



Mahatma Gandhi and World Peace

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The context is the 'Global Peace' in the modern world and the text is 'Gandhian philosophy for its attainment. The broad hypothesis is : " World peace can only be realized through non-violence. There is no alternative to non-violence".

The objectives of this paper are as following:

- (i) to state the problems/ crises of the modern world ;
- (ii) to analyse the multi-dimension of Gandhi's concepts of Non-violence and Truth;
- (iii) to examine Gandhi's views on state and his vision of democracy ;
- (iv) to present Gandhi's interpretation and contribution to the formulation of India's foreign policy and world-views ; and
- (v) to establish an organic relationship between Gandhian principle and world peace.

The modern world is facing a multi-dimensional crisis; a crisis that poses challenge to each and every aspect of our life. Among the outstanding aspects of this crisis are; over-militarization, nuclear proliferation and global reach of arms, overdevelopment and underdevelopment resulting in mal-development, a vast number of people suffering from poverty, hunger and marginalization. Added to these are environmental

degradation in the forms of abuse and overuse of nature and pollution and growing paucity of resources, denial of human rights, gender bias and injustice, crisis in the field of energy, mounting insecurity and violence, terrorism, war and conflicts, drug trafficking, AIDs. Besides, there are corruption, communalism, unemployment, regionalism, problems of language, ethical and moral degradation in private and public life. All these together pose a grave challenge to the world. Peace is far away so long as these problems exist.

II

Among the various political ideologies, democratic governance appears to be best because it is this very system which provides maximum opportunities of public progress and development. People can themselves decide the mode of their welfare. But, is the democratic system of governance free from above problems ? Therefore Gandhian Philosophy is very much contextual today on this accord.

Mahatma Gandhi treated his individual life in accordance with his ideas. He said "my life is my message". Therefore Gandhism is a mixture of Gandhi's concepts and practices. The basic groundship happens to be "Non-violence". He practiced and prescribed non-violence as a

remedy against all social evils. It is the most ancient eternal values and culture of India. He said on this account, "I have nothing new to teach you... Truth and non-violence are as old as hill." Non-violence and Truth are two sides of a same coin.

A. Non-violence

Total non-violence consists in not hurting some other one's intellect, speech or action per own thought, utterance or deeds and not to deprive some one of his life." In essence, abstinence in toto from violence is non violence. In this context Gandhi clarified in an edition of young India.

"..... to hurt someone, to think of some evil unto some one or to snatch one's life under anger or selfishness, is violence. In contrast, purest non-violence is an epitome in having a tendency and presuming towards spiritual or physical benefit unto everyone without selfishness and with pure thought after cool and clear deliberations... The ultimate yardstick of violence or non-violence is the spirit behind the action."

B. Non-Violence is perpetual.

From beginning unto now man has been ultimately treading path of non-violence. It came into existence along with man. It is co-terminus with life. In case, it has not with man from the very beginning, there might have been self-dom by man. Besides there has been gradual enhancement in development and proximity in spite of presence of various obstacles and hurdles.

(C) Non-violence and Truth both are complementary to each other. It is more appropriate to say "Truth is God," rather than saying "God is Truth". He equated God with Absolute Truth as ultimate reality, Soul is the spark of this God of Truth. It is the moral, The spiritual force, the divine spirit which regulates our

body and mind. It is the voice of God, the voice of Truth within us.

Both are two sides of the same coin. Both have same value. Difference consists in approach only. The derivation is that Truth stays with permanence and that Truth is permanent. Non-violence on account of being permanently present stays to be true. Non-violence is both a means and an end in itself.

(D) Non-Violence is the strongest weapon.

It is not a weapon of the weak. It has no place for cowardice. It is an active force. Non-violence is impossible without bravery / courage/ fearlessness. Doing at any cost something that one ought to do. The courage of dying without killing. Having decided upon the rightness of a situation, Gandhi would not like one to be passive spectator to evil. This is the essence of Non-Alignments which is different from neutrality. "When freedom is menaced or justice is threatened or where aggression takes place we can not and shall not be neutral."

(E) Non-Violence has individual and social aspects too. It fosters co-operation and cooperative progress. Progress is difficult to achieve without co-operation. Co-operation is possible only when there is no violence. To him, regulation of mutual relations in society is through non-violence to considerable extent. He wished it to be developed on large scale. He called upon the people to continue to develop it in practice throughout life as the basis of life.

(F) Non-Violence is not utilitarianism.

It is all - timely and all welfaristic. A non-violent is always ready to face punishment for the maximum benefit of all whereas a utilitarian is not.

(G) Complete unity and integrity of body, mind and soul are in the individual human being. The

body should be controlled by mind and the mind by the soul - a harmony among three. But this control is not to be achieved by despising or neglecting either the body or mind or soul.

(H) Means are at least as important as, and often more important than, ends. It is, of course, desirable that ends should be good and reasonable. They give direction to life while the means adopted constitute life itself. The means confirm to the test of truth and non-violence, even mistakes, errors, and failures aid the growth of the individual. We can not get a rose by planting a noxious weed. There is an inviolable connection between the means and end as there is between the seed and tree. The relationship between the two is organic. There must be purity of means. Those who grow out of violence, they will end in violence. This is what makes Gandhi distinctly different from Kautilya, Machiavelli, Bentham, Karl Marx, Lenin, Trotsky and others.

III

Examination of Gandhi's view on State may, perhaps, lead to a better understanding of his vision of democracy. Sometimes a confusion is made between the acts of the individuals and those of the State, and it is expected that Gandhi's State is to be non-violent. But how is the State act non-violently, when it represents violence in a concentrated and organized form? Indeed a non-violent state is a contradiction in terms. It could only be called a non-violent stateless society. This is the ideal for Gandhi. Non-existence of State as cherished by Gandhi is impossible instantly or in near future. At the level of imperfect nature of man, among the existing states, democratic governance appears to be best.

But the paradox is that being theoretically the best system of government, there is tidal waves of violence and other related problems sweeping

across the world and seems to be having no respite.

Gandhi is certainly a staunch supporter of democracy. He believed that state is best which governs least and this is his second best ideal. He held the view that there are certain things which cannot be done without political powers, even though there are numerous other things which do not at all depend upon political power. While in ideal society, there is no room for the military and police, yet in the actual state there is provision for it according to the moral level of its citizens. Democracy should be intermingled with non-violence in even manner and governmental interference is minimum. The present democratic systems can overcome the problems most importantly "violence and terrorism" only when non-violence is accorded supreme status in practice as well as in principle and at social as well as individual plane. Only such a democracy can be successful in its real goal. The existing democratic deficit can be overcome by incorporating "Gandhism in democracy". Violence is not sacred, pure or welfaristic from any point of view. Whatever is gained on the basis of it is impure and temporary. Democracy and violence can never be mutual. The basis of democracy is non-violence in toto. In it, people will grow accustomed spontaneously to observe their social obligations without the operation of the State. The more the individuals have imbibed the spirit of non-violence, the less the necessity of state. This is the implication of Gandhi's concept of Swaraj. "The attempt to win Swaraj is Swaraj itself. It is a developing ideal and is "better than the best". Gandhi calls it "indefinable". Whatever political institutions Gandhi accepted, he did so as a transitional device, to be transcended by better ones. No institutional device is final. They must involve with the evolution of the individuals. The state should work in the direction of development

of non-violence at individual, community, social and national levels. Gandhi believes that politics can remain pure and free of corruption only if and so far it is based on ethical principles- ethics which are common to all religions. He stands for the spiritualization and secularization of politics. Gandhi said : "If they are to be truly made democratic, they must be valiantly non-violent. In case of its absence, democracy shall be there for namesake only and it would be better for it ... clearly be supporter of dictatorship". This democracy must be such that it should not warrant power of punishment. In it people will certainly be conscious of their duties. Peace requires peaceful method. There is no alternative to non-violence.

IV

Gandhi's experiences in South Africa became his laboratory where he conducted experiments and formulated his worldview. The discovery was Satyagraha. The policy of apartheid by the white Minority Government made the lives of the millions of the coloured people deplorably miserable. Colonialism was legitimized. He valiantly fought against racialism, apartheid and colonialism. The historic challenge before him was whether the weak could fight the strong. Through his constant experimentation he realized that non-violence was the strongest weapon of the colonized masses and taught them to use it. He was able to induce courage and strength in the weakest of the weak and remorse in the hearts of the cruelest of the cruel and his belief that good exists in all humans, one only has to awaken that good within.

On his return from South Africa, Gandhi took the leadership of Indian National Congress and adopted a positive and dynamic stand on international affairs. He said : "My idea of nationalism is that my country may become free,

that if need be the whole of the country may die so that human race may live. There is no room for race hatred here. Let that be our nationalism".

He also said :

"I do want to think in terms of the whole world. My patriotism includes the good of mankind in general. Therefore my service of India includes the services of humanity... isolated independence is not the goal of the world states. It is voluntary interdependence. The better mind of the world desires today not absolutely independent states warring one against another, but a federation of friendly, interdependent states. The consummation of that event may be far off. I want to make no grand claims for our country. But I see nothing grand or impossible about expressing our readiness for universal interdependence rather than independence. I desire the ability to be totally independent without asserting the independence".

From the beginning of the Non-cooperation Movement, Mahatma Gandhi emphasized the view that free India would have friendly relations with other countries. In the issue of Young India, 1 June, 1921.

Gandhi wrote :

"An India awakened and free has a message of peace and goodwill to a groaning world. Non-cooperation is designed to supply her with a platform from which she will preach the message."

In November 1921 All India Congress Committee (AICC) passed a resolution, drafted by Gandhi, conveying to the neighbouring countries that the foreign policy of the then Government of India did not represent the Indian opinion and was formulated by the British Government for holding India in subjection rather than protect her border. Freedom movements in

Asian countries drew inspiration, sympathy and support of the Congress.

Under his leadership the Congress did not want to limit its outlook to fighting against British imperialism in India and thought of combating imperialism elsewhere in the world. In 1927 at its Madras Session the Congress declared that India could not be a party to any imperialist war and in no case should India be made to join a war without the consent of its people. In September 1933 Mahatma Gandhi wrote to Pandit Nehru : "We must recognize that our nationalism must not be inconsistent with progressive internationalism. . . I can, therefore go to the whole length with you and say that we should range ourselves with the progressive forces of the world." Gandhi criticized the aggressive policies of Hitler and Mussolini. For India it is one of complete opposition to Fascists ; it is one of opposition to imperialism. All India Congress Committee reaffirmed its determination to oppose any attempt to involve India in the war without the consent of the Indian people.

After the outbreak of the Second World War, Gandhi supported the cause of Poland. Even despite British deception, Gandhi did not want to embarrass Britain when she was engaged in a life-and-death struggle with Nazi Germany.

It may be noted that after outbreak of the Second World War, Gandhi's insistence on the application of non-violence in the international arena led to his ideological break with the Congress organization. Realizing the futility of war in June 1940, Gandhi went to the extent of urging Congress to declare that free India would not use any armed force for its defence.

In September 1940 the A.I.C.C. passed the resolution. The A.I.C.C. stated its commitment to the policy and practice of non-violence, world disarmament and world peace. During the war,

the nationalist movement in Afro-Asian Countries gained momentum. The end of the World War II was followed by the Cold War between the two Superpowers. In such a state of affairs, Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Nehru propounded their doctrine of international amity and cooperation and resurgence of afro-Asian countries for the sake of liberation from colonial rule. India made it categorically clear to keep aloof from all alignments.

Asian Relations Conference was held from 23 March to 2 April 1947 in New Delhi. In this gathering both Gandhi and Nehru ,stressed the role of Asia and India in the promotion of world peace. Gandhi declared "I would not like to see that dream realized in my life time". Gandhiji advocated "voluntary inter-dependence" of nations as against their isolated independence", and "universal interdependence rather than independence". The AICC in its resolution 1942 under Gandhi subscribed to an idealistic approach to India's foreign policy. It expressed "the future" peace, security and ordered progress of the world demand a World Federation of free nations and on no other basis can the problems of the modern world be solved". Such a World Federation was advocated for the sake of the freedom of the member nations, prevention of aggression and exploitation of one nation by another, protection of national minorities, advancement.

Gandhi advised the Asian delegates to convey to the whole world, particularly the west the message of Love and Truth. He said :

"The west today is pining for wisdom. It is despairing of the multiplication of atom bombs, because the multiplication of atom bombs means utter destruction not merely of the west but of the whole world, as if the prophecy of the Bible is going to be fulfilled and there is to be, heaven forbid, a deluge. It is up to you to deliver the whole

world, not merely Asia, from that sin. That is the precious heritage your teachers and my teachers have left us".

Gandhi was in favour of building up of a "World Commonwealth". Gandhi in his speech on 15 September 1931 at the Round Table Conference (Second Session) said :

"Time was when I prided myself on being, and being called, a British subject. I have ceased for many years to call myself a British subject, I would far rather be called a rebel than a subject. But I have aspired- I still aspire to be citizen, not in the Empire, but in a Commonwealth ; in a partnership if God wills it an indissoluble partnership but not a partnership super-imposed upon one nation by another".

Pandit Nehru formulated India's foreign policy adopting Gandhian prescription. It found its expression in the formulation of Panchasheel. Panchasheel are five principles of peaceful co-existence signed between India and China in April 1954. These are :

- i) Mutual respect for each other's territorial Integrity and sovereignty
- ii) Mutual non-aggression
- iii) Mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs
- iv) Equality and mutual benefit and
- v) Peaceful coexistence.

The policy of Non-Alignment reflected the essence of Gandhian prescription and reiteration of 'Panchasheel'. It has grown in to a gigantic movement having 118 countries as members and completing its 14th Summit. In fact, the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) is rightly described "History's biggest peace movement", it stood for 'Atom for peace'. The only possible answer to the atom bomb is non-violence.

As Pandit Nehru used to say" I would call ours the authentic Gandhian era and the policies and philosophy which seek to implement are the policy and philosophy taught to us by Gandhiji. There have been no break in the continuity of our thoughts before and after 1947".

V

Mahatma Gandhi is a practical idealist. He is not a pacifist. The impact of Gandhian message on Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was so profound and electrifying that he practiced the message and techniques for the liberation of the black people in America. He also deserves to be considered as the first public figure who sensed and articulated the common concern in respect of environment. He taught "Earth is our mother and we are her children". A mother can satisfy the needs of her children but not greed, hence limitation of human wants. He strongly pleaded for liberation and upliftment of women. If women are empowered and reign the world, it would be a peaceful world. Gandhi is a postmodernist in the sense that he has harmoniously balanced the multiple identities. There is no private Gandhi and public Gandhi. He has prescribed basic education for cultivating and nurturing moral life.

The ultimate ideal of 'Non-violence and Truth' is unrealized and unrealizable ; its value consists in pointing out the direction, not in their realization. Striving after the ideal is the very essence of practicing Gandhi's philosophy. This consciousness should make one strive to overcome the imperfection. Mahatma Gandhi did not have a shadow of doubt that the world of tomorrow will be, must be, a society based on non-violence.

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