

The Applicability of M.K. Gandhi's Principle of Non-violence Policy in India in the Post-Gandhi Era

Dr. Dipanwita Chakraborty

Associate Professor

Department of Philosophy, Government Degree College, Dharmanagar, Tripura (North)

Abstract

M, K Gandhi introduced new dimension to non-violence by considering it as the eternal, inherent and greatest human virtue. He wanted to establish a peaceful world and thus adopted non-violent fight named Satyagraha through negotiation, agitation and demonstration, arbitration, non-cooperation, civil disobedience, economic boycott, direct action, strike, picketing, non-payment of taxes, fasting and so on. Gandhi's success with non-violence later influenced many figures. Therefore following Gandhi in later period various successful non-violent movements developed in India such as, (1) Boodhan Movement (2) Total Revolutions (3) Farmer's Movement (4) Chipko Movement (5) Narmada Bahhao and Anti Tehri Dam Amdolan (6) Silent Valley Movement. The success of these movements proved that non-violence is the special means of establishing peace in society.

Keywords: Boodhan Movement, Chipko Movement, Silent Valley Movement, Total Revolutions

Introduction

By viewing non-violence as the timeless, inherent, and greatest human virtue, M.K. Gandhi added a new dimension to non-violence in theory and practice. He exhorted people to embrace non-violence as the foundation of their lives and to keep practicing it. He promoted the use of Ahimsa, or non-violence, in all situations, not only in particular ones. Gandhi's adoption of the Satyagraha movement as a substitute for bloody military conflict was one of his nonviolent tactics. He compared non-violent Satyagrahis to soldiers since they had to deal with severe hardship and even death. Gandhi taught his soldiers to fight peacefully even when their opponents were prepared to use force. In actuality, he brought about peace via nonviolence, which subsequently affected his numerous adherents, such as, Acharya Vinoba Bhave, Jayprakash Narayan, Chandi Prasad Bhat, Medha Patkar, Sundarlal Bahuguna, Baba Amte, Sunita Narain and others. The purpose of this article is to highlight the fact that various successful movements developed in India in the post-Gandhi period following Gandhi's non-violent tactics.

Discussion

Considering non-violence as one of the basic human values, M.K. Gandhi gave a new dimension to it. His war against British rule was a non-violent one. In the colonial era, the people of India were under oppression and humiliation. When the British attacked on the freedom fighters frustrated the Indians,

Gandhi gave courage, inspiration to the people through his non-violent policy. The different non-violent methods used in this peaceful fight through Satyagraha were negotiation, agitation and demonstration, arbitration, non-cooperation, civil disobedience, economic boycott, direct action, strike, picketing, non-payment of taxes, fasting etc. Indeed, his goal in pursuing truth through non-violence was to establish a peaceful world. In the post-Gandhi period various movements developed in India based on Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence, such as: (1) Bhoodan Movement (2) Total Revolutions (3) Farmer's Movement (4) Chipko Movement (5) Narmada Bahhao and Anti Tehri Dam Amdolan (6) Silent Valley Movement.

(1) Boodhan Movement: In 1951, at Pochampally village in Nalgonda district, Andhra Pradesh (presently Telangana) Gandhi's disciple Acharya Vinoba Bhave started the bloodless revolution known as the Bhoodan movement or land Gift movement. It was a voluntary land reform movement in India that tried to persuade prosperous landowners to voluntarily give a percentage of their land to the landless. The number of landless peasant households in India was not less than 50% in 1950-51, which increased by 57% in 1956-57. Vinoba Bhave started an agrarian revolution centered on the failure of the agrarian laws, especially the laws on land distribution and land ceiling passed by the various state governments. This movement can be considered as a complete manifestation of the application of values of truth, love, and non-violence in the face of practical problems in India. The movement started with the voluntary donations of some part of a person's land and later extended to Gram Dan (donation of an entire village). Being influenced by Gandhi's principle of Sarvodaya, Vinoba Bhave wanted to build an egalitarian society where the individual worked for the welfare of the whole community.

(2) Total Revolutions: On June 5, 1974 Bihar Movement in Patna was initiated by the students of Bihar under the leadership of Gandhian socialist Jayprakash Narayan. Initially the movement was against the misrule and corruption of the Bihar state government and later it was against the central government. In the context of this movement, Jayprakash Narayan put forward the idea of total revolution (Sampoorna Kranti), which was an extension of the Gandhian approach to social change. Total revolution refers not only to the transformation of material position, but also to the transformation of the moral character of the individuals. The idea of total revolution was inherent in Gandhi's philosophy. Many of his writings and speeches reflect that a partial change in any one component of the social matrix can create imbalance in the society which will lead the society to an unstable state. So, to maintain social stability and balanced dynamics all round change is essential. As Gandhi said: "I do not want to rise in the ashes of the blind. In their (i.e., Indian) socialism, probably these have no place. Their one aim is material progress."¹

Since Gandhi, like idealist philosopher Hegel, believed that revolution begins with the human mind, he emphasized individual's own transformation for social change. Thus, all round change here refers to the change of a person's psyche texture, values, thought process, behaviours, along with social change. In Gandhi's words: "... without self-purification the observance of the law of Ahimsa must remain an empty dream; God can never be realized by one who is not pure of heart. Self-purification, therefore, must mean purification in all the walks of life. And purification being highly infectious, purification of oneself necessarily leads to the purification of one's surroundings."²

Jayaprakash Narayan's Total Revolution tried to change society through non-violent tactics following the basic postulates of M.K. Gandhi. The uprising emphasized moral values, economic and political decentralization of power, and use of non-violent means to reach the goal.

(3) Farmers' Movement: The Karnataka farmers' movement under Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha (KRRS) claims that it is a Gandhian movement and its ultimate aim is the realization of the village republic. KRRS is an association of farmers founded in 1980 in order to solve the problem faced by farmers. The use of various tactics, such as marches, bandh, hartal, fasting etc, in the struggle of Raitha Sangha led to it being considered as Gandhian. Moreover, decentralized camping against globalization and giving importance to recovery of natural resources make its Gandhian vision very apparent. It supported Gandhi's policy of non-violence as a strategy or action when destroying Cargill seeds. Moreover, Indian farmers' protest originated on 9 August 2020 was caused by passing of three Farm Bills by Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha. At the outset, small-scale protests had started in Punjab and later on various farm unions all over India joined the protest. On September 25, 2020, the farm unions called Bharat Bandh. Subsequently, to protest against the laws the farmers from various states marched to Delhi. According to the Congress's Rajya Sabha MP Pratap Singh Bajwa, the peasants were committed to the Gandhian ideology and their protest was non-violent. He said: "The farmers have shown their commitment to Gandhian ideals by ensuring there were no violent protests. This devotion to the Gandhian principle is further underlined by the fact that the 30 farmer unions have done their best to call for discussions with the Central government."³

(4) Chipko Movement: In 1973, the Chipko movement was started in the Garhwal Himalaya of Uttarakhand, which was formerly a part of Uttar Pradesh. It was a non-violent socio-ecological movement by the villagers, especially women and thus it is mainly identified as a women's movement. The road that was built inland in the rural Himalayas during the Sino-Indian border conflict had attracted the attention of many foreign based logging companies. Accordingly after the conflict in 1963 due to the government's development policy, foreign trade was established in the region whose mismanagement and deforestation led to low yields, soil erosion, declining water resources and increased flooding in most of the surrounding areas. In 1964, Chandi Prasad Bhat, an environmentalist and Gandhian socialist, set up a corporate organization called Dasholi Gram Swarajya Sangh (DGSS) to build small industries for the rural villagers using local resources, which was later renamed as Dasholi Gram Swarajya Mandal (DGSM). In 1970, when large-scale industrial policy was cited as the cause of severe floods that killed 200 people, DGSM turned against it. The government's decision to allot forest to a sporting goods company, where the villagers were deprived of the small number of trees that could be used to make agricultural equipment, led to the first Chipko movement in 1973 near the village of Mandal on the upper Alkananda River. After all appeals failed Chandi Prasad Bhat went to the forest with the villagers and embraced the trees to prevent logging. Accordingly, this movement was given the name 'Chipko', a Hindi word, which means 'to cling' or 'to hug.' The Chipko movement was a non-violent movement with the chief goal to defend forest rights. After several days of the non-violent rebellion demands of DGSM were met and the company's logging permission was cancelled in the area. The next major demonstration was held in Reni village in 1974 as a result of the promotion of Chipko strategy in different villages by environmentalist Sunderlal Bahuguna. The women of Reni village, led by Gaura Devi, refused to leave the forest and the situation forced the logger to be inactive. The state government later formed a committee of investigation in the wake of the Reni agitation. As a result a commercial

logging ban was declared in the area for 10 years. The whole movement was based on non-violent resistance and adopted various Satyagraha techniques of Gandhi. In 1974, Bahuguna fasted for two weeks and in 1978, another activist Dhoom Singh Negi from Advani forest in the Tehri Garhwal district fasted. Moreover, the regional women tied yarn around the tree and recited *Bhagavad-Gitā*. In the year 1979, 150 villages joined the Chipko movement with twelve major protests and finally the non-violent protest got success in 1980 with the ban on commercial felling in the Uttarakhand Himalayas and also in Himachal Pradesh.

(5) Narmada Bachao Movement and Anti-Tehri Dam Movement: The two are great examples of the non-violent movements against the big dam constructions. Gandhian technique of non-violence was followed in both the mass movements. Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA) is a non-violent social movement against a number of large dam projects across the Narmada River which flows through the states of Maharashtra, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh. The first protest was raised against one of the biggest dams named Sardar Sarovar Dam in Gujarat. In 1985 Indian socialist Medha Patkar with her colleagues visited the project site and criticized the project authorities and concerned government. Accordingly, she took a 22-day fast and again in the year 1993 she undertook similar fast. Thus, the Gandhian non-violent method was applied in Narmada Bachao Andolan. The Anti-Tehri Dam Movement was another non-violent protest. The Tehri Dam, the tallest dam in India on the Bhagirathi River near in Uttarakhand, is a high rock and earth-fill embankment dam. Environmental organizations and local people in the area protested against it. From the 1980s to 2004 environmentalist Sundarlal Bahuguna led the Anti-Tehri Dam movement. Using the non-violent methods, the protesters raised their voices against the environmental consequences of the weak ecosystem and the displacement of the dwellers. Indeed, these two non-violent movements are related not just to the environment issues, but also to rehabilitation and livelihoods of the people who lose their land and valuable property due to the insensitive planning of dam constructions. The fighters of these two non-violent movements have earned respect, dignity and support from the society through their relentless struggle and commitment to establish rights through non-violent means.

(6) Silent Valley Movement: The Silent Valley movement caught the national attention in the 1980s, when the state took the lead in the development process, the construction of huge dams was a symbol of modern development and the forests of rich diversity were being destroyed. The movement emphasized environmental protection for the next generation. Gandhian non-violent social activists Medha Patkar, Sundarlal Bahuguna, Baba Amte, Sunita Narain, Vandana Shiva were famous leaders of the movement. It exemplifies non-violence by protecting the then lion tailed Macaque for the purpose of saving the evergreen forest from destruction.

Conclusion

Thus, we may note that Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence was later reflected in various non-violent movements in India for socio-political transformation. So, it can be said that Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence and message of peace had proved to be guiding force for the people of India in later period. The Various non-violent movements after M.K. Gandhi had helped to establish democratic rule and overthrew dictators by promoting the freedom of people and rights of marginalized groups and minorities. Thus, the record of non-violent activities in India proved that non-violent movements are an effective way to solve various problems peacefully and bring about social change.

References:

1. Prabhu. R. K. & Rao U. R.(eds.):*The Mind of Mahatma Gandhi*, Encyclopedia of Gandhi's Thoughts, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1967, P.246
2. Ibid, P. 225.
3. Express News Service: "Farmers committed to Gandhian ideals, their protests are non-violent: Bajwa, *The Indian Express*, December 3, 2020

* <http://hdl.handle.net/10603/575512>