Relevance of Gandhian Philosophy for People's Empowerment through Civil Society Organizations

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ABSTRACT

The technological advancement along with the process of liberalization, privatization and globalization (LPG) has resulted for development. On other side, this development is not holistic and not uniform for all the people as well as the geography of our nation. Day by day, the negative impact of this development is becoming increasing with severe vulnerability with hazards & disasters as the process is mostly top-down approach rather than bottom-up indicating the poor participation of the stakeholders with less and less opportunities. Under these circumstances, civil society organizations (CSOs) which still follow the Gandhian philosophy do play significant role in reaching the targeted groups with need based strategies & interventions with sustainable development. The model of SCCRATDSQR has been designed and adopted with civil society organizations which support the relevance of Gandhian philosophy in empowering the people with sustainable development and quality of life (QOL). The model is simple and flexible for understanding and implementing while working for the empowerment of the people through CSOs.

Introduction

It is a well known fact that the process of liberalization, privatization and globalization (LPG) has brought development on one side and on other side resulted in vulnerability and further lead for hazards and disasters. This development is not holistic and not uniform for the people and country. The negative impact includes: environmental pollution, water crises, poor access, high cost, widening the gap between the rich and poor, health hazards, conflicts, climate change, global warming, struggle for the basic needs, scheme or fund driven development, …. and so on which resulted for poor quality of life (QOL). Is it possible for us to be with this process?

Certainly not, but the question before all of us is whether we can get away from this and how? Certainly not, except to accept LPG as there is no other alternative to move forward. Still while moving with this one sided development, it is possible for us to make life better with sustainable development surrounded by healthy & eco-friendly environment.

Gandhian Philosophy – Model

Our great philosopher and Nation's father Mahatma Gandhi is the role model for ever for many in the world. Many of his ideas and seeds have acted as a vision & direction and ignited several minds to develop themselves and the people. Some of the concepts of Gandhian

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philosophy like: simplicity, concern, commitment, responsibility, accountability, transparency, development, sustainability, quality and relevant (SCCRATDSQR) still works as magic words or mantra in day to day life starting from conceptualization to implementation on life cycle basis. This relevance is well accepted in general and particularly in empowering the people through civil society organizations.

The civil society organizations (CSOs) also known as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) works between the government and community for the empowerment of people with sustainable strategies and interventions covering social, developmental and economical areas. This process of empowerment works on life cycle basis and improves the quality of life with independency. The model presentation of SCCRATDSQR and GO – NGOs linkages are shown in Fig. 1 A & B respectively as:
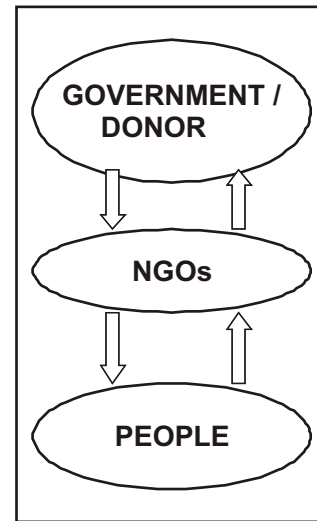
Fig.1B: GO – NGOs LINKAGES

and vulnerability. It works in two ways as downward and upward channels. The combination of these two channels in harmony results for the holistic development of the people. The thoughts of Gandhian philosophy as a model of SCCRATDSQR (Fig.1A) are quite relevant in the present context of people's empowerment through civil society organizations and a brief view of each component has been discussed below.

Simplicity: It is the best suited concept for the civil society organizations to work for better living of the targeted groups with sustainable solutions matching to their skills, needs and vulnerability. It keeps the people and organizations to work with simple measures at all levels. Still this word "simplicity" is relevant with service organizations. The simplicity of NGOs at all levels helped them to be cost effective, close with community with sustainable and quality development. The present acts and policies in India insist for more of community based interventions as they are simple, cost effective, inclusive, sustainable, holistic and reaches larger groups.
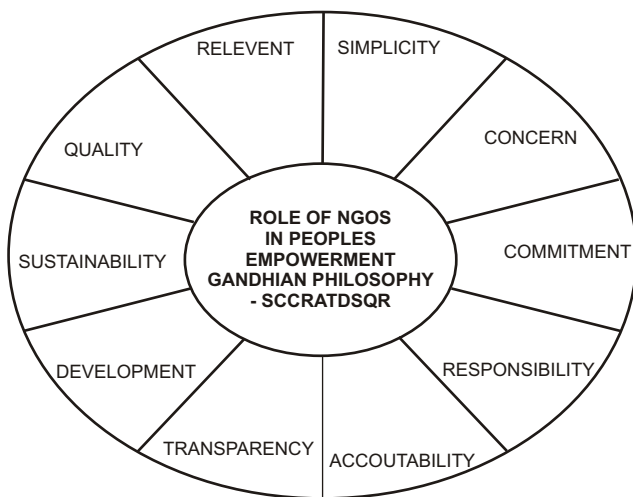
Fig. 1A: SCCRATDSQR

The NGOs play significant role in taking the Government / Donor to the people and vice – a – versa (Fig.1B) with the aim of their empowerment matching to their skills, needs

Concern: Concern for the environment, causes and people is the key word of the civil society organizations. NGOs work with concern for specific cause and vulnerable groups. For example, the concern for disability or HIV / AIDS or environment and affected groups helped the NGOs to work for their training and rehabilitation with the focus of better living with right based strategies & interventions.

Commitment: Commitment for the vision, mission, values and objectives in respect of the vulnerable group made the NGOs to work with sustainable solutions both on short term and long term which finally lead for the holistic development of the people and area. It is the key factor to transform the vision into reality with sustainable strategies and interventions. It is the fact that our commitment through NGOs to fight against polio, TB, HIV / AIDS, disability, poverty and other disasters have resulted for better living environment.

Responsibility: Feeling responsible for the action and cause to do, enhance the NGOs responsibility in working for the empowerment of people with innovative, creative, need based and sustainable strategies & interventions. The Government–NGO coordination enhances the confidence of the people in general and particularly in the event of vulnerability. This process is still relevant for civil societies in doing their best for the better living of the people by working as a transformer between the government or funding agencies and people at grass root level. Our sense of responsibility during the time of recent cyclones, earth quakes and other disasters made us to save the people and their properties including the environment.

Accountability: Having a sense of accountability for the action, cause and its consequences motivates and enhances the confidence level of the team members. This concept is still valid with the NGOs who works with accountability for the cause and consequences and further ignites the minds of the team members and other targeted groups for moving forward with better accountability. The accountability of NGOs towards the eradication of poverty, disability, HIV / AIDS and other hazards resulted for better results.

Transparency: Creation of systems with transparency covering technical and administrative issues in general and more particularly the financial issues both receiving and spending, enhances the confidence level of the stakeholders. Use of e-technologies (ICT) and e-governance has improved the level of transparency significantly both for the users and decision makers. Creation of awareness for the users in terms of concept, utility and advantages gains importance as technology is the need of the hour. Tuning to this, several NGOs are in the process of enhancing their transparency at planning, designing, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and presentation with the participation of the targeted groups and other stakeholders. Deployment of participatory rural appraisal (PRA) tools by the NGOs is the reflection to move with transparency at all levels.

Development: Our Nation's poverty eradication slogan, "Roti", "Kapada" and "Makhan" moves towards development of the area and people in general and ruralites particularly. In spite of the best efforts of stakeholders, the development is not sustainable as the dynamics of the environment are challenging and complex. It

is mainly due to the poor participation of the project affected people (PAPs) & other stakeholders, top-down approaches, scheme or fund driven development, high cost mechanism and poor concern over the surrounding environment. These challenges may be the main reason for the people to oppose for the developmental projects like infrastructure, mining, industries and other business oriented activities. In spite of these short comings hear & there and gaps between the need and actual, still our nation is moving forward with development. The need of the hour is to plan for the developmental activities matching to the needs of the people by balancing the impact over the surrounding environment.

Sustainability: It is the key buzz word and works for the development and to plan further strategies with strong foundation. It is the long term process and all the strategies, interventions and systems should have the component of sustainability at all levels. The civil societies follow the concept of "instead of giving fish, teach them how to fish" as this suits for achieving sustainable development. It is our experience and belief that sustainable strategies have resulted for our nation's independence and civil society organizations have committed with sustainable strategies and interventions in achieving the people's empowerment for better living. Community based strategies & interventions gained importance as they result for sustainable development.

Quality: Quality of the service or product or life of the people is the ultimate parameter as it alone maintains the health of the people and environment. Our nation is facing severe challenges in terms of quality either it is construction or food grains or water or products or services. It is the fact that many of our schemes are mostly target or number driven rather than quality oriented. There is an urgent need to come out with matching solutions. Community based strategies and interventions deployed by the NGOs have started yielding quality results with better sustainability. The better living of the people infected with HIV/AIDS or disability are some of the best examples before us.

Relevance: The product or service or system or support or technology should be appropriate or matching to the needs, skills, living environment and vulnerability of the people. The mismatch results in unfaithful, depression and conflicts among the people. In the process of development, like dams, water, power plants, mining, infrastructure etc., conflicts have become common among the people both nationally and internationally. This is happening mainly due to the top-down approaches, poor participation of the PAPs, scheme or fund or number driven development and less control over the time frame. NGOs are playing key role in minimizing some of these challenges and trying to be very near to the community with innovative, cost effective and need based strategies & interventions.

Discussion

As explained above, Gandhian philosophy for the freedom and development of the people and nation is still relevant to the people and nation. The seeds of this philosophy have emerged into big trees with better shadow, security and protection to the people and nation. The negative part of this process always exists like two faces of coin and our wiseness depends upon the extraction of positive impact and moving forward with better utility of the components of SCCRATDAQR model.

It is the known fact that civil society organizations work by the people for the people with better participation of the people at all levels, starting form the stage of conceptualization to formulation to designing to implementation, including evaluation and monitoring (CFDIEM). Social auditing and use of e-technologies including e-governance have changed the dynamics of welfare in to empowerment to human rights. This further enhanced the faith & morale of the stakeholders to move towards empowerment with rights based strategies & interventions.

In 1980's, I had an experience of having the simple and need based strategy of saving rain water to fight against the water cries in parts of Rajasthan. On house based, majority of the people used to store the little rainwater in the sub-surface sumps / tanks which will be used during the off season. This system was quite common and people got habituated to do the same with concern and commitment. That may be one of the reason that our poverty alleviation slogan: "Roti (food), Kapada (clothing) and Makhan (housing)" never included or thought to include 'water'. Now what is happening? Rivers got dried or polluted, glaciers are melting, groundwater is getting depleted and polluted, encroachment or vanishing of surface water bodies, concrete jungles with less greenery and forests and further consequences have resulted for isolated development with vulnerability for hazards & disasters. With all these challenges and vulnerability, one need not to be surprised when third world war comes to fight against water. In India, people understood the need and started cleaning the rivers, protecting the glaciers, controlling the pollution, initiated afforestation, developing surface water bodies, enhancing water potential by way of rain water harvesting, watershed management and other related measures for resolving water crises with community based strategies & interventions where NGOs play key role with better accountability and transparency.

Civil Societies working for the empowerment of the vulnerable groups of people have achieved their targets by creating evidence based development with sustainability and quality of life. These achievements and significant impact created in the lives of the people have been widely published in the media and won appreciations & awards at all levels. Some of the civil society organizations where I have been associated have developed their system of planning, designing, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and presentation with better participation of the targeted groups and other stakeholders. The use of e-technologies have enhanced their accountability and transparency with better sustainability and quality of life. Some of them have got the National level Awards for the good work done in the rural areas. This reflects the need and strengths of the civil society organizations which supports & reflects the relevance of Gandhian philosophy even to day. The process is going on to adopt several such innovative and creative strategies & interventions matching to the skills, needs and vulnerability of the targeted group of people with community based approaches.

Conclusions and Suggestions

Understanding and experiencing of Gandhian philosophy has resulted for several conclusions as:

- The people and environment are facing several challenges with vulnerability including sustainability and quality,

- The process of LPG and use of technologies have resulted for development on one side and hazards, disasters and widened the gap between the rich & poor on other side,

- The Gandhian philosophy is people oriented and works as a mantra even today, for all and civil societies are working for the empowerment of the targeted groups with better sustainability and quality of life.

- The parameters emerged from the Gandhian philosophy in the form of SCCRATDAQR are still relevant for the civil society organizations which works for the empowerment of the targeted people leading towards their better living with sustainability and quality of life (QOL),

- This model is simple and can be deployed by the civil society organizations matching to the skills and needs of the people and environment,

- Better awareness shall be created among the people by way of trainings, workshops, seminars and publications,

- The students shall be oriented towards the Gandhian philosophy both to learn and to disseminate among others,

- Encourage students to do project or research works and

- Prepare volunteers, NSS, NCC and other clubs to associate with CSOs with creative and innovative strategies & interventions.

Mentoring Skills

Who wouldn't like to have a mentor
One who is a trusted advisor and confidante
But to be a mentor yourself
Now, that requires some skills
So here are some tips to help you
For to someone or the other, mentor you will be
At some point or the other in your career.

Before that let the skeptics on mentoring be assured
That mentoring has definite advantages
For both the mentor and mentee
And thereby indirectly to the organization
Say as part of succession planning strategy.
Mentor ends up with a feeling of great satisfaction
Seeing the mentee grow in self-confidence
With a clear sense of what they are wanting
Out of their personal and professional lives
And develop an expanded sense of self-awareness.
Dealing with the mentee on a long-term basis
The mentor can impact his overall development
By maximizing his skill development
And unlocking his true but hidden potential.

Easier it is to mentor someone
Not immediately in your management chain
Enabling you to take a detached, overall view.
Without a desire to help the mentee
You will not be good at mentoring

So, motivate yourself if need be
That mentoring can help your own growth.
Once you have set foot in this arena
You need to be confident and assured in manner
Critiquing and challenging in a non-threatening way
At the same time listening actively
To understand better the mentee and his psyche
And probe gently by asking open-ended questions
That set the mentee thinking deeply
And always round-off your session with feedback
To not only communicate that you have understood
But also to add your own interpretation to the summary
Which makes the mentee start seeing things
From newer and different perspectives.

It is worth bearing in mind
While you do need to transfer to the mentee
Your knowledge, skills and insights
Doing so in a gradual and phased manner
With the right amount of nurturing and support
Will make the mentoring more successful.

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