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Gandhi's Struggle in South Africa and it's Contemporary Relevance

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Mahatma Gandhi is not of an age but for all ages. Gandhi was a man of education with character; He visited South Africa thrice and spent twenty one years there. The most of the making up of his personality and principles has taken place in South Africa. The Struggles he faced and the ways he evolved to deal with them prove to be immense value in the contemporary situation. In his three visits to south Africa M. K. Gandhi had to deal with different types of struggles centered around human discrimination, deprivation of human right and disrespectful and insulting treatment to human being which was very detrimental to peace and universal brotherhood. During the first visit and stay he had to face bitter experiences due to colour prejudice and disrespectful treatment to Indians e.g. Pushing away from the train, no seat inside the carriage, about dress-code and walking on foot-path. Even he had to deal with the issue of legislative council. During his second visit he faced false allegations, attacks by youngsters and insulting treatment by South African barber. During his third visit he mainly dealt with the issues of registration of Indians and Cancellation of Indian Marriages. He dealt with all these issues with practical understanding, prudence, persuasion, Satyagraha and asserting human approach.

Today's world is dominated by technology and progressing towards globalization, aiming to bring whole world together. But human discriminations, deprivation of human rights, minority issues, and destructive activities still exist. These need to deal with the ways evolved out of Gandhi's experience in South Africa – Love; Truth and Non-violence. So there will be world – peace and universal brotherhood. So Gandhi's South Africa experiences provide a frame of reference to the contemporary world.

Introduction

Mahatma Gandhi, an epoch making Personality, is not of an age but for all ages. Education makes man good and good men act nobly. Gandhi was a man of education with character. He is always ranked as topper on the list of 25 great world leaders by Times magazine, (sakar, kop 8th Feb-2011, Page No. 2) who gave peaceful means of protest – Truth, Love and Non-violence which have proved to be the guiding path to the whole world. Of course his preaching's have evolved out of his struggle and bitter experiences in his life, in India as well as in South Africa. He himself has stated that most of the making of his personality has taken place in South Africa where he spent 21 years of his life. "(Reddy E.S.1993 P.V.)"

Of course the past has to be analyzed and interpreted in the context of present and it forecasts future. Progressing towards globalization in today's technology dominated world, the evils like disrespect for others, humiliation of human beings, still

exist, which mar the universal brotherhood and world peace. This is quite evident in extremist's activities, advanced armaments, attacks, power greed etc. They need to be rooted out which M. K. Gandhi experienced and realized quite long back in South Africa. So Gandhi's Struggles in South Africa his experiences ; and efforts to root out evils, his ways of dealing with the situations if viewed and analyzed in today's context ; would definitely provide a new angle of looking at human beings ; human power, women empowerment, at our country and the world of which network we are the part. The present paper is an attempt towards this.

The Objectives of the Paper :

- 1) The present study is undertaken with following objectives –
- 2) To know the struggles of Mahatma Gandhi in South Africa.
- 3) To interpret the situations and his dealings in contemporary context and to study it's modern relevance.
- 4) To offer new approaches of looking at his struggles in South Africa, the human beings and the world.

Division of the Paper :

The present paper is divided in to four parts. First part deals with his struggle in South Africa during his stay in the first visit and its consideration in contemporary situation. Second part deals with Gandhi's struggles in South Africa during his second visit. Third part throws light on the struggle in his third visit to South Africa. Fourth part brings out conclusions.

Related Literature :

Mahatma Gandhi is worldwide explored banyan tree like personality. Ample material is available. The present study is based on both primary and secondary Sources. The Autobiography of M.K. Gandhi – My experiences with truth; in English and also its Marathi version provides a deep insight into his struggles, thinking and approaches. The present study is mainly based on a compilation of articles on Gandhi by eminent Scholars, Thinkers and even politicians in the world. The books 'Mahatma Gandhi 100 Years', 'Gandhi and South Africa 1914 – 1948', Gandhi: Prisoner of Hope also gives a deeper perspective and detailed information regarding Gandhi's life in South Africa.

M. K. Gandhi's first stay in South Africa

M. K. Gandhi's visit to South Africa started with offer from Meman firm, after his return from London, becoming a Barrister. Meman wanted to send M. K. Gandhi to instruct their lawyers in a case regarding their business in South Africa claiming \$ 40,000. In fact this was going to South Africa somewhat as a servant but he had accepted it to have new experience, to see a new country and to send \$ 105 to his brother.

To interpret Gandhi's struggles in South Africa in his first visit in the contemporary Context provides two aspects for their relevance; the existing situation and the manners of facing the struggles. After a span of six decades the situation, though has changed for betterment marginally, has remained the same as the mind-set of the people is the base for any social improvement. Technology has made today's world a global village and internet has brought world much closer than never before. But the

answer for the question-has really globalization taken place? Takes one back to Gandhi's struggle. Apartheid – Problem had at its base – lack of respect for human being as human – beings and dignified humanitarian approach which is still prevailing. Respect others, to treat all human beings on equal status, no superiority complex and love for others are the essential things for aiming at universal brotherhood are mostly required today also. The President-ship of Obama, attacks on Americas World Trade Center and Taj hotel in India, increasing extremists activities, cold blooded murders strongly asserts the missing of human approach; the same Gandhi realized in South Africa. Today world also asserts the need of treating humans in humanly way and with dignity so that world – peace will be achieved. So Gandhi's impulse to improve the condition of Indians and efforts for them matter today also. Though today the globalization and liberalization aim at intercultural and international mingling of national cultural specificity and human empowerment still the reality of national and cultural specificity is visible, that may be on a small scale, the people are deprived away from their human rights, social or political e.g. The condition of 'Biharis' in India and the killing of Indian students in Australia. The evil aspects of human nature to maintain dignity by torturing other is seen even today. So the resemblance between Gandhi's struggles in South Africa for class prejudice and man's identity and the current condition of today's human beings.

And naturally the dealings of Gandhi with the struggles are immense value today also Gandhi was the most practical man and He handled the struggles prudently with full understanding. So respect for others and the practical ways to deal with struggles, decisions, firmness, prudence and organized efforts to deal with struggles and a strong organized efforts to bring about change have immense value today also.

II M.K. Gandhi's Second Visit to South Africa :

In Dec. Second time M. K. Gandhi sailed for South Africa with his wife Kasturbha, two sons from Durban and the only son of widowed sister as he received a cable from Durban about opening of Parliament. Another ship Naderi also sailed for Durban at the same time.

In his second visit though the struggle seems individual, it has a wider impact and contemporary relevance in a sense that one is likely to face false allegation but has to deal with the unexpected situation with prudence practicability and patience and to come out of the situation peacefully. It affirms the strong faith in truth, it proves to all that opposition can be brought to its terms, handled with patience and belief in truth. International disputes can be settled peacefully in this way.

III Third Visit to South Africa :

M. K. Gandhi received an unexpected cable from South Africa as Chamberlain expected him there for deputation. But Mr. Chamberlain was against Indian deputation. But Gandhi decided to start work a fresh and enrolled in Transvaal Supreme Court.

During his third stay in South Africa Gita's principles of *aprigraha* and *sambhava* (equability) gripped him and also Ruskin's book "Unto this Last" cast a magic spell on him which taught the good of the individual is contained in the good of all.

The struggles in his third visit, regarding the registration of Indians with the registrar of Asia ties have a contemporary relevance as they aim at peaceful as well as stubborn resistance to unjust situation and make the authorities to bow down, with organized efforts. In today's destructive and dominating tendencies these struggles and finding solutions serve as guiding light leading to world peace and affirmation of truth. They also prove that man's heart may be softened by events. The value of patience as well as firmness is everlasting. The struggle for against marriage registration undoubtedly the women's strength and nowadays women are treated as human resource.

Conclusions :

Today's world is aiming at globalization and coming of the whole world together with peace and happiness. Of course this is totally dependent on the mindset and approaches of people and it's a proven fact that evil tendency, beliefs and especially disrespect for others put others in struggles. The universal oneness can be achieved by treating each other with love and respect and not with insult and injustice. Gandhi not only realized this quite long back in South Africa but evolved peaceful means to deal with it. Gandhi's South African experiences form a frame of reference for the direction of struggles today also. His message has relevance for all time and for all mankind.

Gandhi struggled very hard in South Africa to remove human discrimination and insulting and undignified treatment given to human beings based on colour prejudice. He stressed on maintaining the dignity of man and value of the individual. In contemporary world the problem of human discrimination still exist. But can be solved by changing the approaches of people towards each other and accepting the individual identity. Gandhi worked on these issues very prudently and with practical adjustments. This is applicable even today when we deal with the situation of arrival of outsiders in our country.

Many of the tensions that exist in the world of today grow out of important conflicts of interest. They result from a lack of understanding of the feelings, needs, purposes and objectives of the people and government. Peace which Gandhi expected is the ability to cope up with conflicts, which is of almost value today.

The issue harmful to universal brotherhood which Gandhi had to deal with in South Africa – i.e. E.g. Registration of Indians ; marriage registration etc. Deprivation of human rights, undignified treatment to 'coloured class' minority issue do exist today, though, in changed form. Gandhi dealt with these issues with assertion of Truth, firmness, prudence and making people to understand their mistakes. If we look at treatment given to minority communities, foreigners and outsiders, Mahatma Gandhi's means of solving them prove to be of immense value. Today's violent and destructive means, domination, power greediness, the widening gulf between rich and poor, the use of advanced means for human destruction compels us to take

Review of Gandhi's preaching's of love, truth and Non-violence. Only these principles can maintain respect and dignity of human beings and bring the whole world together. So Gandhi today is essential as a saint more than a politician. May be he had to face failure like Christ, Buddha but has shown a very rational; peaceful way to bring the whole world together.

If the world seeks to avoid destruction and to advance the lot of mankind it must need the advice of Gandhi.

Mahatma Gandhi worked selflessly to give respect to Indians in South Africa and his saying 'those who want to do good are not selfish' is very apt in the contemporary situation in the world heading toward economic progress with social justice.

Today's world looks at women as human resource. Mahatma Gandhi realized the strength of women in South Africa and used it in organized way to achieve his just aim of cancellation of registration marriage.

'Satyagraha' – i.e. The force of truth and love and not a passive mean – which he utilized for achieving his just goals, are equally essentially today also to solve the problems.

Great men never die; their work lives on, Gandhi's fundamentals of ethics formed on South African experience – love is better than hate; peace is better than war, co-operation is better than conflict and persuasion is better than force are like light – house for today, tomorrow and forever. His sincerity, integrity and warm humanity will undoubtedly have a tremendous effect on the hearts and minds of all the people in the whole world.

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