

# Non-Violent Struggles of the Twentieth Century: Retrospect and Prospect

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## Foreword

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I am happy to write a foreword for the set of papers written for an international workshop held in New Delhi on the theme of "Non-violent struggles of the Twentieth Century and their lessons for the Twenty-first Century" in the form of a well edited book, I venture to add a few lines of my own as a humble contribution.

The twentieth century is known to be the most violent century witnessed in human history. It had two dreadful world wars; devastation of two cities by the use of nuclear bombs and hundreds of other wars in between World Wars and following them, leaving tens of millions dead and injured. The civilian victims outnumbered the military soldiers in these wars. The development of technology made our planet easier for communications and also more vulnerable. More and more people were exploited by fewer and fewer persons, dividing the world into two unequal halves of the favoured and the marginalized. Not only were human beings killed, but mother earth and its surrounding atmosphere were ruined. Nature, and its flora and fauna were treated mercilessly by men. The tragic division between the rulers and the ruled was sharper than ever before. The minorities and the poor were more unfortunate victims in this tragedy, and the women and the children among them the most severely affected. While science and technology advanced rapidly, the schism between the privileged and the deprived became wider and deeper, leaving several sections of society utterly destitute. The structural violence of the twentieth century was often more cold-bloodedly ruinous than overt violence.

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But twentieth century, was at the same time a period of most innovative experiments of non-violent action. Never before in history had man defied violence so civilly and so successfully. Spectacular scenes of women in their thousands facing baton-charges smilingly; teenagers confronting bayonets with open chests, soldiers refusing to use force against peaceful protestors, thereby inviting punishment on themselves for disobeying military orders; young men and women approaching armoured cars and tanks cheerfully offering roses to aggressive soldiers, were witnessed during this century. There were scenes of people versus armies. Prisons swelled with thousands of *Satyagrahis* voluntarily courting jails. Century old law had to be dragged out of old records to indict men and women who openly defied the unjust laws, but who were willing to accept the sentences passed on them by loyal judges of the day. Millions of citizens crowded roads, buildings and harbours defying laws preventing the assembly of more than three persons. Punishments, convictions, imprisonments and tortures of various sorts became totally ineffective when people defied the oppressor with voluntary suffering. The families of those who accepted imprisonment were supported by unknown families sympathetic with their cause. When dictators ordered certain sections of the society to wear a particular coloured armbands when going out of their homes, with a view to distinguish them from others and insult or injure them for no fault of theirs excepting their religion, the rest of the population came out wearing similar armbands reducing the dictator's order to a ridiculous farce. Entire teaching staff of a whole nation refused to accept the curricula imposed by a conquering despot and willingly accepted the punishment for defying the authority, eventually putting the whole education apparatus to a standstill thus compelling the authority to revert to the original curricula. Peaceful citizens were soon rallying against roaring military and para-military personnel, drowning the din of their commands in the melody of prayerful spirituals or joyous songs of freedom and solidarity.

The twentieth century witnessed the forces of life pitched against the forces of death, it was a war between two unequals often being one of the strong against the weak, the insolent against the meek, the wicked against the wretched, the exploiting few against the exploited many.

It was in this atmosphere of apparent inequality that the seeds of peace were sown. On a soil littered with bodies of the injured, the diseased or the dead sprouted the plant of peace. Peace appeared in the form of absolute novel- kind of leadership which revolutionized the means of struggle. It appeared in the uprising of people hitherto unheard of. It appeared in the quake of the oppressed. It appeared in the form of eternal values like truth, love and compassion once again raising their heads after long periods of dormancy.

Though evidently the most violent century in history, the twentieth century gave birth to hope for just and sustained peace. What were the reasons behind this change? There are a few that seem to be most evident:-

- a) The appearance of leaders who practiced what they preached.
- b) The clarity of mind among the leaders about the direct relationship between the ends and the means.
- c) Total lack of viability of violence and some viability of non-violence.
- d) Sufficient conscientization among the victims of violence to cast off their fear and inertia.

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- e) Release of waves of sympathy towards victims of injustice, oppression and exploitation in a world with much developed means of communication.

Perhaps the greatest lesson that has to be learnt at the dawn of the twentyfirst century is as follows:-

The world has learnt enough about the futility of violence, producing ever increasing counter-violence, but non-violence has yet to prove its practical efficacy in several spheres of life. The practicability of non-violence in many aspects of life is the great challenge that faces mankind today. Lessons from past experience have to be learnt and the knowledge thus acquired has to be applied to the changing circumstances.

It appears that the first thing needed in the struggle against injustice, oppression and exploitation is the awareness of the masses regarding prevailing injustice. Conscientization of the oppressed is the first step that anyone concerned with peace and justice has to take. Making the affected people conscious about their conditions is only the beginning of this process. The general public around should also be made aware about the state of affairs. This helps a lot in creating waves of sympathy for the oppressed. Ideally, those responsible for the cause of injustice should also be made conscious about the truth of the situation. That is likely to change their attitude favourably, or at least, decrease the intensity of their opposition. There could be innumerable methods of conscientization. But, perhaps the best among them are person-to-person dialogue on one hand and people's active participation in the campaign on the other.

The next step that could be taken after awakening the people may be to organize them. Truth and justice can be effective only when they are well organized, for ill organized or disorganized campaigns may be totally futile. Organization of non-violent

campaigns has to be developed not on the model of violent organizations, which generally are centralized and hierarchical in nature. It may be noted that breaking or bending centralized institutions is much easier for the tyrant than organizations with a wide base and whose members make their own independent decisions, rather than obeying orders from the top. While considering ways of struggle against injustice, it is of utmost importance to reflect about the question of ends and means. No method of violence could ever be beneficial to the oppressed people. The forces of death are much better equipped in arms, they have much more experiences of violence and they usually, are more trained. Violence becomes counter-productive when it generates more severe counter-violence. Violence has to be ruled out both from the practical point of view as well as a matter of principle. But training is as much needed for non-violent action as it is for violent action. This is a field which will have to be developed considerably during the twenty-first century.

Non-violent action could both be positive and negative. They may be for reconstruction as well as resistance. Even as non-violent action tries to eliminate the evils of a system based on fear and greed, it can simultaneously try to build alternate models of society. Building alternate models may vary from place to place and from time to time. This would mean setting up centres or creating communities which would serve as models for a non-violent society. The members of these communities would share a common objective, they would work together for the realization of the objective and in doing so, they would enjoy and suffer together, caring for and sharing with each other. They would live together as un-labeled human beings without any discrimination of caste, class, faith, colour or sex.

One vital lesson that the twentieth century has to give is that of faith. Those who wish that the seeds of non-violence and peace sown in the twenty-first century grow into a great fructuous

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tree must have faith in the goodness of human beings and in the future of mankind. In order to develop such deep faith the non-violent activist will have to cultivate faith first of all in her/himself. That will sustain her/him against all odds. Then he/she must have faith in her/his colleagues. That will be the foundation of the non-violent community. They must also have faith in the cause for which they are working. It perhaps goes without saying that nonviolent activist must have firm faith in their means. Means influence to ends as well as the character of one who uses them.

At the end let me say that non-violence to me means harmony within myself, harmony with fellow human beings and harmony with nature. To achieve such harmony demands deep sincerity and perseverance. All noble causes in life are achieved only through extra ordinary preservance.

*Nataya Debi*

## **Introduction**

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The twentieth century is often described as the bloodiest of all centuries in terms of the death and destruction caused by war, and the invention, stockpiling and deployment of weapons of mass destruction. Interspersed between the bloodiest moments of the last century are bright examples of social change and resistance to aggression and injustice brought about through non-violent action. This is particularly true of the last two decades. Tyrants were removed, governments were replaced, invading armies were stopped and domestic repression and denial of human freedom were thwarted. How this hidden power of the ordinary masses was used for the above goals is now chronicled extensively.<sup>1</sup> At the same time non-violent movements against authoritarianism have also suppressed in countries like El Salvador (1979-81), Burma (1988) and China (1989). However, the fact that non-violence was used as the means of protest has enhanced the legitimacy of these movements worldwide. Comparing outcomes of 323 nonviolent and violent resistance campaigns from 1900 to 2006, it has been found that non-violent resistance methods are likely to be more successful than violent methods and have achieved success 53 percent of the time, compared with 26 percent for violent resistance campaigns.<sup>2</sup>

Non-violent action “involves an active process of bringing political, economic, social, emotional, or moral



pressure to bear in the wielding of power in contentious interactions between collective actors.”<sup>3</sup> Non-violent action occurs when people refuse to perform acts of omission and commission or a combination of them. Gene Sharp tells us that non-violent action is “a technique of action by which the population can restrict and sever the sources of power of their rulers or other oppressors and mobilize their own power potential into effective power.” This involves strategies of protest and persuasion, non-cooperation and civil disobedience and even non-violent intervention.<sup>4</sup>

The use of non-violent sanctions is not limited by the type of regime being opposed or by place or by time. We also do not have any evidence to suggest that greater degree of violence that the oppressive system is able to unleash will break the will of the non-violent resisters. However, it is more difficult to sustain a movement which is relying exclusively on violent means given the greater possibility of intensification of repression by the oppressor in such circumstances and the declining level of civilian and external support that the movement will be able to marshal. At a time when we are talking about the role of civil society in nurturing democratic institutions and creating peaceful relations, it must be emphasised that non-violent action is an effective tool that can be put to use in this quest, not only for bringing about desirable social changes, but also for deepening democracy. Although focused on the spread of democracy, a Freedom House study conducted in 2005 shows that “recourse to violent conflict in resisting oppression is significantly less likely to produce sustainable freedom, in contrast to non-violent opposition, which even in the face of state repression, is far more likely to yield a democratic outcome.”<sup>5</sup>

Many years back Sun Tzu said that “to fight and conquer in all your battles is not supreme excellence; supreme excellence consists in breaking the enemy’s resistance without fighting.”<sup>6</sup> Of course this statement was not based on any principled rejection of war as a strategy, but a coolly calculated strategy that recognized the dysfunctional nature of war. But the quote has lot of implications for non-violent action.

Non-violent resistance is a civilian-based method used to wage conflict through social, psychological, economic, and political means without the threat or use of violence. It is an active process of bringing pressure other than force or threat of violence to bear on the wielders of power. Peace is not achieved by avoiding or stifling conflicts over key human issues at stake but by using non-violent struggle as the means to bring such conflicts to a just resolution. Mass non-violent struggle in politics represents an active form of civic engagement and at once a warning to those who ride roughshod over the people. Although insistence on the purer form of non-violence will often act as a fetter on non-violent action, it is perhaps necessary that at least the leadership in such movements subscribes to notions of non-violence as a principle in order to prevent the movement from lapsing into opportunistic violence. While planned application of non-violent action may not be possible in all cases, it is desirable that, wherever possible, such planning is undertaken for greater effectiveness.

At the same time we have instances of failed non-violent struggles in places like China where the regime

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continues to remain in power. The values in China, which emphasised discipline in parental fashion, the lag in rural China, the communications and media gagging, lack of any organised leadership and the inability to persist with non-violence until the end are often advanced as the reasons for the failure of the Tiananmen Square uprising of students. Pushed to the wall, the youthful protestors took to violence which made it easy for the regime to crush it. Same could be said of the Intifada, which had generated the possibility of a civilian resistance causing even some sections within Israel to change their attitude, the continued use of violence and the general lack of commitment to non-violence undermined its effectiveness. The fall of Slobodan Milošević in 2000 and the end of the Eduard Shevardnadze's rule in Georgia, which was propped up through a rigged election, all suggest that the power of civilian peaceful action as a means to bring about democratic change has now become a widely recognized method. The capacity of the non-violent movement to create an alternative power structure whose base is rooted in the consent of the people is crucial for it to persist with its actions. The Chinese rebellion failed because it had not reached that key threshold. In strategic terms, the students did not attack the regime during its weakest moments, but in a period of economic boom inaugurated by Deng Xiao Ping.

In our neighborhood in Myanmar, two successive protests, one led by the students in 1988 and the other led by Buddhist monks in 1997 were suppressed, and despite the devastation caused by the cyclone Nargis, no end to the regime is in sight. The Myanmar army is profoundly isolated from the civilian public. Its officers, over the decades of military rule, have become a separate caste that enjoys great

privileges, and its soldiers are mainly drawn from the rural areas with very little connection to the urban engaged sections of society.

The Tibetan issue for national self-determination within the People's Republic of China also is at a crossroads given the impatience of the youth and their desire for total independence rather than being content with the demand for internal self-determination advocated by the Dalai Lama. The refusal of the Chinese establishment to negotiate in good faith with the representative of the Dalai Lama, who has an excellent grasp of the imperatives of non-violent action is, in many ways, resented by considerable sections of international civil society. In 2009, the Tibetans in exile decided not to celebrate *Losar*, the Tibetan New Year festival in remembrance of the dead in violent clashes in Tibet in March 2008. China's response shows that such symbolic actions affect the establishment more than isolated violent acts given the publicity it generates and the moral high ground it allows for the Tibetan resistance to occupy. Very recently, in Maldives, the authoritarian 30 year rule of President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom was ended through a non-violent movement. Maldives can be rightfully added to the dozens of countries from the Philippines to Chile to Ukraine whose autocratic governments have been overthrown by employing peoples' power.

The most popular form of non-violent struggle in the world is the strategic one that has been popularised by Gene Sharp. It works like military strategy except that the means employed are non-violent. It nonetheless creates the aura of a war and the employment of strategies of cunning etc., to

defeat the opponent. The importance of such an approach is that it is very calculating and therefore appealing to many people who are guided by rational choice theories. It does not concern itself with ethical or moral questions except that the means used are formally non-violent. This is not to suggest that it is unconcerned with moral questions. Instead, the element of strategy is seen as primary. Since Sharp is dealing with tough regimes, the message is not one of Gandhian conversion, but one of defeating the other through a different form of power based on the withdrawal of consent. Non-violence becomes a form of politics by other means. Stephen Zunes tells us that the Palestinian movement “advanced its nationalist cause far more through the largely unarmed resistance in the occupied territories than from terrorism and other forms of armed resistance”<sup>7</sup> during the period of Intifada even though it used non-violence purely on strategic considerations rather than based on any strong commitment to it.

Sharp seems to combine elements of a Machiavelian expediency, Clausewitzian war strategy and a consequentialist understanding of the Gandhian methods to construct a form of non-violent action that he claims to have universal validity. This is oblivious of the fact that often movements emerge not on the basis of such calculations, and some space has to be accorded to their spontaneous emergence. Hence it is doubtful if the strategic non-violent action in itself can bring about deeper transformations since the very process can generate high degree of mutual hostility. The challenge is to build a more humane politics and to redeem it from its Machiavellian moorings. This is perhaps the most important contribution that non-violent actions of the last century have

bequeathed to us. Not every movement in the twentieth century adopted non-violent methods because of a principled attachment to non-violence. Some obviously did not have the arms to resort to violent action or if they had were aware of its implications for the destruction of life and property. Yet they adopted it as a measure of their resolve to fight their oppressors rather than acquiesce in their oppression.

In recent years, India too has witnessed a number of civilian resistance movements. Kashmir now boasts of a number of groups who believe in peaceful ways of agitation for self-determination. In Manipur, for example, the *Meira Paibis* (women torchbearers) in 2004 staged a nude protest against the killing of Manorama Thangjam by the Assam Rifles, who was picked up by the Assam Rifles, raped and killed. The women held aloft a banner that read, "Indian Army Rape Us.", a method of naming and shaming the military directly and the Indian government indirectly, which eventually developed into a civil society protest against the draconian Armed Forces Special Powers Act 1958. This as well as the hunger strike undertaken by Irom Sharmilla Chanu from 2000 onwards is also in the line of non-violent action, although one may not designate them as principled. The hunger strike serves as a bridge that connects what has often been women's private sphere to the public sphere. It serves as a means of political communication to gain sympathy and support, and when women engage in hunger strike, can produce effects on several fronts.

Combining the seemingly negative non-violent action with a high degree of positive element helps to neutralize the hostile environment that can emerge if the actions are focused

on protests alone. Gandhian non-violent action, which combines *Satyagraha* with constructive work, addresses this problem in a balanced way. Johansen and Martin say: "To say 'no' is common and easy, but it will often be regarded as unhelpful, as blocking progress. To present alternatives is more demanding, but often rewarded by being seen as constructive."<sup>8</sup>

Zunes cites cases of suppressed ethnic minorities as particularly difficult ones for winning the support of majority sectors against government repression given the widespread popular prejudice against such minorities. For example, this has been cited as a major impediment to non-violent action for the Tamil cause in Sri Lanka.<sup>9</sup> The Tamils ostensibly took to violence after expressing their grievances non-violently for more than three decades. One could always say that non-violent ways of protest by the Tamils failed because it had not reached a critical mass capable of shaking the foundations of the regime during this period. It is certainly a miscalculation to think that employment of force by a minority against an ethnicised state governed by a predominant majority group will ever achieve success. Recent military successes of the Sri Lankan government against the Tamil rebels attest to that.

Violent groups often eschew and discourage women's participation. Women's movements' use of non-violent tactics may "stem from activists' attachment to the core value of opposition to coercive means".<sup>10</sup> In other words, violent and non-violent methods offer differential opportunities of engagement for men and women, which may not be suggestive of any essentialism about men's and women's capabilities or inclination to either violence or non-violence.

Can non-violent action be engineered from the outside? The overwhelming evidence is otherwise. Support from the outside can be a very useful element in strengthening the movement, but it would not be possible to create a non-violent movement wholly from the outside with not much support from the inside.

In recent years, there have been attempts to link non-violent movements with the agenda of the West, particularly the US. This refuses to recognize the fact that many non-violent protests taking place in the world are actually directed against the neo-liberal policies of the US and agencies linked to its interest. This also imposes the need for reflexive practice on the part of the non-violent activists that enables them to evaluate their own work and remain independent of external linkages that can arouse suspicions. Building support from the third parties should be at the cost of realising the original goals of the movement<sup>11</sup>.

Building a culture of resistance to evil through non-violent means is a task that should not be the concern of isolated segments of society, but should become a part of the social ethos inscribed in the dictionary of political parties, youth movements and other protest groups fighting for various issues.

This volume is a collection of selected papers presented at the international Workshop on Non-violent struggles of the twentieth century and their lessons for the twenty-first, jointly organized by the Institute of Gandhian Studies, Wardha and the Gandhi Peace Foundation, New Delhi



from 6<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> October, 1999. Late Ravindra Varma, the then Chairman of the Gandhi Peace Foundation and the Institute of Gandhian Studies, was instrumental in the organization of the Workshop. The Workshop brought together outstanding scholars and practitioners from as many as eleven countries to discuss threadbare the struggles and identifying the lessons and means of increasing efficiency of non-violent methods.

The first article by Ravindra Varma examines the basic principles of Gandhi's *Satyagraha*. He recounts the basic beliefs that emerged in Gandhi's mind during the struggle in South Africa. The highest force at the command of human being is the force of the mind and the spiritual force that touches the heart and conscience. This subtle force is inherent in Truth or Love. Varma says that *Satyagraha* uses this force, and to be a *Satyagrahi*, one has to become an effective medium or conduit of this force by removing the obstructions to its flow.

Jorgen Johansen, in his article entitled "Non-violence as a Constructive Force" cites empirical evidence of growing trust in non-violent means in the struggles for political, social, economical and religious aims by analyzing the cases of Iran, Poland, Bolivia, Philippines, Eastern Europe, Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, South Africa etc . According to the author, the pragmatic use of non-violence as a substitute for arms, is a major step in positive direction. He also looks at possibilities of spreading non-violent techniques and deep non-violent life style.

In the next article Vijayam speaks of the increasing misutilisation of *Satyagraha* for partisan ends and the

employment of this technique either to tarnish the image of the ruling group or to obtain favourable decisions. Calling for the purer form of Satyagraha that is issue-based and guided by general interest, the author identifies the social movements as the ideal vehicle for carrying out *Satyagraha*.

John Moolakkattu looks at some problematic areas in non-violent action. His paper draws on the writings of Gene Sharp to point out the limitations of Sharp's approach in containing structural violence. While endorsing the general approach of Sharp, the author proposes to link the technique dimension with its moral and structural dimensions.

M. P. Mathai traces the Gandhian Legacy in the struggles of the post-Gandhian period in India and looks upon these struggles as peoples' pursuit of the ideal of Swaraj. He outlines the typology and issues of various struggles. The author admits that the role of non-violence in these struggles is a moot question. He argues that these groups are more convinced than ever before that non-violence has to be accepted as an ideal.

Usha Thakkar's article examines the contribution made by women to the non-violent struggle for independence of India. Thakkar says that the participation of women under Gandhi's leadership is a glorious chapter in the history of India as well as in the history of twentieth century. Participation of women in the struggle for independence gave a new dimension and legitimacy to Indian politics. It also demonstrated that inner strength is more powerful than brute force and the so-called 'weak' can make history, when committed to a cause and readiness to face adverse situations.

Sunderlal Bahuguna narrates the history of non-violent struggles in the hilly region of Uttarakhand. His article highlights the sacrifice of Dev Suman during the struggle for independence, fight against untouchability, liquor and looks at the famous *Chipko* Movement from the perspective of an insider.

In his article entitled 'Solidarity beyond Words', P V Rajagopal examines the meaning of north-south solidarity in relation to the oppressed and marginalized people of the world. He defines solidarity as the conviction born out of an internalized understanding of struggles, sufferings and the sorrows of the poor. He emphasizes the need for translating our words into action by reaffirming our commitment to millions of poor people who are struggling for survival.

Sanat Mehta explains in detail history of Pardi Grass Land *Satyagraha* in Surat, under the leadership of Ishwarlal Desai. The *Satyagraha* was organised by Pardi Kisan Panchayat against the injustice of zamindars in the post-independent era. For Ishwarlal Desai, Pardi *Satyagraha* was not merely a movement for land reform; it was part of a wider movement for proper utilisation of land and self-sufficiency in food.

Sulak Sivaraksa describes the efforts made in his native Thailand to practise Buddhist principles and how this was subverted by 'American experts' who saw these principles to be at odds with the notion of progress. Although leaders like Pridi Banomyong tried to recreate the principles of Vajjian republic of Buddha's period in ancient India, his one time ally Pribun who came to power in Thailand went ahead with the

development of Thailand according to Western models. He sees a ray of hope in the revival of the ancient Vajjian ideals thanks to the concerted efforts of Buddhist clergy and activists.

Thubten Samphel in his paper provides an overview of the non-violent struggle of the Tibetan people. He feels that the Dalai Lama's uncompromising attitude towards violence and his unquestioned moral authority among Tibetan people prevents Tibetans from taking up arms.

A.T. Ariyaratne in his article lays stress on the importance of awareness creation and conscientisation through educational programmes as practical non-violent responses to new forms of violence and injustice faced by his organization in the process of trying to ensure peace within human personalities and human communities as also between human beings and nature itself in Sri Lanka. He feels that the final option before Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement is direct political action if all other efforts fail.

Nurul Alam says that although Mujibur Rahaman was inspired by Gandhi and tried the constitutional method in the initial stages of the struggle against the Pakistani rulers, he was not averse to the use of violence when the Pakistani army cracked down on the civilian population. He highlights the peace accord signed with the tribals in the Chittagong Hill Tracts as an example of peaceful resolution of conflict.

Grazina Miniotaite traces the origin of the idea of civilian defence during the struggle for Lithuania's independence and describes how certain elements of civilian

defence stemming from that experience later came to be incorporated into the national security system of the country.

Elena Aleinikova's paper deals with Belarus' Popular Front and its activities. Unlike the other erstwhile Soviet States where reformist communists were at the helm of popular fronts, the fight in Belarus was largely directed against the authoritarian rule of Communist Party. Although the Front succeeded in undermining the pivotal constitutional position of the Communist Party, many activists have either been co-opted or silenced by the regime.

Chris Walker identifies elements of Martin Luther King's non-violent struggle which are more relevant to Asia. He says that both Gandhi and Martin Luther King realised the creative energy of conflict and used it for beneficial purposes.

Medha Patkar highlights the various issues involved in the Narmada Bachao Andolan's struggle against the Sardar Sarovar Project and the extent to which the principle of non-violence is adopted in its struggles.

This volume is a modest attempt on the part of Institute of Gandhian Studies, Wardha and Gandhi Peace Foundation, New Delhi, to document the different aspects of non-violent struggles from an international perspective. We are sure that this volume will kindle interest among non-violent activists and academic community and help in identifying new areas of research in this direction.

We take this opportunity to express our deep sense of gratitude to Chandrashekhar Dharmadhikari, Chairman,

Institute of Gandhian Studies, Wardha and Radhaben Bhatt, Chairperson, Gandhi Peace Foundation, New Delhi, for their initiative and institutional support in the publication of the book. We are highly indebted to Narayan Desai, Chancellor, Gujarat Vidyapith, Ahmedabad, for agreeing to write a brief foreword for the volume. We must also acknowledge our debt to Surendra Kumar, Secretary, Gandhi Peace Foundation, New Delhi, for his support and encouragement. We are grateful to Arunima Maitra for assisting us in the editing of the book. Our special thanks are due to Shrikant Kulkarni of the Institute of Gandhian Studies for his kind help. Last but not least, we are grateful to Sugunan of Lars Computer Centre, Athirampuzha, Kottayam and Manohar Mahajan of the Institute for word processing.

## **Notes and References**

- <sup>1</sup> . See for example Peter Ackerman and Jack DuVall, *A Force More Powerful: A Century of Nonviolent Conflict* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000); Stephen Zunes et al, eds. [\*Nonviolent Social Movements: A Geographical Perspective\*](#) (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1999); Gene Sharp, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action*. 3 volumes. (Boston: Porter Sargent, 1973).
- <sup>2</sup> . Maria J. Stephan and Erica Chenoweth, " Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict", *International Security*, Vol. 33, No. 1 (Summer 2008), pp. 7–44
- <sup>3</sup> . Kurt Schock, "Nonviolent Action and Its Misconceptions: Insights for Social Scientists", *PS: Political Science and Politics*, Vol. 36, No. 4. (October, 2003), p. 705.
- <sup>4</sup> . Gene Sharp, *Waging Nonviolent Struggle: 20th Century Practice and 21st Century Potential* (Boston: Porter Sargent, 2005), p. 39.
- <sup>5</sup> Adrian Karatnycky and Peter Ackerman, *How Freedom is won: From Civic Resistance to Durable Democracy* (Washington: Freedom House, 2005), p. 8.
- <sup>6</sup> . See [www.artofwarsuntzu.com](http://www.artofwarsuntzu.com).
- <sup>7</sup> . Stephen Zunes " Unarmed Insurrections against Authoritarian Governments in the Third World: A New Kind of Revolution", *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 15, No. 3. (September, 1994), p. 405.
- <sup>8</sup> . Jorgen Johansen and Brian Martin, "Sending the Protest Message", *Gandhi Marg* Vol. 29, No. 4, ( January - March 2008), p. 504.
- <sup>9</sup> . Stephen Zunes, 1994. op. cit, p. 420.
- <sup>10</sup> . Anne N. Costain, "Women's Movements and Nonviolence", *PS: Political Science and Politics* 33: 2 (June, 2000), p. 179.
- <sup>11</sup> . There have been several misrepresentations of nonviolence and non-violent action. More recent among them is the work of Peter Gelderloos who advances arguments that seem to suggest that non-violence is bad both as a principle and as a policy adducing empirical evidence in support of his conclusions. This has been subjected to a severe criticism by Brian Martin for adopting double standards – one for violent action and another for non-violent. See Peter Gelderloos, *How Nonviolence Protects the State* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2007) and Brian Martin, "How Nonviolence is Misrepresented" (review article) *Gandhi Marg*, Vol. 30, No.2, (July-September,2008), pp. 235-57.

# 1

## Basic Principles of Satyagraha

*Ravindra Varma*

The first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century witnessed a series of spectacular and thrilling non-violent struggles led by Gandhi. These struggles demonstrated the power of non-violent action. Gandhi overcame skepticism and ridicule, and established the efficacy and viability or superiority of non-violent methods of action. He made people aware of the power that lay latent within them. He applied and experimented with non-violence on an unprecedented scale involving millions of people, inspiring them to embark on militant and revolutionary action in many fields and on many issues.

The struggles that Gandhi led or inspired spanned a period of nearly four decades. It is impossible to describe or even review each of these struggles in this paper. Nor is it perhaps necessary to do so since most or all of these struggles are well-known and perhaps familiar in detail to those who have studied his life and work. What I will attempt to do therefore is only to look at the basic ideas, techniques and forms of action that were evolved and used in these struggles.

Gandhi described the form of non-violent struggle that he forged and used as *Satyagraha*. He defined *Satyagraha* as the insistence on Truth, and dependence on the force inherent in Truth. He often referred to it as Truth Force and therefore Love – Force. He did not claim that he was the first *Satyagrahi*



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in the world. Truth and Non-Violence were as old as the hills, and *Satyagraha* is a new word, but is as old as time. He often cited the names of many who, according to him, had resorted to the methods of *Satyagraha* (from all traditions).

The term *Satyagraha* was coined in South Africa because he felt that the current term Passive Resistance did not present a correct or full description of the method that he was employing. To him *Satyagraha* was not mere abstention from physical violence, but the positive use of the power of love, and non-co-operation in the active transformation of minds, institutions and societies.

It would be wrong to say that it was in South Africa that Gandhi first used the method, which was later christened *Satyagraha*.

He says that the first time he used this method of resistance or defiance was when he decided not to yield to the fiat of the elders of his community, forbidding him from going to the U.K. to qualify for the Bar. He could not agree; politely declined to oblige; declined to submit and declared his intention to act in defiance, offered to bear the consequences, with no ill-will, with deference. There was no ill-will but also no recognition of authority, no fear of sanction.

In South Africa he did not start with mass struggles. There were many occasions when the personal choice to reconcile with injustice, discrimination, integrity, denial of Human Right or to resist/revolt confronted him. He decided that it was unworthy of a human being to surrender in the field of battle. One had to fight and pay the price for one's

values. Many of these instances are well-known—Maritzburg, the coach, the court where he was asked to remove his head-dress and so on. It was only later, after he read about the Asiatic Bill or the Government's intention to introduce further restrictions on the franchise and rights of the Indians that he decided to stay on in South Africa and organize the people to *resist* the Bill. The call to the people and the commitment to struggle lay in his exhortation to the meeting. If you, *acquiesce*, if you *do not resist*, you will be digging the grave of the aspirations of the Indian community for equality.

He wanted them to discover the duty to resist, and pay the price for what they valued. He believed that the ultimate solution lay in removing prejudice, in transforming the mind of the rulers. He believed that this could not be done through the force of arms. In fact, he says that the use of force never occurred to him. At this point, one may as well recount/recall the basic beliefs that emerged and evolved in his mind during the ensuing struggle in South Africa.

- 1) There is a force behind the status quo, that sustains the status quo, that will be deployed to defend the status quo.
- 2) Those who want to alter, dismantle or substitute the status quo will have to depend on some countervailing force to resist the onslaught of the status quo, to overcome it, and to provide the basis on which a new order could be established or sustained.
- 3) Any conflict therefore boils down to a confrontation or combative engagement of these forces.
- 4) The parity or superiority of these forces does not depend only on the degree of force of the same variety, but also on the ability to deploy other forms of force in a commensurate and requisite degree.

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- 5) If one succeeds in overcoming the force used in defence of the status quo, but does not succeed in transforming the beliefs (on which the status quo is based) that upheld the status quo, the duration of the resultant victory will have to depend on ensuring the continuing superiority of the physical force at the command of the challengers. This leads to an endless dependence on force, an endless competition in accumulating and deploying destructive power. The results of a revolution cannot endure unless there is a change in beliefs and opinions – and values or a reconciliation of views that is sealed by consent.
- 6) The test of victory is the transformation of the mind that sanctifies the status quo.
- 7) The force that we use should therefore be one that leads to transformation of the mind and hearts.
- 8) Annihilation of the adversary or a reign of terror cannot achieve this transformation.
- 9) The force that one uses has therefore to be one that promotes introspection, that leads to a change of mind.
- 10) The attempt to transform is based on belief in the distinction between the evil and the evil doer.
- 11) The attempt to transform the mind or institutions cannot afford to ignore the law of cause and effect, and therefore the relation between ends and means.
- 12) Differences arise because of the nature of the human mind, inertia, ignorance, fallacious methods, perceptions of self-interest, propensity for aggrandizement, the ego and so forth.
- 13) What is the process by which we can convince each other or establish Truth or the justice of claim?  
Gandhi believed in the scientific method of—
  - i. accumulation and presentation of evidence;

- ii. review of the logical processes employed for arriving at a conclusion;
  - iii. joint examination of these processes and evidence;
  - iv. replaying that tape by which one has arrived at a conclusion so that one may detect the point where divergence commenced;
  - v. investigating whether the refusal to see evidence and logic is the result of ego-centric attitudes and perceptions and if it is found that this is what leads to intransigence;
  - vi. divesting oneself of ego-based considerations that have only a limited place within the unalterable paradigms of interdependence that rules humanity;
  - vii. to reassure the 'adversary' that the effort is not to extinguish his interests and promote introspection in the adversary through love and the readiness to suffer (voluntary suffering).
- 14) But in spite of all these efforts on one's part, one may not be able to dissolve intransigence on the other side. Such a situation where all efforts of persuasion seem to have failed would demand Direct Action.
- 15) Direct Action is the deployment of some kind of force.
- 16) The Direct Action of *Satyagraha* is different from that of Passive Resistance. It is active, intense and can be fierce.
- 17) At that point the superiority of the force that the *Satyagrahi* can command becomes very important.
- 18) The force available to humankind is not merely physical force that it shares with the animal, nor even

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the augmented force that it can muster because of its intellect – by way of arms and weapons, but it includes the force of the mind and spiritual force that touches the heart and conscience.

There are gross forces and subtle forces that the human being has access to.

Gandhi believed that the highest force at the command of the human being was the force of the mind and spirit. He had no hesitation to say 'the subtler the force the more powerful it is'. Subtle force can overcome obstruction, can move with a speed higher than that of light. It has more enduring impact and can melt ego-centric attitudes.

- 19) This subtle force is the force that is inherent in Truth, or Love. Gandhi believed that this force was mightier than the force of the atom bomb.
- 20) But if one wants to deploy this force, one has to become an effective medium or conduit for this force through the removal of whatever obstructs the flow of this force.

*Satyagraha* uses this force, and to be a *Satyagrahi* one has to become a conduit for this force.

- 21) Gandhi was so sure of the power of this force that he said his purpose in life was to demonstrate that the mightiest material force could be made to bend before this spiritual force (or force of the spirit).

The question then is how to employ this force or enable people to use this force in their struggle for social justice and to build a new society?

The ultimate objective of the *Satyagrahi*, or the social revolutionary, is transformation through the promotion of introspection and the immediate objective is that of paralyzing injustice through non-co-operation.

The process then involve:

- a. making people conscious of the nature of the injustice, the cause of the injustice. The respective responsibilities of oneself, others, and institutions;
- b. create belief in one's ability and duty to resist;
- c. enable people to realize that acquiescence is co-operation, that one has the duty and the power to resist both as an individual and a member of an organised group which is affected;
- d. that this power lies with us, and it has to be employed to paralyse an evil system.

The first step in overcoming evil or evil system is non-co-operation with evil.

It is as much a moral imperative as a tactical necessity. This Non-Co-operation is based in the withdrawal of the recognition of the authority to rule or enforce its values and fiats. It is the repudiation of the legitimacy claimed by the authority. This non-co-operation can be total or partial, and can be the basis of Civil Disobedience. Civil Disobedience too can be selective or total. To Gandhi, Civil Disobedience is the inherent right of a citizen. He dare not give it up without ceasing to be a man. Civil Disobedience is never followed up by anarchy, Criminal Disobedience can lead to it. Every state puts down criminal disobedience by force. It perishes if it does not. But to put down Civil Disobedience is to attempt to imprison

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conscience. It can be aimed at paralysing and substituting an impugned system to make it wither through Non-recognition, non-co-operation, Civil Disobedience, creation of substitutes or parallel centres of authority and action or / and finally taking over all the functions exercised by the impugned authority, and all the stocks that it held in the name of the people since the former rulers had become usurpers, on the withdrawal of the recognition.

Non-violent non-co-operation and Civil Disobedience can be effective only if operational conditions are controlled to prevent the outbreak of violence, and loss of control by the leadership of a struggle. Gandhi firmly believed that two antagonistic forces could not work to supplement each other. (Since one's attempt is not merely to paralyse or create anarchy-but to transform and shape a substitute).

The techniques or means of struggle that Gandhi employed therefore included:

- Surveys to marshal evidence and establish Truth
- Petitions: Demonstrations including—
- Meeting and processions
- Open declaration: Pledges or Vows.
- Picketing: *Hartal* or stoppage of work
- Defying prohibitory orders
- Defying bans on manufacture and sale of goods.
- No Tax campaigns
- Civil Disobedience and
- Fasting.

## 2

### **Non-violence as a Constructive Force**

*Jorgen Johansen*

The 20<sup>th</sup> century is the most violent period in the history of mankind. More people have suffered and more people have been killed by organised violence than in any other similar epoch ever. The hundreds of wars, the genocides, the weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and the unjust distribution of wealth have created such an enormous mass of misery and agony that it is difficult to find traces of hope for the future. I will in the following try to describe the few but important insights and seeds of hope we can observe by the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. I will do so by taking the position that there is empirical evidence from the last two decades for a growing trust in non-violent means in the struggle for political, social, economic and religious aims. In the large majority of these examples there is obviously what Gandhi called "Non-violence of the weak" seen in action. The pragmatic use of non-violence as a substitute for arms is, in my view, a large step in a positive direction. In a few of these cases we have also witnessed a growing interest in what we would call "constructive work", to use a Gandhian term. I will finally look at some of the present possibilities for the spreading of successful non-violent struggles.

#### **Trends in Armed Conflicts**

In recent years, especially since the end of the Cold War, we have seen a decreasing number of wars between states and a growing number of wars within states. The large



majority of the present wars are in the category of civil wars. These wars have dominated the image of wars presented by media. Most of them are, at least on the surface, much more complex than the traditional conflicts between states. The number of interests involved in these conflicts is several and it is not easy to identify "the good guys" and "the bad ones". One reason for this difficulty is that all parties use violent and armed means to achieve their goals. The consequences for the civil population are so devastating that it is difficult to see the so called "good intentions" of the conflicting parties. The number of civilian victims as a percentage of the total number of casualties has been growing enormously since the beginning of this century. In most modern wars more than 80% of the killed ones are civilians, not soldiers. In comparison, only 5% of those who died in the First World War were civilians.

### **New States being born**

The world community has in the recent hundred years been in a process of dividing states into smaller units. When the First World War broke out the number of independent states in the world were around forty. Today the number is close to 200. Leaving aside the parallel process of regionalism, I will in the following focus on the process of new states being born. Since almost all territory in the world was divided between states more than hundred years ago, the only way for new states to get access to territory is by splitting old states. The process of de-colonisation is one example of such a process. When the African colonies got their independence they got control over the territory mainly by armed struggle. The military means used also came to characterise the new states. In short, and with a few exceptions, we can say that they all became one-party communist regimes with a strong

militaristic structure. The means used "contaminated" the new states. And this for quite obvious reasons. The best military leaders, who were capable to gain victory over the colonial forces, were raised and better trained as professional officers than as democratic leaders. Their way of thinking, their language and their skills were not the best ones for creating a new democratic, open, multi-party state.

### **Nations becoming States**

Without defining a "nation" in detail I will, in the following, use that term for a unit of people who feel enough unity to demand large autonomy and eventually a state of their own. The most common identities for nations are based on ethnicity, language, religion and political beliefs or a combination of some or all of these. I am well aware of the relatively few examples of nations who do not have any territorial claims, but will focus on those who put the demand for political control of territory high up on their list of demands. Of the close to two hundred states we have in the world today, only around twenty can be called nation-states. By nation-states I mean a state with only one nation within its borders. The rest have two or more nations, or parts of nations, within their territory. In the world as a whole there are at least two thousand nations large enough to be separate states. Obviously not all of these have expressed ambition to create their own state. These figures are more to present the explosive potential of ethnic conflicts for the coming century.

### **Terminology**

Let me present one comment on the terminology. In most academic works the word WAR has been defined by using different calculations of the number of deaths as a

consequence of armed conflicts. Some count only those who are dying in the battlefields, other includes all who die as a consequence of the conflict. But what they all have in common is that they look at war as "an armed conflict with XX numbers of casualties....". I will oppose all these different definitions by arguing that war is NOT a type of conflict. War is one, of several, means used to influence a conflict. By defining war as a type of conflict you risk to conceal the actual conflict from the means used to influence it. As a result the other options to influence the conflict will be more difficult to see. All those ways to use non-violent means will never be considered in the same context. The factual conflicts can be identical, for example incompatible demands on a territory, but the means used by one or more of the involved parties can be non-belligerent, and as a consequence, the number of deaths few or none. My conclusion is that it is of immense importance to separate the conflict itself from the means used to influence it. In order to judge the means separate from the conflict you need to define war as a means not a type of conflict. How often have we not realised that we have sympathy with the aims, but not with the means used in a conflict!

### **Trends in Creation of New States**

This paper will have its main emphasis on the means used in the creation of new states or revolutionary means used to take power in an existing state. The equally important question of the actual result of the struggles will not be discussed at length. My forthcoming research programme will focus on that, but it is premature at this stage to speculate on its results. With the very important exception of India most liberation movements up to the mid seventies used mainly armed and violent means in their struggles for independence.

In quite a few cases, the violent means were mixed with non-violent ones. I sincerely believe that there still are a lot of unknown examples of non-violent activities in many of the independence struggles in this century. One reason for not knowing about them is the lack of interest and skills in these means on the part of the authors of history books and the vast majority of journalists who have been reporting on these struggles. But despite these obstacles we have seen a growing number of non-violent means being reported in the last two or three decades. I believe that these observations reflect both an increasing awareness of the non-violent means used and a growing number of successful examples of the application of these means.

## **Iran**

When the Shah of Iran was forced to leave the country in 1979 it was after a relatively short period of revolutionary uprising initiated by the religious leaders. The most extraordinary thing about the process was not the very short period from the start of the uprising to when the old leadership finally gave up, but the means used by those who demanded a change. Against the modern army, the secret police (SAVAK), and the well equipped ordinary police-forces, the opposition had tried for many years to challenge the secular state with armed resistance and guerrilla warfare. Around 1977 the opposition started to organise a resistance movement centred around Khomeini who lived in exile. Khomeini sent tapes of instructions from France: these were copied, distributed, and played in mosques around the country. He provided explicit instructions, calling for strikes, boycotts, demonstrations and non-cooperation. All well-known non-violent means used by other groups around the

world were employed, but with such rapid results. In the Iranian revolution the overthrowing of the old regime happened relatively quickly and the results were very close to the goals of those who demanded a change in the state-system. The fact that they were met by violence and arms did not prevent the demonstrators from going on with their non-violent actions.

### **Poland**

In many ways the Iranian revolution set a new trend for successful revolutions in the two decades that followed. The next actor on the scene is Solidarity in Poland. After two centuries of armed uprisings, the Polish workers in 1980 tried to fight the regime without arms. In August 1980 industrial strikes occurred in several parts of the country. Starting in the shipyards in Gdansk the strikes spread to many sectors and cities in the country. The scope of the protests and the lack of violence created a situation where the government was forced to start negotiations with the newly formed free Trade Unions. By the end of the movement close to 10 million people in a total population of 35 million joined the protests. The unions created a multitude of diverse forums for free expression of opinions. Early in 1981 the new unions were declared illegal and forced to go underground. The underground Solidarity created a rich variety of non-violent actions. One year later they were back on the streets again and went on with their activities. This is not the place to write an extended history of the Solidarity Movement. I just want to remind the reader about the large number of negotiations with a wide variety of parties which took place in 1989 and which resulted in a new regime in Poland.

## **Bolivia**

One of the other early examples is from Bolivia. After five general strikes with successive increases in participation, the generals had to step down in 1982 and hand over governmental power to those who won the elections of 1980. The non-violent mobilisation started in 1977 when three women from the mining districts started a hunger strike in the capital La Paz. The well known woman Domitila Barrios de Chungra joined them and soon many supportive activities around the country followed. Bolivia is not well known for non-violent resistance, but there are a lot of interesting parallels with what happened in Poland. In both cases, the workers' organisations co-operated with the farmers' unions and generated a strong coalition which decided to use non-violent means. The armed tradition from Che Guevara turned out to be less effective and popular than the strikes, demonstrations and boycotts.

## **Philippines**

In February 1986 popular uprisings took place at military camps in Quezon City, the capital of Philippines. President Ferdinand Marcos met serious opposition after thirteen years of martial law. Marcos announced presidential elections confident of victory. Corazon Aquino, wife of the late Benigno Aquino ran against him under the banner LABAN, an acronym for Lakas ng Bayan ("Power of the People"). Marcos used fraud to win the elections and several of the government's tabulators walked out in protest. The Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines issued a document that was read out from pulpits throughout the nation. The document said that the people had a duty to resist non-violently. Later, parts of the armed forces declared that Mrs.

Aquino was the true winner of the elections. Massive demonstrations in yellow t-shirts were taken out in and around the capital to support Mrs. Aquino. By the end of February 1986 Marcos fled the country and Corazon Aquino took her place as the Philippines' legally elected president.

### **Eastern Europe**

By the year 1989 the Communist regimes in six Eastern and Central European countries witnessed non-violent movements which undermined their one-party systems. They are Poland, Hungary, East Germany, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, and Romania. During the following year multiparty elections were held. Many similarities can be seen in these events. Popular movements used non-violent means to put pressure on their political leadership and Soviet Union hesitated to come to the aid of the Communist establishments. All countries found themselves in a difficult situation and were not able to cope with it. The lack of violence from the protesters seems to have been the reason why the establishment had serious difficulties in handling them. They had trained their police and military to handle violent uprisings, but had no preparation or skills for containing unarmed demonstrators. The "CNN-effect" had a restraining influence on the possible use of brute force. With international television cameras following almost every step the demonstrators took, the political cost of hard repression became much higher than the regimes could afford.

This is not the place to present detailed description of these events. I want to say that it will be a great misinterpretation of what happened if focus is directed only on the civil resistance and non-violent means employed.

These aspects are certainly some of the most important and necessary elements, but they are not sufficient to explain what really happened. My thesis is that the means used had an important impact on the process as well as the outcome of the revolutions in East and Central Europe. To what degree and in what way the means influenced the outcome and the way the revolutions took place is still to be investigated. In what way would the result have been different if the people had used violent means also needs to be investigated.

### **The division of Soviet Union**

Of the eighty-nine republics in the former Soviet Union, the three Baltic ones gained independence first. In Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia the popular movements working for autonomy decided to use non-violent means. Even when the Soviet armed forces took to weapons to prevent the demonstrators from gaining their goals, they kept non-violent discipline. An important factor in these cases was the political pressure on Soviet Union from other European countries and demonstrations in favour of the Baltic movements in Sweden and other friendly states.

The independence of Belarus and Ukraine were achieved at the negotiating table. When Chechnya fought for the same rights they took to arms and fought a regular war against the Russian forces. The war ended temporarily after very bloody struggles and devastating damage with a cease-fire but no resolution to the conflict was achieved.

### **The division of Czechoslovakia**

The peaceful transformation of Czechoslovakia from one state to two states took place around the negotiating table.



The difficult sharing of common resources were done after long discussions and with a great deal of understanding from both sides. None of the parties involved used the threat of force to put pressure on the other. In both parts of the former Czechoslovakia those who wanted to split the country saw the non-violent option as the only effective one. This is not the way most other countries have been created. This is a sign of a qualitative new way of thinking.

### **Other Political and Social Movements**

Many of large-scale struggles in the world in the last three decades have used a mixture of armed and non-violent means. In some cases they have changed strategy over time or they have combined different forms of struggle.

### **South Africa**

In addition to the above mentioned examples we have witnessed the mainly peaceful transformation of South Africa from a regime of Apartheid to a multi-party society with extended democratic laws. Even though African National Congress (ANC) had a small segment of activists engaged in armed struggle, the overwhelming part of their struggle used non-violent means.

When the struggle by ANC resulted in a relatively peaceful transformation to democracy in 1994 it was after a long, hard and difficult period with mainly non-violent means. In the eyes of the oppressive regime the few and not very successful examples of violent actions used by ANC justified the use of violent means against every black person in the whole country. On the level of physical force the state was superior and the apartheid regime argued that it had to use violence to prevent the "terrorists" from destroying the country. The large

majority of actions in the anti-apartheid-struggle were conducted non-violently. Many strikes, demonstrations and protests were met with brute force from police and military troops, but in most cases the activists did not depart from their non-violent strategy. The freedom struggle in South Africa was dominated by non-violent actions and they played a vital role in the development of the new state.

One very important aspect of the ANC struggle is the long-term training of personnel who could play important roles after the liberation. In exile they trained people who should be able to take over positions in the new administration, education system and other important jobs. They were able to build up a group of people who could take-over and make plans for the first period. The decision to include representatives of the former white government in the new ANC-led government showed the need and will to build the new country together. The constructive will showed to be stronger than revenge and hate. Another sign of this attitude was the Truth-Commission to deal with the violations of human rights committed during the apartheid period. That the commission also took up crimes by ANC-activists emphasise this willingness to be constructive in the building of the new society.

### **Palestine Liberation Organisation**

After a long period of armed struggle against Israel the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) decided to change their strategy and introduced the Intifada in 1987. The new concept included a wide spectre of non-violent methods such as protests, strikes and boycotts, but also more sophisticated means such as non-cooperation, civil disobedience and the creation of alternative institutions. The media focused mainly

on young males throwing stones on Israeli soldiers, but that created a misguided view of what was going on. The creation of underground economic systems, schools and political bodies combined with the use of non-violent means in the confrontations with Israel made PLO a possible counterpart in the negotiations about the future of the Palestinian people. The Oslo agreement would not have happened if PLO had kept to the former strategy of armed struggle.

### **Kosovo and Rugova**

In Kosovo, the struggle for independence or autonomy had gone through several phases. Under the leadership of Rugova, the Albanian Kosovors took a very strong non-violent line in their struggle against the Serbian leadership. Rugova explicitly said that he was inspired by Gandhi and wanted to follow his methods of liberation. That line gained a lot of support from the Albanians and Rugova was elected as president with an overwhelming majority in the underground elections. The Serbian regime prevented Albanians in Kosovo from living a normal life by separating them in an apartheid-like system. Under Rugova the resistance movement built up a parallel society with underground schools, health institutions, political organisations, culture and media. For a time the Albanians and the Serbs lived on the same territory, but in separate societies.

With little support from the international community Rugova had few successes to show his supporters and the disappointment over his non-violent strategy grew. In 1997 the UCK guerrillas showed up and soon they became popular. When these lines were written NATO had just ended their

bomb-attack and it was difficult to predict anything about the future of Kosovo.

### **Next Steps**

In the above paragraphs I have described briefly some of the examples of regimes being removed by non-violent means. We do not have any answer to the question why these struggles used non-violent means in the first place. What we know is that an increasing number of large scale conflicts have been fought with mainly non-violent means in the last decades. It is, in most cases, a very pragmatic use of non-violence and has nothing to do with pacifism or a different attitude towards other human beings.

When Gandhi talked about "Non-violence of the Strong" and "Non-violence of the Weak" he made a very important point. The connection between means and ends is probably much more evident when we study "Non-violence of the Strong" than in other cases.

In my classes in Scandinavia I prefer to use the terms "Non-violent techniques" and "Non-violent Lifestyle" to be more politically correct than the biased terms "Strong" and "Weak". A technique, we know, can be taught, but what about a lifestyle? I think that good knowledge and experience in the use of the techniques is comparable to a seed being planted, which has the potential to grow into a lifestyle. Combined with historical case-studies, deep discussions, philosophical studies and "experiments with truth" the seed can grow to the wide and strong tree which symbolise a lifestyle. We need to critically and open-mindedly study many examples of non-violence used in the world today. The conclusions must be

widely known and we have to continuously set up "Pro et Contra-lists" for these means. An ongoing lively discussion among researchers, practitioners and activists must be combined with an extensive effort to put non-violence on the agenda of every political meeting, in every classroom and in every social movement. In the same way as we have seen the development of a "deep ecology movement", we need to transform the shallow non-violence techniques into a "deep non-violent" lifestyle.

This work needs to be done by those who clearly see the difference between techniques and lifestyle, in other words, by those who have a deep understanding of the Gandhian principles and the philosophy of non-violence. Those ideas, concepts and experiments Gandhi developed around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century need vitalisation when we are taking the first steps into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. To develop a modern concept of "deep non-violence" we need to analyse the experiments of the recent past and understand the connection between means and ends. The popular formula that there is a causal connection between means and ends is probably more complex than we think. When the religious opposition in Iran started the un-armed revolution against the Shah, the result was not a typical non-violent society. They were able to take power, but little of their non-violent techniques were seen in the state they created. We need to carefully examine all cases of non-violent means, not only those which fit into our models and popular concepts.

### **Developing Theory**

The connection between means and ends is a field that has drawn very little attention of peace researchers and those

engaged in conflict resolution. For me, it is obvious that there is a need for deeper and more extensive studies in this area. Those who have been studying development theories have not paid much attention to the means used in social conflicts, the peace-researchers have been more focused on wars and armed conflicts, and in the area of conflict resolution, the most interesting studies have been on short-term results. Few have tried to develop theories and models covering the concept of conflict, means used for resolution and their long-term results in an integrated manner. I think that more cross-science studies in these areas will help us to understand these processes and to develop new branches of knowledge in these areas. For me, personally, it is obvious that studies of Gandhi and his experiments will be an essential part of such research.

## **Conclusion**

While entering into the 21<sup>st</sup> century the humanity has more experiences of non-violent means in large scale conflicts than ever before. To be able to learn from all these examples it is necessary to start intensive studies of these conflicts and the means used to influence them. If we want increasing use of non-violent techniques to develop further and include more "constructive work" there is an enormous task in front of us. The understanding of these complex contexts of means and ends must be made available to all those who are searching for ways to empower themselves, who are searching for ways to improve their life-situation and for the increasing number of scholars who are engaged in conflict resolution and development theory.

## 3

### **Growing Importance of Satyagraha**

***G. Vijayam***

The beginning of the third millennium is a ray of hope for the future of humankind. It is time to ponder over the achievements of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and learn lessons from the past so that the future generations could live in peace and prosperity.

In the twentieth century we were witness to an era of an unprecedented and staggering inventions in the field of weapons of mass destruction. The two World Wars and the consequent Cold War resulted in the spurt of violence, overt and covert. In spite of prevailing poverty, squalor, hunger and want, all nations squandered their resources and time and energies in manufacture and combat readiness for the annihilation of their "enemy". The century of weapons stands as a century of fear, hatred and self deception. More the weapons, more the insecurity. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century millions were massacred, but the regimes collapsed, paving the way for the march toward democracy, however imperfect and halting, it may be. It is a return from serfdom to that of freedom.

The future historians would regard the 20<sup>th</sup> century as not only the most violent, but also the one in which non-violence triumphed. Undeterred and undaunted by the dark clouds hovering over sky, the champions of non-violence had demonstrated to the world, the futility of violence, and the

need to follow the path of non-violence, for the peaceful resolution of conflicts.

We were witness to an era of application of non-violence in the collective plane and for the resolution of problems in political, social, economic, cultural and technological fields. In the earlier centuries, non-violence was primarily applied in individual situations and, levels. But in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, non-violence blossomed and entered into many new arenas, opening up new vistas for the peaceful resolution of conflicts.

Mahatma Gandhi was the most towering personality in the field of non-violence. His methods, struggles and opinions left an indelible impression on the minds of the people all over the globe. His anti colonial struggle was unique. He had demonstrated to the world the difference between power and authority. He won the hearts of the people and remained an undisputed leader of the Indian masses for half a century. Even those who differed with him, had to recognise his unique contribution in the struggle for political freedom. He was Father of the Nation. He was also the harbinger of the Constructive Programme, and added a new dimension to the non-violent approach, which is unique. He was a creative genius. A happy blend of the agitational and constructive approaches he added a new dimension to the non-violent struggles. He harped on positive approach for achieving social change. The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi are both voluminous and luminous. The one hundred volumes give us a glimpse of this unique personality and his experiments with truth and non-violence. The contribution of the Mahatma is too well known and does not require further elucidation. It is like carrying the coal to new castle.



It would be most appropriate to concentrate here on the post-Gandhian era and the nuances of non-violent struggles in India and their lessons for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The post-Independent India is qualitatively different from the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

No doubt, Gandhi was the first to give shape to the concept of *Satyagraha* and also to experiment with it on a mass scale, unprecedented in the history of humankind. No wonder, thus Gandhi became a symbol of resistance and a ray of hope to the oppressed and the suppressed in the world. His method knew no frontiers and people from different backgrounds, races and colours have adopted his method of non-violent resistance to fight injustice and inequality.

Post-Independent history of India records innumerable attempts to follow the method of non-violent resistance to achieve justice to the people. Some of these attempts were genuinely motivated to improve the lot of the people by following the method of the Mahatma. Some others, on the other hand, were the products of the power struggle which would be inevitable in a multi-party democracy. Frequent use of the method by the power hungry politicians to mobilise popular support for their party resulted in the degeneration of that lofty *Satyagraha* into a mere handy weapon of agitational politics.

Many a time the question is raised as to whether it is possible to conduct *Satyagraha* in post-Independence India in view of the changed circumstances. The conditions have changed considerably and the presence of various political forces and parties make it well nigh impossible to think in terms of a pure and truthful *Satyagraha* without the

interference of various political forces, which have their own axes to grind. Whether one invites them or not, the political forces jump into the fray and try to utilise the opportunity for their partisan ends. Hence, it is becoming highly difficult to conduct *Satyagraha* as a controlled experiment and keep out the forces that operate in society.

Today we have greater polarisation in society. Those who are in power look at any attempt of *Satyagraha* as a potential threat to their power and they do their best to ascribe motives to each and every action of the people. Similarly, those who are out of power, would like to take every available opportunity to embarrass the government or to discredit its actions. Thus, the atmosphere in post independent India is charged with allegations and counter allegations about the motives of other's actions. But is it possible to determine the motives, even before the action has taken place? This is the crux of the problem. Whether political parties can lead *Satyagrahas* at any time? Whatever they may do, motives will be attributed to their actions and other people look at the action of the party through coloured glasses.

Similarly, the question can be raised whether it is possible to conduct *Satyagrahas* on socio-economic issues which are so vague and all pervasive. Prior to Independence, the goals of *Satyagraha* were specific and easily identifiable. But now, due to complex socio-economic systems it becomes difficult to specify the goals for actions. Many of the *Satyagrahas* are aimed at lessening socio-economic inequalities, or solving the problem of food or providing employment which are very fundamental in their nature.

We are living in an age of rising expectations. The goal of a welfare state unleashed a series of demands from various sections of people and the conflict of interests from different strata of society makes it difficult for government to fulfil the demands of any one particular section. Not only this, some of the *Satyagrahas* are undertaken by the vocal sections of society disregarding the interests of the downtrodden and the poorest of the poor. As vocal sections have better organisational ability and access to communication facilities, they project their grievances in a magnified form and try to get the maximum benefit from government.

Gandhi conducted *Satyagrahas* on a moral plane and he provided necessary charismatic personality for proper use of the method of *Satyagraha*. But after Independence, the situation is nebulous. People do not have any common goal. The efforts to remove socio-economic inequalities conflict with the vested interests of different sections in society.

Some people are of the opinion that there is no place for *Satyagraha* in post-independent India. If it were true what would be the channel open for people to ventilate their grievances? It becomes highly necessary to ponder over all these questions when one wants to think about the concept of *Satyagraha* in post-Independent India.

In fact, non-violent direct action is the safety-valve in the society. When people have many grievances they ventilate them through their peaceful actions. It enables the government to understand the problems of the people and to take necessary steps for their redress. From this point of view, the non-violent actions played a significant role in post Independent India. However, it must be stated that in many

cases non-violent direct action has been utilised as expediency. The moral weapon forged by Gandhi was used many a time to fight battles outside the legislatures, with a view to capture power in the elections. In some of these cases people's welfare was secondary.

However, it should be clearly realised that in post-Independent India the political factor was all pervasive and it affected all spheres of activity. Many of these political actions did not yield desired results.

One of the reasons for the ineffectiveness of the non-violent direct action in post Independence period is that the organisers adopted a constituency approach to cater to needs of a particular section of society. This approach had inherent limitations. In some of the *Satyagrahas* thousands participated from all over the country, whereas in some others people from a particular region or a particular section took active part. On the whole, *Satyagrahas* have become the vehicles for ventilation of grievances. It is important to note that almost all-political parties-from leftists to conservatives- have resorted to *Satyagraha* and non-violent struggles at one time or the other.

*Satyagrahas* are undertaken at different levels and on divergent issues. On local, regional, national and international issues, *Satyagrahas* have been organised. It might be a purely local problem or an international issue like liberation of Goa from foreign domination, or the Kutch issue, for which *Satyagrahas* were conducted. States reorganisation, land problem, rising prices, unemployment, socio-economic and political problems-all these figured in *Satyagrahas*. Thousands

of people offered *Satyagrahas* all over the country. Some of them were imprisoned for months in jail.

In spite of such a widespread phenomenon, there is no systematic study yet about the impact of these *Satyagrahas* on society. It is a social phenomenon which merits careful understanding and examination. No principle can preserve in practice the perfection that inspires its theory. In theory, *Satyagraha* is universal in its application. But in practice, some of the *Satyagrahas* are not yielding desired results.

In spite of openness of methods, some times, *Satyagraha* is not getting enough response and inspire others. Why? If the issue is specific, it generally belongs to a particular section of society. Its sectional interest may not evoke common response. Or the conflict of interest restricts the effectiveness of that *Satyagraha*.

The other major problem is the partisan interest of the political parties. For some parties capturing power is primary and solving the problem is not a priority. When political parties conduct *Satyagraha*, no doubt, they have some advantages. They have their own organisation, trained cadre, a body of sympathisers, financial resources, goodwill and their party members in legislatures and Parliament highlight that issue and about *Satyagraha*. The party in power may fear the *Satyagrahas* of the opposition parties, because it may lead to erosion of their strength and popularity as well as public image in the long run.

In spite of the advantages associated with *Satyagrahas* organised by the political parties, they have drawbacks too. In fact, the set backs are serious in nature and they led to the

failure of the *Satyagraha* campaign altogether. The ruling party views the *Satyagraha* as a game in power politics and tackles it in a different way. For the government, more than the issue of *Satyagraha*, who leads it is of greater significance. The government will not yield to the demands of the *satyagrahis* as far as possible, so that the opposition party may not get credit for championing the cause. Each side wants full credit for itself. Thus some of the *Satyagrahas* are caught in the whirlpool of party and power politics.

Hence, in spite of repeated *Satyagrahas*, there is no desired impact. It is because of the partisan outlook both in the party which champions and the government. Hence the movemental approach is better suited to achieve the goal of *Satyagraha*. In movemental approach, the issue gets prominence. The movements are built on the basis of the grievance of the people. It cuts across party, class and other considerations. Attention will be focused on the issue they champion. Movemental approach and partisan interests are incompatible. In the movemental approach the scope is wide, activities are diversified and people are enthusiastic to participate in a movement. Attention will be focussed on the issue they champion. In India many movements have been conducted. Their scope is wide, activities are diversified and ready to absorb all sections of people. They have an edge over political party approach.

One may wonder what is the place of individual *Satyagrahas* in this age of mass democracies. What one individual or a small group of individuals can do? But even in post Independent India, we have examples how individuals inspired people. Those individuals have become conscience keepers of the nation.

Individual *Satyagrahas* are good in terms of social costs. No harm is done to society if they fail. But, if they succeed, it would benefit society in general. They become pioneers in championing new social order. Potti Sriramulu's martyrdom led to the creation of Andhra State and it also accelerated the pace of creation of linguistic states in India. Honesty, integrity, capacity of conviction and other qualities are necessary to achieve success in individual *Satyagraha*.

Individual *Satyagraha* is like a spark. It may or may not kindle the light. The success of individual *Satyagraha* depends upon the discontentment in society and mood and consciousness among people. Individual *Satyagraha* is an alternative to meek submission and servitude. The success of individual *Satyagraha* depends on a happy blend of idealism and realism.

With the introduction of parliamentary institutions, right from village to the national level, now the emphasis is slowly shifting from direct action to legislative activity. But Parliamentary battles and procedures are very complicated and deceptive. One can easily be lost in the wilderness of laws and complicated administrative jungles. There will be time lag between the *Satyagraha* on an issue, and legislation that follows on the matter. It does not mean that the legislature was not aware of the *Satyagraha*. Gazing the public opinion, the government takes necessary steps to fulfil the aspirations of the people. In other words, the present day *Satyagraha* is helpful to generate public opinion. Once this has been done, all the other agencies in society work simultaneously on the problem. The struggle then moves from the streets and villages into the parliamentary arena. It will be revitalised from time to time with a fresh *Satyagraha*. Thus, when the battle of

ballots fails to solve people's problems, people come into streets again and offer *Satyagrahas*. In democracy *Satyagraha* has a significant place in moulding the public opinion as well as that of the law makers.

But the effectiveness of *Satyagraha* depends on the moral commitment of the leaders and selflessness of the parties concerned. *Satyagraha* is an important weapon in the hands of the people.

Based on the experience of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it is clear that the future role of non-violent struggles is very significant.

- Non-violent struggles have a preeminent position and place in democracy.
- Non-violent struggles generate public opinion, and in the long run, changes take place.
- Non-violent struggles will be more successful when they are in the form of movements.
- Partisan outlook and selfish or ulterior motives of the political parties reduce the effectiveness of the method of *Satyagraha*.
- Honesty and integrity of the persons involved increase the effectiveness of the action.
- Non-violent struggles are educative processes which lead to a chain reaction for social change.
- Non-violent struggles should take up the felt grievances of the people.
- Non-violent struggles are safety valves in democracy.
- Let's strengthen the democratic values and ramparts we guard.
- The relevance of the Gandhian method of *Satyagraha* will be further recognised in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.



## 4

### **Some Problematic Areas in Non-violent Action**

*John Moolakkattu*

#### **Introduction**

Looking at the future of non-violent action with reference to the twentieth century may rightfully generate feelings of pessimism. Yet this otherwise bloodiest of all phases in human evolution has witnessed some of the major successes in non-violent action entitling it to the status of a legitimate method of struggle against oppression and also a means to bring about desirable social changes. It is an empirical fact that the number of unarmed insurrections is increasing even as violence persists, and they often arise as improvised responses to oppression and grievances. They are also signposts that popular commitment to democracy is increasing. A cursory look at the conflict map of the world shows that lot more needs to be done to usher in a world in which conflicts are expressed and resolved creatively and non-violently.

Gandhi is credited to have been the first person to show the efficacy of non-violence in mass social and political action. He looked upon non-violence as a moral philosophy, a way of life and a method of action. However, non-violence is becoming attractive more as a method of action than as a principle or a way of life. Seen from a Gandhian angle such technical forms of non-violence cannot be sustained. Gandhi also visualised non-violence as a dynamic concept and called

for perfecting it through practice and adherence to truth. Non-violence is not a new idea. However, elitist construction of history has marginalised. This is one of the reasons for the predominant reliance on improvisation in non-violent action unlike in combative actions.<sup>1</sup> Even in those movements avowedly committed to violence, the sheer weariness induced by violence, particularly in protracted conflicts, is leading the organisers to try civilian forms of unarmed resistance, often with spectacular and unexpected success.

Non-violence is becoming popular either by choice or by necessity, more often by the latter. The mode of non-violent action that is practised in general differs from the extremely principled forms that Gandhi, Gaffar Khan and Martin Luther King had envisaged. The secularised version sees non-violence more as a method of action, instrumentally conceived, justifiable primarily on rational choice principles rather than on normative grounds. Winning finds a strong resonance in this approach. This does not mean that such practitioners are blind to the moral high ground of non-violent action. Gene Sharp is credited to have systematised non-violence as a political strategy and is now the foremost contemporary theoretician of non-violent action.

In this paper I shall draw on the writings of Sharp to point out the limitations of his approach in containing forms of structural violence and suggest that infusion of structural consciousness is a sine qua non for non-violent action that is truly liberatory. While endorsing the general approach of Sharp from the perspective of action as well as rationality, I propose to argue that securing non-violent action within a

moral perspective has substantive advantages if conflicts are to be transformed rather than merely brought to an end.

### **What is Non-violent Action?**

Non-violent strategies are based on non-cooperation and political or moral jiu jitsu. The first is based on the withdrawal of consent, the source of power, assuming that the willing cooperation of people as tax payers, tax collectors, soldiers and so on is necessary for retention of the power of the ruler, and once this is withdrawn, the system will collapse since the very basis of its rule is undermined. The second seeks to fight a ruler by using the unconventional method of non-violence aimed at throwing the ruler off balance. Sharp says, "if the withholding is undertaken by enough people for a long enough period of time, then the regime will have to come to terms or it will be collapsed"<sup>2</sup>. With increasing repression, the number of non-violent actionists and the severity of defiance increase. This leads to sufficient internal opposition among the opponent's usual supporters so as to reduce his capacity to deal with the defiance. If the purpose of this defiance is to convert the opponent through the application of love and a relational world-view, it becomes a moral jiu jitsu. The instrumental use of this method in politics results in political jiu jitsu. Non-violent action seeks to bring about change in three ways, according to Sharp. The first is conversion, which is the rarest. The second is accommodation, which is the most usual. The third is non-violent coercion, which is the most extreme of all forms.

Sharp is at pains to divest non-violent action of any semblance of passivity. He says : "Non-violent action is a means of combat, as is war. It involves the matching of forces

and the waging of "battles" requires wise strategy and tactics and demands of its "soldiers' courage, discipline and sacrifice"<sup>3</sup>. Sharp also distinguishes it from anarchism. It is based on fear of sanctions as well as consent. He says that it is possible to integrate non-violent action into a constitutional system of government. Here, characterises non-violent action as a democratic method and anchors it as a perennial element in any society capable of defending and sustaining human freedom. Unlike Gandhi, he detaches non-violence from its normative forms. He incorporates it as a legitimate mode of action with immense possibilities in liberal democracy.

The debate as to whether non-violence should be embraced for its intrinsic worth or as a strategy to be evaluated on the criterion of efficacy amounts to raking up an old controversy. But the controversy or confusion still remains to haunt several non-violent actionists, especially those who emphasise the moral superiority of non-violence. While Gandhi could equally justify the superiority of his methods on the basis of cost-effectiveness, he envisaged it as an incidental rather than a primary reason for non-violence given his greater commitment to the process rather than the outcome of conflicts. That the process of transformation has implications for the nature of outcome is now increasingly being recognised by theorists and practitioners of social transformation. This moral stance also finds reflection in the work and thinking of Gaffar Khan and Martin Luther King. Khan unconventionally located the source of non-violence in Islam, in the teachings of the Prophet. King was influenced by Christianity and Gandhi's ideas were interpreted by him in this light. This reliance on a deep spiritual consciousness is still persuasive in the non-violent tradition. A.T. Ariyaratne says: "Under today's circumstances, the votaries of non-violence

and social justice have to depend almost exclusively on the spiritual consciousness they can awaken within themselves. They have aggregated these energies into a critical mass capable of affecting the mass psyche of general population. The external manifestations of such a course of spiritual action that is directed to bringing about a change will manifest itself in the form of fearlessness and sacrifice"<sup>4</sup>. In line with the spiritualist tradition, the Dalai Lama envisages compassion informed by love as the basis of non-violent action<sup>5</sup>. Although principled non-violence as a life style continues to hold sway in a number of circles, it is probably the secularised version that is most widely practised and popularised. However, this is not to say that these two perspectives are mutually exclusive.<sup>6</sup>

The role of organised religion in non-violent action cannot be discounted at this stage notwithstanding its frequent association with conservative forces. For example, the Catholic Church did play an important role in Philippines as well as in East Timor by providing support to the civilian population engaged in opposition to repression. In the latter case, Timorese quest for national self-determination came to be intimately linked with the Catholic Church. The Anglican Church in South Africa allowed the use of church premises by squatters and supported tax resistance and conscientious objection in the struggle against apartheid.<sup>7</sup>

### **The Base of Non-violent Action: The Adequacy of Power and Consent**

Sharp agrees with the advocates of violence about the importance of power, that one should wield power in order to control one's adversaries. Sharp says that the view of political power held by the advocates of violence is a top-down one,

that is "people depend on governments, that political power is monolithic, that it can really come from a few men and that it is durable and self-perpetuating" In contrast, non-violent power is bottom-up. That is, "government depends on people, that power is pluralistic, and that political power is fragile because it depends on many groups for reinforcement of its power sources" <sup>8</sup> He says: "the exercise of power depends on the consent of the ruled who, by withdrawing that consent, can even control and destroy the power of their opponent"<sup>9</sup>. In Sharp's classification cases such as the American colonists' struggle against Britain and the 1905 Russian revolution are instances of employment of non-violent pressure tactics. Non-violent action may be used for larger or limited goals. The power of rulers is not intrinsic to them but is external to them, derived from the society they govern. Political power is not a one-sided affair, but requires consent for its constant replenishment. This notion of power as based on consent is not anything new. It is Lockean in form and constitutes basis of any democracy. However, the institutionalised operation of political power had undermined its consent dimension. Sharp is known for transforming the Gandhi-King-Khan tradition of sacrifice and suffering informed by an internal spiritual resolve into a method of action that meets the dominant Western criteria of technical rationality. Sharp frequently uses strategic parlance to buttress his argument and sell his idea to the strategists and policy makers.

Women, particularly those radically oriented often question the tendency to idealise non-violence. Feminists like Adler and Ling say that, "The violence against women eludes the techno-rational problem solving to non-violence and

remains lost to discovery, understanding, and most importantly, resolution".<sup>10</sup>

Brian Martin tells us that Sharp's simple presentation of patriarchy as a relation between the ruler and ruled does not capture the complex processes of upbringing, expectations of characteristic behaviour, the gender division of labour, harassment, rape and similar types, which are linked to other systems of exploitation or structures like military and the state - subjects of high priority for Sharp<sup>11</sup>. How can the idea of 'love thy enemy' stop rape? How can non-cooperation tackle linguistic violence and the low self-esteem of women? Taking a structural view feminists contend that violence when extracted as a purely external physical act excludes from consideration "the multi-layered institutional origins of violence" which is what affects women most<sup>12</sup>. Further "systems of oppression contain within them forms of power embedded in the structures that create those systems" Further, "the experiences of the oppressed must be seen to constitute different world-views rather than represent the margins of some dominant perspective".<sup>13</sup>

Women already love their enemies in view of the system of submission and its internalisation over years. Adler and Ling ask the pertinent question: is it possible to employ a strategy of non-cooperation against patriarchy?<sup>14</sup> Non-violence, in this view, is already practised by women with no effect on their predicament. Hence the new non-violent discourse tends to reinforce the extant forms of patriarchal oppression rather than address them. Political jiu jitsu requires shared cultural beliefs and norms in order to affect the opponent. However, citing the effort in Greenham Common, they say that women were represented negatively due to a "dissensus about appropriate female behaviour" suggesting

that "political ju jitsu compels women to conform to the very societal conventions that they seek to challenge".<sup>15</sup> Hence the existence of consensus within society is necessarily absent in such a perspective, which obviously undermines the effectiveness of non-violence. In effect what the "love thy enemy" idea removes is the element of anger. Instead of serving as a tool for change, this anger or discontent is only reinforced in non-violence. "In so doing non-violence negates any socially redeeming values for violence and its associates like anger. Women need to recognise and accept this anger to end violence against them. If not they implicitly uphold the legitimacy of their oppression. Patriarchies historically sublimate and alienate women's anger with the myth of the spiritually superior female. . . Any woman who rejects this moral standard somehow becomes inherently sub-female".<sup>16</sup>

That anger is a source of power is often not recognised by the adherents of non-violence. Marcos Bisticas-Cocoves, a peace activist, says: "I still believe in non-violent direct action as a tactic, but I have come to have grave misgivings about the political viability of a philosophy that extols love and denigrates anger,... a philosophy that demands the renunciation of anger as a precondition for action". Anger is the source of power and anger is to be channelled in such a way as to pressurise those in power, not to convert them, according to him.<sup>17</sup>

There are also problems with this notion of monolithic power. There are many states which thrive through networks of patron-client relationships. Often the state may be based on a coalition of groups or some degree of diffusion of power throughout the system. Diffused power that is systemically oppressive creates problems for non-violent action particularly



when it is difficult to persuade a sizeable section of society to withdraw consent. It is the mixed nature of the state that makes action difficult on many occasions. Just as the state oppresses, it tends to help certain sections with special privileges and subsidies. This was probably one of the reasons why the Iraqi regime headed by Saddam Hussein did not encounter spontaneous mass uprising against it for so long. The problem becomes increasingly complex in ethnically divided societies in which the state structure and one or more of ethnic groups may be simultaneously identified as the problem. It is often assumed that the non-violent magic of transforming or coercing the enemy will work regardless of culture, time and gender. Gene Sharp universalises non-violent action and says that failures are often due to the "weakness in a group employing the technique or in the strategy and tactics used".<sup>18</sup> Consider, for example, the case of Burma. Despite popular support for Aung San Sui Kyi, the junta continues to be well-ensconced in power. Internally, the National League for Democracy's points of leverage for weakening the regimes are few and achieving change in the near future does not present an optimistic picture. This may be because of the strategies of the regime which black outs information flow to the public as well as outside. In this way the regime makes itself impervious to global public opinion. Further, modern technologies of mass control often prevent the people from understanding the nature of the crime committed by the regime in power. New instruments of police control provide a flexible but not always less than lethal coercive response to combat non-violent action. A design criteria has been to mask the real impact of their effects so that the media do not get an accurate picture of the level of coercion being deployed.<sup>19</sup>

We do not have enough empirical evidence to come to the conclusion that all changes brought about through non-violent action will be long-lasting, as Sharp claims. Consider the communal riots that plagued several Indian cities since independence and the numerous conflicts that survive in spite of the Gandhian heritage. Is this because of non-violent action unaccompanied by structural analysis? Structural analyses produce excellent material satisfying the needs of academia but are insufficient for action, a point on which Sharp scores hands down over Galtung, a well known Peace Researcher inclined to a structural approach. However, to reduce non-violent action as a mere technique as Sharp has done, without allowing its moral and structural ramifications to surface, amounts to anchoring it securely within a rational choice framework. To link the technique dimension with its moral and structural dimensions in a balanced way is perhaps the greatest challenge facing non-violent action today. I feel that the recent shift in emphasis from conflict management and resolution to conflict transformation reflects an approach which is anchored securely on the moral foundations of a justice-oriented application of non-violence rather than on its seemingly status-quoist technique aspect.

### **Underlying forms of Oppression**

There is a belief among the adherents of non-violence that what takes place in individual relations can be equally applied and transferred into group relations. Instances of structural violence like imperialism, patriarchy and racism are embedded in the structures. Advocates of non-violence seemingly claim that individual-based non-cooperation can surmount structural problems. For example, capitalism is a system whose resilience and potential has often not been fully

grasped by the non-violent activists. Interestingly, many Third World civilian movements against oppression have been followed by the emergence of capitalism. The system of capitalism exists as hegemony, reflected in educational structures, mass media, family, popular culture and the day to day styles of living and doing.

Non-violent activism has generated an interest in conflict resolution programmes. The fear is that these conflict resolution programmes will deprive non-violent activism of its political content and become more akin to technical problem-solving. Sam Diener says: "As conflict resolution programmes enter the mainstream, we face the threat that peace making skills and non-violent training may be stripped of political content, implemented without an awareness of the impact of power differentials between disputants and used to address forms of oppression as problems to be solved merely between individuals. At worst mediation programmes can be oriented toward conflict management, giving another tool of control to administrators and politicians working to defend the status quo".<sup>20</sup> One may ask whether non-violence is employable in extreme forms of oppression. We also should admit that even oppressive governments do not exist purely on oppression. They would be providing some service or the other to the public to legitimate their rule. Further, such systems are based on patron-client networks which often confuse the ruler-subject division. In other words, real world situations often complicate the application of the power theory of Sharp in neat terms. If we look at the highly divisive nature of the type of protests that took place in early 2009 in countries like Thailand and Madagascar, it becomes clear that delineating people power is sometimes not easy in all situations.

The state can often create groups of militiamen who terrorise unarmed groups of people as happened in East Timor. The death squads and terrorists cow the people into submission. At the same time, the Indonesian state denied responsibility for this. Stephen Zunes calls this "privatisation of the repressive apparatus."<sup>21</sup> Such situations obfuscate the targets of non-violent direct action. In real life we can see many such situations in which the opponent does not feel obliged to respond or can always find a safe space to keep himself off from culpability.

### **New Politics and New Institutions**

Non-violent actions in the recent past, particularly events in Eastern Europe following the collapse of communism, have brought to the fore new forms of politics. Although the revolutions in Europe are seen by some as amounting to the triumph of liberalism, others say that they have also shaken the foundations of liberal-electoral politics. The movements are seen as not only a way of opposing communism, but as a way of sustaining individual freedom and empowerment in a modern mass society. These so-called civil initiatives - petitions, protests, vigorous critical debate, civil disobedience etc., are not illiberal. But they are in deep tension with the normal institutions of liberal politics. The style of politics is more rebellious and participatory than the normal forms of liberal democratic politics. It has strong resemblance with the Arendtian world-view of individuals as inhabiting a common world that in complex ways imposes on them certain ethical responsibilities. This is clear from Havel's view of civil society. He is strongly in favour of greater decentralisation and room for the NGOs suggesting that anti-

political politics can inform important public policy questions. I wish to quote at length Jeffrey C. Isaac who has chronicled the uprisings in Eastern Europe. He says: "Does 1989 simply represent the triumph of old, liberal values or of something new. It should now be clear that neither alternative as baldly stated is plausible. Liberal democracy has triumphed but haltingly and with uncertain results. Anti-political politics does resonate with liberalism, and yet it is not unambiguously liberal. It is new, but it is not wholly new. The kinds of civic initiatives pioneered by the democratic oppositions did not spring up *de novo*. They had antecedents and exemplars and surely were inspired by previous revolts against Communism and non-violent political struggles in the twentieth century more generally.... On a deeper level anti-political politics can be seen as simply one of a number of instances in modern history where ordinary citizens have improvised new forms of democratic agency and new forms of opposition to oppressive power. It was not "new" but neither was it assimilable to the repertoire of normal liberal democratic politics".<sup>22</sup> Sharp also had talked about the "relative strengthening of the non-state institutions of the society in which non-violent action is used" as a direct possible outcome. Lot of institutions, particularly community based ones and local courts, came up in South Africa during the civilian stages of the struggle undermining the officially constituted local governments in black townships. The mayors of many black town councils had to resign when people failed to co-operate with them, when people started reposing confidence in their own parallel institutions.<sup>23</sup> However, these developments often do not have any positive impact as soon as the immediate objective is attained. The implications these trends have for a vivified civil society are tremendous. Instead of looking at non-violent action as

constituting a special genre, it is necessary to strike alliances with similar movements of resistance even if it means making compromises. This suggests the need for adopting situation-specific strategies of resistance and a favourable attitude towards coalition formation.

### **Infusing Constructive Elements**

Andrew Rigby says that the Gandhian approach of juxtaposing the opposition to evil with positive strategies like the constructive programme targeted at the immediate needs of the people while at the same time being futuristic in orientation, should be taken seriously. Based on his study of non-violent interventions during the Intifada, he says: "It seems that the most successful kinds of intervention are those which share something of the Gandhian approach to constructive work: intervening to assist those in the conflict zone who are engaged in peace-making activities, intervening to help relieve the suffering of the victims, offering one's services to facilitate dialogue and related processes of reconciliation between enemies. Such constructive modes of intervention are not only oriented to helping meet the expressed needs of the direct parties to the conflict, they also embody a commitment to the creation of a more cooperative and peaceful future. They lack the drama and the publicity potential of some of the protest-oriented interventions, but their impact on the conflict situation is invariably more substantial".<sup>24</sup> In fact, this aspect as well as the Gandhian plea for the creation of more peaceful socio-political structures, which he identifies with non-industrial forms of social organisation, have not become popular. The non-violent movement is largely operating on the assumption that capitalism is a given, an unproblematic system. Gradually, the

non-violent movement should recognise the oppressive elements of capitalism in the era of globalisation as one finds in the protests already taking place against the World Trade Organisation and the activities of many multi-national corporations.

### **Conclusion**

I feel that the future of non-violence lies in its creative use rather than emphasising too much on the purity of its application which excludes the possibility of millions of ordinary men and women from partaking in it. The burden of identifying what constitutes a non-violent act in a particular instance should rest with the people practising it rather than onlookers from outside. It is not right to insist as to what is right and what is wrong on the basis of norms evolved in contexts different from the one where the real action takes place. This does not mean that a non-violent movement should divest itself of its moral foundations. While an excessive concern with principled form of non-violent action can act as a fetter on ground level action by the masses, an overemphasis on the technique can sap its moral foundations, making it possible for its easy adoption for causes that are not all that noble. It is here that we should think of a middle ground. It is true that the adversary does not often distinguish between one non-violent action and the other on the basis of intentions, which are intrinsic to the actionists. As far as the rulers are concerned, non-violent action of any kind, be it the principled kind or the strategic kind, is problematic.

Non-violent action is actor-centred rather than system-centred. Hence the systemic nature of many forms of oppression cannot be accommodated. Its beliefs in

universality, consensus within society and failure to recognise the subtleness of forms of oppression irreducible to subject-ruler categories deprives it of its attractiveness to many self-conscious oppressed groups such as women. We should recognise the fact that just as structural transformation can lead to personal transformation, the obverse also can happen, as Anthony Giddens reminds. Non-violent activists should also not be wary of striking alliances with emancipatory movements in their excessive concerns with purism and independence.

Non-violence should not be seen as a panacea. Certain conflicts by their very nature are resistant to resolution in the short run, either non-violently or violently. Force may be necessary on some occasions to protect the civilian population as in East Timor where the UN had provided security to the people against attacks by the Indonesian-sponsored civilian militia for some time. The role of non-violence in ethnic conflicts needs to be assessed afresh given their greater recalcitrance to non-violent resolution. Whether non-violence can become a functional alternative to violence at this stage of our social evolution is debatable. Non-violence preceded by a high degree of structural consciousness and awareness of the interconnections among systems of exploitation is necessary to gain control over the post-change situation. This remains one of the most important challenges facing non-violent action. At the same time, we have to acknowledge that modern battles, especially battles against terrorism, can be waged successfully not only through the strategic application of non-violence, but also by stirring the moral consciousness of humanity. As Vaclav Havel says: "Without a global revolution in the sphere of human consciousness, nothing will change for



the better in the sphere of our being as humans, and the catastrophe towards which this world is headed... be it ecological, social, demographic or a general breakdown of civilization.... will be unavoidable".<sup>25</sup>

### Notes and References

1. Gene Sharp, *The Politics of Non-violent Action*, vol..I, (Boston: Porter Sargent, 1973) p.4.
2. *Ibid.*, vol.2, p. 434. Sharp tells us that the use of non-violent method is dependent on a number of factors. They include the tradition of the people, level of knowledge and experience of non-violent action by leaders and actionists, the socio-political situation, the degree of repression the leaders and actionists are prepared to suffer, the nature of the objectives of the opponent, the resources at the disposal of the opponent, the degree of ruthlessness of the opponent, the extent of dependence of the opponent on the members of the non-violent opposition , the number of participants in the non-violent opposition and the level of support they get from the public, the quality of the activists and leaders, nature of the grievance in question and the specific situation in which action takes place.
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4. A.T Aryaratne, "Practical Non-violent Responses to new Forms of Violence", *Gandhi Marg* 13, April-June, 1991, pp. 198-99.
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8. Gene Sharp, *The Politics of Non-violent Action*, vol. I, op.cit., p.8.
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10. Lisa Adler and L.H.M. Ling ,. "From Practice to Thoery: Towrads a Dissident Feminist Reconstruction of Non-violence, *Gandhi Marg*, 16, 4. 1995, p. 467.
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12. Adler and Ling. *op.cit.*, p.472.
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14. Adler and Ling, *op. cit.*, p. 470
15. *Ibid.*, p.471.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 272.
17. Marcos Bisticas- Cocoves,. "Listening to Anger", *Non-violent Activist*, September-October, 1998, p. 9.
18. Gene Sharp, *The Politics of Non-violent Action*, vol. 1. op. cit., p. 71
19. For example, traffic monitoring systems used in China made it possible to take photos of the students in Tiananmen Square which was broadcasted immediately with a demand for early identification and anonymous reward see Steve Wright,. "Undermining Non-violence: The Coming Role of New Police Technologies, *Gandhi Marg*, April/June, 1992, p. 158.

20. Sam Diener. "Cooptation or Conversion", *Non-violent Activist*, September-October, 1998, p.15.
21. Stephen Zunes, "Unarmed insurrections against authoritarian government in the Third World: a new kind of revolution", *Third World Quarterly*, 15, 3, 1994, p. 421.
22. See Jeffrey C. Isaac. "The Meanings of 1989", *Social Research*, Vol. 63. 2, 1996, pp.291-344
23. Stephen Zunes, 1999. *op. cit.*, p.406.
24. Andrew Rigby, "Unofficial Non-violent Intervention: Examples from the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict", *Journal of Peace Research*, 3, 4, 1995, .p.463
25. Vaclav Havel, Quoted in Thomas Lasley, *Teaching Peace: Towards Cultural Selflessness*(West Port: Bergin and Garvey, 1994.), p. 3

## **The Pursuit of Swaraj: Tracing the Gandhian Legacy in the Non-violent Struggles of the Post-Gandhian Period in India**

*M . P. Mathai*

### **Introduction**

The twentieth century has been characterised as a century of widespread democratic upsurge. The first half of the century witnessed the overthrow of colonialism in Asia and Africa because of the liberation struggles. The Indian freedom movement led by Mahatma Gandhi which used non-violent direct action - *Satyagraha* - as a technique of struggle, has won general acclaim for the pioneering role it played in sharpening and hastening the process of dismantling the classical forms of colonialism and imperialism. The next two decades witnessed massive attempts at post-colonial transformation in the newly independent colonies initiated by the state. There has been a deeply entrenched presumption that the state was an effective mediator in ameliorating the conditions of the weaker and poorer sections of people, for the purpose of ensuring social justice and equality, the liberator of the oppressed and "an engine of growth and development that would usher in a new civil order based on progress and prosperity and confer rights to life and liberty, equality and dignity, on the people at large".<sup>1</sup>

The third decade of independence was a period of disillusionment and demystification. It becomes clear that the expectations of the positive and interventionist role of the

state and the presumed alliance between the state and the masses have been completely belied. As pointed out by Kothari: "Today the state is seen to have betrayed the masses, as having become the prisoner of the dominant classes and their transnational patrons and as having increasingly turned anti-people . ... The state in the third world, despite some valiant efforts by dedicated leaders in a few countries, has degenerated into a technocratic machine serving a narrow power group that is kept in power by hordes of security men at the top and a regime of repression and terror at the bottom kept going by millions of hardworking people who must go on producing goods and services for the system, for if they did not, every thing would collapse".<sup>2</sup>

This has evoked sharp response from the victims. They are being organised and mobilised under the aegis of what are known as New Social Movements/Action Groups/Peoples' Movements and these movements are engaging the oppressors in violent and non-violent struggles. There are movements of dalits, tribals, women, displaced peoples, environmental movements, movements for regional autonomy, movements against globalisation etc.

One can say without being seriously contested that the major non-violent/peaceful struggles of the post-Gandhian period in India are organic extensions of the *Satyagraha* campaigns carried out by Gandhi in his anti-racial and anti-colonial struggles in South Africa and India. In fact, there is hardly any significant non-violent struggle in any part of the world during the last fifty years that does not bear the impress and impact of Gandhian non-violence in a substantial way.

The anti-colonial struggle led by Gandhi for the liberation of India was unique in many ways. That it was predominantly a non-violent one has been mentioned repeatedly. It is another aspect that I want to highlight here. The Indian freedom movement was a multidimensional one. Gandhi did not limit it to a single point agenda of putting an end to British rule in India. Of course, ending foreign domination was an important and crucial item in the Gandhian agenda. However, his goals were greater and more ambitious. What he wanted to achieve was *Swaraj - Poorna Swaraj* or complete freedom.

### **Meaning of Swaraj**

A brief explanation of what Gandhi meant by *Swaraj* is called for here. Although the word *Swaraj* simply means self-rule, Gandhi gave it the content of an integral revolution that encompassed all spheres of life. "At the individual level *Swaraj* is vitally connected with the capacity for dispassionate self-assessment, ceaseless self-purification and growing *Swadeshi* or self-reliance".<sup>3</sup> Politically *Swaraj* is self-government and not good government (for Gandhi, good government is no substitute for self-government) and it means continuous effort to be independent of government control, whether it is foreign government or whether it is national. In other words, it is sovereignty of the people based on pure moral authority. Economically, *Poorna Swaraj* means full economic freedom for the toiling millions. For Gandhi *Swaraj* of the people meant the sum total of the *Swaraj* (self-rule) of individuals and so he clarified that for him *Swaraj* meant freedom for the meanest of his countrymen. And in its fullest sense *Swaraj* is much more than freedom from all restraints, it is self-rule, self-restraint and could be equated with *Moksha* or salvation.<sup>4</sup>

How to realise *Swaraj* also engaged Gandhi's attention seriously. He reminded his colleagues that *Swaraj* will not drop from the cloud and that it would be the fruit of patience, perseverance, ceaseless toil, courage and intelligent appreciation of the environment.<sup>5</sup> He also reminded them that *Swaraj* means vast organising ability, penetration into the villages solely for the service of the villagers; in other words, it means national education i.e., education of the masses.<sup>6</sup> And in the Gandhian discourse education of the masses means conscientization, mobilisation and empowerment, making people capable and determined to stand up to the powers that be. He said: "Real *Swaraj* will come, not by the acquisition of authority by a few, but by the acquisition of the capacity by all to resist authority when it is abused. In other words, *Swaraj* is to be attained by educating the masses to a sense of their capacity to regulate and control authority".<sup>7</sup>

Political independence was an essential precondition and the first step towards the realisation of the goal of *Swaraj*, but it was only a first step. For political independence Gandhi worked with and through the Indian National Congress, but there existed serious philosophical and ideological differences between Gandhi and other prominent leaders of the Congress particularly Nehru. The development model visualised by Gandhi and enunciated in the *Hind Swaraj* - known as Gandhi's manifesto and the strategy he evolved subsequently were totally unacceptable to Nehru and his Congress. 'Nehru dismissed *Hind Swaraj* as "completely unreal" and declared that neither he nor the Congress had ever considered the picture presented in it. However, to Gandhi the vision presented in the *Hind Swaraj* was the ideal for the realisation

of which he had devoted his life fully. He wanted to rebuild India after the model presented there. This required much more than ending British rule.

India was a subjugated nation. However, foreign domination was not the only form of subjugation suffered by her. India was the victim of many ills and evils of her own making for which no foreign power could be blamed. Therefore, Gandhi wanted an internal cleansing chiefly through self-motivated voluntary action in the form of constructive work. He, therefore, dovetailed them into his movement for freedom. *Swaraj* of his dream was to be built from below, brick by brick. It meant the elimination of all forms of domination, oppression, segregation and discrimination through the use of active non-violence and a simultaneous economic regeneration of rural India through programmes like the revival and propagation of *Khadi* and other related village industries. For translating these constructive programmes into reality, organisations were necessary. Congress was chiefly concerned with the question of political independence and believed in mobilising the people politically for it. It was not prepared to take up constructive work. Therefore, Gandhi founded voluntary organisations to carry out his Constructive Programme. The All India Spinners Association (AISA) and All India Village Industries Association (AIVIA) the *Harijan Sevak Sangh*, the Leprosy Foundation etc., are examples. Through the instrumentality of these organisations, Gandhi launched a massive programme of rural reconstruction and of empowering the marginalised sections of people. As these organisations were primarily meant for social transformation through voluntary action at the grassroots level their thrust



was mainly social. However, it does not mean that they were apolitical. On the contrary, they developed what later came to be labelled peoples' politics and basic politics, which in turn helped in the consolidation of *lok shakti* or peoples power. Although constructive workers were barred from directly taking part in political struggles, on crucial occasions, Gandhi enlisted their services for political mobilisation. For example, the 79 volunteers who constituted the Dandi Salt March team were all constructive workers. When Gandhi launched the Individual *Satyagraha*, it was the most prominent constructive worker Vinoba whom he selected as the first *Satyagrahi*. Gandhi visualised constructive work as a training programme for non-violent resisters or *Satyagrahis* and advocated the extensive use of Constructive Programme for preparing favourable environment for launching *Satyagraha*. Therefore, the political thrust of the constructive programme shall not be lost sight of.

In what is known as his Last Will and Testament Gandhi suggested the disbanding of the Congress organisation as a political forum and its blossoming into a constructive work organisation -*Lok Sevak Sangh* was the name he proposed - to conscientise and mobilise the people to work and struggle for *Swaraj*. Congressmen of the party-political disposition gave no heed to the advice of the Mahatma. However, after Gandhi's assassination the constructive workers, under the leadership of Vinoba Bhave, formed the *Sarva Seva Sangh* at the national level and *Sarvodaya Mandals* at the regional/state levels to carry on *Samagra Grama Seva* - integrated village service - for realising the goal of *Swaraj*. Two major non-violent movements for socio-economic and political revolution in India viz. the *Bhoodan* - *Gramdan* Movement led by the

Vinoba and the Total Revolution movement led by Jaya Prakash Narayanan [J.P.] were actually held under the aegis of the *Sarvodaya* Movement. On closer scrutiny it could be seen that the constructive work organisations founded by Gandhi and the *Sarvodaya Mandals* and *Sarva Seva Sangh* have actually served as precursors and role models of Peoples Movements, Voluntary Organisations (V.O.s) and some of the Non-Governmental Organisations (N.G.O.s) that were subsequently launched in various parts of India. As the similarities in their approach and praxis are obvious, it is not necessary to elaborate on them.

Gandhi had very clear ideas about the role to be played by the constructive work organisations and the proposed *Lok Sevak Sangh* in the reconstruction of India. He made it clear that he would not hesitate to use non-violent direct action against the new government headed by Nehru, his chosen heir. In his conversation with Louis Fischer Gandhi made it unequivocally clear that mass *Satyagraha* will have to be launched also against the capitalists and the landlords for persuading them to end their oppression and exploitation and that he was mentally preparing himself for that historic struggle for justice.

### **Why State Scepticism?**

Why did Gandhi take such a position vis-à-vis the new state? Although most of his prominent colleagues and contemporaries pinned their vision of transformation of society and polity on state power, Gandhi cherished a deep-rooted suspicion of the state machinery. He defined the state as the most organised and concentrated form of violence and called it an impersonal entity, a soulless machine that stifle

individuality, which lay at the root of all progress. The *raison d'être* of the state is that it is an instrument of serving the people. But Gandhi feared that in the name of moulding the state into a suitable instrument of serving the people, the state would abrogate the rights of the citizens and abrogate to itself the role of grand protector and demand abject acquiescence from them. This would create a paradoxical situation where the citizens would be alienated from the state and at the same time enslaved to it which according to Gandhi was demoralising and dangerous. If Gandhi's close acquaintance with the working of the state apparatus in South Africa and in India strengthened his suspicion of a centralised, monolithic state, his intimate association with the Congress and its leaders confirmed his fears about the corrupting influence of political power and his scepticism about the efficacy of the party system of power politics and his study of the British parliamentary system convinced him of the utter impotency of representative democracy of the Westminster model in meeting out justice to people. So he thought it necessary to evolve a mechanism to achieve the twin objectives of empowering the people and 'de-powering' the state. It was for this that he developed the two-pronged strategy of resistance (to the state) and reconstruction (through voluntary and participatory social action).

Socio-political developments in the post-colonial world corresponded with the Gandhian prognosis. The post-colonial Indian state started showing signs of becoming authoritarian under the pretext of becoming an adequate instrument of serving the people. Since erstwhile colonies had to overcome their underdevelopment (due to colonial exploitation) and develop in order to "catch up with the west", post-colonial

societies were urged to give their states enormous power in every domain. As Neera Chandhoke points out, development empowered the state in a way no other ideology could—indeed development became an ideology. ‘Narrowly conceived in an economistic fashion development portrayed the state as an impersonal vehicle of social change. As the post colonial elite who were captains of the state believed that development was the imperative of the time and considered it to be a value-free social process, they ignored the crucial fact that such an approach would breed its own patterns of domination and social oppression’.<sup>8</sup> This became clear in less than two decades after independence. As pointed out in the beginning the hope of post-colonial transformation in which the state was assigned a pivotal role was completely belied. The state was made visibly pro-elitist, catering to the needs of the rich and the powerful. With the beginning of the last decade of the century, the post-colonial states began openly collaborating with transnational and Multinational Corporations and Companies compromising even the sovereignty of the nation state and exposing the weaker sections of the people to stark exploitation. New forms of Western domination are being facilitated by the state reducing itself to the role of a broker. The state is being rolled back and is replaced by the market. In short, the very conception of the state as an instrument of human liberation and social transformation is to be doubted and contested. Not only the state but also the active mediators of the political process, namely the political parties, also have alienated themselves from the people and forfeited their credibility. It is not necessary to argue so hard to show that all these trends correspond to the Gandhian prognosis.

In this paradoxical situation, the victims of oppression are compelled to fall back on the legacy of the anti-colonial struggle that challenged the authoritarian conception of the state and political power. The anti-colonial struggles had opened up the streams of democratic consciousness that gave the people not only a sense of their fundamental and inalienable rights but also confidence in their capability to challenge and overthrow anti-people regimes through peaceful means. Another dimension of the anti-colonial struggle was that it gave the people the vision of an ideal social order that is free from exploitation, segregation and domination and also the hope that they can through corporate effort translate this vision into reality. All these have boiled down to a new determination among the masses - particularly the oppressed and the marginalised and the displaced - on the one hand to resist all forms of oppressive structures including the state, and on the other to strive for a more humane, participatory, just and sustainable social order. The socio-political turbulence and upheavals that we witness today are manifestations of this new determination.

As pointed out by Harsh Sethi, the action groups/peoples' movements that are spearheading these campaigns and struggles of the masses represent such a bewildering mix of ideologies, objectives, work styles, social composition, size of organisation and operation that it is well-nigh impossible to put them under a single rubric.<sup>9</sup> Most of these groups are composed mainly of sensitised and radicalised middle class youth working with and for the oppressed and exploited strata with a vision to transform society. Another commentator has identified three major

groups of actors in peoples movements - Gandhians, radical Christians and freelance Marxist intellectuals.<sup>10</sup>

### **Typology and issues**

1. Struggles for gender justice - fighting structural and cultural oppression - resisting harassment of women and girl children through direct action and legal measures. Many women's action groups are involved.
2. Struggles of the Dalits - fighting structural and socio-cultural oppression - most action groups are Ambedkarites - very active in Karnataka and Maharashtra - most of them not committed to non-violence. Demand socio-economic justice and equality.
3. Struggles of the Tribals - the worst hit victims of the major development projects of India like big dams, mines and collieries, thermal power stations etc. Demand right to live in their natural and traditional habitats and control and use their natural resources - also demand Tribal self government in the scheduled areas - Many action groups are active.
4. Ecological Struggles - Probably the most popular and widespread are environmental struggles - Demand an end to pollution, environmental degradation, over-exploitation of natural resources, and non-renewable sources of energy -pose the issues of sustainable development and alternative life styles. Narmada Bachao Andolan, the most popular movement today.

5. Human Rights/Civil Rights Struggles - expose and resist the authoritarian acts of the state and other powerful social forces and vested interests - seek mainly legal redressal. - Peoples' Union for Civil Liberties.
6. Anti-Nuclear Campaigns and Struggles - resist the establishment of atomic power plants - the attempt to establish nuclear reactors were defeated twice in Kerala - and the escalation of nuclear weapons and other weapons like missiles - the Baliapal Struggle.
7. Struggles against the liquor - drug menace - demand legal ban on the manufacture, sale and consumption of alcohol, drugs and other intoxicants - chiefly under the aegis of All India Prohibition Council and State Prohibition Councils - also led by citizens and women's Action groups - prohibition was an item in Gandhi's Constructive Programme.
8. Struggles for land redistribution - mobilising landless agricultural labourers and tillers and other landless sections and offering *Satyagraha* against the state and landlords and certain institutions that are monopoly holders of land - capture and occupation of land - the campaigns led by Shri.Jagannathan, a senior *Sarvodaya* leader in Tamil Nadu - also similar struggles in Bihar.
9. Struggles for *GramSwaraj* - an ongoing campaign for realising village-self-sufficiency and autonomy through struggles and constructive activities - led by *Sarva Seva Sangh*.

10. Struggles against Commercial Tourism - expose the evil designs of corporate capitalism in promoting tourism as an industry leading to cultural pollution, carnivalisation of religious festivals, child prostitution and large scale environmental destruction - active in states like Goa and Kerala.

### **A General Assessment**

As already mentioned, these struggles are held around a variety of issues that are different but interconnected. The theatres of struggle are also equally varied. The actors are disparate and sometimes even conflicting. At a glance, they appear almost kaleidoscopic. But there are certain characteristics that stand out. The most predominant, I suppose, is the convergence and alliance of actors in each struggle. Most of these struggles are localised and single-issue based and take place in remote and inaccessible places. Therefore, during the early years of these struggles, as the issues were not properly reported in the media, the action groups found it difficult to hold on against their adversaries who were formidable. But as a result of organised and concerted effort the situation changed gradually. As the action groups could succeed in publicising the seriousness of the problem and the consequences thereof, most of the theatres of struggle now attract a chain of actors. At the base are, of course, the direct and immediate victims, but there converge people from media, professionals like researchers, technologists, doctors, professors, and human rights activists including lawyers and also writers and theatre artists, and students from different levels.<sup>11</sup> Some of the struggles have attracted support even from overseas.



This kind of convergence of concerned and sensitised people drawn from different walks of life and various areas of specialisation has helped those at the base line of action to acquire factually accurate data and argue their case more scientifically and convincingly. It has also created a new sense of solidarity and fraternity reminiscent of days of the historic anti-colonial struggle. When a selected team of *Satyagrahis* of the NBA decided to do *Jal Samarpan*, i.e., offering themselves as sacrifice in the rising waters of the river Narmada and refused to leave their post, many sympathisers drawn from various parts of the country offered to get drowned with the *Satyagrahis*. And they remained with them in neck deep waters braving the risk of being washed away by the state-created flood. This is one of the rarest demonstrations of solidarity that can be read as a very reassuring sign of hope by all those who stand and struggle for the greater common good.

Alliance building within the theatre of a struggle is not without problems. Harsh Sethi, for example, points out that as a result of the intervention of professionals from outside the real issues tend to get clouded and there is even the chance of it moving away from the central question of power. He has also hinted at a cognitive handicap likely to arise out of an interface of two contradictory worldviews, that of communities rooted in nature and that of the urban middle class professionals. Sethi feared a distortion and downgrading of traditional wisdom and folk knowledge.<sup>12</sup> However, later developments show that such well-meaning criticisms and the warning implied therein were received very positively by all concerned, particularly by the middle class intellectuals and

specialists. Consequently, the collaboration was carefully developed into an alliance, which proved transformatory for both sets of actors. Both became self-conscious in a positive sense, accepting one's limitations and never trying to exchange roles. The professionals worked with commendable restraint, and they have openly acknowledged the great transformatory education they received from the experience of being with traditional communities. Needless to say that this has helped considerably in strengthening the struggles.

Almost all the struggles are localised. However, the issues involved are non-local and sometimes they are of global significance. Therefore, there arises the need to transcend localism while remaining local. For resolving most of the issues, wider support becomes essential because the issues are complex and the opponents formidable. The message of the ancient axiom - united we stand, divided we fall - has become clearer than even before to the action groups. So alliance building between peoples' movements has become an imperative need of the times and to fulfil this need the National Alliance of People's Movements (NAPM) has been formed. The NAPM is a co-ordination of such people oriented organisations, parties, movements, institutes and individuals that are working towards alternative development paradigm based on equality, justice and peace, and striving to evolve a sustainable society.<sup>13</sup> Within three years of its inception the NAPM has succeeded in getting a large number of peoples' movements affiliated to it and has made its presence felt in the overall scenario of peoples' struggles in India. It appears that in the years to come it is going to play a pivotal role in the consolidation of peoples' movements and struggles in this country.

One of the important results achieved by the struggles is that they succeeded in initiating a serious dialogue and discussion within and among the action groups and peoples movement on an alternative development paradigm. This has helped the action groups in placing the whole gamut of struggles in perspective and in evolving a consensus on what is meant by sustainable development-the values that underlie it, the components that constitute it and the methodology that would translate it into practice. The dialogue on alternative development model has thus narrowed down the ideological distance between movements. It has also emphasised the need to evolve an alternative politics. Discussions on various aspects of the emerging peoples' politics, which is distinguished from party politics, are galore in people's movements, though nothing concrete, capable of making a dent nationally, has emerged yet. But fundamental and crucial political questions hitherto ignored or marginalised by mainstream political parties and political commentators have been pushed into the vortex of contemporary political discourse by the movements.

An important trend that has started emerging with the struggles that attempt to resist and reverse globalisation is the importance given to constructive activities. Action groups that were oriented primarily to agitation and were engaged in mobilising people only for struggle have effected a change in their orientation by incorporating constructive work also into their praxis. Time there was when interest in and insistence on constructive work was brushed aside as a Gandhian fad. But now, the number of movements and groups that assign a key role to the building up of models of alternative enterprises and

structures are on the increase as they have understood the substantive and strategic significance of these programmes

The role of non-violence in these struggles is of course a moot question. As already mentioned, while some movements and groups have openly expressed their disapproval of non-violence as a method of struggle, others have emphasised the need to give up violence and resort to peaceful means. Although these groups do not adhere to Gandhi's position on non-violence, i.e., accepting non-violence as an article of faith and making it the central organising principle of life, they are convinced more than ever before that non-violence has to be accepted as an ideal if a just social order is to be translated into reality. For them justice is an essential value and they know that violence in any form and in any degree amounts to a denial of justice. Therefore, they emphasise peace, taking peace as one form and manifestation of non-violence. It is really indicative of an emerging trend among action groups of giving up violent methods and gradually moving towards non-violence. Some organisations claim to be non-violent. However, a critical observer is constrained to point out that theirs is not the non-violence of the brave visualised and demonstrated by Gandhi, but non-violence of the weak. Most of the *Satyagrahas* that we see today are only passive resistance and not real *Satyagraha* as conceived by Gandhi. One is reminded of the significant confession Gandhi made while witnessing the communal carnage following the partition of India that the non-violence that he nursed and nurtured in this country was in truth non-violence of the weak and the coward and not true non-violence. It will be relevant to recall that J.P described the movement for total revolution as "peaceful" and not "non-

violent". But it serves as a sign of hope that more and more action groups are renouncing violence being convinced about its utter futility and accepting peace and non-violence as key values. Probably, they have come to the realisation with Martin Luther King Jr. that the choice before humanity today is not between violence and non-violence but between non-violence and non-existence.

Peoples Movements and their struggles have been mainly located in civil society by social scientists.<sup>14</sup> Civil society has been advanced to provide the conceptual frame work to comprehend and evaluate people struggles. It has been pointed out that these struggles are to be seen as part of an attempt to create an authentic civil society in which all its members can experience the values of freedom and equality. But as Neera Chandhoke argues, "the civil society constructed by the post colonial state is a constrictive and exclusive arena...a peaceable arena...in which any one who confronts the state is a political offender and can be banished out side the pale of society. . . it is a neutralised civil society that is stripped of its potential to engage with the state. Thus in fact, the concept of civil society does not provide an adequate conceptual apparatus to locate peoples struggles".<sup>15</sup> Manoranjan Mohanty introduces the concept of 'creative society' to situate peoples' struggles and here 'creative society' refers to a phase of development of a society in which a large number of political contradictions become articulate and active and oppressed people get politically mobilised and demand their rights.<sup>16</sup>

A closer and critical look at Gandhi's concept of *Swaraj* will show that it can provide a more adequate conceptual

apparatus to locate and assess the struggles of the oppressed peoples. As pointed out earlier Gandhi's concept of *Swaraj* is a comprehensive one and encapsulates the individual human person and life in a holistic framework. It visualises the progressive liberation of all from all oppressive structures and therefore can be equated with salvation. If we examine the vision of the new world order – the haven of freedom - conceived and formulated by the ideologues of the peoples' struggles, it would become unambiguously clear that nothing less than a concept as comprehensive and holistic as *Swaraj* will be necessary to locate it properly. That is why I look upon these struggles as peoples' pursuit of the ideal of *Swaraj* and situate them in the Gandhian legacy.

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## 6

### **Discovering New Horizons : Women and the Non-violent Struggle for Independence in India**

*Usha Thakkar*

The participation of the Indian women in the non-violent struggle under Gandhi's leadership against the unjust British rule is a glorious chapter not only in the history of India but also in the history of the twentieth century. Women's entry into national politics through non-violent methods brought miraculous results. On the one hand women became aware of their own inner strength, and on the other the human and moral elements gained legitimacy in politics. While charting a new course in the history of the twentieth century Indian women's non-violent struggle has carved some messages for the twenty first century also. It has demonstrated that to be weak is not a crime and to be powerless is not a folly. What is required in the struggle against injustice is the inner strength rooted in non-violence. The pre-condition of the effective struggle against inequality is freedom from fear. Women can be a force to reckon with when committed to a cause with conviction. They do not have to follow the accepted male-dominated political norms to be effective. They can evolve their own perception of power and politics and they can find their own methods.

Gandhi was confident that "If non-violence is the law of our being, the future is with women."<sup>1</sup> His experience of participation of women in the non-violent struggle till the end



of his life bears testimony to the fact that women never failed his expectations. Women's participation in the non-violent struggle gave a new dimension to Indian politics and changed their own perspective of life. Women discovered new horizons as they become aware of their potentials. There is a lot of truth in the observation by C.F. Andrews that among all the different interests which occupied Gandhi's attention in India, very few can be compared with his earnest support to the women's movement.<sup>2</sup> Thousands of women, some famous and many unnoticed heroines of India learnt the meaning of liberation from him and contributed with all their energy to the struggle for independence. Gandhi had a special reason for encouraging women to be self reliant; he believed that "When woman, whom we call *abala* becomes *sabala*, all those who are helpless will become powerful".<sup>3</sup>

An attempt is made in the present paper to understand the contribution made by the women to the non-violent struggle for independence and the implications and messages of this struggle.

## I

Indian history is resplendent with examples of women (mostly queens) who joined and led armed struggle against the enemy. Rani Laxmibai of Jhansi is one of the brightest stars among them. Coming to the twentieth century, we find that women had their specific response in 1905 at the time of the partition of Bengal. Women expressed their feelings by taking part in Rabindranath Tagore's plan of *rakhi-bandhan* on the partition day, 16th October 1905, and by answering Romendrasundar Trivedi's call of not lighting the hearth for

cooking on that day. The fact that fiery spirit was awakened is proved by an incident when 500 women went to congratulate the mother of an editor of an extremist newspaper, who was sentenced for sedition.

Though emancipation of women was not mentioned as a specific object of the Indian National Congress at the time of its establishment on 28th December 1885, its membership was open for women. Educated women started taking part in the activities of the Congress, but the pace of this participation was rather slow.<sup>4</sup> When the Congress adopted the programme of boycott, *Swadeshi* and national education between 1905 and 1915, women contributed a lot in popularising this programme. Home Rule movement also attracted women. According to Annie Besant, the strength of the Home Rule movement was rendered ten-fold greater by the adhesion to it of large number of women, who brought to its helping the uncalculating heroism, the endurance, and self-sacrifice of the feminine nature.<sup>5</sup>

It was under Gandhi's leadership that women discovered their potential strength and contributed their best with verve and vigour. It was Gandhi who turned traditional symbols and ideas into sources of energy and inspiration for thousands of Indian women. As walls of conventions and traditions crumbled against the force of nationalism, Indian women came out of the sheltered existence to play an important role in the non-violent struggle. Gandhi's presence had an electrifying effect on Indian women - rich and poor, urban and rural educated and uneducated. He brought a silent revolution in the perception of life for women. In his words, "My contribution to the great problem (of women's role in society)

lies in my presenting for acceptance of truth and *ahimsa* in every walk of life, whether for individuals or nations. I have hugged the hope that in this, woman will be the unquestioned leader and, having thus found her place in human evolution, will shed her inferiority complex." <sup>6</sup>

It was in South Africa that Gandhi become aware of the power of women as participants in his non-violent struggle. When Gandhi launched his first *Satyagraha* in South Africa against the British policy of racial discrimination, the oppressed sections had discovered a powerful weapon in non-violent methods. Initially Gandhi did not ask women to join the *Satyagraha*, but later on agreed to do so under Kasturba's pressure. Indian women felt insulted by the judgement delivered by Justice Searle of the Cape town Supreme Court declaring only those marriages legal, which were celebrated according to Christian rights and registered by the Registrar of Marriages. Gandhi sent a group of sixteen, including Kasturba, from Phoenix settlement in Natal to the Transvaal. After a few days a batch of eleven women from Tolstoy Farm in the Transvaal crossed into Natal without permits and were arrested. There were 127 women among the coal miners who marched to Charlestown. The women, who had hardly stepped out of their homes, had to suffer hardships of jail. Valliamma Moonsamy Moodaliar, a young girl of 16 years succumbed to the fatal fever contacted in jail.<sup>7</sup>

Gandhi's entry in Indian politics changed its very context. Life for women also started changing. Love for the motherland made a silent entry in the private world of women, and brought a silent revolution.<sup>8</sup> Women started doing spontaneously some activities which would not come under suspicion like sheltering persons who were offenders in

the eyes of British law, inculcating nationalist ideas in the children in the family, supporting and encouraging political activities of men in the family. Women from all parts of the country came out of their homes to organise meetings and processions, to sell *Khadi*, to spread the message of *Swadeshi* and to picket near by liquor shops and shops of foreign cloth.

In the battle fought by Gandhi at Champaran in 1917, women helped by organising literacy classes and contacting people in their homes. Soon after Champaran *Satyagraha*, Gandhi was in Ahmedabad to espouse the cause of the workers of the textile mills. Anasuyaben Sarabhai, sister of the famous mill-owner Ambalal Sarabhai, became his loyal follower. In the Congress session after the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, a nation-wide programme of boycotting the British titles, courts and academic institutions as well as the picketing of liquor-shops was launched. Gandhi asked women to respond with their might and women did not disappoint him. Women contributed generously to Tilak *Swaraj* Fund by giving money and jewellery. Gandhiji's language had a direct appeal for women. He compared the British rule with *Ravan-rajya*, and said that as Sita did not co-operate with Ravana, so the Indian people must not co-operate with this *Rakshasi - Sarkar* (devil's rule).<sup>9</sup>

The programme of boycott of courts and schools was accepted by the Congress on August 10, 1920. In September 1920, the non-cooperation resolution was put in the Congress session at Calcutta and was ratified at Nagpur in December same year. April 6-13, 1921 was declared *Satyagraha* week, women started participating in meeting organised during this week. They started *Rashtriya Stree Sangh* in Bengal.

Volunteers responded to C. R. Das's call to sell *Khadi* on streets of Calcutta. His wife Basanti Devi and his sister Urmila Devi were among the arrested on 7 December 1921, but released soon. Soon crowds gathered to exert pressure on the police to release women. The next day, December 8, 1921, the city was in commotion. When women from Das family resumed picketing cloth shops and selling *Khadi*, many women volunteers and students joined them. Gandhi urged women from other parts to follow the example of women from Bengal. Basanti Devi presided over the Bengal Provincial Conference at Chittagong and Kasturba chaired the Gujarat Provincial Conference in 1922. Rameshwari Nehru started a *Kumari Sabha* in Allahabad to encourage girls for public speaking and discussions.

Women had impressive demonstrations in Bengal. They sold *khadi*, picketed cloth and liquor shops and made salt. Women like Hemprabha Majumdar were working with dauntless courage. Latika Ghosh, an oxford educated teacher organised the *Mahila Rashtriya Sangha* in 1928 to mobilise women for political work. Its women members wanted *Swaraj* and an improved status for women. Latika Ghosh mobilised women by evoking the stories of the battles between *Devis* (goddesses) and *Asuras* (demons), the *Shakti* image and the deeds of the Rajput women. In 1928, Subhash Bose decided that uniformed women volunteers would march with men in the procession to inaugurate the annual Congress meeting in Calcutta. He made Latika Ghosh a Colonel and gave her responsibility for this which she performed very well. In response to the call of the Congress, *Nari Satyagraha Samiti* was formed in 1929 in Calcutta with Urmila Devi as its president. Jyotimayee Ganguli as vice-president, Santi Das and

Bimal Protiba Devi as joint-secretaries. Women from middle-class families attracted public attention when they joined the processions or picketed the foreign-goods shops. Some women's organisations in Calcutta like Nari *Satyagraha* Committee and *Rashtriya Mahila Sangh*, had played an important role in breaking the salt law.

Gujarat was not to be left behind. Women participated in Borsad *Satyagraha* of 1923-24 in large numbers. Thousands of women came to Gandhi's meeting, and remained firm even when their cattle and property were confiscated by the police. The Bardoli *Satyagraha* of 1928 also witnessed increasing participation of women. Women supported men in their decision of not paying taxes, even when their cows, buffaloes and land were confiscated. Sardar Patel noted that women were better than men in firmness and forthrightness. Maniben Patel, Mithuben Petit and Bhaktiba Desai were in the forefront of this *Satyagraha*. Participation of thousands of rural women in the *Satyagraha* had made it a special struggle. At the All-Indian Ladies Conference in Ahmedabad, 6000 listened to Bi Amman, the mother of Shaukat Ali and Muhammad Ali, leaders of the All-India Khilafat Committee. Bi Amman asked women to enlist as Congress volunteers and, if men were arrested, to join the picket lines and keep the flag flying.<sup>10</sup>

Gandhi's Dandi march on March 12, 1930 opened a new chapter in India's history, but his decision not to include women in it disappointed women. The Women's Indian Association protested against their exclusion on the ground that in a non-violent struggle, any discrimination on the ground of sex was unnatural and liable to work against the

awakened consciousness of women. There were many individual protests also. Women like Khurshedben, Dadabhai Naoroji's grand daughter asked Gandhi the reason for preventing women from joining him.

Ultimately, Gandhi had to permit women to fully participate in the *Satyagraha*. He named Sarojini Naidu as his second successor after Abbas Tyabji and she carried out her mission with rare distinction. On Gandhi's way there were meetings with thousands of women in them. At the village Abhrama on 10<sup>th</sup> April 1930 in an audience of 5000, no less than 2000 were women; at Matwad, on 11<sup>th</sup> April a quarter of the audience was women; at Dandi on 13<sup>th</sup> April more than 500 women received him<sup>11</sup> Gandhi talked to women in such meetings about their duties to the nation, i.e., picketing liquor and toddy shops, boycotting the taxed salt and spinning *Khadi*.

Women's participation in the civil disobedience movement was more intense and meaningful than in the early 1920s.

Bombay women's picketing and demonstrations during 1930-32 attracted the attention of the country and press. *Rashtriya Stree Sangh* contributed well to the national cause with Sarojini Naidu as the President and Goshiben Naoroji Captian and Avantikabai Gokhale as vice-presidents. By 1930, *Desh Sevika Sangh* emerged with its women members ready for action.

In response to Gandhi's call, women in Bombay formed an organisation to plan and direct efforts to close shops selling foreign cloth. The sixth of April, the anniversary of the

Amritsar massacre was chosen for breaking the salt law. Seven persons, including two women, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya and Avantikabai Gokhale, were the first to go to the beach and boil sea water. Kamaladevi described women's participation in poetic words: "Women turned every house into a sanctuary for the law breaker. They lent sanctity to their act by their purity of spirit. Even the mightiest military power cannot cope with a struggle that has its being in the sacred precincts of the home."<sup>12</sup> The Bombay Chronicle reported that thousands of Gujarati women marched at the Chowpatty sea face, collected sea water in their brass and copper jugs.<sup>13</sup> Women volunteers picketed toddy shops in the heart of the city and asked owners to close down and patrons to leave the premises. Some women sold salt on the streets, and some went house to house urging housewives to buy only *Swadeshi* products.<sup>14</sup> This campaign was directed by *Desh Sevika Sangh* formed by Hansa Mehta and others. Goshiben Captain (1884 - 1970), one of the founding members, insisted on impeccable credentials of the members.

Women addressed public meetings, sold proscribed literature, helped organising *Vanar* and *Manjjar Senas* (monkey and cat armies of children) and faced police atrocities. Some of them worked as "dictators" of the war councils. Through the summer of 1930 "day by day, the streets of Bombay would be livened in the early morning with the songs of freedom sung by troops of patriots rousing the people to action.... Women could be found all over the city, sitting outside the liquor shops and foreign cloth shops, plying their little 'spinning wheels' called *taklis*, silently warning every Indian that he must not buy from that shop.... Many of the women had never taken any part in public life before".<sup>15</sup>



Sarojini Naidu was nominated as the leader of the raid on the Dharasana salt works. She directed the protest that began on 15<sup>th</sup> May 1930, was arrested the same day and released. On May 21<sup>st</sup> she led the second batch of raiders, was arrested and sentenced for a year in prison. Her example inspired many women.

The contribution of women from Maharashtra has remained notable. Pandita Ramabai and Kashibai Kanetkar were amongst the first women to attend the Congress session. Ramabai Ranade had played an important part in the suffragette movement. Yesu Savarkar was active in *Atmanishtha Yuvati Sangh* in Nasik. Laxmibai Thuse was involved with Home Rule movement in Pune. Avantikabai Gokhale, Gandhi's disciple, was called 'Sarojini of Maharashtra' by Tilak. Padmavati Harrolkar (Satyabhama Kuvalekar) took interest in organising women and spreading *Khadi*. Janakibai Apte, Premabai Kankar, Malinibai Sukhtankar, Godavari Parulekar, Anutai Bhagwat, Leelatai and Annapurna Deshmukh worked tirelessly for the nation. Women like Kasturba, Sarladevi Sarabhai, Mridula Sarabhai, Indumati Sheth, Mithuben Petit, Nanduben Kanuga and Maniben Patel emerged as leaders from Gujarat. And there were many women like Gangaben Vaidya who translated Gandhian ideals in life.

The response of women from places like Allahabad, Lucknow, Delhi and Lahore was unprecedented. Leadership came from the elite families, but the followers were from all sections. Women from the Nehru family were in the forefront. Swarup Rani Nehru, Motilal Nehru's wife and Jawaharlal Nehru's mother, came out from the sheltered life to

participate in the non-violent struggle and to bear the brunt of the police *lathis*. Kamala Nehru, Jawaharlal Nehru's wife, displayed heroic courage and activity in spite of her frail health.

Parvati Devi- Lala Lajpatrai's daughter, Lado Rani Zutshi- the wife of Motilal Nehru's nephew, and her three daughters- Manmohini, Shyama and Janaki - led the movement in Lahore. Manmohini was active with the nationalist activities of the students. As a protest against the death sentence to Bhagat Singh and his comrades, she organised successful picketing at three colleges in Lahore.

In Delhi, Satyavati Devi, the granddaughter of Swami Shradhananda, was one of the prominent leaders. She asked women to join the struggle to liberate the motherland. She became very sick in the prison, but continued the work throughout the 1930s. Women's demonstrations in Delhi were powerful and inspired many men to join the freedom struggle.

Bengal was vibrant with activities initiated by women. In Calcutta women's organisations like *Nari Satyagraha Committee* and *Rashtriya Mahila Sangh* broke the salt law.

Madras also displayed political involvement of women, though not so intense as in Bengal or Bombay. S. Ambujammal was a follower of Gandhi's ideology. In 1928, she decided to form the *Women's Swadeshi League*. They took the *Swadeshi* vow, and spread the message of *Khadi*. Ambujammal was the president of the organisation with Smt. Jamammal as treasurer. Krishnabai Rao organised the *Desh Sevikas* under

the aegis of the *Swadeshi* League. They picketed at shops selling foreign cloth and propagated values of *Swadeshi*. Rukmani Lakshmipathy was with C. Rajagopalachari in his march to Vedaranyam to break salt laws in 1931. She was arrested and became the first woman political prisoner in Vellore women's jail. Durgabai showed her potential as leader when she suggested Salt *Satyagraha* for garnering support of the people for civil disobedience movement. After writing to Gandhi, she persuaded T. Prakasam to lead the volunteers, who designated Durgabai the 'dictator' of the movement. The latter did her duty very well, but was arrested and put in prison.

Women in Bihar had leaders like Mira Devi, Mrs. Hasan Imam, Mrs. C.C. Das, Gauri Das and Vindhya Vasini Devi who worked sincerely and successfully for mobilising women to participate in the nationalist struggle. Women leaders like Kamladevi Chattopadhyaya, Umabai Kundapur, Krishnabai Panjekar, Ballari Siddama and Gowramma remained active in Karnataka.

The civil disobedience movement in Orissa became powerful with contribution of women like Rama Devi, Kishorimani Devi, Malati Choudhary, Subhadra Devi, A. Laxmi Bai and Annapurna Devi. While many women contributed to the constructive programme, some under the leadership of Malati Choudhary started Socialist movement. Kuntala Kumari Sabat, a nationalist writer, appealed to women to come out of the kitchen and join hands with the *Satyagrahis*.

It seemed that women were charged with energy. Over 80,000 persons were arrested during the Salt *Satyagraha* of whom more than 17,000 were women.<sup>16</sup>

Taking note of the fact that not only elite women but women from all sections of society, peasants and professional women, students and artists, housewives and working women had spontaneously participated in the movement, Jawaharlal Nehru wrote : "Here were these women, women of the upper or middle classes leading sheltered lives in their homes, peasant women, working-class women, rich women, poor women pouring out in their tens of thousands in defiance of government order and police *lathi*,"<sup>17</sup>

Women were active in the princely states also. 700 women were *lathi*-charged in the Viramgam *Satyagraha* in May 1930. They took part in the Rajkot *Satyagraha* of 1938-39 also.<sup>18</sup>

The Congress Working Committee in 1930 adopted a resolution regarding its "grateful tribute to the women of India for the noble part they are progressively playing in the present struggle for national freedom, and the readiness they have increasingly shown to brave assaults, abuses, *lathi*-charges and imprisonment while carrying on the Congress work."<sup>19</sup>

When Gandhi inaugurated his programme of Individual *Satyagraha* in October 1940, Sucheta Kripalani was one of the earliest to join. Quit India movement of August 1942 brought new vigour to the freedom struggle. All the important leaders were arrested on 9<sup>th</sup> August at the public meeting at Gowalia tank in Mumbai. Aruna Asaf Ali unfurled the flag, went

underground and earned admiration of the people. She remained underground for four years and published bulletins and with Dr. Lohia edited the *Inquilab*. Usha Mehta, with her three colleagues, made history by operating the underground radio. They called themselves "the Congress Radio operating from somewhere in India". They gave regular news about the Congress and the freedom struggle with the messages of leaders at 7.30 p.m. from August to 13 November 1942, till she was arrested with her colleagues. She was sentenced to four years rigorous imprisonment at Yervada jail. These young fighters looked upon Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia and Achyut Patwardhan for guidance. Women like Sophia Khan, Prema Kantak, Maniben, Nanavati and Rehana Tyabji were busy in spreading the nationalist ideals.

Women all over the country felt compelled to respond to the struggle. Kanaklata Barua in Assam led the procession of the people and fell victim to firing. Matangini Hazra of seventy-three years of age in Midnapore in Bengal carrying the national flag in a procession succumbed to the soldier's bullets. In Karnataka, young students Hemlata and Gulwadi attacked the building of the court and exhorted the judge to resign. In Punjab a young school girl, while answering the questions of the police, captured the mood of those times. To the question 'what is your name?', her answer was '*Baghi* (rebel) No. 1,2,3'. To the question 'what is your father's name?', her answer was 'Gandhi', and to the question 'what is your mother's name?', the answer was '*Bharatmata*.'

The police tried to repress the popular uprising with brutality and force. A special train with Indian and European soldiers was going to Wardha. Some soldiers looted the

property and raped the women at Chimur. There was much public protest. Bhansali, a respected leader and associate of Gandhi, went on an indefinite fast against the outrageous behaviour with women. The Congress radio was the first to announce the news about the rape of women at Ashti and Chimur.

The upheaval caused by the 1942 movement continued till the attainment of independence. Women, young and old, were involved in this great struggle. They went to the jail sometimes with their babies and contributed to the programmes of constructive work. There were, however, some women who joined the revolutionary activities for the independence of the nation.<sup>20</sup>

Biographies, autobiographies and personal interviews of some women fighters give us the glimpses of their saga of sacrifice and their strength to stand on their own feet in adverse situations. It is not easy to know about all the women who participated in the freedom struggle. Names and contributions of some women have been retained, but many remain virtually unknown, their sacrifices unacknowledged and their contributions unnoticed. The task calls for intensive concerted research and collection of data from old records and oral history.

## II

The glimpses of women's participation in the freedom struggle bring on surface some important undercurrents and the lessons for the twenty-first century. Though the history of women's non-violent protests goes back to Rome in 195 B.C. when women had protested collectively in a non-violent way

against the law prohibiting Roman women from wearing purple and gold-traditional insignia of power and authority - in public and from riding in horse-drawn carriages in towns and cities, it is in this century that the frequency and diversity of collective action and non-violent protest by women have increased.<sup>21</sup> Women in different countries are raising their voices against injustice and are making concerted efforts to remove discrimination. Women's actions have very often roots in their spontaneous, non-violent and firm response to a particular issue. Women organise themselves in peaceful demonstrations and processions against the unjust power-structure and channelise their energy towards some meaningful goal. Most of the Indian women, who participated in the freedom struggle, also got involved in this non-violent struggle spontaneously and wholeheartedly. This unprecedented phenomenon while making the history in the twentieth century contains some messages for the twenty first century also.

The Indian women by their non-violent struggle demonstrated that inner strength is more powerful than the brute force, and the so-called weak can be strong. This powerful lesson is important for us as we prepare ourselves to enter the next century with apprehension and hope. The Indian women also showed the strength of peaceful collective action. There were thousands of women, unacknowledged and virtually unknown, who have given everything they had for the nation. It is not easy to get the record of their names and work. Some studies concentrating on specific regions throw light on the role played by women of those regions. There are also some men and women living today, who talk about the glorious days of the freedom struggle. They indicate

that women from almost all sections of the society participated in the struggle. Women from cities and villages, from professions and homes, from high castes and low castes had plunged into the freedom struggle and worked as never before. As for example, Patidar peasant women were active in Ras, Borsad and Bardoli.<sup>22</sup>

The life-stories of such women and interaction with some women freedom fighters like Lakshmi Menon, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya, Ratan Shastri and Usha Mehta bring out their perception of freedom, which is of crucial importance to the oppressed sections of society. Liberty has to be conceptualised in its totality. The obstacles facing women in the way of liberty are many. The most difficult stem from the institutions of the family and the society coupled with women's own socialisation and dependent self-image. Women's participation in the freedom struggle changed many perceptions. In a way the Indian women feminised nationalism and the nationalist struggle helped them to liberate from age-old social taboos and traditional norms. A scholar has noted an example where a married woman freedom fighter broke her glass bangles, when told that they were made of Czechoslovakian glass. She did not even for a moment think that it is a bad omen for a married woman to break her bangles.<sup>23</sup> Such examples are not few and far between. They suggest that though these women did not challenge the traditional roles, they did discover new freedom and mobility. Their involvement in politics emphasised the spirit of co-operation and not competition with men. Barriers of caste and class often crumbled while singing, or walking in *prabhatferis* or cooking together. The sharp dividing line between private and public became blurred, and the Indian woman could



establish relation between her life and the nation. She learnt that meaning of politics in the language she understood. Life for her after participation in the freedom struggle was never the same again. Her perception towards the self, the family and the society had undergone a change. As Bharati Ray argues, involvement in the freedom struggle had taught women the basics of agitational politics, and the breaking of the carapace of traditional domestic life had widened their horizon. They had begun, as their writing indicates, slowly to comprehend the reasons for their oppression and to perceive the need to organise their own associations as a source of strength.<sup>24</sup>

The principles and techniques of *Satyagraha* provided much needed space and solace to women. They could, through these, present a critique of the colonial state, which was unethical. Truth cannot be achieved in a soulless regime, so one had to strive for *Swaraj*, and it was not of any shame or embarrassment to be feminine and weak. As argued by Amrit Srinivasan, the domestic or civil domain was not deemed the submerged, weak and ineffectual 'female' domain within the 'male' world of state politics. At the highest level of aberration, the Gandhian science of *Swaraj* was preoccupied with the 'feminine' in a way in which all ethical programmes which involve themselves with the world and its transformation are.<sup>25</sup> The Gandhian critique of the authoritarian colonial state which emerged during the freedom struggle contained women's perspective of politics. Women demonstrated by non-violent struggle against the unjust rule that they had their own vision of future and their own concept of peace. And as pointed out by Karen J. Warren and Duane L. Cady. "Feminism and peace share an important conceptual connection. Both

are critical of and committed to the elimination of, coercive power-over privilege systems of domination as a basis of interaction between individuals and groups. A feminist critique and development of any peace politics, therefore, ultimately is a critique of systems of unjustified domination".<sup>26</sup>

Women's participation in the non-violent struggle also brings out the interplay between nationalism and feminism. Under Gandhi's leadership the Indian women started discovering their identities, they started becoming aware of the fact that they were not objects of men's lust but self-reliant individuals. They learnt to respect themselves and to value their contribution to social and political cause as women. The non-violent struggle legitimised women's role in the movement as women. To be a woman was no longer considered to be inferior to a man. Gandhi maintained, "To call woman the weaker sex is a libel; it is man's injustice to women. If by strength is meant brute strength, then indeed is woman less brute than man. If by strength is meant moral power, then woman is immeasurably man's superior."<sup>27</sup> Gandhi saw that the low status of women was the result of prejudices and adverse traditions, which were centuries old. Woman was reduced to the position of the slave "who did not know that he could or ever had to be free".<sup>28</sup> It is difficult to get women interested in the larger problems of life and because they knew nothing of them, having never been allowed to breathe the fresh air of freedom.<sup>29</sup>

Women realised that the only factor that would enable them to come out of such situation was the determination and strength of women themselves. Though men should help in the cause of women, Gandhi maintained, "ultimately woman

will have to determine with authority what she needs".<sup>30</sup> The *Satyagraha* movements gave women opportunities to take decisions, and to strengthen the bonds of sisterhood. Feminism and nationalism were never mutually exclusive for women in women's organisations like Women's Indian Association, All India Women's Conference and National Council of Women in India. There may have been conflict with the nationalists over priorities and tactics but not over ultimate goals.<sup>31</sup> Feminism and nationalism were closely inter-linked. As the national movement gained momentum, the goal of independence became the only concern for both men and women. The women's movement in India had none of the man-woman antagonism characteristic of women's movement in the West.

Women followed Gandhi, because they found something in him which had direct links with their lives. They discovered their own potential and strength as they got involved in the freedom struggle. As pointed out by Laxmi Menon, women joined the movement because his message. "Offered the women of India an opportunity to break from the past with all its frustrations."<sup>32</sup> According to Aloo Dastur and Usha Mehta, one of the enduring results of Gandhi's great life work has been the awakening of women which made them shed their deep-rooted inferiority complex and rise to great heights of valour and dignity, of self-reliance and achievement.<sup>33</sup>

Vina Mazumdar also stresses that Gandhi's greatest contribution to the movement for raising women's status lay in his revolutionary approach to women's roles in society, and their personal dignity as individuals.<sup>34</sup> As Devaki Jain argues, though many of Gandhi's statements on women may seem

jarring when read today, Gandhi seems to have been intuitively attuned to women, and to have seen women's potential more clearly than any other political or religious leader in any part of the world. He perceived women equal, but different. In their difference, Gandhi himself identified with woman.<sup>35</sup>

While the nationalist struggle provided women with an opportunity to enter the public sphere and bring changes in their lives and around, it has to be noted that it could not totally transform the reality. The chains of the traditions and conventional thinking could not be thrown off totally. As pointed out by some scholars, "the struggle against a common oppressor effectively diverted attention from other potential conflicts within the social system."<sup>36</sup> Moreover, since 'patriotism was subsumed within religion', women's participation filled into the traditional cultural matrix.<sup>37</sup> It is also argued that Gandhi recruited women to channel the energies of an emerging women's movement into the political movement he controlled.<sup>38</sup> In addition, Gandhi created a new myth of Indian womanhood, Sita - like in her devotion to service and self-sacrifice, whether in her family or to her nation. In that context, the essential issues related to women's emancipation could not be taken up.<sup>39</sup>

The magic of the Mahatma however encompasses the participation of women in the freedom struggle.<sup>40</sup> Women from different sections, classes, regions and religions were attracted to Gandhi. His calm words and non-violent ways of working made it possible for women to traverse effortlessly between their private world of home and public world of the nationalist struggle. He used the language they understood,

he used the symbols they were familiar with. He gave the message of self-reliance through the *charka* and the use of *Swadeshi* products. Women under Gandhi's leadership learnt that they should seek justice, never favours".<sup>41</sup> This important lesson of self-reliance is relevant for the next century also.

It has to be noted in this context that the women used democratic and transparent methods during the non-violent struggle. There was no organised structure and hence no hierarchy. Women (and men too) usually sat in a circle, implying equality of all and reached all the members by devotional group songs. The informal atmosphere and activities like walking or eating together encouraged sharing, and a strong bond was established among the women. There are instances where pregnant women or women with infants went to jail, and were looked after by their women colleagues there. Their families were taken care of by others who also had faith in the nationalist ideals. Human elements of such experiences are guidelines for human behaviour in the society. The activities of women in the non-violent freedom struggle give messages of inner strength, simplicity, self-reliance and the need to identify with the deprived sections. Some women's struggles like Chipko, anti-arrack and anti-dowry agitations and working of some women's organisations like Laxmi Ashram and SEWA indicate the strength of non-violent methods, which were nurtured by women during the freedom struggle.

Women's participation in the non-violent freedom struggle has heralded a new era for the nation as well as for women themselves. Though more than fifty years of independence have not brought for women the liberation

from exploitation and injustice, the experience of participation in the freedom struggle has been very valuable. It has taught the women to aspire for freedom and to strive for it. Women have proved that they form an important part of history, and they can make history. Women struggling against injustice and deprived sections aspiring for freedom in the twenty-first century also can take inspiration from the experiences of the Indian women active in the non-violent freedom struggle.

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## Non-violent Struggles in Uttarakhand

*Sunderlal Bahuguna*

Though far from the centres of power, the hilly region of Uttarakhand has been the venue of a number of non-violent struggles. Highlanders belong to a martial race. Their spirit of revolt is known throughout India. Inspired by the freedom movement, the Garhwali soldiers of British army, under the leadership of Chandra Singh Garhwali, refused to open fire at non-violent *Satyagrahis* in Peshawar in the twenties. Later, in Tilari, Tehri-Garhwal State, the peasants launched *Satyagraha* against state control over the forests. The protesters had assembled in a meeting on the banks of Yamuna, on 30<sup>th</sup> of May 1930, when the army opened fire. Some of them were killed and about 100 were arrested. They were inspired by the Salt *Satyagraha*.

### **Suman's Sacrifice**

Dev Suman, a young man from Tehri-Garhwal, came in contact with the Gandhian movement. After his release from Agra Central Jail, where along with others he was detained for participating in the 1942 Quit India movement, he came to Tehri State to spread the message of Gandhi. He was arrested and tried for treason. He was sentenced for two years. The ruler asked him to apologise, but he was so firm that he said, "You can break me, but can not change me" (*Tum mujhe tor sakte ho, par mor nahin sakte ho*). He went on a fast unto death inside the prison to press his demand for granting civil liberties to the oppressed state subjects, who had been denied

the right to form organizations and hold public meetings. True to his mission, he continued his fast in spite of atrocities. He was chained and flogged, but he firmly said: "I do not mind living in prison for two years; my whole life is dedicated to the cause of the protection of the rights of people." Dev Suman died inside the prison on July 25th, 1944. His body was thrown into the river Bhilangna a tributary of Bhagirathi in the midnight. The martyred Suman proved more formidable than the living Suman. Repression could not eliminate the feelings of the masses. It filled them with courage to fight oppression and they were determined to finish the autocratic rule, even though the ruler was known as 'Bolanda Badri' (incarnation of Badrinath). There was a *Kisan* movement in 1946, which later developed into a mass uprising. People under the banner of *Prajamandal* started capturing the state government offices. The officers fled. Finally a parallel government was formed. The *Satyagrahi* leaders came to report to Gandhi on 29th January 1948. He was happy to know that *Ahimsa* had been successful in the remote hilly region.

### **Temples Opened**

Although the struggle against autocratic rule was over, more difficult was the struggle against social evils like untouchability. The holy shrines of Gangotri and Yamunotri were closed for *Shilpkars*, people belonging to the Scheduled Caste. The constructive workers had opened schools for them and a hostel- Thakkar Bapa Hostel - in Tehri, where students of all castes lived together. Constructive workers organized temple entry into Yamunotri and Gangotri temples. It went on smoothly, but it was in a small temple, Budha Kedar, where they were beaten with shoes. When news of this reached Tehri, some sympathizers of the workers filed a suit against

the opponents; but it was soon withdrawn in a spirit of Gandhian non-violence.

### **No to Liquor**

In 1960, Acharya Vinoba Bhave stressed the importance of non-violence in the areas bordering China. Though the Army was posted to guard the frontiers, Vinoba said, "China is not a tiger, which can be prevented by a *guna*. China has a philosophy of eradicating poverty by class-war, which should be fought on an ideological basis. We have the philosophy of 'Ahimsa'. He called upon the constructive workers of Uttarakhand, led by Sarala Behn – Gandhi's English disciple, who was running a Basic Education (*Nai Talim*) centre for hill girls in Kausani since 1946, to take up the challenge. Thus we started making contacts in all the hill districts of Uttar Pradesh. We realized that more dangerous than the Chinese threat, was the liquor barons in this region. The State Government, in order to earn more revenue, had allowed each person to carry eight bottles of country liquor at a time. This encouraged the spread of liquor shops in every nook and corner of this hilly region. Vinoba observed, "How can India, equipped with liquor, keep away China, which had freed herself from opium?". Thus anti-liquor movement became a form of peoples' defense.

Who should come forward to fight liquor? Men were addicts. Women and children were the sufferers. So, for the first time, the hill-women, who were already burdened with agriculture and animal husbandry work, besides household work, came forward along with children. A new chapter in the history of public life was opened. They picketed the liquor-shops and courted arrest. My six year old son Pradeep was

also arrested along with his mother and sent to Saharanpur Jail. Veteran freedom fighter Kanhaiyalal Mishra 'Prabhakar', who visited the women *Satyagrahis* in Saharanpur Jail observed. "The rule of Uttar Pradesh Government has come to an end in Uttarakhand, since the Government is afraid of even a six year old child." It took us six years (1965 to 1971) to fight the liquor menace. Ultimately liquor shops were closed in all the hill districts. A few foreign liquor shops were opened to meet the requirements of permit-holders. The spirit to fight the liquor menace still continues. In 1991, the Uttar Pradesh Government opened a foreign liquor shop in Ghandsali (Tehri-Garwal). The women immediately came forward to oppose it. They could not get a place to open the shop. For sometime they tried to sell the liquor in a jeep, but women chased them away forcing them to leave the area for good.

### **Chipko Movement**

The *Sarvodaya* movement in Uttarakhand had spearheaded the anti-liquor movement. The challenge before the movement was to find ways and means to give employment to the masses. Agricultural land is scarce and that too is mostly unirrigated. Only 12 per cent of land is irrigated. We felt employment could be given through forest-based industries. Trees were felled, converted into sleepers and floated down through water ways to the plains. This had started in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when a British hunter called Wilson got a lease for felling trees in the upper catchment of Bhagirathi near Gangotri. Later this became the main source of State revenue. The Uttar Pradesh Government sold some ash trees in Mandal forest of Chamoli district to a Sports Goods Company of Allahabad. *Dashanli Gram Swarajya Sangha* constructive work organisation inspired by the

*Sarvodaya* movement - opposed this and demanded this timber for local industry. When refused, the villagers hugged the trees and drove away the axe men. Thus began the famous *Chipko* movement. The demand of the movement was to give raw material to the local industry; end the contractor system of felling the trees and give employment to local forest Labourers' Co-operatives sponsored by the local constructive work organizations as in Gujarat and Maharastra.

Forest Labourers' Co-operatives were formed, but after sometime, it dawned on the organizers that it made no difference whether the trees were felled by contractors' axe or that of the Co-operatives. The prevalent slogan of forest-extraction was: What do the forests bear? 'Resin, Timber and foreign Exchange'. We pondered over our action. Are we not responsible for the devastating floods, which are caused by tree-felling in Himalayas? People come to this holy land for pilgrimage with great reverence and we in turn send them floods! Realization of guilt and repentance is the Gandhian way. We changed ourselves and our slogan: *What do the forests bear? Soil, Water and Pure Air. Soil, Water and Pure Air, are the basis of life.*

Gandhi went to the roots of problems and he did not believe in simply removing the evil, but replacing it with a permanent solution. That was the spirit of his constructive programme. The forests are essential for the survival of all living beings. What should be the practical way out? *Chipko's* reply was trees not for timber, but for food, fodder, fuel, fertiliser and fire. This would form the basis of a permanent economy, which would save our precious soil from being eroded, heal the wounded Mother Earth, provide us with

oxygen without which we can not live more than five minutes and help us to meet the water crisis. Human kind is facing acute water crisis, partly due to the over use of water and its pollution. "The situation is-perhaps most critical in China, which faces severe grain shortages in the near future because of water depletion and the shift of limited water resources from agriculture to industry and cities." (Maude Barlow, "We are Running out of Water", *The Ecologist*, May/June 1999, p. 182). Some thinkers are of the view that water may be the issue over which the Third World War will be fought.

*Chipko* movement made its impact in India. Actions to stop tree felling were repeated in many parts of the country besides the Himalaya region. The most effective was the *Appiko* movement in North Canara, Karnataka. The movement is known all over the world. To us, it is the expression of the message of Indian culture which sees life in all beings and believes in the scientific principle of interdependence of all life.

One of the saint poets goes a step further, when he sings:  
Oh mind! Take lesson from the tree.  
The tree is not angry with the axe man.  
Nor specially loves one who waters it.  
It bears heat over its head.  
And provides shade to others.  
One who pelts stone.  
It returns back fruits.

The next step of the *Chipko* movement was to launch a massive tree plantation campaign to clothe the denuded hill slopes in order to regulate the flow of the Himalayan rivers. The movement advocated this not only for Himalaya, but for



the whole country. The population is expanding at an alarming rate, while the arable land is contracting. The solution is using the space towards sky. This is possible only by adopting tree farming.

We could not take up this, as in spite of peoples' movement and independent scientists' warning, the Government started the construction of Tehri-dam Project over Bhagirathi. For six years, they could not start the work. Finally, the work was started under armed Police guard and after putting a large number of people behind bars. I went on prayerful fasts for 49 days in 1995 and 74 days in 1996. The dam builders resorted to foul play intriguing a bus accident involving demonstrators in which 16 persons died and some became invalid. This was a great blow to our non-violent struggle.

I still sit in protest near the dam site in the midst of dust, smoke and noise. The heavy blasting of explosives to break the rocks presents the scene of a battle field: As a *Lok Sevak*, I feel satisfied as I repeat Gandhi's self-composed prayer - the prayer of a *Sevak*, specially the lines - "Give me strength and urge to be one with the people of India."

## Solidarity Beyond Words

*Rajagopal P.V.*

What is the meaning of the North South Solidarity especially in relation to the oppressed and marginalized people of the world? In my view, the challenge of the hour exactly is to translate words into action so that solidarity does not merely remain a theoretical concept on paper. I know it's very difficult to draw the attention of the powers that be on the plight of the underprivileged. The modern world's value system pre-empts any genuine concern for issues that do not figure in the limelight.

Given this culture where the self is supreme, it is but normal for the very concept and practice of solidarity to be endangered. Formal education inculcates brilliance and intelligence at the cost of the human feeling and empathy. It is like a huge machine where the innocent, well meaning people are put into. When the machine has run its course, one finds the same individuals transformed into insensitive entities, displaying an obsessive self indulgence. The insensitivity thus imparted by the system creates mental blocks in the expression of mutual solidarity.

All over the world a consensus is emerging about the need for solidarity, and theoretically, all of us understand its indispensability. The need, however, is to move beyond the theory into the realm of feeling and subsequent action. Solidarity is more than just the intellectual commitment. It is,

being able to internalize the pain, the sufferings and the sorrows of the poor. It is the conviction born out of an internalized understanding of those struggles and pains.

I have undertaken extensive travel across my country, India. On numerous occasions I have had opportunities to attend various protest marches, rallies and public meetings. On analyzing the root cause for the protests and rallies, marches and *bandhs*, I noticed that people are fighting just for their survival. Let me explain the aforesaid with a couple of illuminating examples:

There is this village I had been to. My visit was pertaining to an introduction of what we call "Smokeless stoves". It is a cooking system that is economical and poses relatively less health hazards. I called the villagers together and made a little speech introducing them to the finer points of the new technology and explained how it would help improve their lives. At the end of my speech, an old lady stood up and said "Sir, I have a smokeless stove at home". I was taken aback. I was just introducing the technology in that region. The old woman continued: "do you know why smoke comes?" I replied that it is a common knowledge that the burning firewood causes smoke. She was unconvinced. Her reply however left me in the state of shock. She had nothing to cook, she said, and so her stove was smokeless. There I was, trying to introduce a new technology to people who did not have enough to feed themselves. In effect, she told me, leave your new technology alone, forget it, instead, tell me where is the food going to come from?

Another place and another struggle but the same basic issue. There is this group of indigenous people struggle to

hold on to the basic survival element-water. It is for water that the people here are fighting, pleading the Government not to divert the river water for a private factory. They need water for drinking and for irrigating their fields. Not just a large chunk of water is diverted to the factory, but what is left gets contaminated by the effluent released from the factory making the water unfit for drinking and irrigation. They have been struggling for long now but the Government refuses to heed to their pleas. A prolonged hunger strike followed and one old woman activist starved herself to death. With no positive result on the horizon, the struggle continues unabated.

In yet another place that I visited, a World Bank sponsored forestry project is underway. The Government of India in collaboration with the multi-lateral financial institutions is undertaking extensive National Park Projects all over the country. For the Government these protected National Parks will entail conservation of wild animals. In reality, however, there is commercial intention behind the altruism of conservation with undue emphasis on culturally catastrophic eco-tourism. The creation of exclusive boundary around the National Parks would result in eviction and displacement of the indigenous people from their traditional forest habitat. It would result in the denial of access to the forest for their customary use. It will mean restriction on grazing to their domesticated animals. The Government is even asking them to desist from carrying out their customary communal rituals of song and dance lest it disturbs the wild. No beating of drums in night please ! The tigers are sleeping ! Funny, you think? But this is the reality. A reality brought to the fore by misplaced and fund driven conservationist agenda

of the Government. The only fate that awaits proud people after eviction from their natural abode is migration to cities. Unskilled as they are by the city standard, their only refuge is the bondage and brothel.

That, then, is the level at which people are struggling !! And that is why it is important that we support these people in their hour of distress. Not just speeches and discussions in conference rooms on the need to express solidarity but words must eventually culminate into action.

What are the local Voluntary Organisations doing when people are struggling at that level of bare existence? They are empowering people by helping them to organise into small groups and helping young people to stand up as indigenous leaders to lead the community for struggle and change. This is not an easy task and that is why solidarity is very important !

As far as Governments in the South is concerned, their political credo notwithstanding their position vis-a-vis transnational corporations is quite clear. They find these corporates mutually beneficial. TNCs are given a free run over natural resources in the host country in return for protection against trade unionism and people's organisations that might create trouble against the TNCs. This is by far the standard understanding between the ruling Governments in the South and the invading transnational corporations. To protect the TNCs the average Southern state is systematically deploying the police and assorted repressive machinery to crush dissent, any dissent.

Those struggling to claim what rightfully belongs to them are often at the receiving end from a Government that has surrendered to multi-national business interests. I know of hundreds of young people in unlawful custody for no other crime than that they fought against an oppressive regime, that they expressed solidarity with the struggling people. I know of young people men and women-against whom there are multiple police cases slapped because they fought for their traditional rights over the natural livelihood resources. These form the shape of struggle being waged across the rural South.

So, all these youngsters are increasingly finding it difficult to face their own state which is becoming more and more oppressive. Certain countries are more interested in building up their conventional and nuclear arsenal than in the welfare of those they claim to rule !

This is where the question of solidarity springs forth afresh. People have sustained the non-violent struggle against the state for much too long. It won't be long before their patience runs out and they turn militant. An outcry against the purveyors of inequality must happen on a global scale before things go out of the hand. Violence has been one of the staples of human history and one cannot hope to hold it at bay for much too long in the absence of meaningful and widespread reform in real terms, so, I need not reiterate the consequences of this largely peaceful protest tradition turning into full scale violence. We, who speak of solidarity and still repose faith in the non-violence, must seek alternatives to our long-suffering credo of peaceful protest.

This is where I would like to come into the practical aspects of the role played by Northern NGOs. I will not be polite in my indictment because I firmly believe these bodies have failed in their stated mission. I am raising questions not so much to stir their conscience but to ask them to review their own performance.

To reappraise their *modus operandi*, their functioning, and correct, if corrections are needed, and not just follow the groove just because it suits.

It never fails to escape me that somehow NGOs in the North have failed to augment their understanding of struggles in the South. These events are derisively dismissed as "local politics". Many of the people I have met dismiss this as politics of the South and the stock reply is-we don't want to get into it! And, surprisingly they are more interested in projects that will bring in quantifiable results. What is quantifiable, anyway? That is explained in terms of how many hand pumps have been fixed, how many health centres have been started etc. That is how the NGO sector from the North quantifies its activities. But they do not realise that awareness is not quantifiable! Northern NGOs somehow fail to perceive the spirit of struggle that animates people standing up for their rights, claiming what is theirs by right and standing their ground in the face of the oppressive state power. They fail to see the larger picture and are merely concerned with statistics that anyway give out only a skewed picture of the ground reality.

The second point I would like to raise is that of Northern NGOs becoming more and more expert-driven; it has

inaugurated dominance of experts and managers in the operation. There are few who have actual field experience to feel the pulse of the people. There are however too many experts who are intellectually brilliant and professionally competent but lack that single, intangible emotion called feeling. These experts in the North and the South meet and find each other technically competent and intellectually stimulating. They are very comfortable with each other what they miss out is the fact that an appraisal of the human condition requires less of practical intelligence and more of understanding and insight. Unfortunately, this artificial requirement for experts has provided employment opportunities to the educated middle class for all the wrong reasons.

The knowledge of European languages has also come to be seen as a must for anyone who hopes for a career in development. The natural fallout of such an obtuse requirement is the fact that projects and programmes are more spoken, planned and discussed about - all on paper. The project managers fail to realise that the actual condition on the ground has to be studied and the project plan can only be implemented according to the specifics thereof.

Another aspect that comes to mind is the suspicion that the voluntary sector stands a real chance of getting co-opted by agents of the very establishment we are trying to correct. New revisionist theories like inevitability of Globalization and the omnipresence of TNCs are sought to be presented to mollify the dissent. NGOs end up telling people that reality is what it is and we have little or no power to change it. That being the case why not compromise and accept what is fated



to be our lot. We need to introspect deeply into the possibility of the voluntary sector being used to thwart its very reason for existence.

A further point in my critique would be the fact that Northern NGOs seem to share an ambiguous relationship vis-a-vis their own Governments and those of the South. I find that Governments, their colours notwithstanding, share a pronounced tendency to feign helplessness in the face of multilateral lending institutions and TNCs on the plea that these are beyond their control. They choose inaction saying that they cannot change much. This leaves me with the impression that it is these neo-mercantilists that control Government agendas. And not vice versa. By approving of these positions, the NGO community lends credence to such pretence.

The Governments of developing countries repeatedly fail to meet basic citizen needs and are prone to violate promises made to the electorate. In both the hemispheres we have gone a long way in this patent violation of our chosen mandate. The question is: are we speaking of radical change or just exploring the possibility of patchwork ? I feel it is high time we came up with an answer !

All I say is that the people we claim to work for are facing very real struggles; against their own Governments which has taken definite stand on MNCs and globalisation trends, against the purveyors of exploitation and all these against the heavy odds. And on it, they have to do with an NGO community that is managed by professionals that have no regard for the people oriented developments as they are all concerned with

mere facts and figures. In our present orientation how are we to show genuine solidarity with people beyond mouthing platitudes? We must realise it is high time, we re-apprise our role and re-affirm our commitment to those millions of people who are leading a struggle for life and death. And we must face the possibility of affecting a radical shift at the policy level, at our functioning level, at our sensitivity level.

Unless we draw lessons from these non-violent struggles and respond to the issues-people faced with non-violence will remain more of theoretical issue and it will lose its sharpness like any other tool, which remains unused.

So the challenge for 21<sup>st</sup> Century is to promote networking of sensitive individuals and institutions to take possession and use the tool of non-violence very effectively at every level.

## Solidarity Beyond Words

*Rajagopal P.V.*

What is the meaning of the North South Solidarity especially in relation to the oppressed and marginalized people of the world? In my view, the challenge of the hour exactly is to translate words into action so that solidarity does not merely remain a theoretical concept on paper. I know it's very difficult to draw the attention of the powers that be on the plight of the underprivileged. The modern world's value system pre-empts any genuine concern for issues that do not figure in the limelight.

Given this culture where the self is supreme, it is but normal for the very concept and practice of solidarity to be endangered. Formal education inculcates brilliance and intelligence at the cost of the human feeling and empathy. It is like a huge machine where the innocent, well meaning people are put into. When the machine has run its course, one finds the same individuals transformed into insensitive entities, displaying an obsessive self indulgence. The insensitivity thus imparted by the system creates mental blocks in the expression of mutual solidarity.

All over the world a consensus is emerging about the need for solidarity, and theoretically, all of us understand its indispensability. The need, however, is to move beyond the theory into the realm of feeling and subsequent action. Solidarity is more than just the intellectual commitment. It is,

being able to internalize the pain, the sufferings and the sorrows of the poor. It is the conviction born out of an internalized understanding of those struggles and pains.

I have undertaken extensive travel across my country, India. On numerous occasions I have had opportunities to attend various protest marches, rallies and public meetings. On analyzing the root cause for the protests and rallies, marches and *bandhs*, I noticed that people are fighting just for their survival. Let me explain the aforesaid with a couple of illuminating examples:

There is this village I had been to. My visit was pertaining to an introduction of what we call "Smokeless stoves". It is a cooking system that is economical and poses relatively less health hazards. I called the villagers together and made a little speech introducing them to the finer points of the new technology and explained how it would help improve their lives. At the end of my speech, an old lady stood up and said "Sir, I have a smokeless stove at home". I was taken aback. I was just introducing the technology in that region. The old woman continued: "do you know why smoke comes?" I replied that it is a common knowledge that the burning firewood causes smoke. She was unconvinced. Her reply however left me in the state of shock. She had nothing to cook, she said, and so her stove was smokeless. There I was, trying to introduce a new technology to people who did not have enough to feed themselves. In effect, she told me, leave your new technology alone, forget it, instead, tell me where is the food going to come from?

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## **Nation building and Non-violent Struggles in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century with Particular Reference to Siam: A Buddhist Perspective**

*Sulak Sivaraksa*

The non-violent struggles of the 20<sup>th</sup> century are bright lights in an otherwise bloody 100 years. During this century more human life has been lost to violence than at any time in history, and, not just through war. Violence, inequality, injustice and the like, all in the name of 'progress'. To be sure we have experienced technological progress on an unprecedented scale in this century, but to equate technological progress with human progress is a folly in the extreme. It is a folly, which if left uncorrected, will destroy our species and possibly the planet along with it. Gandhi was once asked what he thought about civilization. His reply, "it would be a good idea." Equally disturbing is the way in which we as a society have seemingly become immune to the violence all around us and integrated it into the very fabric of our societies. Within the structure of traditional culture war has existed, true. But it has generally been limited by certain moral restraints and guidelines pertinent to the particular culture and to the situation. Today we have the Geneva Convention, which dictates proper behaviour towards prisoners of war but we don't have a similar document detailing with the rights of the poor. Again Gandhi said poverty is violence in itself. We have the United Nations but it seems singularly unable to prevent conflicts and to resolve them when they occur. Rwanda is a prime example where

the UN had information of impending genocide and nothing could be done to stop it. So obviously a new model or paradigm for building peace is needed. Of course first we need to learn to breathe properly, to change ourselves to be more non-violent and then to reach out and find ways to share and spread this philosophy. We also need to be able to look back into history, both the history of the non-violent conflicts in this century and beyond, for guidance, wisdom and fair warning, to learn from and not repeat the mistakes of the past.

I

Approximately six centuries before Christ, Vajji was a small democratic republic in India. Its form of government was known as *Sangha*. The Buddha in fact used the term *Sangha* to refer to his community of celibate renunciants who left home in pursuit of the ultimate truth. The *Sangha* was democratic; its members fully participated to decide matters unanimously and harmoniously. In this way, the democratic model of liberty, fraternity, and equality was developed non-violently some 2500 years before the French Revolution.

To this day, *Sangha* members, whether high or low born, are treated equally. Seniority is based on the day he or she joins the body. Each member has only three pieces of robes, an alms bowl, and a few other essentials. Superfluous objects are either owned by the community or jointly with another member.

*Sangha* members must learn to have the right view, that is, cultivating selflessness and maintaining harmonious relations with the inner self, the community, and all sentient beings. Rules and regulations laid down for the *Sangha* are

meant to effect self-reliance, contentedness, and generosity. Members of the *Sangha* would have the time to learn to breathe properly in order to cultivate seeds of peace within and to develop critical self-awareness. The realization of one's optimal potentiality would, in turn, help enhance the understanding of the self and the world. The less selfish one is, the more likely one will be able to understand reality or truth, holistically as opposed to atomistically. That understanding must come from the head as well as the heart, otherwise one would become arrogant and aggressive.

Proper ethical conduct and the practice of mindfulness, equality and fraternity in the *Sangha* would lead to liberty from greed, hatred, and delusion.

The Buddha stated that the *Vajji* republic would remain ever prosperous if its leaders met regularly, resolved conflicts peacefully, decided on matters unanimously, respected women and elders, conserved the natural environment and sacred monuments, maintained a simple lifestyle, and accepted guidance from spiritual persons.

Ultimately, the *Vajji* republic was destroyed, but not because of the military might of the great Magadha Empire, which was an absolute monarchy. Rather, the external powers stirred disunity among the *Vajji* leaders, sowing jealousy among them and luring them with the illusory happiness of a luxurious lifestyle. It is really sad that our leaders, in the kingdom and in the monkhood of Siam blindly followed this advice from the American experts.

The American experts tried the same trick on the Thai *Sangha* in the 1970s. They told us that Buddhism is a dangerous ideology because it is godless. Moreover, they

argued, it teaches contentedness and generosity, the very kind of attitude that would prevent Siam from catching up with the 'developed' West. Therefore, the American experts advised us to completely discard our values and simple lifestyle.

## II

Arguably, unregulated transnational capitalism and its supporting technologies and ideology pose the greatest peril or challenge to the environmental, human, and cultural wellbeing of Siam at present and in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. (Witness the United States, which has long been experimenting with economic neo-liberalism and which has the greatest socio-economic inequality in the so-called developed world.) How did things get this way?

My country is supposed to be a Buddhist kingdom. Before being incorporated in the informal empires of the British and later of the Americans, most of our communities followed the Vajjian model. People might have been poor by Western standards, but they were self reliant and contented with their simple lifestyle. They respected their identities and traditions. Besides did not 'prosperity' in the West originally mean 'according to hope'?

By and large, the people lived along the rivers or canals and related harmoniously to the natural environment. Whatever they did not need, they generously gave to the *Sangha*, that is, the brotherhood of monks and sisterhood of nuns in the holy Buddhist order. Every Buddhist temple served as a centre providing examples for people to live less selfishly, to be generous to oneself and other sentient beings, to learn to respect oneself and others, and so on. In other words, the temple was an important institution that

helped foster inner peace, spiritual growth, and a peaceful and sustainable society.

Then Buddhist temple premises were also full of trees. In fact, the word temple or monastery in Pali means grove or park. For the people, the temple served a variety of purposes: it was an educational and cultural center, a hospital, an art gallery, or simply a recreational place.

Above various local communities presided the King and his officials. They adhered more strictly to Buddhism than to Brahmanism. The former regards every form of violence as a root cause of suffering or ill being. The latter however bestows on the King, the right to kill, punish, and wage war. Hence it may be argued that Buddhist teachings helped restrain the royal power of Siamese kings and encouraged them to respect the different religions and cultures in the kingdom. By preaching the view of man-in-nature as opposed to man-over-nature, the Siamese King was also expected to take care of the environment.

Although not formally colonized by the Western imperial powers, the country was pried open to their culture and influence. Like other non-Western areas, Siam served as the binary opposite in the Western imagination, a view that soon infected the royal house and its officials. Thus the King sent his children and the brightest of his subjects to receive education in the West, transforming them into unequivocal supporters of Western science and technology. For the sake of modernity and efficiency, the King wielded power more absolutely, even over the kingdom's social and cultural life. For example, being a 'modern' or 'civilized' person meant being employed, particularly as government civil servants.



Being a civil servant was deemed as better than being a farmer, monk, nun, or artisan. The freedom of local communities became more circumscribed. Even the essence of the temple was deliberately destroyed once 'modern' hospitals and colleges were introduced in the kingdom. Eventually, most temples were transmogrified into merely places to hold religious ceremonies.

In sum, as the Siamese ruling class became more westernized, their adherence to Buddhism became more diluted, having little if any understanding of its democratic and social dimensions such as the emphasis on equality, fraternity, and freedom from greed, hatred, and delusion,

### III

In 1932, Mr. Pridi Banomyong successfully challenged the absolute power of the monarch and introduced democratic elements in the kingdom. He helped restore many dimensions of the *Vajjian* model. For instance, he started the first open university, the University of Moral and Political Sciences, to help develop the new generation morally and spiritually. Buddhist, Christian, and Muslim leaders were soon involved in educating the students on ways to confront and overcome suffering: religious teachings may help overcome personal ill being while morality combined with political sciences can help mitigate the social injustices.

However, Pibun, who helped Pridi carry out the 1932 revolution, had his own hidden agenda. He wanted to get rid of the princes and royalists and to install himself and his supporters (known as the Young Turks) in positions of power instead. Pibun and his cronies rapidly amassed personal

power and influence, eventually creating a dictatorship. In 1939, as prime minister, Pibun changed the name of the country to Thailand, arguing that the name would suggest to others that we were a civilized lot of people - in the Western sense of the word. He further uprooted the Thai from their traditional cultures by forcefully imposing Western ways of life on them. Worshipping state power, he drew the country into the Second World War on the Axis side.

Pridi, on the other hand, formed the Free Thai Movement and sided with the Allies. The Allied powers recognized the movement and did not brand the kingdom as an Axis member state. Briefly, Pridi became the national hero and served as prime minister. He brought back the name Siam and tried to nurture democratic people's movements and communities in the country. Unfortunately, a military coup toppled his government in 1947. By 1949, Pibun returned to full power, changing the country's name once again to Thailand.

Driven by imperial and Cold War considerations, the United States ultimately supported the Pibun dictatorship and consented to the banishment of Pridi from the kingdom. Pridi's independent nationalism, vision of a non-aligned Southeast Asia, and promotion of social democracy were deemed by Washington as heretical. Hence Pridi was labelled a communist and traitor and booted out of the country. He died in Paris in 1983, living in exile for 37 years.

At present few acknowledge the contributions of Mr. Pridi to Thai society. The name Pridi Banomyong was even on the verge of being thrown down the memory hole. I am glad to say that I am one of the NGO people that has managed to

make the Thai government recognize his name and good deeds and that has asked UNESCO to commemorate him next year - his centenary - for being one of the world's leading lights in democracy, in non-violent struggle and environmental sustainability.

To quench their obsession with 'progress', 'development', and 'national security' post World War Two, Thai leaders, brutal military dictators and elitist civilian technocrats alike, have by and large turned to the West, the United States in particular, for guidance and emulation. To be 'civilized' and 'developed' means to be like the West, whatever the human and environmental costs and no matter how appropriate. In the late 1940s, the ever-opportunistic Field Marshal Pibun set the country on this course, using the United States as the model of modernity to imitate. (In the 1930s and early 1940s Field Marshal Pibun and the Thai militarists largely saw fascist Germany and Italy as models.) Successive Thai governments have not really strayed from this line. Since the late 1980s, a new twist was added, that of globalization. For the sake of national progress and prosperity the country must by all means accept the logic of economic neo-liberalism, attract foreign investors (read, giant multinational corporations), and condone, if not support, consumerism. With the financial meltdown in 1997, this line of thinking gained even more converts among the public.

Many decades of adopting and complying with the Western models of development have done wonders to my country. For example, Bangkok is now a gigantic and ugly city that is full of slums and pollution. Invaluable forests had been and are being destroyed. The poor have been

indoctrinated to worship money and consumerism. Furthermore because of debt and giant agribusinesses they have become landless labourers. Note that we never had absentee landlords before. To fill the void in their lives, many of the poor have become drug addicts and gamblers; many are also highly superstitious. Indeed, many Buddhist leaders have become superstitious, especially those who are close to the powers that be, politically and economically.

However the situation is far from being hopeless or unsalvageable. There are vital signs that the *Vajjian* ideals are being revived, deliberately or otherwise. A sizeable number of monks, nuns, engaged Buddhists, and activists are mindful of the dangers posed by consumerism and transnational corporations. They are helping to promote a new form of literacy among the poor and marginalized, one that is based on empowerment and sustainable development, one that will also really contribute to the culture of peace and poverty eradication. For example, many of the poor are being morally and spiritually empowered to overcome drugs addiction, gambling, and superstition. Many, including their communities, are rediscovering confidence, identity, and wisdom in traditional cultures. Cultural diversity is being affirmed; this is an important bulwark against the global monoculture that is destroying alternative ways of life. Many no longer feel dispirited and inferior, no longer blindly follow the foreign-educated ruling circles; how extreme marginalization and oppression lead to apathy and fatalism is well known. Hence, they are more actively participating in the civil society, an important prerequisite for a meaningful democracy. A sizeable number is engaging in voluntary simple lifestyles that are based on self-reliance and self-sufficiency. For instance, they earn their livelihoods by

traditional farming, seek solace or entertainment in nature and traditional plays, dances, and songs, and no longer use chemical fertilizers. All the projects under the rubric of empowerment and sustainable development are also being extended to help benefit the peoples and communities of neighbouring countries, in particular those in Burma. Some of us also help in training them in non-violent conflict resolution.

The small farmers in my country have come to care about and co-operate with one another, forming, on their own initiative, the Assembly of the Poor. The Assembly has now more than half a million members and helps voice the grievances and interests of the poor farmers in mainstream politics. The small farmers have moreover created their own University of the Poor, a forum to freely exchange current environmental, socio-economic and political concerns and to learn from one another's experience. The University of the Poor is linked with the Midnight University, which was pioneered by a number of progressive professors at Chiang Mai University, as well as with the Spirit in Education Movement, which I founded in 1995.

Our alternative education seeks to link the head with the heart, seeks to help establish a culture of peace. We concentrate on opening the mind and creating mindfulness. Among other things, we seek to promote the view that reality is holistic (not atomistic), that humanity must be realized in nature (as opposed to over nature), that value criticism is necessary to validate reality (not the validation of theory with reality), and that time is non-linear.

With these in mind, we attempt to develop alternative socio-economic and political visions; that is, alternative to the hegemonic Western conceptions. Gandhi once said that devoid of morality or idealism, politics and economics would be akin to prostitution, having sex without love. When asked what he thought about Western civilization, he simply replied, "It would be a good idea:" In other words, as Satish Kumar explains, in Gandhi's view, a machine civilization that contributes to widespread human misery and environmental degradation is no civilization.

E.F. Schumacher stated that mainstream economists are somehow unaware of the impending catastrophes; they are single-mindedly and busily concentrating on arranging deck chairs on the Titanic. On the other hand, we are preparing the lifeboats for the people, preventing them from being sucked down the whirlpool of greed, hatred, and delusion. To some extent, many among the poor now understand structural violence. Among other ways, they have learned to overcome (de-structure) it by training themselves to be mindful, self reliant, confident, and compassionate. Solidarity must be maintained and promoted and struggles against socio-economic injustice and inequality must be waged, but the exploiters or oppressors must not be hated.

#### IV

Thanks to the collusion between, on the one side, Total and UNOCAL multinational oil corporations (or France and the United States respectively) and, on the other side, the Thai and Burmese governments, a gas pipeline running from Burma to Siam is being constructed at great human and environmental costs. The most pristine forest lands in Burma are being destroyed and the Burmese military junta is killing

resistance movements in the name of protecting the pipeline. As for Siam, the construction of the pipeline has done harm to its forest, sources of rivers in the central plain, wild animals, and the lives of the people in the area.

Members of the Thai middle class in Kanchanaburi who were affected by the construction of the pipeline initially opposed it for reasons of personal safety. Later they expanded their vision to incorporate the concern for the flora and fauna of the area. Ultimately, they also came to care for the human rights abuses suffered by ethnic minorities and for the destruction of the environment in Burma.

In 1997 when the people of Kanchanaburi started the campaign against the construction of the gas pipeline, they were morally and materially supported by the Assembly of the Poor and numerous concerned students and NGOs. Various ethnic minorities groups in Burma and Siam also gave strong backing. Although our protest and obstruction failed to halt its construction, we subsequently managed to prevent the building of the largest electricity plant in Rajburi province. We helped pressure the World Bank not to fund the electricity plant project because it involved human rights abuses and environmental destruction.

Equally important, we managed to help stimulate the moral concern and sense of civic responsibility of the middle class in many other provinces. They eventually rose up to protect their natural environment and demanded greater transparency from the government and state enterprises. For example, the collaboration between PTT and UNOCAL to construct another gas pipeline from the Gulf of Siam to Malaysia came under public scrutiny.

An unintended benefit of globalisation is that it enables the oppressed and marginalized peoples worldwide to support each other's struggle, to create trans-national alliances that will help check the growing power and influence of the trans-national capitalist class. Ironically, while economic neo-liberalism is creating massive socio-economic inequalities, formal political democracy is spreading worldwide. Without mindfulness and compassion this combination is a recipe for social and political mayhem or instability. With *Dhammic* sensibility far-reaching socio-economic and political changes are possible.

There are opportunities for great and constructive changes. But we, as concerned global citizens, must first reclaim our respective civil society and minds as well as the international society, all of which have long been colonized by greed (e.g. consumerism and capital), hatred (e.g. violence, distrust of mass participation, centralization, secrecy, militarism, etc.) and delusion (e.g. expertism and scientism).

No single action is sufficient to meet this challenge. Rather there must be concerted efforts to turn back the tide. Opposition to the global economy must be waged, but alternatives to it must also be laid out or experimented with. Reforms or changes need to be simultaneously made at the individual, local, national, and international levels.

For example, the activities of trans-national corporations must be vigilantly inspected and made accountable to the public. The hidden agenda of the trans-national capitalist class in the form of free trade or investors' rights agreements must be constantly exposed and subverted. Governments must increase their roles in



regulating the market for the sake of public well-being and environmental conservation; the public and the environment must not be left to the mercy of the trans-national oligopolies.

Democratic participation by the public must be encouraged, not restricted to only casting ballots in elections. Alternative media must be set up to voice the concerns of the subaltern groups. Experiments with economic localization must be supported; this means independence from the global economy. Alternative lifestyles (e.g. voluntary simple lifestyles) must be sought and promoted to combat consumerism, lest cultural diversity and the environment are destroyed. Through time unregulated capital will homogenize all cultures like it had successfully broken down political, social, economic, and geographical barriers since its emergence 500 years ago. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the clash between cultures and capital is more likely than the so-called clash of civilizations. *Vajjian* values such as compassion, mindfulness, self-contentment, selflessness, and cooperation must replace selfishness, delusion, acquisitiveness, competitiveness, and hatred.

## V

"What is hope?" asked Lu Tsin, a well-known Chinese novelist in the 1920s. Does it exist or not? And what about The Way, he continued, does it exist or not? By itself, the earth does not know the way. However, when many people have continuously walked on the same route, the way becomes more apparent. Similarly, the hopes and non-violent struggles of peoples worldwide help provide badly needed approximations of a better society or world, help

point to a new direction that will guide us away from the precipice.

In Siam, May 11, 2000 marked the centennial anniversary of Pridi Banomyong, the father of Thai democracy. It served as an opportune occasion to help sow the seeds of peace and hope in our people, to embark on a concerted effort to 'de-colonize' our Unconscious Spirit, natural environment and civil society. Perhaps these are prerequisites to disassemble structural violence and, over its ruins, to construct structural peace.

In my country, our movements are working closely with farmers, poor villagers, community leaders, students, monks, nuns, army officers, etc. We seek to help promote compassion, empowerment and sustainable development. For many years, we have provided numerous courses and workshops ranging from non-violent conflict resolution to deep ecology, grassroots organization and leadership skills to meditation, and Buddhism to social analysis. The results we have achieved are mostly favourable.

In Siam, our movements work closely with the other ethnic groups and religious beliefs as well. We also collaborate with various NGOs and people's organizations in neighbouring countries, especially Burma, Laos, Cambodia, Sri Lanka, and the Philippines.

We maintain the so-called North-South dialogues with the peoples of continental Europe and with some alternative movements in the United States. We try to learn from South Asian leaders such as those from the Gandhian and the *Sarvodaya* movements. We maintain direct links with Schumacher and Sharpham Colleges in Britain and the

Naropa Institute in the US. These colleges are not only approaching education holistically, but they also hope, like us, to confront suffering mindfully, in other words, to find the causes of suffering or ill being in order to overcome them through the peaceful way of mindfulness. We also work with the International Network of Engaged Buddhists and the Buddhist Peace Fellowship, which care for inner peace as well as peace and justice in society as well as environmental balance in the world.

Additionally, we are cooperating with the various living faiths under the leadership of the Archbishop of Canterbury in order to help the president of the World Bank reform the gigantic institution to be more moral and humble. If the World Bank really respects and sides with the poor and oppressed instead of with the rich men's club, this would be a boon for global healing in the next millennium.

At the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the people's movements in Siam are now sufficiently strong and the attitude of the Thai military leadership has also underwent positive changes. We thus hope to confront the challenges with real moral and spiritual strength. May this strength expand to other communities or societies around the world?

To reiterate, the major challenges that are confronting us now and that will increase in magnitude in the next century are derived from trans-national capitalism. Economically, the threat is in the form of neo-liberalism that heightens socio-economic inequalities worldwide and promotes the power and privileges of trans-national corporations and the trans-national capitalist class. Politically, technocrats use formal political democracy to

legitimise socio-economic injustices, to limit the far-reaching changes demanded by subaltern groups. Ecologically, consumerism and greed are destroying the environment at an unprecedented rate. Culturally and individually, identity and diversity are being homogenized by the consumer monoculture. Structurally, violence, hatred, greed, delusion, and cutthroat competition are being promoted.

Some valuable lessons may be derived from the non-violent struggles in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

First, we have learned the profound power of non-violent social action to create changes, to oppose tyranny and injustices successfully without leaving behind the bitter aftertaste that contributes to more violence. In other words, we have seen that it is possible to build a culture of peace, the antithesis to the culture of violence that for too long has been engulfing the world. We have begun to explore alternative and non-violent means to resolve conflicts.

Second, we have learned that for the culture of peace to flourish, it must be cultivated at different levels, internally and externally. As individuals, we must train ourselves to be peaceful within, to free our mind and hearts from suffering caused by greed, hatred, and delusion. In fact, this may be seen as the prerequisite for anyone who wishes to engage in non-violent struggle. At the broader level, we must undertake to build strong and more equitable communities on the model of 'small is beautiful', rediscovering and modifying community values and organizations that existed prior to the age of colonialism and development. We then need to expand our vision of peace to encompass the whole society and the international system.

## **An Overview of the Non-Violent Struggle of the Tibetan People**

*Thubten Samphel*

In the late 1980's the big news was that peace was breaking out in Asia. One after the other, from Afghanistan to Cambodia, the killing fields happily reverted to their traditional role of feeding people. And Asia - or those regions racked by invasion and civil war - prepared for a long break from slaughter. But a decade or so later, the welcoming sound of peace breaking out is now a faint echo among the sound and fury of renewed war and carnage. From Indonesia to Kosovo the world is back to doing what it does best : mutual slaughter.

The unravelling of the international system imposed on the world by the big powers after the Second World War has thrown up numerous movements for independence. All are violent ones or have the potential of being calamitous. The latest and bloodiest was the war in Kosovo. Europe, which has given us two world wars but since then looked upon by the rest of us as a haven of peace and stability, is once again back to the business of war.

With old and new hot spots flaring across the globe, the question is how have the Tibetans managed to keep their freedom struggle non-violent for so long? And why is Tibet's non-violent struggle for freedom relevant and important to the rest of the world ?

A part of the answer lies in the personality of the Dalai Lama and his Buddhist beliefs. His uncompromising attitude towards violence and his unquestioned moral authority among the Tibetan people have prevented the Tibetans in Tibet and in exile from taking up arms. And in the Tibetans' ability to keep their struggle non-violent lies in the ability of a large part of Asia to check itself from falling into the abyss of violence and civil strife. A sustained Tibetan armed struggle could trigger a similar upsurge of ethnic anger and violence among the Uighurs of Xinjiang and Mongols of Inner Mongolia where discontent and ethnic pride have continued to simmer and flare. Like the Tibetans, the Mongols and Uighurs bristle at their boot-heel subjugation by China. The consequences of violence breaking out in any of these parts would be unpredictable for China and Asia. The recent accidental but tragic NATO bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade has provoked both fear and anger among the Chinese who suspect that this accident could also be replicated in China where the regime faces similar tense situation with non-Chinese people.

The Tibetan struggle initially started off as a violent and desperate reaction to the Chinese communist invasion and occupation of Tibet. The comparative military strength and leadership qualities of China and Tibet did not deter the rag-tag Tibetan army in challenging one of the world's largest fighting machines. The battle-hardened People's Liberation Army, flushed with victory over the nationalist Chinese, simply brushed aside the Tibetan army in its onward march to Lhasa.

The defeat of the Tibetan government forces led to the signing of the 17 - Point Agreement in which Tibet was forced to admit that it was a part of China. In return China promised

to leave Tibet's traditional social order intact and respect the power and prerogatives of the Dalai Lama. In this way, from 1951 to 1959 Buddhist Tibet co-existed un-easily with communist China. Some Chinese scholars trace the origins of the present one country, two systems concept with which Hong Kong lives under Chinese sovereignty to this agreement China made with Tibet.

However Hong Kong because of its financial clout provides China a powerful incentive to keep its promises. Tibet, despite its mass and bulk, had no such incentives to offer. Beijing soon began to nibble away at the influence of both the Tibetan government and the monasteries. China also began to impose drastic socialist reforms on eastern and north-eastern Tibet, which sparked Tibetan resentment, compelling the Tibetans to take matters into their own hands. Suspecting that communist China was striking at the very root of Tibet's separate cultural and ethnic identity, the Tibetans formed a nucleus of a resistance movement. Comprising mainly of Khamba tribesmen, the resistance that began in eastern Tibet within a couple of years engulfed the whole of Tibet.

The vicious cycle of Chinese repression and Tibetan resentment presented the Tibetan government and specifically the Dalai Lama with a tricky task of how to handle Tibetan people's anger or caution patience in the face of the incremental demands of the Chinese authorities for more influence in Tibet. In the choice the Dalai Lama made between his pacifist religious beliefs and his people's natural instinct to take to arms lies in the genesis of the Tibetan philosophy of non-violence. Throughout the 1950's the Dalai Lama felt that he was sitting between two volcanoes, each likely to erupt at any moment. He knew the dire consequences if the Tibetans

pitted their raging anger against the might of China. It was the classic case of the rock and the egg. If the egg was thrown at the rock, the egg was smashed. If the rock was thrown at the egg, the egg was smashed.

Above all the Dalai Lama was torn between his roles as both the political and spiritual leader of Tibet and his helplessness in the face of growing Tibetan anger and rapidly diminishing Chinese patience. In his autobiography, *My Land and My People*, the Dalai Lama wrote, "Worst of all, I felt I was losing control of my own people. In the East they were being driven to barbarism. In central Tibet they were growing more determined to resort to violence; and I felt that I would not be able to stop them much longer, even though I could not approve of violence and did not believe it could possibly help us."

At the same time, he was torn between admiration for Tibetan courage and fortitude in the face of insurmountable odds and his need, as the head of state, to salvage the best deal for his people. At least, he wanted to avoid bloodbath brought about by a headlong collision between Tibetan nationalism and Chinese military might. At the most, through quiet diplomacy, he hoped that he would prevail on the Chinese authorities to respect the autonomous status promised to Tibet and in this way preserve Tibet's distinct cultural heritage.

In 1956, the Dalai Lama was invited to participate in the Buddha Jayanti commemorations in New Delhi. He visited the Rajghat where he was able to meditate more deeply on the philosophy of non-violence as advocated by Mahatma Gandhi.



"I wished most fervently that I had had the privilege of meeting him in this world. But standing there, I felt I had come in close touch with him, and I felt his advice would always be that I should follow the path of peace. I determined more strongly than ever that I could never associate with acts of violence."

The non-violence philosophy the Dalai Lama brought to the Tibetan struggle was shaped not only by his Buddhist beliefs, but also by his judgement that Tibet's distinct cultural and ethnic identity could best be preserved through a policy of dialogue with the Chinese authorities.

However, in the 1950's the Dalai Lama was only in his teens. The Tibetan struggle had gone too far into a violent phase for the Dalai Lama's peaceful approach to make any appreciable impact on the resistance movement. The fiery cauldron of repression and resistance boiled over in March 1959 when Tibetans took to the streets of Lhasa to demand for Tibetan independence. The Chinese reaction was predictable and brutal. The result, in terms of human lives, was catastrophic. By whatever estimate the calculations are based on, the Tibetan population was decimated. According to official Chinese data, in the fighting in the 1950's, the crackdown on the 1959 uprising and the mopping up exercise which followed, about 87,000 Tibetans were killed in central Tibet alone. Tibetan exiles put the total number of Tibetans killed at 1.2 million.

The Dalai Lama, followed by thousands of Tibetan refugees, sought asylum in India. But the resistance movement continued from new bases in Mustang in Nepal.

However, because of the rapprochement between the United States and China in the early 1970's, the CIA funding for the resistance movement dried up. At the same time the Nepalese army moved in to disarm the Tibetan guerrillas. The guerrillas refused. The Dalai Lama intervened by sending an emissary with a taped message urging them to peacefully surrender their arms. The guerrillas surrendered, but several, torn apart by the need to obey their political and spiritual leader and their commitment to the cause of Tibetan freedom, committed suicide. This ended the violent phase of the Tibetan freedom struggle and a critical chapter in Tibetan history was closed.

In exile the Dalai Lama had more time to reflect on the Tibetan situation and how he could deal with it. Right from the start he and his advisers realised that the issue of Tibet could only be solved satisfactorily through a process of negotiations with the Chinese government. However in the 60's and early 70's, China was in no mood to talk. It was pre-occupied by political strife and the madness of the Cultural Revolution. The power struggle within the leadership was veering China toward the precipice of social chaos and institutional collapse. The brutality of the Cultural Revolution was felt not only in China but also in Tibet, where monasteries and temples were razed to the ground, monks and nuns defrocked and where one nastier political campaign followed another.

Because of this, many young Tibetans questioned the relevance and effectiveness of the non-violent strategy the Dalai Lama advocated. They pointed out that their opponent was a one-party dictatorship. They argued at least the British,

for all their colonial greed and rapaciousness, respected the rule of law. Gandhi and his non-violent philosophy succeeded because the British were great sticklers, if not for the spirit of law but at least for the semblance of justice being done. The Chinese, the Tibetan youth argued, believed with almost religious fervour in Mao's dictum that political power grew from the barrel of a gun. Turning the other cheek was for the Chinese, who lived through more than half a century of social upheaval, civil war and revolution, an exercise in unadulterated stupidity. The Chinese believed that revolution was not a garden party but a calculated act of violence to achieve desired ends. How could non-violence succeed against such a regime? Tibetan refugee youth argued.

The response the Dalai Lama made against these compelling arguments was shaped by two factors; his Buddhist beliefs and the ground reality.

For Buddhist everywhere life in all its diverse forms is sacred. To be born a human being is a privilege because this gives a person the opportunity to attain enlightenment, the highest spiritual goal of being freed from the cycle of birth and rebirth. By killing a person you are committing the worst negative act because you are depriving that person of the chance of becoming enlightened. On the other hand, Buddhists believe that your enemy is your best teacher because he teaches you the virtues of patience and tolerance, virtues vital on the difficult path to enlightenment. As for the geo-politics of the Tibetan situation, the Dalai Lama believes that any sort of armed Tibetan uprising would constitute mass suicide. An armed uprising would be the best excuse for China to obliterate the Tibetans from the face of the earth. At the

same time, there was no country in the world that would be willing to provide arms and ammunition to the Tibetans to sustain their struggle.

Instead the Dalai Lama made his own proposal of the Middle Way Approach, carefully crafted on non-violence and on a policy of not seeking outright independence for Tibet. He explained his ideas in two documents, the Five Point Peace Plan and the Strasbourg Proposal. The Dalai Lama announced his Five Point Peace Plan at the US Congress in September 1987 and the Strasbourg Proposal to the European Parliament in June 1988. In the Five Point Peace Plan, the Dalai Lama called for the transformation of the whole of Tibet into a zone of peace and the commencement of earnest negotiations on the future status of Tibet and of relations between Tibetan and Chinese peoples. The Dalai Lama felt that Tibet was ideally situated for fulfilling the role of a sanctuary of peace in the heart of Asia. Tibet's historic status as a neutral buffer state contributed to the stability of the entire continent. In the Strasbourg Proposal, the Dalai Lama said that the whole of Tibet should become a self-governing democratic political entity founded on law by agreement of the people for the common good and the protection of themselves and their environment in association with the People's Republic of China.

Though its reaction was muted, a section of the exiled Tibetan youth expressed outrage, labeling the Dalai Lama's proposal as a sell-out. These young Tibetans contended that no one had the right to compromise on Tibetan independence.

The reaction from Beijing was equally scathing. China said that discussion of independence, semi-independence and independence in a disguised form was out of the question. The Chinese leadership would not accept these as agenda in any future discussions on the status of Tibet. The Chinese government considered the Dalai Lama's demand for a truly autonomous Tibet, in which the Tibetans could manage their own affairs, as Tibetan independence in disguise.

Despite the Chinese government's outright rejection of the Dalai Lama's major diplomatic initiative, there was a glimmer of hope in 1988 and 1989 that the Chinese side would come to the negotiating table to settle the matter peacefully. The 1989 upsurge of pro-democracy movement in China and the subsequent massacre of students at Tiananmen squashed all hopes of that. The hardliners in the leadership, who got the upper hand in the power struggle sparked off by the Tiananmen square student movement, wanted nothing to do with the Dalai Lama. They calculated that the Dalai Lama's approaching mortality would put an end to what they considered a small irritant.

The hard-liners' position was strengthened when in 1987, 1988 and 1989 Tibet was rocked by a series of independence demonstrations. Though largely peaceful, the demonstrations threw up some angry Tibetans who burned Chinese police stations, and set police vehicles on fire. China jettisoned its earlier relatively liberal policy in favour of the policy of "merciless repression." In 1989 Beijing clamped Lhasa under martial law, which lasted more than a year, much longer than the one imposed in Beijing in the aftermath of the students' uprising.

However, for his efforts the Dalai Lama was awarded the 1989 Nobel Peace Prize for his constructive and forward-looking initiatives in the cause of peace. This greatly enhanced the Dalai Lama's international stature but did not help change the ground reality in Tibet or China's hard-line attitude to the question of Tibet.

In fact, the Dalai Lama was faced with the same dilemma he faced in the 1950's : the uncompromising attitude of the new generation of Tibetans and the implacable will of the Chinese government. Faced with the same old problem in a new context, the Dalai Lama said that if the mainstream Tibet movement favoured violence then there is nothing for him to do except to step down from the leadership of the Tibetan struggle. And he took a step only he could take: he took the moral high ground. He went to his people in exile and proposed that a referendum be held on the goals of the Tibetan struggle. In his 10 March statement of 1994 the Dalai Lama explained that he was criticized by a section of the Tibetan community for the concessions he made to the Chinese government. On the other hand, the Chinese government rejected these concessions outright. In view of this he felt that there was nothing for him to do except to go to the Tibetan people and let them decide what they really wanted. He proposed four goals: independence, self determination, his own middle way approach and *Satyagraha*. Tibetans had to choose one.

Whatever decision, the Dalai Lama said, the Tibetans made, would be followed by him and his administration. But he made the condition that whether the Tibetans decided the

end goal of the Tibetan struggle was independence or autonomy, the means must only be non-violent. He would not compromise on this core issue. The Tibetan parliament-in-exile conducted a preliminary opinion survey in 1997. Sixty five per cent of the Tibetan refugee community said that they had implicit faith in the Dalai Lama. Whatever he decided would be acceptable to them. They said a full-fledged referendum was not necessary. Messages from Tibetans in Tibet supported the majority view.

## The Relevance of Gandhi's Thought: Past and Present Bangladesh Scenario

*S. M. Nurul Alam*

### 1. Relevance of What?

Today, we see violence everywhere; in the family, in the community and also inside the state. Does non-violence carry any sense in a world where we experience and see violence everywhere? We may argue and challenge the idea of non-violence and question its relevance in the background of contemporary experience.

It is true that the relevance of Gandhi's non-violence is now being challenged, but I will argue that Gandhi's *Ahimsa* should not be understood only in literal sense but implicit meaning of this should be understood by heart. For Gandhi, *Ahimsa* is a philosophy, strategy, and mode of action for mobilising people against oppression and a framework for the advancement of society. The following quote from Gandhi's work is pertinent in the present context<sup>1</sup>:

“The virtues of mercy, non-violence, love and truth in any man can only be truly tested only when they are pitted against ruthlessness, violence, hate and untruth. ... It is another matter that our non-violence has not reached such heights. It would be wholly wrong for us to lower the standard of *Ahimsa* by reason of our own frailty or lack of experience. Without true understanding of the ideal, we can never hope



to reach it. It is necessary for us, therefore, to apply our reason to understand the power of non-violence".

I feel that the relevance of Gandhi's philosophy and teaching lies not in what is possible or not possible to do through it rather it lies in its spirit. It is a great source of inspiration for many and will remain so to create a violent free world on the basis of love and providing opportunities for all for self-development. In this sense, I will argue that Gandhi's non-violence was not irrelevant, rather it will become relevant and useful in future.

## **2. Universality of Gandhi's Thought**

There is no doubt that *Ahimsa* is a major aspect of Gandhi's thought, but there are certain other aspects of his thought and philosophy which are more relevant today than they were during Gandhi's time. The following quote from Dr. Pathak is quite relevant<sup>2</sup>: "Apart from political agenda, Gandhi also wanted villages to be self reliant because more than 75 percent of the total population then lived in rural areas. He opposed automation and favoured self-employment; he opposed untouchability, child marriage and drinking; and took a series of steps to promote literacy among women and improve the conditions of Harijans, especially scavengers. Apart from all these, Gandhi always stressed self spiritualisation and character building to be able to enjoy the fruits of modernization, science and technology".

So, I will argue that we should understand what Gandhi wanted to achieve through non-violence and also how and what type of society he wanted to create. Currently humankind is facing serious environmental crisis and it is on the verge of destruction of their habitat. We are concerned

about various environmental crises such as, global warming, air pollution, depletion of forest resources, soil erosion, riverbank erosion, scarcity of water etc.

The main reason for the current environmental crisis is the selfish attitude of human beings and the use of natural and material resources by West without understanding how to live with nature. Industrial development in the West did not take into account the incalculable damage that it may cause to nature. These problems have been created because we have valued the present gains without thinking of the future. We have sacrificed the future for the present because of sheer greed for material progress and prosperity. Many of Gandhi's ideas have significant relevance and implications for the environmental crisis that the mankind is currently facing.

“His ideas on simple living, a just society, reverence for nature, and non-exploitation not only within a country but also in its economic relations with other countries, have bearing on all our environmental problems<sup>3</sup>”.

Currently, we hear a lot of rhetoric regarding the need for eco-friendly and sustainable development strategies. He criticised industrialisation and the development of consumer oriented society. He was a great believer of simple and plain living and always advocated sustainable development, which has become a rhetoric in the contemporary development thinking.

### **3.0 Bangladesh Scenario**

I feel that teachings of Gandhi have significant relevance for Bangladesh not only in contemporary context but also in the past during our *mukti juddho* (liberation war). Since Independence, Bangladesh has been pursuing growth-

led economic development policies devised mostly on the Western economic model. Questions may be raised regarding the suitability of these models and the unintended social, cultural, economic and ecological consequences that have been brought about by the various development programmes in recent years. In the next few paragraphs, I will briefly describe the pertinence of Gandhi's teachings and also how it helped in the initial stage of our independence movement.

### **3.1 Independence Movement**

Bangladesh being one of the countries of the Indian sub-continent has many commonalties with India. We have derived inspiration from the Indian independence movement. Gandhi's teaching regarding non-violence has greatly inspired our architect of Independence movement, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. During the months preceding the actual fighting with the Pakistani army, our leader Mujib tried to secure the rightful claims of *Bengalis* through non-violent means. He did not want to put the *Bengalis* in direct confrontation with the Pakistanis without trying the peaceful and non-violent means. From his conviction of peace and non-violence, he participated in the general election of 1970, secured all the seats except two, and wanted to form the government. But the army junta of Pakistan refused to allow Mujib to form the central government.

Mujib tried his level best to avoid bloodshed and went on negotiating with the Pakistani military ruler. He also requested his countrymen to remain calm and conduct peaceful demonstration. But later on when all options were exhausted, Bangabandhu in his historic speech on March 7, 1971, called for total non-cooperation with the Pakistani government. From March 7 to March 26 before the crack

down of the Pakistani army on the innocent Bangladeshi population known as *aoshojug andolon*, Bangladeshis did not go to office, pay taxes, and boycotted Pakistani goods. Mujib was the de facto ruler of Bangladesh. This non-cooperation movement ultimately led to direct fighting with the Pakistanis and ultimately the liberation of Bangladesh on December 16, 1971.

Now how should we evaluate and judge the *aoshojug andolon* of Sheikh Mujib in the Bangladesh liberation struggle. Can it be linked with the non-violence idea of Gandhi? Mujib was a great politician, a strategist, a far sighted leader. He used nonviolence as a strategy to compel Pakistanis to accept his demand for Bangladesh independence but he never ruled out the possibility of using force whenever necessary. This was obvious in his March 7 speech where he said<sup>4</sup>,

*"Pratyak grama, pratyak mohallays awami leaguer netratty sangram prisad goraya tulon ebong amader ja kishu ashea ta neya prastrot thakun. Rakta jokhan deyachi rokta aro debo "*. (Under the leadership of Awami League form sangram committees in every village and neighbourhood and be ready with whatever we have. We have given blood and will give more blood).

I would, therefore, argue that our leader Bangabandhu derived his inspiration from Gandhi's non violence at a phase of our liberation struggle and used this as a strategy. Non-violence was his strategy but not his philosophy and his goal was the liberation of Bangladesh at any cost by applying any

feasible strategy and ultimately the welfare of Bangalee population.

### **3.2 Peace at the Chittagong Hill Tracts**

Recently, the government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh has signed a peace accord with the Shanti Bahini of Chittagong Hill Tracts by ending two decades of insurgency lodged by a group of tribal people. The accord was hailed both in and outside Bangladesh. The crux of the peace accord is that it was accomplished without any outside mediation and interference. The peace accord was possible because the current government of Bangladesh believed in non-violence and also wanted to develop the hill areas of Bangladesh in a peaceful atmosphere. So we can say that this is another example of how the faith in non-violence helped Bangladesh to attain peace.

### **3.3 Bangladesh Politics and Gandhi's Teaching**

In political arena, we see that politicians are fighting for power. They lack tolerance, mutual respect and trust and want to grab power at any cost. Consequently, politics has become very violent. In political agitation people injure and kill one another, burn properties both private and public. In political agitation many innocent people have become victims of political violence. Politicians talk more and work less. They, in many instances, bluff people through rhetoric. Honest politicians are rare. This situation is not unique in Bangladesh but rather common in many countries of the world. A question may be raised what is the reason behind violence and restlessness? This is because all of us irrespective of our identity have become selfish forgetting that we have responsibility to one another. Today we need a person like Gandhi who can teach us non-violence, love and respect.

### **3.4 Development Strategy**

In the quest for development Bangladesh has adopted a policy of development through industrialisation and modernisation of agriculture. The establishment of industries such as, textiles, leather, garment, electronic etc. are being encouraged whereas the traditional artisans industries are systematically ignored, which resulted in displacement of millions of people from their occupation. A large segment of people are being gradually marginalised and pauperised. Almost 56 % of the population live below poverty line.

Wealth is being concentrated in the hands of few and those who are rich. There is competition of the rich to become richer whereas the poor are becoming poorer. It seems that there is no end to this race for wealth and for development. This is bringing unwanted misery to many. It is now imperative that we read Gandhi and find out what he said about development. We need peace of mind and love for fellow people which Gandhi taught us to learn. We need environmental friendly sustainable development approach which Gandhi always reminded.

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## **Practical Non-violent Responses to New Forms of Violence: The Sarvodaya Movement in Sri Lanka**

*A.T. Ariyaratne*

The international Human rights enumerated in international Covenants of Civil and Political Rights and of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights cover a very broad sweep of human life. In certain respects, they highlight the advances in human thinking about the conditions necessary for human beings to live a more truly human life. One has only to compare, for instance, the content of the present day human rights covenants with the Code of Hammurabi in Babylonia or accounts of the amphitheatre of the ancient Romans where the general public came to witness the most cruel killings of the other human beings as a source of legitimate pleasure to see the immense progress that has been made in what humanity has now generally come to consider to be the ideal rights of all human beings.

Almost every government in the world has given its assent to the concept of human rights giving it a universality that is unprecedented in recorded human history. However, this leaves us with no room for complacency as the degree of suffering in the world is perhaps at a higher level now than at any time in the past. With the enormous increase in human population and the multiplication of the demands placed upon the environment by that population, or sections of that population, the level of violence in the world has registered a massive increase.

The gravity of this lies in the hidden dimension of the violence to be found in the world today. It is true that no human society will openly condone the imposition of suffering on other forms of life and openly derive pleasure from it as in the past. Of course, even this statement is debatable as we saw during the war prosecuted by the United Nations against Iraq. The truth is that as the world becomes ever more polarised between a global affluent and privileged minority and a poverty-stricken and powerless majority, new and hidden forms of violence are considered necessary by the former to keep the later in check. As Mahatma Gandhi said some half a century ago, "if true freedom were to come to India, the hovels of the poor and the palaces of rich will not be able to co-exist for even a moment." There is an appearance of freedom and democracy but the substance of it is drained away in unseen and hidden ways. Both subtle and crude forms of violence are the greatest violators of human rights. Finding a nonviolent response to violence is our greatest challenge.

### **All - Encompassing Violence**

What are these new forms of violence that impose unjust structures and unjust outcomes on others? We need to go back to the very definition of violence in order to understand what is sometimes not immediately visible to the eye. Any external factor interfering with the normal growth, functioning, and survival of living organism can be broadly defined as violence. When human society was less sophisticated, we could have confined the meaning of violence to the inflicting of harm by human beings on other human beings in thought, word or deed. To this type of personal violence, which imposes pain on mind and body, we could have added structural form of violence through social,



economic, and political instruments of control. The most important characteristic of both these forms of personal structural violence for our purposes was the ability to identify the person or group on whom the violence was imposed.

In the present day, however, the victim need not necessarily be an individual human being or a group. The victim of the new violence can be as small as a living cell or micro-organism that has its integrity, which is the result of millions and billion of years of evolution, violated by the sophisticated instruments of modern science that probe it without having any comprehensive understanding of the probable outcome. On the other hand, the victim can be as big as the planet itself, including the entire biosphere, atmosphere, and stratosphere which humanity is abusing in a manner unprecedented in history. To add to the complexity of the problem, the imposer of the violence and the victim are difficult to identify, and quite often they happen to be both the subject and object of violence.

Those of us who believe in *Sarvodaya* believe in a concept, which is of Gandhian origin, meaning the well-being or awakening of all. Ours is a universal thought for the well-being of all life where, personal and structural violence as well as identifiable and unidentifiable violence are neither condoned nor permitted. Our ideal is to create a human society where the human mind and the social, economic, and political institutions created by human beings and their relationship with Nature in its microscopic and macroscopic dimensions sustain themselves with the least opportunity for self destruction. This demands a reappraisal of the *Sarvodaya* and Gandhian approaches to counter violence and to disseminate new thinking, techniques, and technologies.

### **Fear Psychosis**

Now I would briefly look at the situation in Sri Lanka as analysed by the *Sarvodaya Sharmadana* Movement to which I belong and give a few examples of the process we are trying to release to ensure peace within human personalities and human communities as also between human beings and Nature itself.

*Sarvodaya* has worked in the villages of Sri Lanka for over three decades. At present we work in over 8,000 villages which constitute more than a third of the village communities in the country. *Sarvodaya* is involved in all aspects of community development under ten broad basic human needs. They are : environment, water, clothing, food, housing, health energy, communication, education, and cultural and spiritual needs.

*Sarvodaya* means the awakening of all in every aspect of human life. We believe in six aspects of integrated development: at the levels of the human being, the family, the village and urban community, the national and the world community. These are the spiritual, moral, cultural, social, economic, and political aspects of life. For a world where peace, non-violence, and justice will prevail, we believe that human beings and society should awaken simultaneously at all these levels.

However, the political and economic mismanagement of our country since independence has resulted in an appalling degeneration of commonly accepted social norms and values which prevailed for at least the two millennia for which we have recorded history. The inevitable result is that in every profession, from teaching to farming and from religion to

judiciary, there is a moral and spiritual decay in the quality of the personalities involved in those activities.

The ensuing frustration and desperation conspire to bring about a fear psychosis in which even homicidal tendencies become a means to survive. I will not say that everybody would take it that far. But certainly a substantial minority in Sri Lanka has already demonstrated a frightening capacity to resort to such actions in order to survive. The young people in the southern part of the country who attempted twice to overthrow the prevailing system by violence and the militant youth and even children in the north who are still on the battlefield clearly demonstrate this fact. The equally harsh and more repressive instruments of official violence are just as much subjected to this fear psychosis and homicidal mania as their opponents. In the meanwhile, the vast majority of peoples, whatever their political or racial group, are enveloped in fear and even have marginally become subscribers to these evil tendencies. The custodians of values including the religious personalities, are no less victims of this total malaise.

### **Ruling Coteries**

In our societies the most powerful establishments for changing the course of society for better or worse in the short term are the governments. Even though we call ourselves democratic countries, those who run governments are the political leaders and small coteries of their supporters. To varying degrees and perhaps at a much more intense level than those of others, the survival instinct and fear psychosis get control over them.

The *Sarvodaya Shramadana* Movement is not functioning in a vacuum. We work in the reality of this environment. Thousands of our workers, spread across the length and breadth of the country, are a witness to the air bombing, cannon fire, landmine explosions, foot mines, disappearances, burning on tyres, and unauthorised arrests - all of which constitute nothing but violence and human suffering. They also do witness the apparently carefree and happy -go-lucky affluent lifestyles of a minority who are insensitive to the realities of what is happening in the rest of the country. They zoom about in their air-conditioned cars and enjoy sumptuous meals at five-stars hotels as if these are normalities in everyone's life.

In this world of contrasts, of poverty and affluence, of fear and sensuality, any practical response with the intention of having an impact has to be manifold and all - embracing. The portfolio of activities should include the awakening of the personalities of unborn children to the creation of a popular mass of consciousness of the people in the country of critical proportions to enable them to realise the grave situation and the way out of it.

While the physical energies and resources of people and the remnants of sanity still prevailing in social structures are utilised to the maximum, the priority for *Sarvodaya* is creating a critical mass of spiritual consciousness. With extreme caution, the spiritual energies have to be differentiated and harnessed from religious resources, but taking care not to hurt the religious susceptibilities of people. A kind of socially engaged Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, and Christianity have to be brought to the fore to get individuals,

groups, and communities to practise meditation, cultivate respect for life, and radiate loving kindness far and wide.

Material resources have also to be harnessed and directed to bring about a realisation of the utter futility of violence and the alternative sustainable social system that can be put into place by non-violence. Satisfaction of basic, secondary, and tertiary human needs can be initiated by releasing processes through constructive nonviolence action, and participatory and sustainable village level socio-economic structures can be created so that democracy evolves from below rather than imposed from the top.

### **Backlash**

*Sarvodaya* has initiated these processes in its three decades of work so that its presence as a non-violent integrated movement for total change is being felt nationally. The surest indication is that in subtle and devious ways the government itself has launched an all-out attack on the movement and its leaders. Throughout our existence we have on occasions been at the receiving end of governmental displeasure. But in the last couple of years, this has reached an unprecedented level. I will not be exaggerating if I say that no other organisation except one that has embedded itself in the people could have survived the government sponsored campaign of distortion and obstruction.

The first portent of things to come was when, within a week of the swearing in of the new President, I was interrogated by the chief of the National Intelligence Bureau. The weekly educational radio programme we had conducted for several years was suddenly stopped and TV and radio coverage of our activities was completely blacked out. Then

using the excuse of the Presidential Commission to investigate NGOs, the police began to question our workers. Foreign funds pledged to us by donor agencies, that also assist the government, were blocked by the finance ministry.

This was followed by a calumnious campaign against *Sarvodaya* and myself personally in the largest circulation government-controlled newspapers in which, among other things, we were falsely accused of selling babies abroad for profit. In the midst of these attacks, my family and I began to receive anonymous death threats and we were followed by unidentified men in vehicles. A very large printing machine we had ordered to print low-cost books for the poor was confiscated by the customs authorities. The Central Bank stepped in to restrict our children's savings programme and rural savings and credit programme and ordered us to return our savings deposits. These are some of the highlights. There are a large number of other obstacles that have been put in our path.

### **Initial Measures**

How are we going to face these new forms of violence which are intended to break our spirit and force us to acquiesce in the injustice that is rampant in our country? From our past experience we have learnt that when there is violence and injustice imposed on us, patiently continuing to do whatever work that can be done helps to diffuse the adversities and the work that was previously being obstructed can be continued. Of course, there is a waste of time and resources on account of the damage that would already have been done.

The injustice and violence have been imposed on us on account of the ignorance regarding the value of the work that

we are doing. On the basis of that realisation, we regard awareness creation and conscientisation through educational programmes as having a very useful role to play. Once the ignorance is dispelled, the erstwhile opponent becomes friendly, subscribes to our ideals, and supports our work. But there are some who cannot be changed this way because they are quite aware of the valuable work that *Sarvodaya* is doing but still persist in willfully obstructing our work. If they happen to be administrators working on the instigation of the political authorities and who know very well that they are working against the spirit of the law and justice, then another course of action has to be resorted to, that is, to take resort to courts of law to get justice.

During the present period, *Sarvodaya* has had to resort to this course of action owing to the continued injustices imposed on us by the abuse of power and vitiation of the law. The difficulty is that there are now an increasing number of laws that are no longer based on the principles of justice, but are drafted and legislated merely to suit the temporary convenience of the government. In a like manner, it is possible that judicial appointments will be made not on the basis of merit and justice but rather on the basis of the consideration to further the unjust purposes of the appointing authority. As a result, the general public is losing faith in the law and in the administration of justice. Still, one has to try it out. Only if we fail to get justice by resorting to legal institutions will the next course of action have to be considered. For a nonviolent revolutionary movement like *Sarvodaya*, this is non-violent direct action.

However, unlike during the times of Mahatma Gandhi when he launched his non-violent satyagraha campaign against the British rule in India, at the present time the non-violent direct action has to be directed against rulers who are a part of the general population of the country. They have used and misused the democratic processes in both a subtle and crude manner and claim democratic legitimacy for their tyrannical attitude towards their opponents. They believe that their election victories give them the right to define their own rules in their own interests. For instance, they have created and used illegal goon squads to intimidate, kidnap, torture, and kill dissenters even if they were unarmed and non-violent. Therefore to resort to non-violent direct action is more difficult today than it was during Gandhi's time.

### **Final Option**

Under today's circumstances, the votaries of non-violence and social justice have to depend almost exclusively on the spiritual consciousness they can awaken within themselves. They have to aggregate these energies into a critical mass capable of affecting the mass psyche of the general population. The external manifestations of such a course of spiritual action that is directed to bringing about a change will manifest itself in the form of fearlessness and sacrifice.

The final possibility that is open to *Sarvodaya* is direct political action. Although *Sarvodaya* does not believe in power and party politics and has stayed away from it ever since its inception this very system has caused and is causing untold damage to its work. Now the present regime has launched an all-out attack to make the movement ineffective and destroy it completely. But people in thousands of *Sarvodaya* villages



want *Sarvodaya* to exist and succeed. The people's strength of the organisation has in recent years expanded as a result of the oppression the movement has been subjected to. Therefore it has become both necessary and possible to confront the unjust and violent power and party political system by people's power and replace it by a participatory alternative system of politics. *Sarvodaya* has decided to take to this kind of political action if all other efforts to bring about sanity and justice do not succeed.

### **The Goal**

Among the objective of such a political campaign will be :

- i) to introduce non-violence and justice as the fundamental value systems into the political life of the country,
- ii) to disband the highly concentrated political and economic centres at the top of the hierarchy and re-establish village-level political authorities ensuring protection of people's lives, their properties , life support systems, and the environment,
- iii) to ensure the justice of law, affecting the general population, as against the discriminatory legislation that protects the privileges of a few,
- iv) to ensure the freedom and integrity of the judiciary and non-interference with the administration of justice,
- v) to re-establish the dignity and worth of civil servants to function under the law without duress or interference from the political authorities,
- vi) to ensure the freedom of the press and media so that they can play an independent and investigative role befitting a participatory democracy,

- vii) to promote a true open economy in which the private sector, the public corporation sector, and the non-governmental and cooperative sector are given equal opportunities and incentives for production, marketing, and financial and resource management, and
- viii) to promote the evolution of a democratic political system from below where the ultimate objective of an enlightened Sri Lankan community with diverse cultures but equality before law is achieved.

Under the existing constitutional and political realities in Sri Lanka, these objective cannot be achieved without confronting partly politicians and their institutions. However, the objective of the confrontation is not to grab power. It is to ensure the achievement of the objectives sketched out above. Therefore, *Sarvodaya* has decided to form a political organisation and get it registered under the Commissioner of Elections so that if the present regime continues, it can be challenged electorally.

I have concentrated on the tragic issues directly affecting human life in Sri Lanka and the immediate socio-political issues relating to the need for a nonviolent alternative. This does not mean that we should give less importance to the violence inflicted upon our life support system by inappropriate applications of science and technology. Violence done to living cells, to human beings, and to the planet as a living organisation should also be our constant concern.

## **Lithuania: From Non-violent Liberation to Non-violent Defence?**

*Grazina Miniotaite*

"A nation that had won freedom without the force of arms should be able to keep it too without the force of arms," said Gandhi in 1947.<sup>1</sup> Gandhi began his advocacy of non-violent resistance to aggression in the 1930s. In 1940, he proposed to the Working Committee of the Indian National Congress to opt for non-military defence policy and to fully exploit the experience already accumulated on this count. He saw this as India's mission in the world. Even though the Congress did not accept the proposal, the idea has been attracting growing attention of scholars and the public worldwide. However, in spite of the interest shown in civilian defence by scholars and some politicians, there is no country in the world where it is employed as an alternative to military defence.

A new impulse for the development of civilian defence might be provided by the peaceful victory over totalitarianism in the countries of Eastern and Central Europe. Lithuania has played a particular role in the development of the idea and the practice of civilian defence. Its way to civilian defence has gone through the real experience of recent non-violent resistance. So its strategic discoveries might be useful in the construction of a more developed civilian defence.

The paper is an attempt to review this experience and to consider the prospects of its development within the context of an idea of civilian defence. The analysis deals with the period from 11 March 1990 (when the Supreme Council of Lithuania declared Lithuania's independence) up to the present. The period subsumes two stages in the development of civilian defence: the first is the period of struggle for Lithuania's international recognition, and the second for consolidating state independence. The first stage was characterized by a synthesis of spontaneity and deliberately planned civilian defence. The second stage is marked by infusion of certain elements of civilian defence into the very security system of Lithuania.

### **The Concept of Civilian Defence**

In contemporary studies an alternative to military kind of defence has been called social, civilian or civilian-based defence. This is "defence by civilians (as distinct from military personnel), using civilian means of struggle (as distinct from military or paramilitary means)," <sup>2</sup> It is based "on the planned and prepared combination of non-violent actions (viz., symbolic actions, denial actions, and overt confrontations) by the majority of the population of a given nation or international community" <sup>3</sup> against internal as well as against external forms of aggression. It is not a territorial defence, but "a defence of social values (that is, freedom, democracy, peace etc....) and the social structure (the way society is organized in its entirety)." <sup>4</sup>

The central principle of civilian defence is the principle of non-cooperation with the aggressor, denying him control over social institutions. This principle is based on the notion of power as dependent upon the good-will of people. In 1920

Gandhi wrote, "I believe, and everybody must grant, that no government can exist for a single moment without the co-operation of the people, willing or forced, and if people suddenly withdraw their co-operation in every detail, the government will come to a standstill....." <sup>5</sup> Later, Hannah Arendt emphasized that real power always comes from the people gathering together in the movements, "the people lend their power and support to the government agreeing to act according to its rules."<sup>6</sup> Kenneth Boulding, in his analysis of power, defined it as "integrative power." This is "the most fundamental form of power... the power of legitimacy, respect, loyalty, affection, love, and so on."<sup>7</sup> Gene Sharp has also stressed the idea that power is based on consent. <sup>8</sup>

This understanding of power implies that defending a society by means of civilian defence requires its social structure to be characterized by a high level of political and social homogeneity. A strongly hierarchic society, for instance, cannot be defended by civilian defence. Studies of those social and political conditions which are necessary for the implementation of non-military methods have been associated with the structural approach, represented mostly by German scholars.

However, the mainstream development of the concept of civilian defence is characterized by the instrumental or pragmatic approach followed by Gene Sharp and Adam Roberts. According to this approach, "civilian defence constitutes an alternative means of struggle, which, if an intensification of scientific research can be brought about, can replace the military forms of struggle." <sup>9</sup> Accordingly, this kind of investigation into civilian defence looks much like strategic studies, with the same vocabulary of weapons, threats,

strategy, balance of power, deterrence, defence, etc. It is an attempt to propose new, more effective kind of "weapons" without requiring any principal changes in the ways of thinking, without delving into what kind of energy of people's power (both constructive and deconstructive) these "weapons" would be based on. The instrumental approach has been successfully used for the historical "case studies" of spontaneous non-violent resistance. This is also the reason why our analysis of the non-violent liberation movement in Lithuania is mainly based on the instrumental approach. However, the development of the civilian defence theory requires both the structural and instrumental approaches.

### **From Non-violent Resistance to Organised Civilian Defence: March 1990 - August 1991**

Lithuania was the first country in the Soviet Union to declare its independence on 11 March 1990. A mere 1.5 per cent of the population comprising only 0.3 per cent of the territory threw a challenge to the vast empire and its powerful apparatus of repression. The declaration of independence was accompanied by an address to USSR President Gorbachev. The Lithuanian government stated that it would not object to the presence of Soviet troops in Lithuania, provided their future status would be defined in bilateral talks. The government also issued a resolution that proclaimed that the Soviet law of mandatory military service would no longer be binding on Lithuania. The documents, together with a proposal for talks on all issues related to the re-establishment of an independent Lithuania, were sent to Gorbachev on 12 March. On March 15 an Extraordinary Third Congress of USSR People's Deputies adopted a resolution "On the Decrees of 10-12 March 1990 adopted by the Supreme Soviet of the

Lithuanian SSR" that stated, the decrees of the Supreme Soviet of the Lithuanian SSR..... have not "any legal validity" and that "state government and executive organs of the Lithuanian SSR take all measures to ensure that law and order of the territory of the (Lithuanian Soviet Socialist) Republic be maintained." <sup>10</sup> In the letter to the Congress Lithuanian Supreme Council, Chairman Landsbergis stressed that resolutions of a foreign power have no legal force in Lithuania, but any legitimate interests of the USSR could be the subject of talks. Both sides saw themselves in the right and both made efforts to achieve their goals. The essential difference was that the Lithuanian government had the people's support, while Gorbachev had to rely mainly on force. The Lithuanian government was made up by people from Sajudis<sup>11</sup> who were well-experienced in constructive leadership over spontaneous mass action.

The USSR started a policy of intimidation. There were threats of economic destruction, of splitting the society into hostile factions, and of some territories cut off. Lithuania was under pressure to sign a new union treaty. The Supreme Council of Lithuania urged the beginning of talks and, in defying the threats, was engaged in the creation of state institutions.

As early as April 1990 Department of National Defence was created. The situation could not continue indefinitely, with the result that the major task for the USSR became that of bringing Lithuania back to the status of union republic by any means. In challenging the Soviet empire, the Supreme Council of Lithuania was well aware that its chief weapon was the support of the Lithuanian population and of democratic community abroad. That support could only be earned and

sustained by preserving the peaceful character of the attempted political and social changes. The very first resolution of the Council stressed the importance of the discipline of non-violence in the pursuit of the goal of independence. As the threat of military violence increased, an understanding had deepened that the only way of countering the aggression was "Gandhi's way". On 22 December, the declaration "Republic in Danger" was announced. In it, the citizenry of the republic was urged "to adhere to the principles of non-violence and non-cooperation with the occupational authorities."<sup>12</sup> On 8 January 1991, as the Soviet intentions on a coup became evident, Vytautas Landsbergis made a radio appeal. "Come and help your own government, otherwise a foreign one would overcome us."<sup>13</sup> From 8 January on, a round the clock civilian watch began around the supreme council building and, in the following days, around other strategic places as well (the TV transmission tower). In an orderly manner, according to a defined schedule, people came from all over Lithuania to keep watch. They were offered food and room for rest by citizens of Vilnius. Unarmed policemen and undergraduates of the Police Academy joined the watch, with the main task of preventing armed confrontations. On 11 January, paratroopers opened fire on unarmed civilians in Vilnius, who were trying to protect the Press Building. In the early morning hours of 13 January 1991, a tank and infantry attack took place against civilians guarding the Television Tower in Vilnius-14 people were killed and 702 were injured.<sup>14</sup> After the seizure of the transmission tower, people did not disperse, they moved to the center of the city to join the crowd surrounding the Supreme Council. The unarmed people on the square were determined to halt the attack on the Supreme Council at any cost. However, the building was



attacked neither on 13 January nor on the following days. Undoubtedly, the Soviet government's decision to refrain from the assault was due to the Soviet government's dogged determination despite the loss of life at the TV tower.

The January events provide a stunning example of the potential efficacy of non-military defence. Mass walls of people were able to defend strategically important objects, such as the buildings of the Supreme Council and a transmission and radio center in Kaunas. It was no accident that after the January events the attitude of public opinion and the government was most favourable to civilian forms of defence. The government viewed civilian defence as a matter of calculated organization, not merely a spontaneous outburst of people power. This was due both to practical experience and to theoretical insights provided by Gene Sharp in his book *Civilian Based Defence*.<sup>15</sup> On 28 February 1991, the Supreme Council adopted a resolution which read in part: "In the event a regime of active occupation is introduced, citizens of the Republic of Lithuania are asked to adhere to principles of disobedience, non-violent resistance, and political and social non-cooperation as the primary means of struggle for independence."<sup>16</sup>

Vytautas landsbergis offered a precise definition of the period after the January events when he called it the "creeping occupation." It was characterized by incessant assaults of the Soviet troops, Lithuanian police patrols were attacked, deserters from the Soviet army hunted and kidnapped, customs offices destroyed, and driver training schools and aviation clubs invaded and occupied. The "creeping occupation" could have at any time turned into further mass military aggression. Thus the primary task of the Lithuanian

government was that of deterrence. The leadership of the Soviet Union and its military had to be persuaded that the goal of subjecting Lithuania to central control was unrealistic and that the continuation of their aggression could only bring material and moral loss. In January, the Lithuanian Department of Defence started the publication of a Russian language newspaper, *Doroga Litvy* ("Lithuania's Way"), in order to counter Soviet propaganda. The newspaper was distributed among Soviet troops in Lithuania and in the Soviet Union. Videotapes of the January events were widely circulated. Sajudis and the deputies of the Supreme Council maintained close relations with movements of national liberation in the Soviet Union. Private relations were also widely utilized. People were urged to send letters to their friends and acquaintances in the Soviet Union explaining the situation in Lithuania. Attempts were made at influencing the process of democracy building in other regions of the USSR. On the initiative of labour Union, striking miners in the Donbass and Kuznetsky regions of the USSR were supplied with food. Transportation of Lithuanian food supplies by trucks through the territory of Soviet Union had a considerable effect. They carried the positive message of Lithuanian solidarity with the concerns of Russian and other citizens of the USSR.

An important factor in strengthening the impact of civilian defence was the education of both civilians and the military in the use of the "weaponry" of the general technique of non-violent action. "This is a nontraditional system of weapons the use of which should be learnt. It requires much more knowledge, thought, and understanding of human nature than does the use of rifle or a police baton, " later wrote Minister of

Defence Audrius Butkevicius in the preface to the Lithuanian translation of Gene Sharp's book.<sup>17</sup> By a government decree of 20 February 1991, a Commission for Psychological Defence and Civil Resistance was established in the Department of Defence. The decree envisaged "the preparation of a set of instructions on non-violent resistance for the personnel of the defence department and for volunteers" and 'the organization of volunteers' training in the techniques of non-violent resistance."<sup>18</sup> The "Volunteers" (*Savanoriska krasto apsaugos tarnyba*), roughly analogous to a national guard system, placed great emphasis on the training of volunteers in civilian resistance. Translation of relevant literature was undertaken. Excerpts from books and articles on non-violent resistance in Finland, India, Norway, Philippines, and on Poland's "Solidarity" movement were translated. The Volunteers' Library series published Gene Sharp's paper on "The Role of power in Non-violent Struggle." Popular Lithuanian newspapers, such as *Gimtasis Krastas*, *Soglasije*, and *Lietuvos Aidas*, published articles on the history and techniques of civilians resistance. Several television shows taught the basic principles of civilian defence.

On 19 August 1991, during the attempted coup in Moscow, people were again asked to gather at the building of the Supreme Council. The Department of National Defence issued a decree that ordered the defence staff "to organize and carry out acts of civil resistance on the territory of the republic by using the techniques of non-violence."<sup>19</sup> However, the decree also included a clause enjoining "armed defence of the offices of the Supreme Council and the government." The decision to combine non violent defence with armed defence was most probably a reaction to the brutal killing of customs

officers on the border with Byelorussia on 31 July. The coup in Moscow collapsed on 22 August by using the non-violent methods against the military forces. The experience of the January 1991 events in Lithuania was applied to the defence of democracy in Russia.

Soon after the collapse of the coup in Moscow, Lithuania was enjoying international recognition. In a speech delivered on 17 September 1991 on the occasion of the ceremony of Lithuania's acceptance to the United Nations, Vytautas Landsbergis stressed: "We rejected violence and resisted provocation, we have accumulated new political experience and we are ready to share it with others."<sup>20</sup>

What are the specific features and the lessons of Lithuania's experience in the use of non-violent action for the attainment of international recognition of its independence? It should be noted that the declaration of independence was made under very favourable internal and external conditions. The Soviet Union was undergoing the processes of *glasnost* and "democratization," while the public opinion in the world - after the "velvet revolution" in Czechoslovakia and the unification of Germany - was deeply interested in Baltic liberation movements and sympathetic to their goals.

In a few years' time Lithuania, as well as the other Baltic states, accumulated valuable experience of non-violent mass action and developed independent power centers that gave the movement its direction and some ideological grounding. It was no accident that with the declaration of independence a unique situation was created as the interests of the newly formed government and of the mass movement largely

coincided. In the words of Arendt, “the people lent their power and support to the government.”

A vitally important role in creating the image of Lithuania as an independent state, both in Lithuania and abroad, was played by mass media, mostly very favourably disposed towards Lithuanian independence. It is no accident that the attempt of Soviet rulers at organizing a coup in Lithuania in January 1991 started with an assault on the Press house and the TV transmission tower. Non-violent mass defence of the two was most challenging, and successful, test of the constructive power of non-violent action. After the events of January 1991, civilian defence was widely recognized as a viable means of defence. Sajudis, Department of National Defence, Voluntary National Defence Service made some efforts at its institutionalization. However, since the relevant knowledge, expertise, and even belief in the idea were still rather inadequate, the efforts were not particularly successful. On the other hand, the parallel attempts at organizing the much more familiar military defence and guerrilla warfare were much more active and effective.

The development and the use of civilian defence in Lithuania was mostly based on the instrumental approach to the idea. With opportunities for the creation of a strong military defence being greatly limited at the time, civilian defence was treated as its substitute or complement. There was no clear recognition of the fact that the essential element of civilian defence, namely non-violent action, had both a moral and a constructive potential. So it is no wonder that since the time Lithuania gained international recognition, its defence policies turned mostly towards traditional military

defence, even though civilian defence is accorded an important role in nearly all conceptions of national security proposed in 1992-1995.

### **The Development of Defence Policy in Lithuania after the International Recognition**

After the international recognition, Lithuania, just as Estonia and Latvia, swiftly moved in the direction of greater integration with the West.<sup>21</sup> Lithuania is a member of the United Nations Council of Europe, OSCE, NACC, and NAA, it signed Europe treaty with the European Union in June 1995, and applied for full membership in December 1995. In their security and defence policies, the Baltic countries have actively sought contracts with all the existing security institutions of the European security landscape. They signed an agreement for Associate partnership with the WEU in May 1994, are members of the CSCE, and they also seek membership of NATO.

The question that arises is whether the present military - based security and defence policy has any place for the experience of civilian-based defence that has played a vital role in the period from the Declaration of Independence to the defeat of the attempted coup in Moscow? The answer should be in the affirmative. The idea of civilian defence is still alive in the Lithuanian society. The Act of the Supreme Council of 28 February 1991 that enjoins the population to adhere to the principles of non-violent resistance in case of occupation is still in force. The Department of Civil Security of the Ministry of National Defence is also responsible for the organization of civilian defence. Its activities now are mostly educational. The educational center of the department has a study specializing on non-violent resistance which accumulates material on the

history of non-violent resistance in Lithuania and the world as well as theoretical studies of non-violence. A short introductory course on non-violent resistance and civilian defence is read to heads of municipal and local authorities and other officials.

The idea of civilian defence is also alive in the minds of Lithuanian politicians and scholars. This has found its expression in the projects of the security system for Lithuania. Lithuania has not yet adopted a general conception of its national security, though there are five alternative projects proposed. Lets have a look at those that accord a definite role to the civilian defence. This is primarily a project prepared in 1992 by a group of scholars. Civilian defence is here parallel to military defence. It is defined as "organized action of non-violent resistance."<sup>22</sup> Civilian defence is to be organized and led by a specific body, the Lithuanian Council for Civilian Defence. It also has the responsibility of creating the social premises for a mass non-violent resistance to a potential aggression (public education, analytical work, accumulation of material, and technical resources).

The idea of civilian defence has survived and has even become more specific in the latest project that has been prepared by representatives of the Parliament (Seimas) parties, the members of the coordinating group for working out of the national security conception (June 1995). In the project, the defensive function is to be performed by both the military forces and by citizens and their associations. The latter, "in case of an attack on the territorial integrity of Lithuania or on its constitutional order, the citizens and their voluntary organizations take the actions of civilian self-defence, including non-violent resistance, disobedience and

non-collaboration with the illegal administration, as well as actions of armed resistance. Liability for collaboration shall be defined by law.”<sup>23</sup> The preparation for mass resistance is to be organized by state institutions. The project also envisions the implementation of a long-term programme on “Civilian Training for Mass Resistance and Civilian Self-Defence.” The conception envisions “civilians' self-defence” as both armed and non-armed defence, that is, an attempt is made to combine guerrilla warfare with civilian defence. An important and promising idea in the development of the civilian defence is the envisaged agreement between Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia on cooperation in civilian defence. The idea has emerged as a result of cooperation between the Lithuanian officials and the scholars of the Albert Einstein Institution in the United States. The project of the agreement (April 1995) is based on the premise that the means of civilian defence, as a constitutive part of the whole system of defence, need careful preparation and training. In case of an aggression “state authorities, civil institutions and individuals would fight the aggression by a co-ordinated campaign of mass non-cooperation and disobedience” (article 2). “The countries agree to render non-military help and assistance for measures of civilian-based defence in any country that has suffered aggression against its sovereignty, constitutional order, national or cultural identity, territorial integrity, political independence, or security” (article 4 ).<sup>24</sup>

The project of the agreement was favourably received in all the Baltic countries, so there is opportunity that in the near future such an agreement will be signed. And if Parliament adopts the concept of national security that has been outlined



above, further development of civilian defence would be based on solid grounds.

### **Some Issues**

The idea of civilian defence was mostly developed during the Cold War era. Security and defence studies attempted at the time were essentially based on theoretical premises of realism and neo-realism. The geopolitical reality was conceptually split into the scientifically ruled and controlled "interior" of the national state and the anomalies, threatening, anarchistic "exterior". This view on the matter is also characteristic of the concept of civilian defence based on the instrumental approach.

The changed geopolitical reality found its expression in the theoretical search of a new security agenda. The concept of civilian defence is, of course, facing the same task. With the emergence of a new content of the idea of collective and regional security, the problem of the place and the role of civilian defence becomes of particular importance, the question of the relation between military and civilian defence is raised afresh, and the problem of the social and political premises for civilian defence becomes more urgent. The further development of the conception of civilian defence can, it seems, gain from recent post-structuralist studies of the role of subjectivity in the constructions of power relations; in particular, from the way they articulate how contemporary insecurities are being created and intensified by the contemporary power/security discourse.<sup>25</sup>

In Lithuania, the attempts at introducing some elements of civilian defence into the security system of Lithuania

proceeded mainly on the concept of security as based on the premises of realism. This is in accord with the general political intent of building a nation-state, even though it is hardly compatible with the country's intention of integrating with the European community. The growing social and political tensions, the emergence of striking income inequality, the increasing mistrust of state institutions, and the consequent political indifference of the population strike at the very roots of civilian defence, at the unity of goals of the government and the society. Under contemporary circumstances civilian defence in Lithuania could hardly be effective. Thus its development requires deeper theoretical grounding and wider public recognition. Its inclusion into the official security conception of Lithuania is but the beginning of the task ahead.

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11. The Lithuanian independence movement called *Sajudis* was created on 3 June 1988. In a very short time it became a mass public organization having the overwhelming support of the population. This was demonstrated by the truly massive character of its actions and its influence on political life. Very soon it became, in fact, an alternative to the government of Lithuania. In February 1990, *Sajudis* won a landslide victory in the elections to the Supreme Council of Lithuania. This was crucial for the Declaration of Independence on 11 March 1990.
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**Non-violent Struggle in Belarus:  
The Belarusian Popular Front  
(1989-1999)**

*Elena Aleinikova*

*Satyagraha* is the light of hope for deliverance from violence in our imperfect world. It is the answer found by Mahatma Gandhi to the question: Is it possible to resist the regime and at the same time obey its laws? "In order to be able to conduct a civil disobedience in practice, a man should be put into a school of voluntary and respectful obedience to the laws of the country".<sup>1</sup> This article is an attempt to overview the activity of Belarusian Popular Front, the most well-known political movement in Belarus during the last 20 years, from the point of view of principles of non-violent struggle.

The Belarusian Popular Front known by name 'Renaissance', is a broad public political movement for reconstruction of society, the revival of the Belarusian nation on principles of humanism and democracy, cultural development of the nation and all national communities, and for the creation of an independent state of Belarus.<sup>2</sup>

In contradistinction to the Baltic Popular Fronts created on the initiative of the reformatory local communist parties, Belarusian Popular Front (BPF) has arisen in defiance of Belarusian communist leaders' desires. However, it does not mean that the Front's leaders and the participants were hostile to the existing government. Moreover, at the starting point, one of the Front's tasks was to cooperate with the

progressive forces of the Communist Party for the realisation of the goal of an independent Belarus.

The Organising Committee of National Popular Front “Renaissance” was formed on October 19, 1988 at the House of Cinema (currently it is St. Simon’s and St. Alena’s Cathedral) in Minsk.

The founders of the Committee came from an illustrious group of Belarusian intelligentsia, which had to its credit the working out of the Belarusian language Renaissance programme under the title “Mova 2000”, revelations about the Kuropaty- the place of mass execution of dissidents during Stalinist repression, and formation of the Memorial Committee. Secondly, another group that played a role in the formation of the Front came from the informal youth organisations, which had experience of civil disobedience while organising the mass ecological meetings in Grodno and Novopolotsk, ecological marches on Dvina and Prypyat’ and three mass meetings in Minsk, in 1987 on Dzyady, the national Belarusian holiday, in defence of the Upper City in Minsk, and in Kuropaty in 1988. From the very beginning, Zenon Poznyak was recognised as the Front’s leader. He was known to the founders as the famous researcher of Belarusian theatre, the fighter for the preservation of the upper city and as the man who exposed the mass killing in Kuropaty. On November 11, 1989 the Organising Committee adopted the appeal “To the Citizens of Belarus”. It marked the political position of the Front and the goals of the movement. The Belarusian Popular Front stood “for the real sovereignty of Belarus functioning in accordance with constitutional law, for eco-friendly Belarus, and the revival and official recognition of the Belarusian

language”<sup>3</sup>. The Front is committed to consolidation of society and is prepared to engage in a dialogue with the government and ideological opponents towards this end. But the communist government of the Republic adopted a hostile attitude when the Front was formed.

Nine months after organising the Committee the first Congress of Belarusian Popular Front took place in Vilnius. These 9 months were difficult times for the Front members. On October 30, 1989, a meeting organized by the Confederation of Belarusian Communities that “took place in Minsk on Dzyady was broken up. For breaking up the meeting the police used tear-gas. In February 1990 a mass meeting at the “Dynamo” stadium in Minsk and the election to the Supreme Council of the BSSR took place. As a result of the elections, 18 members of the Popular Front became deputies of the Supreme Council. At the same time, a campaign of slander against the Popular Front was unfolded in the official mass media. Not only the persecution of the active members of the Belarusian Popular Front occurred at their places of work and residence, but trials of the front leaders on fabricated charges began as well (e.g. The case of Poznyak). In a number of cases arrests and punishments for the use of national symbols took place (the case of Kaputskij in Molodechno, the case of Murashko in Polotsk, the case of Busel in Svetlogorsk region, etc.). In some others physical violence on the members of the Front (the case of Svistunovich in Baranovichi) followed. Having come to a collision course with the authorities, the Front directed the fight demanding human rights and the abolition of article 6 of the Constitution, which institutionalised the leading role of the Communist Party.

After the first congress the Front's activities became stronger. From June 1989 to November 1989 the Front organised a wide range of actions including mass meetings, campaign using the mass media, and mustering international support. The result of these actions were the following: the disclosure of the truth about the Chernobyl tragedy and its implications for Belarus, the acceptance of the liquidation of the plant by the Supreme Council of the BSSR, and the adoption of the law granting official status to the Belarusian language<sup>4</sup>. From December 1989 the BPF began a new attack on the Soviet system, using the election to the Supreme Soviet of the BSSR and to the local organs of government as the occasion. As a result of these elections, the BPF set up its units in almost all the Municipal and Regional Councils and put up stiff opposition in the Supreme Council thanks to which article 6 of the Constitution was abolished and a Declaration of Sovereignty was adopted at the first session of the new parliament itself.

At this point the first and strong phase of the BPF activity ended and a temporary crisis followed. Some of the members of BPF left the front, accusing the Front of being too radical. During this period, the opposition group in the Supreme Council was working out the bills and the economic programmes. Other active members of the Front concentrated on the expanding and strengthening their positions in Belarus and on equipping themselves with the requisite education.

On March 25, 1991 the second Congress of BPF took place, and a week after the Congress the second phase of the Front's activities began. Spontaneous strikes broke out. The



main slogans of that period were “Down with the Communist Party!”, and “Independent Belarus”. A number of events followed in quick succession as detailed below.

- April 1991 –stormy strikes and meetings throughout Belarus;
- May-July 1991- the expulsion of Communist Party Committee from a number of factories
- August 1991 – the banning of the Communist Party and the declaration of the independence of Belarus, and election of S. Shushkevich as the Leader of the Supreme Soviet;
- September 1991–the adoption of the new title of the State–the Republic of Belarus, the new white-red-white flag the coat of arms – “Pogonya”;
- December 1991–the signing of the Belovezhskie agreements on the dissolution of the USSR;
- February-April 1993 – the collection of nearly half a million signatures for the dissolution of the Supreme Soviet and the conduct of a new election.

The unsuccessful attempt to marshal support for a referendum in May 1993 and the failure in organising mass actions in its defence marked the end of the second stage of the activities of the BPF. Again, another major group of activists left the front.

The presidential elections in 1994 turned out to be a test of strength for the BPF because, for the first time, the Popular Front appeared with a clear and independent position before the electorate. There were lot of debates as to whether the Front was defeated or whether it had won the elections. The Front contested the elections and right away began its preparation for the Parliament elections. It

organised a shadow government and worked out the economic programme for Belarus. The crux of this programme was to follow the path adopted by other post-socialist countries, like putting into circulation the national currency, financial stabilisation, “privatisation”, etc. And that was not the only programme of the shadow cabinet of BPF which met regularly once in two weeks for working out the specific means of realising the programme goals. The cabinet of the Opposition turned out to be a team of hardworking professionals, which would be in a position to assume responsibilities should such opportunity arise. The analysis of the presidential elections in 1994 showed that the greatest impression upon the voters had been made by Poznyak, who appeared on the TV surrounded by his team of known economists, researchers and professors. Analysts say that if Poznyak had come to power in 1994 he would not have spent months on the working out of the political programme, the selection of specialists, and the forming of the cabinet.

Having received the *carte blanche* in the election in 1994, Aleksander Lukashenko (the first Belarusian President) changed the political and economic system, created a new ideology and placed under control all the social processes taking place in Belarus. One of the achievements of Lukashenko was the liquidation of most of the opposition groups. During 1994 - 1996 organised and individual work was carried out with representatives of political, economic and cultural elite who were seen as a potential threat to the President. Some of them were assigned new positions and new duties. Some others had to leave the country or were placed under strict surveillance. One of the main tasks of the authoritarian head of the state was to strike such a level of

terror so as to facilitate the flourishing of his own power. In Belarus this task has been largely accomplished. The opposition could function as long as they did not pose a threat to the ruling power<sup>5</sup>. This fact was corroborated by the presidential referendum of 1996, when the results of voting were fabricated overlooking world opinion. The central office of the Belarusian Popular Front was stacked with oppositional material, but nobody was there to distribute it among the population. Nothing had been done in the form of political education of the common people before the referendum. Moreover, the political leaders of the Front, instead of remaining in Belarus and trying to be in the epicentre of political life of their own country even under the threat of being put into prison, had asked the United States for political refuge.

Even after nearly three years nothing positive has taken place. Zenon Poznyak is known to be a “fax leader” of the Front, living and leading the Front from Poland. In his fax message sent to the 6<sup>th</sup> Congress of Belarusian Popular Front (July 31, 1999), he mentioned that his return to Belarus was possible only if authorities guaranteed his personal security<sup>6</sup>. Inside the BPF itself a split took place at the Congress and it was decided to organise a parallel session in October 1999. Most of the known radical opposition leaders are currently engaged in internal squabbles leading to the disarray of the opposition.

Fewer people are interested in the policy of the Front now. Changing its policy from the non-violent ways of struggles (for the Independence of Belarus in the beginning) to aggressive confrontation (even though only in words) with

the official authorities, the Front lost much of its earlier reputation. Leading the *satyagraha* campaign, Gandhi once pointed out: "Politeness is the weakest place of *satyagraha*. Being polite doesn't mean only civility of speech. It means inner gentleness and the wish for good to the opponent"<sup>7</sup>. The roots of aggressive behaviour are in the desire to change the world using violent methods. However, violence can only give birth to further violence. The formation of the Soviet Union and its 75 year history show us in clear terms the consequences of violence. The Belarussian Popular Front turned out to be incapable of practising non-violence that demands the harnessing of all the moral forces of the practitioners.

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## **Martin Luther King's Non-violent Struggle and its Relevance to Asia**

*Chris Walker*

In a sense Martin Luther King grew up in a religious environment which in some ways would be more characteristically Asian in its overall nature. He lived in an environment steeped in religion, the Christian religion to be sure. But in the West where religious life and secular life are most usually divided, with religion often being relegated to Sundays and forgotten the rest of the week, the integration of religion into everyday life is an extraordinary thing. However I have found in Asia that this is more usually the norm. Regardless of a person's particular devotion to his religion, the signs, symbols and ceremonies of religion govern the patterns of everyday life. In some cases this familiarity may breed contempt, but when faced with a crisis, those who have been initiated into the belief that the spiritual domain is indeed to be found both in heaven and earth automatically turn to the spiritual for guidance, wisdom or intercession. This would be an everlasting hallmark of Martin Luther King's non-violent struggle. He found strength in his faith. When he needed answers to tough questions, he prayed. Thus was bound inextricably together the inner and outer elements of non-violent struggle. The outer elements are the politics if you will: The external causes and conditions of suffering and injustice, and the ordinary steps to remedy these problems, like mass organisation, public education, intra and inter-organisational conflict resolution. The inner element of non-violent struggle

underscores the strength and faith to carry it out in the face of ridicule, of loss of freedom, even physical harm to oneself and one's associates. To struggle to change the phenomenal world without in some way calling upon the power of the sacred is futile.

Another aspect of Martin Luther King's life which is more uniquely Asian than American is his early and intimate contact with suffering.<sup>1</sup> Life in the house of a minister (his father) is punctuated by late night phone calls announcing the sickness or death of a parishioner, a marriage torn apart, a job lost and so on. In Asia all but royalty or the blind see everyday the effects of poverty and injustice. They see in the street sickness and death, homelessness, families living under bridges, combing through the garbage. This is not to say that every Asian takes what they see to heart. It is possible to see and yet not to see. Yet the difference is that America is a sanitised society. The sick and mentally ill are rushed off to be tucked away in special places, out of sight. Death is treated as an anomaly, rarely spoken of in the open and dealt with speedily and quietly. The homeless are driven out of common areas and live on the fringes of society. Thus it takes a special environment or initiative to come face to face with the immediacy and predominance of suffering in the world for one who lives in the mainstream of American society. Martin Luther King had one more reason why he was forced to come to grips with suffering and injustice in society. He was black, a descendant of the African slaves who had been ripped from their homeland hundreds of years earlier and on whose backs a large part of American prosperity was built. When he was a young child he played with the white children who lived down the street but when the time came to attend school he went

to one school and then another.<sup>2</sup> This raised in his mind the question of inequality and the knowledge that society's laws and God's law as he had learned from the bible, were different.

### **Transformation into an Activist**

How did Martin Luther King begin to synthesise those facets of his early education in life and develop an aspiration to change the status quo and furthermore to adopt non-violent struggle as the *modus operandi*? Firstly he made a careful and thorough study of the commonly studied texts in the so-called 'classical' are perhaps more accurately, mainstream western education. He studied the classical philosophers, Plato, Aristotle, Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau. He also studied *Das Kapital* and *The Communist Manifesto*. His conclusion was that these works represent only a partial truth.<sup>3</sup> He abhorred the separation of the means from the end inherent in all of these systems as well as the separation of humanity from ideology. He says about his impressions of these philosophies 'Constructive ends can never give absolute moral justification to destructive means, because in the final analysis the end is pre-existing in the means'.<sup>4</sup> In regard to both Capitalism and Marxism he felt that if human beings are the children of God, the purpose of the state is their welfare, not vice versa. This is entirely relevant in the light of the damage being done to today's world by rampant consumerism where the trans-national corporations, which have largely supplanted the state as the dominant force in human interaction, assume that consumers and client states exist for their benefit. In fact many of today's non-violent struggles are fought on the frontier of this new colonialism which goes by the pseudonym, globalisation. Martin Luther King had

examined the undercurrents in the prevailing world-view and rejected them. He had his faith in God as an ultimate view. On what fulcrum does his ultimate world view (Christianity) and his relative view (action in the world- *artha kriya*) pivot? This point is crucial because for Martin Luther King as well as any of us involved in non-violent struggle it is the active principle. We may believe in God, morality, communism or whatever, but at the basic level these are only ideas. Good or bad ideas can sponsor good or bad action. There is no certainty and no true guiding principle without a bridge between the sacred and the mundane. At this very moment Buddhist monks supposedly professing a commitment to non-violence, are participating in violent acts in Sri Lanka, Christians in Serbia are killing Muslims, Hindus whose faith teaches non-harm and non-killing are killing Christians. So it is safe to say that this point is entirely crucial in the understanding of non-violent struggle. Many profess a faith of peace but the actions they take don't always correspond. It is in fact the bridge between the ultimate and the relative, which provides the active principle, which connects a person to his source of power and inspiration. How about Martin Luther King's action principle: He had studied the classics, he had his Christian training, but what finally brought him to the conclusion that action was necessary and that non-violent struggle was the way? It was in Philadelphia, during a Sunday church meeting that Martin Luther King heard a sermon by Dr. Mordecai Wyatt Johnson, the president of Howard University. Dr. Johnson delivered his sermon on the life and thinking of Mahatma Gandhi. I feel it was at this moment that Martin Luther King's ideas and studies became crystallised into a plan of action. After this first, indirect encounter with Gandhi through the words of a man who himself had actually met the Mahatma, King went



out and bought as many books as he could find about Gandhi's life and works. It was in the writings of Gandhi that King began to see certain aspects of his own religion in a new light.

In Christianity the relationship of God to man is often characterised as Agape. Agape is love, with a capital 'L'. It is not only an idea, a feeling, emotion etc. but it is quite literally a force. Like the force of gravity, which permeates every corner of the universe and has an effect on everything in it, Love is the central principle around which Christianity revolves. God sent his son in human form to suffer and atone for humanity's shortcomings. Because of love, the imperfect human can be unified with the perfection of God. And yet, until he heard the proactive, socially relevant way in which Gandhi applied this force in the mundane/ profane world, Martin Luther King wasn't sure that love had implications beyond the soteriological realm, that is the realm of salvation. Now he came to see that love was a force imminently applicable to social issues, indeed perhaps the only one that could quell the deep-seated roots of violence, prejudice and greed in human nature as it most usually has shown itself throughout history.

### **The Roots of the Tree of Non-violent Struggles**

In so many ways all of the non-violent struggles around the world are against injustice especially institutionalised injustice. In a village or a tribe, very often the tools exist to resolve conflicts- councils of elders, town meetings etc. With the rise of the nation state the application and end of violence has become far more complex and interpenetrated with all of the other aspects of culture.

For both Martin Luther King and Gandhi learning from their experience was a strong component of their programmes and of their unique wisdom. So many leaders have fixed positions or dogmas that they are actually incapable of learning from their experiences. One has to have an open mind and a humble nature to really learn from experience. You may enter a situation with a certain way in mind to handle it, this is natural, but true wisdom unites the right view with the skilful means. In this case skilful means implies the ability to examine the causes, conditions and outcomes in a situation, and to change in such a way as to be most effective in furthering the cause of non-violent struggle.

Gandhi possessed penetrating psychological insights into the dynamics of conflicts and ways in which they might be managed. I use the term manage, as opposed to stop or eliminate, because conflict is a part of the natural order of the Universe. It is also important to note that conflict can be a creative process. Both Gandhi and Martin Luther King realised that the creative energy of conflict and conflict resolution could be used for beneficial purposes as opposed to trying to stamp out all conflict. Conflict is also a natural by-product of struggle, and both Gandhi and King believed that passivity and acquiescence to injustice was not tantamount to peace. In line with his psychological insight, Gandhi saw that the process of struggle emboldened, encouraged and in so many cases transformed people in beneficial ways.

### **New Vocabulary**

What exactly is the vocabulary of constructive conflict if the violence in the world order is so well mixed up in and disguised by social structures and violence? Then a new vocabulary is needed as a counterpoint. Arguing for non-

violence in terms of violence-semantics is ineffective and in fact may reinforce or justify violent behaviour. In every righteous struggle there must first be an overarching philosophy. I think in the ultimate sense Gandhi and Martin Luther King had a similar basis or philosophy, which underpinned their actions. In a word, it seems that Love, with a capital L, or in the Greek agape, was the bedrock from which they drew strength. For Gandhi, love was part of a trinity of God, Truth and Love. One of the unifying factors of all of these elements of Gandhi's underlying philosophy is that they are all creative forces. This is why one who holds these principles to be the "true norm" , the reference point for social action, can never fall into or promote violence. Violence is not a creative force. Even when a goal is attained if it be through violence-then it is vulnerable to attack and repudiation by violence. Violence also leaves a bitter aftertaste in the mouth of the defeated; it plants the seeds of future dissent and dissatisfaction. As Dr. King commented on his view of Gandhi's work, "it is rather a courageous confrontation of evil by the power of love, in the faith that it is better to be the recipient of violence than the inflicter of it, since the latter only multiplies the existence of violence and bitterness in the universe." The goal of non-violent struggle is not to make the oppressed the oppressors but to forge a co-operative society in which all may live peacefully and strive toward human progress together. For Martin Luther King love was at the fulcrum of a trinity as well, God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. God is the creator, he created the world by, for and with the power of love. God is truth, intelligence and wisdom. But he gave humanity freewill and the result was that humanity fell away from the link between heaven and earth which was love and became blinded by the philosophy which is seemingly

proposed by the phenomenal world. Like the *maya* of Hindu thought, the knowledge sought by man at the primordial beginning of the Christian creation story was pedantic. It was induced by a poverty mentality, to know about the world to garner benefits accruable and attributable to oneself only as opposed to the recognition of interconnectedness and the proper credit for all creation, all knowledge, all sustenance etc., to God and the force of love in the world. "In the beginning was the word and the word was God." Jesus Christ was God's love incarnate. A human form to teach and demonstrate the original principles of love which had been diminished by humanity's continuous and increasing self-love, or solidifying the ego. The separation of God and man, was not through God's action but man's repudiation of the original principals of love, which leads to the misunderstanding of interconnectedness. The Holy Spirit is the action principle, it is the pervasive and infinite energy, which is available to all who can let down the ego-created barrier to feeling at the deepest level the connection between God and man. (Integrative power)

All of the vocabulary used by Gandhi are undoubtedly well known to the peace studies community and hence to reprise the most common terms is perhaps not informative at this juncture. However it is highly relevant in the context of this paper to address some of the vocabulary of Martin Luther King in relation to the main pillars of Gandhian thought: *ahimsa*, *satyagraha*, *swaraj*, *hartal* etc. Both of their dialectical styles and content are profound and deep. For Gandhi, he reached into the deepest well of the Indian psyche by making an organic holism out of the triumvirate of truth, god and love. Gandhi was practical and not too philosophical in his dialectic, that is, he meant to find a way to motivate people to utilise

the power of social change that he knew they had. Even so his trinity, like the Christian one harks back to cosmology. In the beginning, the world was balanced by a virtual triangle of cosmic forces. Then in the vastness of the primordial past, they began to fall out of synchronicity with each other. Once they were fully dissynchronous the only way back to proper balance was creation, the exercise of suffering in and hopefully transcending the *maya* of the phenomenal world is the only way that the cycle of rebirth is exhausted. Gandhi's vocabulary may be action-oriented but has a cosmological and spiritual significance as well as soteriological significance. King's vocabulary is more directly connected to spiritual matters, as it could be no other way. The African American Christians, growing up under slavery and later discrimination had developed a unique tradition of homiletics. Spiritual songs about freedom and the Promised Land, redemption etc., all contain a subtext of aspiration toward justice on earth as well as faith in God and the afterlife. These very spiritual songs were used to communicate news of slave escapes and rendezvous with the underground railroad.

Most of the inspirational and educational vocabulary of non-violence that Martin Luther King used in his preaching and teaching about non-violence was directly inspired by the Christian gospel. Even so it is clear that Martin Luther King was deeply and directly influenced by Gandhian thinking in his action-oriented interpretations of Christian concepts. All of the dialectics stems from his understanding and faith in God. Indeed faith is a key concept, the link or pact between God and mankind. In the Bible, faith is addressed many times, "by faith alone shall ye enter the kingdom of God." Faith is a crucial aspect and especially emphasised in the African American experience of Christianity. Faith was the key to the

African American's survival of centuries of slavery. How is faith applied to non-violent conflict? Naturally first of all tenets of the Christian faith specify that a believer must "love thy brother as thyself " and "turn the other cheek." So the doctrinal background is clear. But how about socially engaged approaches, in what way does faith contribute to the character of the non-violent struggle for civil rights? Put simply, faith keeps you going in the face of opposition and gives you the strength to persist in non-violent methods. Martin Luther King spoke often to his followers about being steadfast in the application of non-violence. Through the experience of Gandhi, he knew it could be very effective but he also knew that if the *Satyagrahi's* discipline failed it would have disastrous results. This is a double kind of faith. Faith in the Truth of the method and the goal, and faith that God is always beside you to give you strength in the actual application of the struggle. Martin Luther King's wife when asked how she kept calm amid all of the turmoil replied, "We believe we are right, and in believing we are right, we believe that God is with us."

Martin Luther King added "We have a strange feeling down here in Montgomery that in our struggle for justice we have cosmic companionship. And so we can walk and never get weary because we believe and know that there is a great camp meeting in the Promised Land of freedom and justice. And this belief, this feeling that God is on the side of truth and justice and love and that they will eventually reign supreme in this universe. This comes down to us from the long tradition of the Christian faith. There is something that stands at the centre of our faith."<sup>5</sup>

King also spoke often of justice: justice and faith go together. He says, "I think every person who believes in non-

violent resistance, believes somehow that the universe is on the side of justice and that there is something unfolding in the universe whether one speaks of it as an unconscious process or... some unmoved mover or as personal God, there is something in the universe that unfolds toward justice."<sup>6</sup> Justice represents the higher order of God's law, under which all beings are equal, as they are all God's children. "In Christ there is neither Jew nor Gentile... male nor female...communist nor capitalist. We are all one in Jesus Christ. And when we truly believe in the sacredness of human personality, we won't exploit people, we won't trample over people with the iron foot of oppression, we won't kill anybody."

### **The Fruit of the Tree of Non-violence**

I think that the history of Gandhi and Martin Luther King's successes are well known. So I shall discuss the more esoteric benefits of non-violent struggle as I perceive them as opposed to the matters of fact and historical record. Without a doubt the first benefit of adopting a non-violent approach to conflict resolution is personal transformation. Although for each person the effect may differ, applying non-violent philosophy to one's life and actions in this world makes a person progressively more peaceful on the inside. Regardless of religious views or the level of one's social activism, non-violent means are imminently applicable to every situation in life. It is a positive cycle that feeds on itself. The process of non-violent struggle itself creates and enhances one's transformation, the lessening of greed, anger and delusion in one's mind and body. Spiritual practice is needed to face the challenges of the very violent world in which we live, be it theistic or non-theistic, Hindu, Christian, Buddhist or whatever. We need not be perfect, but without the sincere

and strong aspiration to lessen violence in ourselves, we cannot be helpful to others.

Not all non-violent struggles achieve tangible successes but many do. The process of struggle which changes people and softens their hearts creates conditions in which entire societies can be transformed. Even in the absence of political change, the process of non-violent struggle is creating social change. The effects on society may be hard to measure but by training, and building up skills in conflict resolution, the seeds of peace are planted and fertilised. Just as Martin Luther King, who never met Gandhi was influenced to see his religious background not only as a metaphysical and soteriological frame work but an action principle by Gandhi's example, the influence of those who work for peace non-violently may have immense effect on society in the future. As Elise Boulding says, peace is created out of the everyday skills of peaceful problem solving and conflict resolution in families, in neighbourhoods, and among different social, cultural, religious and ethnic groups within and between societies.<sup>8</sup> Thus employing non-violent means as a paradigm for problem solving has the potential to utterly revolutionise our planet. In the past non-violent struggle was seen as extraordinary and unusual. In the future we must strive to make it the norm in society from the lowest to the highest level. There are many pressing reasons to do so. The first is moral. Simply put, it is the right thing to do, it is in accordance with the Truth. The second is social: Because there are always those who will adopt violent means to struggle for their rights, proponents of non-violence must beat them to the punch so to speak - as the violent struggles legitimises, in the governments view, the use of violence to suppress righteous struggles. The environment itself is suffering from violence and without a stable culture of peace



no effective and lasting solutions can be found. In addition the environmental damage is linked to social justice as so many people depend on natural resources for their very livelihoods. For all of these reasons and more it is obviously vital that we draw upon the wisdom of Gandhi and Martin Luther King to develop and implement a real plan of action designed to bring about peace, social justice and to foster the development of a culture of peace, a society that reflects the precepts on non-violent problem solving at all levels.

On a more personal level, I wish to point out some of the ideas gleaned from the life and thought of Gandhi and Martin Luther King. What are some of the lessons of these two giants of non-violent struggle in the 20th century and how do these lessons bode for the future? A clear moral understanding must be in place. Archimedes said, give me a level and a firm place to stand and I will move the world. Without a strong rock on which to stand it is not possible to personally shoulder the suffering and the responsibility for helping all the beings in the world. Both Martin Luther King and Gandhi relied on faith in the sacred, Truth, God, Love and they perceived that these two words are not separate. This in a sense gives the engaged peace worker an infinite well of energy to rely on and a sense of companionship with something larger than himself in the universe. A Sense that God's law of the law of truth (*dharma*) is really at work in the world already and that we may harness its power for social change, for personal transformation and to help us through troubled times.

Another lesson exemplified in the non-violent struggle of these two great men of the 20th century is the power of the journey, both symbolic and real. Many of their social action

campaigns involved a journey, a march to the sea, to the country courthouse, a 'freedom ride' to the Deep South and many others. Not only is there something about the nature of a journey or odyssey which strikes a chord in everyone's heart thus creating power for change, but the journey itself is symbolic of the inner change which must take place for non-violence to be effective. Our lives are a journey as well, and like Martin Luther King and Gandhi we are always growing and changing, sometimes subtly, other times dramatically. I am reminded of a Buddhist phrase, 'journey is the goal'. Not every social action campaign is successful on tangible terms. However it is the act of non-violent struggle, in essence, the journey, which is of real importance. Thus the lesson is to honour and recognise that the process of struggle is itself of great value and significance, and never be discouraged from continuing by the lack of obvious success for the journey is indeed the goal as we journey into a new millennium.

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