

REVISITING GANDHIAN IDEA OF DECENTRALIZATION AT THE TIME OF COVID 19: KERALA MODEL

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ABSTRACT

This paper is an attempt to explore the relevance of the lost legacy of Gandhi in the context of the Gandhian idea of decentralization at the time of the most challenging health crisis in the world, the pandemic COVID 19. The impetus to the idea of democratic decentralization was first witnessed during the 73rd Constitutional Amendment which came out with the constitutional status to the Panchayati Raj Institutions and evolved three-tier system of Panchayat. The credit goes to the Balwantrai Mehta Committee which was set up in 1957 and recommended the three-tier structure of interconnected local self-government. The idea was the endowment of PRIs with the necessary power for the implementation of social justice and welfare programmes. However, it is a bitter reality that centralization remains at the centre ignoring the envisioned objective of decentralization. Gandhi talked about overall holistic village development, where he tried to establish a close link between positive transformation through various programmes and village governance through Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI). Both went not parallel to each other but enclosed in each other. It thus becomes important to identify this correlation in the role of decentralization in tackling the most difficult crisis in human history. This paper thus is a modest attempt to examine the Kerala way of fighting COVID from the perspective of the Gandhian idea of decentralization. Kerala is known for its successful model of decentralization; many times this angle is ignored or remains unacknowledged in analysing the outcome.

KEYWORDS: *Gandhian Approach, Gram Swaraj, Panchayati Raj, COVID 19 Kerala Model, Gandhian Relevance*

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