconstitution of power is the only remedy for the ills of the capitalistic model of liberalism seen today. Promoting ethical values or self-transformation of personality, the sine qua non of Gandhian democracy is much needed for modern democratic societies.

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