

Gandhi and peace: Saviour of humanity

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Abstract

The most important issue before the comity of nations is the issue of peace, which preludes and necessitates the survival of humanity. The question of peace has to be addressed from two complementary perspectives. One derives from perspectives of peaceful co-existence among nations states. It focuses on avoidance of war and includes strategies, processes and instrumentalities that minimize tension, and augment the balance of power, and attempts to reduce arms and armed forces and promote negotiated settlement of international problems. It builds on the large corpus of research on international relations, superpower rivalries, regional conflicts and security. The technological and organizational innovations that may help manage arms control negotiations and peacetime cross-national links between military and civilian groups.

The second perspective is “bottoms up” and stems from a view of local conflicts among groups of people sub-national entities that often spill over into the rest of the nation, neighbouring nations and have the potential of threaten regional and international peace. Survey of the literature and works in progress concerned with peace suggests that Gandhian model is of considerable potential wherein non-violence plays a catalytic role.

Keywords: Peace, non-violent, nations, arms.

Introduction

Gandhi's life was devoted to the perfection of non-violent technique and everything that he said and did always informed of non-violence. He firmly believed that lasting peace in the world was possible only through non-violence. This was the only way to create a peaceful and humane society. Gandhian approach alone can generate a movement for harmony in family community, nation and the world. Research shows that violence in the world is visible in the form of wars conflicts, tensions, killings, cruelty, hatred intolerance and absence of sympathy.

To Gandhi the problem of society and of the world is, in essence, the problem of the individual. To quote his own words, “The world will live in peace only when the individuals composing it make up their minds to do so. It means that the individuals should attain a state “when mind and body and speech are in proper co-ordination. Thus the integration of the personality of the individual, through training and self-discipline is of the essence of the Gandhian way, even as the capture of political power and state machinery is essential to socialism and Fascism. According to Radha Krishnan, Gandhi tells us that we, who constitute the social order, are the disease and we must change, if civilizations is to improve. Thus, if the world is to be rid of violence in the form of war and revolution, the individuals must purge themselves of violence through self-discipline for world peace. it constitutes the first step or stage of the long-term approach to peace.

According to Gandhi the ethical discipline of the individual, chiefly, consists, of five vows and they are the same as the famous “Panch Yamas” of Patanjali, whose “Yogasutra” Gandhi studied in South Africa. The five vows are- Satya (truth), Ahinsa (non-violence), Asteya (non-stealing), Aparigraha (non-possession), and Brahmacharya (chastity). Some other vows recommended by Gandhi include fearlessness, removal of untouchability, “bread labour” tolerance i.e. equality of all religions, humility, and the vow of

Swadeshi. Gandhi says vows can be taken only on points of universally recognized principles. No one opts to take vows on dubious matters. Taking of a vow does not mean that we are able to observe it completely from the very beginning. It only means that we have to make constant and honest effort in thought, word and deed with a view to its fulfillment. Here he means starting point of a long journey from imperfection to perfection. From impurity to self-purification and from truth to truth. The various vows and observances, though apparently separate, make together single whole. They all are derived from truth, which is the sovereign principle. Thus, he writes, all the disciplines are of equal importance. If one is broken all are, therefore, it is essential that all the disciplines should be taken as one. Because the focal point is truth and if we follow the path of truth it's an arduous task for all of us.

Apart from the various observances discussed above, Gandhi's discipline for peace has another significance aspect. This is his emphasis on what is known as his constructive programme. The programme includes hand spinning, village work, national education and work for the uplift of the so-called untouchable these activities help to equip people for a non-violent fight by accustoming them to regular work. Again, constructive work is for a non-violent army what drilling etc. is for army and designed for bloody warfare. Gandhi believes that ultimately discipline will lead man to identify himself with the whole creation. In addition, that would be to best guarantee for peace. Man should earnestly desire the well-being of all God's creation and pray that he might have the strength to do so. In desiring, the well-being of all lays his own welfare. One, who, desires only his own or his community's welfare is selfish and it can never be well with him. Unless the collective mind of groups and nations is civilized, there can be no peace in the world. The very social advance man has made so far will be destroyed. Instruments of destruction get ever sharper until now they have arrived at the nuclear stage. Even then the tests must continue. One wanders what more is possibly wanted,

when, several nations, already have with them the instruments, which can destroy the whole of humanity repeatedly.

So it follows that there must be some organizations for peace as the problem calls for a thoroughgoing many-sided solution. There must be an attempt to remove or, at any rate, to control the causes of war. War according to Gandhi, is not an isolated phenomenon. It is the expression of all-pervasive violence. The world is composed of nations and individuals; and unless the purge themselves of violence, there can be no peace in the world. He suggests a thoroughgoing discipline for the individual to control and canalize his impulses. Thus, the individual and his regenerations are of the utmost importance for Gandhi. He is of the view that if the individual is properly disciplined and educated, the world would take care of itself.

Gandhi believes that a drastic transformation and reconstruction of the political and socio-economic structure of the nations internally should go hand in hand with the training and discipline of the individual. The object seems to be to give a broad institutional and socio-economic basis to world peace. In the end, the non-violent nations will organize themselves into a world federation or international league.

Thus, the idea is to build for enduring world peace from bottom upwards by two steps. Firstly, there is the discipline and training of the individual, which will be slightly, precedes other efforts towards peace. Secondly, there should be a transformation and reconstruction of the political and socio-economic structure of the nations along non-violent lines. The latter part of Gandhi's technique may be characterized as internationalism through non-violent nationalism for he does not urge the abolition of nation as pre-condition of world peace. For example, some advocates of World Government do, and it (internationalism through non-violent nationalism) forms the subject matter of the following pages in this article. Gandhi does not believe that nationalism and internationalism are antagonistic forces. As early as 1925 he wrote, it is impossible for one to be an internationalist without being a nationalist. Again, "Our nationalism can be no peril to other nations in as much as we will exploit none just as we will allow none to exploit us."

However, it must be non-violent nationalism that is; the nations of the world must be purged of violence. In 1946, Gandhi was asked how wars could be stopped. He replied, "I have no doubt that unless big nations shed their desire of exploitation and the spirit of violence of which war is the natural expression and atom bomb the inevitable, consequence, there is no hope for peace in the world. Non-violent nationalism is, also, a natural concomitant of his doctrine of Swadeshi, which lays down that we-limited as we are by bonds of the flesh-can best serve the world by serving our own country and countrymen, our nearest neighbours in space. Let every nations set its own house in order, and the rest will follow. This idea of non-violent nationalism entails thorough going transformation of the political and socio-economic structure and of the policies of the nations internally. For one thing, Gandhi strongly opposed to the state, because it represents violence in concentrated forms and organized form. State is a soulless machine; ideally speaking he is in favour of abolishing the state altogether. His ideal is a society in which there is no political power because there is no state in such a society life becomes, self-regulated and there ensures a state of enlightened anarchy. Thus Gandhi is philosophical anarchist like Tolstoy, Kropotkin and Bakunin.

Gandhi does not attempt anywhere to give a detailed picture of the ideal society of his concept. According to him, the satyagrahi cannot fore see the future, for God has given him no control over the future. We must be concerned only with our present effort. For if we take care of the means, the end will take care of itself. We got a fair idea of certain aspects of it from his early work. Hind Swaraj for according to Gandhi, what is written there has reference to an ideal state. In support of his arguments Gandhi also discusses the political and socio-economic aspects which will facilitate a nation to move along the cherished objectives of non-violence, which he has characterized as internationalism through non-violent nationalism.

For Gandhi the end is the greatest good of all or Sarvodaya as he calls it. Ideally speaking this end can be realized in a state of enlightened anarchy or stateless democracy, where "everyone is his own ruler." He writes, "Society based on non-violence can only consist of groups settled in villages in which voluntary cooperation is the condition of dignified and peaceful existence." His ideal society will be marked by voluntary cooperation and decentralization. In this society, every village will be a self-sufficing republic with a Panchayat armed with full powers, and every village will be "capable of managing its affairs event to the extent of defending itself against the world." Thus, even defense will be completely decentralized. Gandhi lays great emphasis on decentralization, both political and economic. Ideally he rules out all machinery for "it is machinery that has enabled these (big) nations to exploit others." However, he is not against machinery as such; he is against the evil consequence of mass production by means of machinery. Moreover, heavy transport, courts, lawyers, doctors and big hospitals are incompatible with the ideal non-violent society. Heavy transport is, chiefly necessitated by centralized industry and military considerations and as there will no centralized production and military in the ideal society, heavy transport will be automatically ruled out. Lawyers' courts will have no place here because in a society based on truth and non-violence, quarrels should be few and far between. Small differences could be settled through other peaceful means like negotiations, persuasion etc. Again, there will be hardly any need of mediation and hospitals because the discipline of bread labour (or manual work) will keep the bodies healthy. However, Gandhi believes that "an ideal is never fully realized in life." Therefore, Gandhi like Plato conceives of a second best or attainable ideal. He calls it a predominantly non-violent society". Gandhi retains the state, but it would for the most part be based on non-violence.

Freedom and equality must characterize the government of the predominantly non-violent society. Nation must be free from external control. Thus, Gandhi writes, "As every country is fit to eat, to drink and to breathe, even so is every nation fit to manage its own affairs, no matter how badly." Politically the non-violent state should be a parliamentary democracy. He writes, by political independence I do not mean an imitation of the British House of Commons, or the Soviet rule of Russia or the Fascist rule of Italy or the Nazi rule of Germany. My notion of democracy is that under it the weakest should have the same opportunity as the strongest, thereby giving equal opportunity to every individual. True democracy is not consistent with a few persons representing the spirit, the hope and the aspirations of the people; bulk is not the true test of democracy. As to the

sphere of state activity, Gandhi believes with Thoreau that, "that government is best which governs least".

He wanted every individual to be his own defence. However, he knew it was only a distant dream, for the nations of the World have not cultivated the non-violence of the brave. Hence, he suggested the idea of maintaining a non-violent army, which should act, unlike armed men, both in peace and war. The general of the non-violent army must be endowed with greater presence of mind than that of a violent army. Gandhi is against compulsory military training in every case and even under a national Government. However, he allows military training for those who believe in the use of arms, for "it is not possible to make a person or society non-violent by compulsion." There will be a "disciplined educated intelligent, educated police force, in the non-violent state to keep order within and to fight raiders from without. In 1940, Gandhi wrote, "The police of my conception will, however, be of a wholly different pattern from the present day force. Its ranks will be believers in non-violence. They will be servants not masters of the people. He does not believe that crime will disappear in a non-violence society. He believes that there will be crime in independent India. According to Gandhi, "Crime is a disease like any other malady and is a product of the prevalent social system. All crime is different kinds of diseases and they should be treated as such.

According to Gandhi the state should be secular. Every one living should be free to profess his religion. The non-violent state will entail vast economic and social changes in order to secure economic and social justice. Economy should not be separated from morality.

He suggests sweeping changes in the tax structure and the revenue system of the non-violent state and important duty of the non-violent state is to give education to the people. Primary education compulsory between the ages of seven to fourteen. Handicraft should be made self-supporting, so far as recurring expenditure is concerned. Self-supporting education is the only method in a poor and agricultural economy that Gandhi advocates, whereby education may be taken to the masses.

So in a world consisting of non-violent states, every country will be an equal and free partner of the emerging non-violent international society, for the non-violent nationalism of Gandhi is not "exclusive, and not designed to harm any nation or individual." Gandhi in fact presents to the world the highest ideal of internationalism. Thus he writes, just as the cult of patriotism teaches us today that the individual has to die, for the family, has to die for the village, the village for the district, the district for the province and the province for the country, even so, a country has to be free in order that it may die, if necessary for the benefit of the world.

Therefore, of nationalism or his idea of nationalism is that his country may become free, that if need be the whole country may die, so that the human race may live. There is no room for race-hatred there. Let that be our nationalism?. He agrees that in these days of rapid inter-communication and growing consciousness of oneness of all humankind, we must recognize that our nationalism must not be inconsistent with progressive inter-nationalism we should therefore range ourselves with the progressive force of the world.

Gandhi envisages the establishment of a world federation as the necessary condition for world peace. He wrote to Maurice Freedman in July 1942, I told you that I was at one with and that I was trying to take the Congress and everybody towards

world federation. However, Gandhi points out that the structure of a world federation can be raised only on a foundation of non-violence, and violence will have to be given up in world affairs.

Earlier also he had expressed the same view in 1931 while speaking in Geneva about the League of Nations. He said, (the league) is expected to replace war, and by its own Power, to arbitrate between nations who might have differences among themselves. But it has always seemed to me that the League lacks the necessary sanctions. I venture to suggest to you that the means we have adopted in India supply the necessary sanction not only a body like the League of Nations, but to any voluntary body or association that would take up this great cause of the peace of world.

According to Gandhi, there would be an international league only when all the nations big or small, composing it is fully independent. The nature of independence will correspond to the extent of non-violence assimilated by the nations concerned. A non-violent international order should be based on general disarmament. However, before general disarmament begins, as it must some day, some nation will have to dare to disarm her and take large risk. The level of non-violence in those nations, if that event happily happens, will naturally inverted and command universal respect.

The world is over ridden by misery chaos, instability, corruption to name a few. It is only because we are leaving behind Gandhi's principles. Gandhi in our lives is disappearing somewhere.

"Perhaps never before has there has been so much speculation about the future as there is today. Will our world always be one of violence? Will we have a firmer and wide belief in religion, or will the world be Godless? If there is to be great change in society how will that change be wrought? By war or revolution? Or will it come peacefully? Different plan of tomorrow's world as he hopes and wishes it to be. The answer is not only out of belief but also out of conviction. The world of tomorrow will be, a society which must be based on non-violence. That is the first law; out of it, all other blessings will flow. I may seem a distant goal, an impractical utopia. However, it is not in the least unobtainable, since it can be worked for, here and now. An individual can adopt the way of life, of the future the non-violent way without having to wait for others to do so; I see no poverty in the world of tomorrow, wars, no revolutions, no bloodshed and in that world there will be a faith in God greater and deeper than ever in the past. The very existence of the world, in a broad sense, depends on religion. All attempts to root it out will fail."

Gandhi showed us how to live non-violently and resolve conflicts peacefully if we have to give a message to the world, it must be the message of loves greater than the message of bomb.

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