

Lessons from Gandhi for a peaceful and sustainable global order

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Distinguished Chairperson of the World Peace Conference, fellow panelists, learned participants, members of the organizing team, ladies and gentlemen,

At the outset let me express my profound gratitude to the organizers for inviting me to present the keynote address at this Conference. I consider this a great privilege and I hope my observations will be useful in the formulation of appropriate strategies in strengthening our collective resolve towards a peaceful and sustainable global order.

Nagai Dakashi, the author of *Bell of Nagasaki* sang:

The bell of Nagasaki tolls
Nations plan no more wars
So long as the atomic bomb exists
Future wars are suicidal
Listen to the wailing voices of the dead
Fight no more. Cooperate within the boundary of love
The dead lie prostrate before God beseeching Him
That bomb on Nagasaki be the last in human history

The big and mind-boggling question staring at humanity even after about six decades of the most diabolical act perpetrated on humanity, namely the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki is: Are the bombs over Nagasaki and Hiroshima the last in human history? There are other questions as well: How is humanity going to tackle the monsters of war, violence, terror, injustice of various types, the grinding poverty widely prevalent in large segments of human populations and what is humanity doing to arrest the all-time high and alarming environmental degradation?

What Jonathan Schell, author of landmark books, *The Fate of Earth*; *The Gift of Time*; *The Case of Nuclear Abolition Now*, points out, could be some use to us in our understanding of the situation:

Two paths lie before us. One leads to death, the other to life. If we choose the first path—if we humbly refuse to acknowledge the nearness of extinction, all while increasing our preparations to bring it about – then we in effect become allies of death, and in everything we do our attachment to life will weaken our vision blinded to the abyss that has opened at our feet, will dim and grow confused; our will, discouraged by the thought of trying to build on such a precarious foundation anything that is meant to last, will slacken, and we will sink into stupefaction, as

though we were gradually weaning ourselves from life in preparation for the end. On the other hand our, if we project our doom, and bend our efforts towards survival – if we arouse ourselves to the peril and act to forestall it, making ourselves the allies of life – then the anaesthetic fog will lift: our vision, no longer straining not to see the obvious, will sharpen: our will, finding secure ground to build on, will be restored and we will take full and clear possession of life again. One day – and it is hard to believe that will not be soon – we will make our choice.

This optimism apart, there are dark clouds all over threatening heavy downpour of destruction any moment. It appears there is no respite for humanity.

If anybody believed that the Cold War era has ended and humanity could live in peace and justice henceforth, his hopes have been completely belied in the face of raging violence and senseless killings in various parts of the world. Notwithstanding all high sounding assurances on arms reductions and cuts in military expenditure, we see an alarming escalation in the production of lethal weapons. It is estimated that there is an annual worldwide expenditure of 1000 billion dollars on arms alone. Even one-sixth of this huge amount is sufficient enough to remove world hunger in the next six years.

Grinding poverty and frightening environmental degradation

Over a thousand million human beings are living on an average annual income of less than two hundred dollars. More frightening than this is the revelation that by 2000 AD the world population, crossed the six billion mark. Ecological degradation and the callous manner in which precious non-renewable energy resources are being squandered in the name of progress have started sending shock waves at least in some sensitive souls.

It might be of interest to remember how the SGI president Ikeda and Josef Derbolav in their dialogue, *Search for a New Humanity*, warn humanity of the impending danger. They feel that further technological progress should be undertaken only after a careful analysis of the general situation and humanity should not allow situation to go out from its control. The nagging question is what is the contribution of the present century to the easing of human suffering? Planners and administrators do not seem to be worried about hunger and disease, malnutrition, illiteracy, unemployment, lack of basic school facilities, large-scale infant mortality, lack of safe drinking water to millions of people who live in those veritable hells called urban slums or shanty towns.

Many might not realize that while the nations of the world spend \$2 billion per day on military, thousands of people are starving to death; millions more are living on the verge of starvation. Every second, somewhere in the world, a child dies or is permanently scarred by the diseases of poverty; in the same second we spend \$23,000 on our militaries.

President Eisenhower was conscious of the enormity of the problem when he spoke before the American Society of Newspapers Editors, on 16 April 1953, contending,

Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and not clothed. This world in arms is not spending money alone. It is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children..... This is not a way of life at all in any true sense. Under the color of threatening war, it is humanity hanging from a cross of iron.

Do we know the following?

- That 30,000 children could have classrooms for the price of only one military tank
- That one jet fighter costs as much as 40,000 village pharmacies
- That half a day's military expenditure would be enough to eliminate one of humanity's worst friends – malaria
- That a half-percent of the military expenditure would be enough to pay for all the machines and equipment needed to help the Third World countries attain an adequate food production.

Greed, mutual suspicion and intolerance guide most of the nations though noises are heard on laudable goals such as global village, warless century, boundaryless world. Noble sentiments apart, the one question that troubles all those who care for human survival and security is : Should we not think of alternative futures as against the violent structures that had an unprecedented growth, respectability and to some extent consolidation of its hold on the harassed, threatened and starving humanity?

Twentieth Century was a century of war and violence though the growth of science and technology reached an all-time high. Humanity has realized painfully and most shockingly that violence can't be countered by violence and the answers to the various questions and problems could be found only through nonviolence.

We have to make truth and nonviolence, not matters for mere individual practice, but for practice by groups and communities and nations. That at any rate is my dream. I shall live and die in trying to realize it. My faith helps me to discover new truth every day. Ahimsa is the attribute of the soul, and therefore to be practiced by everybody in all affairs of life—Mahatma Gandhi.

This statement of Gandhi, read along with two other brief messages he gave, one to his disciples in the government and the other to a journalist who asked for a message, reveal the essential Gandhi. To the journalist he said, "**My life is my message**", To the new rulers of India he gave a talisman:

Recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man whom you may have seen, and ask yourself if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him. Will he gain anything by it? Will it restore him to a control over his own life and destiny? In other words, will it lead to swaraj for hungry and spiritually starving millions?

Hunger kills more people than weapons and bombs

Whenever we discuss peace, we don't forget to mention Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Holocaust, World War I and II and some of the major and minor conflict zones and killing fields in different parts of the world. But how many of us think even for moment about hunger?

More people have died from hanger in the past two years than were killed in World War I and World War II combined.

More than one billion people are chronically hungry

Every year 13 to 18 million people die as a result of hunger and starvation.

Every 24 hours, 35,000 human beings die as a result of hunger and starvation – 24 every minute, 18 of who are children under five years of age.

No other disaster compares to the devastation of hunger

The number of people who die every two days of hunger and starvation is equivalent to the number of who were killed instantly by the Hiroshima bomb

The worst earthquake in modern history – in China in 1976 – killed 24200 people. Hunger kills that many people every seven days.

The shadows of September 11

The mad and insane September 11 terrorist attacks on America besides altering the course of human history reveals how fragile our castles and glass houses of progress are. The supremacy of genocidal weapons to inflict crushing defeat on enemies has also been exposed. Nuclear weapons or war, though still haunt humanity, are no longer the deadliest deterrents. Anything in human hands could become deadly and fatal. Hence our perception of peace as the absence of war and violence need change.

Perhaps never before has there been so much speculation about the future as there is today. Will our world be always one of violence? Will there always be poverty, starvation, misery? Will we have a firmer and wide belief in religion, or will the world be godless? If

there is to be a great change in society, how will that change be wrought? By war, or revolution? Or will it come peacefully?, wondered Gandhi.

Gandhian assertion of peace through peaceful means

Humanity has witnessed several wars and revolutions. It has also seen changes being effected through peaceful means. Gandhi demonstrated the power of Ahimsa (Nonviolence) as an alternative to war and violence.

The power of nonviolence as a political weapon and instrument of liberation was emphasized and successfully used by Mahatma Gandhi in his various campaigns both in South Africa at the turn of this century and later in India. Since then, it made its mark on the world and has come to stay as an effective weapon and strategy in the hands of those who believe in the supremacy of soul-force and moral law. While the general contemporary interest in nonviolence is largely due to Gandhi's relentless fight for the adoption of nonviolent alternative, it cannot be said that Gandhi is the originator of all that goes with the concept and practice of nonviolence. On the contrary, the history of the idea of nonviolence as a religious or philosophical doctrine can be traced to the authors of the ancient Indian Classics, the Upanishads. The Chandogya Upanishad and the sixth century B.C. Chinese Tao-Te-Chim glorified nonviolence both as a personal virtue and a desirable societal goal. The Bible up-holds the role of nonviolence for the edification of mankind. Shakyamuni Buddha, who was a rebel against the corrupt practices in religion laid the foundation for a modern outlook and emphasized the need for developing social awareness based on respect for all living forms.

Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. as trend-setters

In Plato, it became a vague sort of advice to overcome evil by good deed. But with Gandhi and later Martin Luther King, Jr. Nonviolence became a creative, challenging and eloquent force symbolizing man's inalienable right to live in peace and harmony and to help himself and his fellow human being reach out to their maker. The tragedy of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the rampant colonial exploitation which was no less dehumanizing than the reality of mass murder, and capitalist injustice brought nonviolence to the center stage, though those who apparently control human destiny find this as inconvenient irritant that would go against their interests, particularly the economics they have developed.

The Gandhian perspective of nonviolent human transformation is slowly but steadily receiving attention in varying degrees in almost all parts of the world now. A considerable number of social activists, freedom fighters, human rights activists, thinkers, political leaders and even to some extent those to whom acceptance of nonviolence would hurt their national economies, which are based on military hardware and by those who engineer

troubles and conflicts of that their armaments could be sold, have demonstrated their conviction that the nonviolent option as advocated by Gandhi needs serious attention. Humanity, thanks to this positive development, is assured of a reexamination of the Bismarckian notion of worshipping war as a wholesome hygiene that allowed human nature to be perked up when civilization was becoming too soft. The protagonists of this view propagate the obnoxious theory that aggression is healthier than non aggression, waging war invigorates and it is genuinely positive to be aggressive, according to this school of thought.

At one stroke Gandhi demolished this myth though the significance of the Gandhian initiative was not immediately known to all around. Let it also be remembered that the industrialized West as well as those in the developing world also did not take Gandhi seriously, though there was some awareness about what Gandhi did in India. The difference in the cultural context in which Gandhi worked and the difficulty of many others to see beyond their noses were important factors which prevented the international community to realize the supreme importance of the Gandhian strategy. As is fairly known now, it was Martin Luther King who proclaimed the efficacy of the Gandhian strategy of nonviolent resistance:

“..... The Christian doctrine of love, operating through the Gandhian method of nonviolence is perhaps, one of the most potent weapons available to the oppressed people in their struggle for freedom”.

Yet, initially the international community took the Gandhian and Kingian initiative only as freak developments.

Nonviolence as effective strategy

A few major developments that stand out as one thinks of nonviolence as an effective strategy not only to counter violence but to set the pace of human life as we move into the next century. In almost all continents and in most of the countries there has sprung up several motivated groups of individuals though it is yet to become the mainstream concern.

The pace of nonviolent collective actions along Gandhian lines initiated by Martin Luther King was continued with conviction and courage by activists who lead civil liberty movements all over the world. Kenneth Kaunda, Bishop Desmond Tutu, Julius Nyerere, Nelson Mandela, Ho Chi Min, Aung San Suu Kyi are only few of the most illustrious names to remember in this context.

With the acceptance of Gandhian tactics for injustice and nonviolent transformation by the Greens, notably Petra Kelly, a new dimension of ecological and sustainable developmental models as envisioned by Gandhi has spread to many countries in the

Eastern Europe. The championing of Gandhian nonviolence by the Quakers also added hopeful signs and led to a resurgent collective action for justice and freedom in many western nations. The impact of their initiatives notably in the Latin American region is quite substantial.

Several motivated souls who developed nonviolent attitude in their journey to the service of mankind such as Prof. Glenn D. Paige, Gene Sharp, Johan Galtung through their dedicated efforts and sustained critical interest offered valuable academic input to the significance of nonviolence for human survival. Among those who were instrumental in bringing into the scene a whole generation of young researchers and peace activists by offering them appropriate framework to understand, analyse, research into the various aspects of nonviolence is Professor Glenn D. Paige whose Herculean efforts to develop a critique of Nonviolent Political Science is another important phase in modern history. Professor Paige has made significant contribution in enthusing several young scholars of international repute to adopt nonviolence as their area of specialization.

Ahimsa as moral equivalent to wars

Can Ahimsa and Satyagraha be moral equivalents to wars and other conflicts that corrode human survival? It is claimed by both Western and Indian Scholars that Ahimsa and Satyagraha can be resorted to any situation involving injustice that in some situations of this kind armed resistance is impossible and hence Satyagraha and Ahimsa are better adapted than armed resistance to the role of ultimate instrument of justice. This assertion is partially ambiguous.

As Horsbough said, the prospects of nonviolence in the sphere of international conflict may be brighter than is commonly supposed in spite of our continued belief in armed force. As Gandhi demonstrated through his work, a conscientious efforts to make Ahimsa a way of life and not to keep it as a creed is the need of the hour. "Man either progress towards ahimsa, or rushes to his doom", Gandhi said. Analyzed against the background of the all what the great teachers of humanity and votaries of Ahimsa did, Gandhi's contribution to the cause is second to none. An incredible optimist that he was, Gandhi believed in the essential goodness of all. He said, 'one step enough for me'.

As in Gandhiji's own times, his notion of nonviolence continues to be diversely interpreted and discussed in different parts of the world. While to some it is an ideal that all men should cherish, to an overwhelming number of others it is a value-guiding thought and action. Many view it as a policy which is declarable and effective only in certain given circumstances. Quite a good number of people all over the world find in it a practical tool to be used according to the capabilities of the user, while some view it only as a technique suggesting one range of actions which may be supplemented or even substituted

by other techniques if the situation so demands. Each one of these different interpretations usually is supported by quotations from Gandhi's words and citing Gandhi's actions.

Hurbert Humbrey, Rev. Jesse Jacksons, Senator Diakno, Johan Galtung, Gene Sharp, Eruk Erikson, Prof. Richard Keyes, found in Gandhi's concept of nonviolence a great opportunity for humanity and which will enable mankind to take a fresh look at the problems man has created for man disregarding the Laws of Nature. France Huthchins and several others find Gandhi's approach as nonviolence-absolutist. To them Gandhi's view of nonviolence explicitly or implicitly included motive as well as act, so that ahimsa or nonviolence was both psychic and corporal.

Thomas Clark and several others find great scope for the practical application of the nonviolent mode. William Robert Miller, James E. Bristor, William Stuart Nelson, A.J.Maste, Ted Duncan, Willock Michael W. Sonneleitner, Glenn D.Paige and a few other scholars and pacifists find in the Gandhian nonviolence a force and action that can well become the basis for the Twenty-first century man to experiment with while the SGI President and one of the most profound thinkers of our time, Dr. Daisaku Ikeda view Gandhian nonviolence as a potent force and an instrument to secure justice and peace.

Nonviolent struggles after Gandhi

A cursory glance reveals that during the last five decades since the assassination of Gandhi a very considerable degree of intellectual effort went into the appreciation and understanding of the concept of nonviolence than ever before in different parts of the world.

This ranges from deep sociological analysis of the dimension of the conflict to the policy implications of the Gandhian mode. Many see in the Gandhian nonviolence clues to ways of dealing with national problems of tensions, conflict, arms race and war. Inevitably what most of the analysts, critics, followers or admirers have seen in Gandhi is a 'Challenge rather a stereotype'.

It is natural that different levels of perceptions developed as it spread globally. Since Gandhi represented a model value system it is quite natural that people viewed Gandhi from different social, political and territorial positions. Berlin's mayor Klaus Scuts was categorical in his assertion "Nonviolence does not mean passivity or political vegetarianism". It is an active attitude, it permits fight for justice, challenges the opponent to declare himself. Gandhian concept of nonviolence never visualized surrender to evil or injustice, but pitting of one's soul against the will of the tyrant. The philosophy of soul force visualizes three kinds of persons. The first category is that of the coward who supinely submits to injustice in order to save his skin. While the second category is that

of the brave man who is eager to redeem injustice by brute force methods willing to kill and dread to be killed. The third is the superior person, the Sathyagraha, the believer in and practitioner of nonviolence, who in the fullness of his strength using soul force method forgives the doer and attempts to convert him to right-during through nonviolence and love.

South Africa was the laboratory of the Mahatma Gandhi. The twenty one years Gandhi spent in South Africa witnessed great changes both in his private and public life and also much of what Gandhi did later in India had been tempered by the South African experiments.

His ashram life and its beginning in the Phoenix ashram in South Africa Nonviolent resistance, simple life, Charkha spinning, nonviolent struggle, insistence on simple life, all had their origin there. In fact Gandhiji had already become the Mahatma in the making by the time he left South Africa for India. His was a heroic struggle involving several millions of people over a long period.

Gandhi's influence on South Africa's fight against apartheid

It may look refreshing and inspiring to the votaries of peace and nonviolence all over the world to realize that the epoch-making changes in South Africa signaling the death of apartheid owe their inspiration of Mahatma Gandhi's heroic work in South Africa at the beginning of this century as Nelson Mandela acknowledges. It was precisely a hundred years ago that Gandhi set his foot in the soils of South Africa. Gandhi who was invited to South Africa as a lawyer to fight a court case found on his arrival situation highly mortifying and humiliating for any human being to tolerate. He was aware of the inhuman segregation a section of Indians were facing back in his home country in the name of untouchability. But what faced Gandhi in South Africa was beyond his understanding. That man could be segregated in the name of color of his skin and could be denied of his basic rights came to him as a rude shock. Millions of the local black population and the Indian settlers (most of them indentured laborers) were languishing in inhuman conditions. Gandhi too became a victim of this dehumanizing practice not one or two but several times. On June 7th of 1893 a few months after his arrival in South Africa Gandhi while traveling by a train in a first class compartment was thrown out of the train at the Petermaritzburg station. The crime of Gandhi was that he was black and the blacks were not permitted to travel first class. On another occasion he was denied travel by a coach along with white passengers. He was denied hotel accommodation once and taking pity on him a kindly soul offered him accommodation once and taking pity on him a kindly soul offered him accommodation in the hotel on condition that he would not come down to the dining room, instead would remain in his room and take his food also there. On another occasion he was pushed down by the guards for having dared walk along a road in the vicinity of the residence of some important white government official. Later Gandhi knew that the

black and coolies were not allowed to walk along that road. Gandhi could also see that the children of the blacks were also not allowed to study in the school along with the white children. These were only some of the visible symptoms of the dreaded apartheid practice and there were many more and more humiliating aspects the foundations of which were too strong and which defied any attempts of uprooting. That a satisfactory solution to this vexed issue could be found in 1993 which marked the centenary of Gandhi's work in South Africa is good news to the freedom-loving citizens of the world and more so to the peace activists.

And when Gandhi was doing all this how did the local population of the Blacks react to it? There is no doubt that by and large that Gandhi was fighting the inhuman and discriminatory laws enacted by the Pretoria regime. But Gandhi was equally fighting a system that was perpetuating racial discrimination and inhuman treatment to fellow human beings in the name of color and nationality. The general situation facing the blacks in South Africa was not very different from that of the Indian settlers. It would be naïve to believe that the Black population was insensitive to what was happening in South Africa under the leadership of Gandhi. Though he was concentrating on the Indian population, the issue he was fighting for had importance far beyond what the Indians in South Africa were trying to secure. But it can not be said that Gandhi influenced them considerably when the Gandhian struggle was on in Natal, Pretoria and other places. But then as the law of nature teaches us, the seeds sown always take some time to sprout. The Gandhian pattern of nonviolent resistance had to wait until Nelson Mandela came to the scene. There again, one cannot deny that the ANC was considerably influenced by Gandhi. By and large if the ANC movement became very violent it is largely due to the influence of Gandhi. Two points arise here was it the brute force of minority white regime that kept the blacks at bay or their incapacity to rise in revolt and finish off their opponents? One thing that emerges from their experience is the difference in the manner in which they conceived nonviolence as a creed a strategy. It was conceived as creative and positive and in their own way the Black majority wanted to give it a fair trial.

The ANC leadership and Nelson Mandela seemed to be familiar with and appreciative of Gandhi's work and the success of his campaign. Mandela's speech after two days of his release from jail on 11.02.90 was significant in the sense that besides referring to his indebtedness to Gandhi, he said:

Another strand in the struggle against oppression began with the formation, right here in Natal Indian Congress founded in 1884, a tradition of extra parliamentary protest that continues with the present. The next decade saw the increasing radicalization of Indian politics under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi..... In 1906, at the time when Bambatha led sections of Africans in a war to destroy the poll tax, our brothers who descended from India, led by Mahatma Gandhi, fought against oppression of British Government.

“There is no future without forgiveness”

Another passage Mandela had quoted before his arrest was from Jawahar Lal Nehru “There is no easy walk over to freedom anywhere and many of us will have to pass through the shadow again and again before we reach the mountain tops of our desires” which indicates that Mandela was studying the Gandhian option carefully. Though the release of Mandela and legalizing of ANC cannot be viewed as concessions, they are definite indications of qualities and wisdom of President De Clerk which none of his predecessors had displayed. Of course there were other ground realities which prompted De Clerk to adopt an attitude of reconciliation despite the stout opposition from the minority die-hard whites. There was a resurgence in the people’s movement despite the imposition of emergency in 1985 and the banning of the UDF and other organizations. The upsurge of 1989 and the open defiance of the segregation laws, made it practically impossible for the De Clark to govern the South Africa which had almost become a pariah among the committee of nations. Further its economy was showing signs of crumbling following the strikes by COATSU and mine workers. The sanctions also shattered the economy. To so-called military supremacy of South Africa was proved to be a myth when Angola gave a hard knock at the military might of South Africa. There were many hurdles to be crossed. Yet there was the silver lining as was revealed from the manner in which both the government and the ANC denounced criminals and violence. No doubt despite several setbacks the ANC and the government moved closer. The lifting of emergency except in Natal also helped large number of refugees returning and the signing of the Pretoria minutes too augured well. Repeal of discriminatory legislations, release of political prisoners, acceptance of the principle of one man one vote were very central to transfer of power and restoration of peace. The deep scars of apartheid and the legacy of distrust and the cynical attempts made by the apologist of apartheid, the growing internecine war among the blacks and, the stridency of the Neo Nazi groups made the process of change painfully slow. But the final victory as reflected in the triumphal march of South Africa into a free democratic nation under Mandela recreated visions of nonviolence as a matchless life force. Though dismantling of apartheid proclaimed the humanistic side of nonviolence in political arena, the leadership provided by Nelson Mandela in the setting up of Truth Reconciliation Commission under the leadership of Bishop Tutu revealed unparalleled creative nonviolent leadership. Their adherence to nonviolence enabled them to proclaim. “There is no future without forgiveness”.

Gandhi influences Martin Luther King (Jr.)

Martin Luther King had in his own way added new dimensions to the Gandhian nonviolence in order to make it an effective instrument of fight against evil. But then as is seen both in South Africa and in USA when the fight derives its strength from moral and spiritual considerations and depends on the quality of suffering it takes quite a long time to effect what we call the change of heart which is the aim in a nonviolent struggle as opposed to

an armed conflict now-a-days victory to either of the party not assured and it is not easy as it sued to be. The recent racial violence which Los Angeles and some other parts of the USA witnessed speaks volumes how fragile our civilization is. It is actually an ominous portent and a disturbing reminder to what has been simmering underneath the welter of modernity and progress.

It also shows how skin-deep our pretensions of equality of human beings are. And that such racial disturbance should occur in the land of Abraham Lincoln, Thoreau, Emerson, Walt Whitman, Kennedy and Martin Luther King, that too after several decades of the physical killing of the demon of racial discrimination is surprising. It meant that the dream of Martin Luther King who dreamt of a day when on the red hill of Georgia, sons of former slaves and sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood was still far away. No doubt the American Blacks have won several rounds with remarkable success yet as the Los Angeles violence suggests the dream of Dr. King when “when my four children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character”, remained a dream. A partial fulfilment of this dream can be seen in the ascendancy of Barack Obama to the President of United States.

Dr. King was greatly influenced by the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi even from his schooldays. And it was natural that Dr. King adopted the Gandhian doctrine of nonviolence as the most effective weapon to fight racial segregation in the US. He once said in explaining his philosophy:

“I believe in a militant, nonviolent approach in which the individual stands up against an unjust system, using sit-ins, legal action, boycotts, votes and everything except violence or hate”

Dr. King acknowledging his indebtedness to Gandhi said:

“from my background I gained regulating Christian ideals, “From Gandhi I learned my operational technique”.

Acknowledging his debt to Mahatma Gandhi, Dr. King explained the Montgomery bus boycott program:

“This is a protest of passive resistance depending upon moral and spiritual forces. We will return good for evil. Christ showed us the way and Mahama Gandhi showed us it could work”.

Explaining why the US Negro has not taken to more radical ways to gain civil rights, he said: The basic reason is that the American Negro has faith in that he can get justice within the frame work of the American democratic set-up”.

That Gandhi continues to inspire a considerable section of the American opinion is a fact which cannot be wished away. What E. Stanley Jones, himself a great pacifist said about Gandhi assumes significance.

“I bow to Mahatma Gandhi, but I kneel at the feet of Christ and give him my full and final allegiance. Any yet a little man, who fought a system in the framework of which I stand, has taught me more of the spirit of Christ than perhaps any other man in East or West”.

Global influence of Gandhi

There are quite a few among the liberal pacifists in the West who found in Gandhi the argument against the inevitability of the deterministic social order dominated by Darwin and Marx. Albert Einstein, Aldous Huxley, Oswald Garrison Villard, Roger Baldwin and many others were able to see in Gandhi a reinstatement of the Renaissance faith of the perfectibility of man. In contrast to this group there was the religious pacifists such as A.J. Maste, John Nevin, Haynes Holmens, Norman Thomas who found in Gandhi “a moral equivalent of war”. There may not be a Martin Luther King now in the USA but the number of votaries of nonviolence both as a political strategy and as a creed has increased and there are several internationally famous pacifists who are champions of nonviolence. Johan Galtung, Homer Jack, Dr. Glenn D. Paige and Gene Sharp Dr. Lou Ann Guanson, Dr. Barnard Laffeyette, Vance Engleman, Dr. Richard Deats, Captain Charles Alphin, Richard N. Nagler are some of the ardent exponents and practitioners of nonviolence.

The spilling of blood in both the former Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia and the uncertainties created by the events following the disarmament of the USSR should be viewed as the inescapable result of incongruities grown around a philosophy which by and large did not care about the pure means in achieving ends. Here comes the relevance of the Gandhian insistence of purity of means and ends, something which the communist blocks always scoffed at. The Gandhian concept of nonviolence seems to have attracted the attention of the youth of Czechoslovakia. There is an awareness all round that nonviolence which is as old as hills and which is based on primordial instinct of man to live happily and let live would be an answer to the seething problems they face. Following the Soviet invasion of 1968, there was a Gandhian protest mainly organized by the youth. From the youth the message gradually spread to the elders. It may be of interest to note here that the Czech organized extremely useful programs during the Gandhi centenary. The Speaker of the National assembly Czechoslovakia said in a message, “Gandhi’s thought is of special significance”. The helpless victims who are caught up in the cross fire of dismemberment and vaulting ambition of political leaders of Czechoslovakia look up to the Gandhian concept of nonviolent social transformation more than ever before. In Yugoslavia also the fast emerging political scenario offers very disturbing pointers. The USSR, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, the three main pillars of communism in Europe face

very serious crisis, a crisis that needs some humanitarian touch to defuse. And as reports indicate the Gandhian alternative is very much being examined in these countries which are faced with the threat of political extinction and internecine killings.

There is no doubt that the 20th century was a glorious one in terms of man's continued conquest of nature including the outer space. Materially man has reached zenith of his achievements. The rapid technological strides that have changed the life style of man also induced in him a new sense of both insecurity and hope. Hope on his ability to rise like the phoenix to reconstruct from the ruins and the indomitable spirit of never to yield. The insecurity stems out of the profound understanding that unless material progress is tempered with the waters of spiritual values and concerns humanity will land itself on the desert sands of its creation.

Europe overawed the rest of humanity with its superior might through an intelligent harnessing of the fruits of Science and Technology while other continents particularly Africa and Asia continued to be enveloped in spiritual and philosophical pursuits. The appeal of the Buddha despite the tidal wave of material progress swept almost the whole of the South East Asia while the Indian civilization and the Chinese civilization made feverish attempts to come to terms with the new challenges. The Asian continent which was condescendingly described as 'developing' while the African region with its infinite natural resources and tremendous man power was described to be 'dark; and 'underdeveloped' continent because it suited the colonial exploiters to keep it so. But it did not escape the notice of the impartial observers that Africa is only a sleeping giant who when awakes will be a formidable force to reckon with. Though the hang-over of the centuries old colonial exploitation still hampers the different countries, there is no doubt that rejuvenated African continent which would be self confident of its inherent strength will place a crucial role in the 21st century. Brushing aside these seething problems, Africa and Asia which have several common features in between would challenges the West and as and when this happens it would mark a new phase in human history.

Gandhi, Johan Galtung points out, has become a part of the world political culture and Gandhi is bound to influence the course of Twenty first century. This is amply made clear from the manner in which the fast-spreading Soka Gakkai movement under the presidentship of an unbelievably energetic and creative leader, Dr. Daisaku Ikeda has been emphasizing the Gandhian method for world peace. The SGI leadership has shown remarkable awareness of this fact as is evident from the thrust SGI President Dr. Ikeda gives in recent times to the propagation of Ahimsa as enunciated by Shakyamuni Buddha. The growing awareness of a world without war which is one of the cherished goals of humanity could not be a distant dream. A spiritual awakening supported by cultural, educational and social movements is the need of the hour. Then, what kind of changes are we expecting? It cannot be anything other than a nonviolent and non-exploitative and just society where no man will dies of hunger, where everyone's self respect will get prime place and where no one will be segregated in the name of the color of his skin.

Well, are we dreaming of an Utopia? Even then to dream is a pleasant experience. The tragedy of the present times is that a large segment of our fellowmen is still denied of opportunities for growth.

Denial of justice and the widening gap between the rich North and poor South

Will there be peace on earth when humanity does not address basic problems which perpetrate imbalance? Let us look at the following staggering facts provided by the World watch Institute (State of the world 2002 New York, 3-15)

- More than a billion people today lack access to adequate clean water.
- Nearly three billion people do not have access to adequate sanitations.
- Nations have long grappled with inequality, but never before have the assets of just three individuals matched the combined national economies of the poorest individuals matched the combined national economies of the poorest 48 countries, as was the case in 1997.
- In spite of a decade of unprecedented economic growth that added over US\$ 10 trillion a year to the global economy, the number of people living in poverty (at US\$ 1 a day levels) has remained nearly unchanged at more than one billion.
- Meanwhile, a billion people are added to the human population every 15 years.
- The lack of democratic political representation and concentration of economic and political power in a few hands has created a fundamental instability in many nations – an instability that has far-reaching consequences in the form of large-scale human migration, illegal drug exports and increasingly, terrorism.
- The average American uses 19 times more paper than the average person in a developing country, and most of it ends up as trash; less than half of the paper used in the United States gets recycled.
- Some 27 per cent of the world's coral reefs have been irredeemably lost, up from ten per cent in 1992. Because coral reefs are second only to forests in biological wealth, such an extensive loss inevitably takes a great toll on many aquatic species as well. In all, goods and services from reefs were valued at US\$375 billion in 1997.
- Global emissions of carbon have grown by an additional 400 million tones during the ten years it has taken to agree to a modest climate protocol that was first proposed at Rio.
- Twenty known communicable disease – including tuberculosis (TB), malaria and cholera – re-emerged or spread in the last quarter of the twentieth century. And at least thirty previously unknown deadly diseases – from HIV to hepatitis C and Ebola – surfaced in the same period.
- After sixty years of near-continuous decline in deaths from infectious disease in the United States, the trend turned upward again in 1980; death rates have nearly doubled since then.

- A 1999 pharmacological study reported that only 13 out of 1,223 medicines commercialized by multinational drug companies between 1975 and 2000 were designed to treat life threatening tropical diseases.
- Meanwhile, the market for cures for toenail fungus, obesity, baldness, face wrinkles and impotence runs into billions of dollars.
- A third of all adults are overweight in Europe; the figure stands at 61 per cent in the United States. Obesity (the extreme condition of overweight) rose dramatically in the 1990s – by ten to forty per cent in most European countries and by 50 per cent in the United States.

Gandhi for social justice

Social justice and human rights have been two key areas of Gandhi's concern both in South Africa and India. Gandhi predicted that unless expeditious corrective measures are taken humanity will see more mega-death weapons proliferating among nations and there will be population explosion, more pollution, more poverty, more destruction of planet's like supporting capabilities.

Social justice, distributive justice and commutative justice have to be woven into the matrix of social, political and community life, Gandhi insisted. Commutative justice is based on the dignity and equality of all persons while distributive justice should guarantee the right of all men and women equal share in the social and public goods. Social justice should encourage citizens to engage themselves in the creation of just social and political structures. Truth will be the guiding principle in all these forms. The way of peace is the way of truth.. Gandhi said. What Jaime L Cardinal Sin pointed out in the annual lecture series of United Nations University (1985) aptly sums up the frightening scenario:

Poverty in the third world or anywhere else is an indication of failure. But the subject and agent this failure are not the poor themselves; rather, they are the victims of this failed human and technical enterprise. The responsible agents of poverty are the rich and the powerful. The agents of poverty are the economic planners who choose to import capital-intensive technologies and whose victims are the jobless industrial workers. The technocrats of poverty are the educator who promoted school systems that are replicas of foreign universities. Their victims are the youth who became alienated from their own people and culture. The merchants of poverty are those unscrupulous industrialist who manipulate fragile economies and destroy their self-reliant foundations. The innumerable victims are the small farmers, fishermen and entrepreneurs whose labor and produce are brought cheaply and whose daily rice depends on market decisions made in Chicago or Geneva. The poor are poorer because they must contend not only with the exploitative powers of local groups, but with those of an international network as well.

The paradox of the emerging scenario whose defining characteristics are a kind of mad frenzy and utter contempt to all values will have only scant regards to what are known today as the seven social sins – a set of guidelines sent to Gandhi by one of his readers and which Gandhi reproduced in his journal should deserve our attention:

Politics without principles
Wealth without work
Pleasure without conscience
Knowledge without character
Commerce without morality
Science without humanity
Worship without sacrifice

Can we afford to ignore them if we care for future? Can there be peace without these?

The prayer of Pope John Paul II during his visit to Hiroshima reflects the anguish and agony of humanity:

*To the Creator of nature and humanity, of truth and beauty, I pray:
Hear my voice, for it is the voice of the victims of all wars and violence among individuals and nations;
Hear my voice, for it is the voice of all children who suffer and will suffer when people put their faith in weapons and war;
Hear my voice when I beg you to instill into the hearts of all human beings the wisdom of peace, the strength of justice, and the joy of fellowship;
Hear my voice, for I speak for the multitudes in every country and in every history who do not want war and are ready to walk the road of peace.
Hear my voice and grant insight and strength so that we may always respond to hatred with love, to injustice with total dedication to justice, to need with the sharing of self, to war with peace.
O God, hear my voice and grant unto the world your everlasting peace.*

Gandhi's Challenge

Gandhi continues to challenge many postulations and keeps on reminding humanity that there is a truth beyond all what we perceive and hold to be truth. By making truth as the axis of all his endeavors Gandhi was seeking the spirituality of truth itself which is the very basis of science. He there by convincingly challenges those who espouse the notion that spirituality and science need to be at war with each other.

Here Gandhi out-grows the condescending position of a social scientist and revolutionary thinker and social activist that was given to him by commentators and historians. If

science is 'truth-seeking', by making his life "Experiments with Truth" Gandhi went far beyond the traditional parameters of classifications. Gandhi who initially held the view that 'God is Truth' reversed it later as, 'Truth is God' there by asserting the supremacy of truth over everything. He reminds us here of Einstein's statement that **imagination is greater than knowledge**.

This also implies that there is a greater power within every human being in his/her consciousness. The outer world has been effectively influenced by changing what is within us. The inner world constitutes a vast reservoir of untapped energy which, if used diligently, has the power to take on the material world. The courage to make every crisis into an opportunity and every obstacle into a possibility springs from the inner and spiritual fiber of the individual. Newton's Law of Motion, if taken in its metaphorical sense, illustrates this argument further, "every object in the universe attracts every other object with a force directly proportionate to the product of their masses and inwardly proportional to the square of the distance between their centers".

Just like science and scientists, who believe that there is nothing impossible in life, Gandhi held on to truth like a baby clinging to its mother. When he emphasized the power of love, compassion, truth, nonviolence, even many of his close friends raised their eyebrows. His plans to take on nonviolently the mightiest of the Empires of the day, many doubted his wisdom. His claim that India could win the freedom without resorting to violence and war, it looked laughable. His ideas were described impractical, naïve, or even dubbed as 'A Mid-Summer Night's Dream'.

Undisturbed by these barbs, Gandhi pursued his 'Experiments with Truth' with the precision and devotion of a scientist. He was guided by the teachings of Gita and the assertion of Thoreau who wrote, "I know of no more encouraging fact than the unquestionable ability of man to elevate his life through conscious endeavor". What is important is the ability of every human being to nurture their spirit and inner resources and allow to transcending the walls and fences that hold them captive. Who ever is able to assert their mental and spiritual freedom will eventually emerge as liberated souls. John Milton's words corroborate this: "the mind is its own place, and in itself can make a heaven of hell, and a hell of heaven".

It goes to the credit of Gandhi that he evolved a philosophy and life style which was permeated with spiritual insights and scientific truth. He did not see any difference in them and when he asserted in his autobiography, 'What I want to achieve – what I have been striving and pining to achieve these thirty years – is self realization, to see God face to face, to attain Moksha', (page x) he was restating the profound relationship between the spiritual and the material.

Gandhi was not interested in the argument whether religion is forerunner of science or science has always been nurturing religion or religion and spirituality are older to science. He could see how science outgrew the importance of religion in the life of individuals as more and more intelligent men of science and technology devoted their time in unraveling and developing scientific truth and capability. The champions and custodians of the spiritual domain relapsed into just meditative and contemplative life styles there by becoming status quoists. Science and technology with its manifold focus and application came into the daily life of people with surprising and hitherto unbelievable results. The primacy of religion steadily eroded while science forged ahead with unstoppable speed and energy.

Gandhi's seminal contribution lies in the area of blending science and spirituality as revealed in the philosophy and practice of Satyagraha. The Satyagraha as enunciated by Gandhi seeks to integrate spiritual values, community organization and self reliance with a view to empower individuals, families, groups, villages, towns and cities. Robert Payne in his perceptive study of Gandhi remarks, "Gandhi was continually experimenting with truth and inventing new forms of force. And just as Satyagraha was never "truth force", so it was never "nonviolence" or "passive resistance", although it included them in its ever-widening orbit.

Gandhi, as is known fairly now, tried to infuse the fresh air of spiritualism in every domain of human endeavor, including politics. He earned the name of a saint trying to spiritualize politics. His mantra was to wipe away tears from every eye.

Perhaps, if we look first into ourselves we will come up with appropriate responses than if we concentrate all our energies and try to look for the guilty. We know, in all wars, it is not only the guilty who pay with their lives, but mostly the innocent and the uninvolved. It is our fathers, brothers, sisters and our children who pay with their lives. The fears and the sufferings of the affected live on much longer than the limited duration in which wars are fought and won or lost. In history, we have the great inspirational models of Mahatma Gandhi who brought the British Government to its knees through nonviolent methods. Similarly, Martin Luther King, who paid with his life to establish a nation where African-Americans would be treated equals. They champion methods that defied the "logic" of military might and conflict. Peace revolutionaries demand that we sacrifice our todays to safeguard the tomorrows of the future generations. (See Janiva Gomes, People to the Goodwill Must come together, The Times of India, November 7, 2001, New Delhi, India, p.12).

Religion is meant to be an advocate of peace. But we know that the biggest of wars have been fought in the name of religion. There are many of us who would not like a world to be partitioned on the basis of religions, creed, castes and money. Such a world of peace demands an attitudinal change. In such a world the strong will not exploit the weak, the rich will not harm the poor, and the privileged will not ignore the underprivileged.

Religious values and peace are highly correlated. All religions aim to achieve peace, tranquility, universal brotherhood, sisterhood, and tolerance. When brothers and sisters (people) unite and agree or agree to disagree, no fortress is strong enough to break the pulls of common life. A world which is dominated by conflicts and mutual disregard cannot expect to live in peace despite modern advancement in technological and economic development. While we have reason to gloat over the endless vistas opened by the “Windows” of Bill Gates, we have been made painfully aware of the “doors” of humanity slammed shut on hopeless people by the mindless use of technological power. Science today, acknowledges that its powers have limits beyond which lie chaos, entropy and death. It is the perennial nature of these values that draw us into the orbit of sublime. By usage and connotation the word, ‘sublime encompasses all that fills within the basis of spirit’.

Spurring a sense of wonder and reverence in human minds and making them alert to the prurience of divine. Albert Einstein had aptly said, “Religion without Science is lame and science without Religion is blind. He further said: The cosmic religious experience is the strongest and noblest driving force behind scientific research”.

Blind faith or fundamentalist, revivalist version of religion was totally unacceptable to Gandhi. He would instantly question any assertion that faith is a bundle of superstition or rituals. It has to be grounded on meaningful and reasonable and basic human values.

Gandhiji had stated that the very essence of our civilization is that we give permanent place to morality in all our efforts—public or private. The ancient Vedic philosophy of “Sarva Dharma Samabhav” or Respect for all religions” formed the basis of Gandhiji’s religious humanism.

We have a lot to learn from animal world. Swans and Penguins remain faithful to their water life long. Bees, Ants and Birds form the disciplined social groups. Elephants have a joint family system caring for each other. Even the Crows care for the injured mate. If only all of us care for each other and follow the same voice of Gandhiji, the world would be a better place to live in for every one. The aim of religion is not to fill the empty vessel but to turn the eye of soul towards the light to evolve a common understanding of all religions and their relevance to achieve peace by working collectively.

It is said that science emerged as a revolt against the Age of faith. Science gradually helped heralding the Age of Renaissance. Science is also hailed as a major phase in human history. It was argued in many quarters that it posed a major threat to the very existence of human kind.

The relationship between science and society, spirituality and religion needs creative interpretation and adaptation. Science without spirituality, as Vinobha Bhave has observed will lead humanity to 'sarvanash' (total destruction). Science, elevated to the highest pedestal and every other sphere of human endeavor reduced to a subservient position, as is being sought to be promoted now, would in the long run, lead humanity to a precipice.