

A Case Study of Non-Violent World Order through the Mind of Gandhi

Jan Mohammad Lone

Research Scholar, Department of Philosophy, Aligarh Muslim University, Uttar Pradesh, India

Abstract

Briefly, but purposefully, this paper has been penned with an attempt to bring an attention of all to show that, “the non-violent world order through the mind of Gandhi” has neither been fully understood nor executed under the cover middle ground consensus among all. In this paper, in short, I pursue to examine the non-violent world order through the mind of Gandhi, as we have been witnessing the conditions of the contemporary world present a disappointing situation.

Gandhi’s concept of non-violence needs its philosophical background to be understood properly. There are still many misconceptions, particularly about the concept of Gandhi. Like it is cowardice act or passive resistance or to present the other cheek who slaps you on your one cheek. When we listen or go through things then we feel it still requires some more clarification. Gandhi’s concept of non-violence is a new concept, different from other earlier concepts on non-violence. Gandhi’s concept of non-violence is a kind of soul force. Gandhi believes in peace, freedom and harmony which became the central theme of his life’s philosophy. Gandhi’s concept of non-violence is a passionate pursuit of spirituality.

I may say, non-violence and truth are intertwined which cannot be separated. If non-violence is the means, then truth is the end. If non-violent world order is an Ideal’s idea, then to yield it in action is our supreme duty. If peace is the crying need of a distracted and/or tormented world, then non-violent world order is a faithful voice for it. And yes, Gandhi’s application of non-violence extends from the smallest group to the global society. We shall end-up knowing, Gandhi may have lost a battle, but Gandhi’s struggle is not lost, and it must not be allowed to be lost.

KEYWORDS: Non-violence, spirituality, harmony, and truth.

Introduction:

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi is preeminent known and famous for his enunciation of the philosophical and tactical principles of non-violence, or non-violent action, as well as their application to the struggle against British imperialism and for Indian autonomy and self-sustainability. Few men in their lifetime aroused stronger emotions or touched deeper chords of human heart than Mahatma Gandhi. And to still fewer men has it been given after death to influence mankind as intensely as Gandhi. He belongs to that extraordinary cluster of men whose mind and heart have exaggerated the foundations of ideas over the humanity. Admiration for his success and the reliability of his character are an essential part of the self-esteem of our society. And if Gandhi continues to live with us is because he really represents a firm timeless ethical search of the universal-man. He rejuvenated and refreshed our sense by meaning of ethical values. E.M. Foster believed that he was expected to be considered the utmost man of our century. J.H. Holmes described him “as the greatest Indian

since Gautama”, the Buddha and the greatest political leader and social reformer of India.

Before one can entirely realize Gandhi's concept of nonviolence it is crucial to bear in mind the philosophic background of the concept, through his life and teachings, Gandhi bears evidence to the values for which our country has stood for ages; faith in fortitude, the splendor of the devoutness, the acceptance of life's obligations, the soundness of nature and the values which are universal. He had spiritualist reliance in truth and this led him on to live and endures for it, Life to him was an entire and perpetual battle against iniquity to be fought under the only laudable banner of Truth and Non-violence. Such a way of life has marvelous moral implications for humanity that seems to have lost faith with the mystic, the holy and the meek. Gandhi believed in the authority of spirit that alone can bring about harmony and deliverance of mankind.

Gandhi's non-violence is based on the higher aspects of human nature which insurgent against dictatorship, inequality and authoritarianism. The values derived from heart and will of men. Gandhi believes in the marvelous support of human nature for peace and freedom. The society which he aims at is already universally present in the hearts of men though it may be flooded, we have to transmit it to the surface by fighting the evil forces: political, social and psychological. For Gandhi non-violence involves an inner effort which requires us to conquer terror, voracity, anger and guilt. A great personality challenges the spirit in us and reminds us that we are not just animals but human beings. Gandhi's idea was to advance man's advancement towards a lucid world order. He advocated that we must direct the evolutionary process towards the goal of a world without fear, without hate and without war. Gandhi is the perpetual advocate of fulfillment of love and understanding in a world wild with hatred and ragged by misinterpretation.

Enlightening the central theme of his life as the passionate pursuit of spirituality, Gandhi wrote: “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 liberation. I live and move and have my being in pursuit of this goal. And that “I do by way of speaking and writing, and all my ventures in the political field are directed to this same end”.

Truth and Non-violence comprise the middle core of Gandhi's memorandum, and what is everlasting in it. There have been, in history, apostles of Non-violence, but Gandhi's exclusivity lays to prognostic these genuine individual ethical qualities on the wider fields of joint socio-political life and action. He translated his passionate spiritual pursuit into an equally passionate effort to guarantee the freedom and decorum of the human spirit ubiquitously. In this era of technology and mad rash after material success, he had the courage to state by his example the dominance of the spiritual, the veracity and decorum of man. During the past few centuries, in the absence of spiritual orientation, man's achievement of gigantic resources of energy and power has led to the deepening of his interior conflicts and tensions, leading to hatred, violence and war. Gandhi saw the need to equivalent the growth of man in the substantial fields of his physical and rational life with a analogous increase in the not-so-obvious field of his spiritual and ethical life. And this is the accurate field of evolutionary progress. It is merely when life's vigor gets this spiritual direction that man becomes truly human and his life becomes true life.

The idea of Non-violence has been nearby in the cultural history of our ancient land from the beginning. We have it in prayers, philosophical speculations, commandments, poetry and epics. In the Bhagvad Gita Ahimsa is stated as a superior virtue. Laws of Manu enjoin: "Let him patiently hear hard, words. Let him not insult anybody. Against an angry man let him not in return show anger. Let him bless when he is cursed".

The word Ahimsa literally means non-injury, or more scarcely, non-killing, or, more widely harmlessness, the repudiation of the will to kill and of the intent to hurt any living thing, the abstention from antagonistic notion, word and act. Gandhi, being deeply conscious of the precincts arising from the largely unenthusiastic nature of this virtue, utilized every opportunity to explain that what he meant by Ahimsa was the affirmative force of Love. We can obtain and maintain an active social ethics only from the affirmative principle of love and not from a pessimistic principle of Non-violence. Gandhi is essentially the teacher and consummate of a dynamic social ethics, the aim of which is to suggest and release the affirmative forces of love from morally sensitive men and women.

As early as 1916 Gandhi distinguished between the pessimistic and the affirmative meanings of Ahimsa thus: "In its pessimistic form it means not injuring any living being whether by body or mind. I may not, therefore, hurt the person of any wrongdoing or bear any ill-will to him and so cause him mental suffering...Ahimsa requires deliberate self-suffering and not a deliberate injuring...In its affirmative form Ahimsa means the largest love, the greatest charity. If I am a follower of Ahimsa, I must love my enemy or a stranger as I would love my wrongdoing father or son. This active Ahimsa necessarily includes truth and fearlessness".

Consequently Gandhi comprehended the meaning of Ahimsa far-off simple non-injury. The path of Ahimsa is the path of non-attachment and entails incessant pain and the humanizing of infinite endurance: It implies not only a firm approach of isolated empathy toward an opponent, but also the refutation of the very existence of an opponent.

Even though Gandhi was motivated by the great convention of Ahimsa in India, he spent a lifetime elaborating coherent structure for his faith. He articulates that nonviolence arouses the best in others, that visible excellent from violence is transitory even as the evil is permanent. He reasoned after the new testimony that in fighting one side or the other loses, although in the nonviolent way there is the chance that both sides may succeed. Tolstoy reasoned that life lost through nonviolent confrontation is a part of that lost in violent revolutions.

The underneath reasons for non-violence are as:

- (a) Love is the source and end of life and the Law of human race.
- (b) What is possible for some men should be possible for all, human nature being the same.
- (c) The effects of nonviolence are more permanent and enduring.
- (d) Nonviolence is an ethical force.

The Power of Nonviolence:

Noticeably the spirit of nonviolence may be nurtured by tradition and reason, but it lives and grows also by experimentation, Gandhi's life was an experiment with truth and nonviolence. Besides, nonviolence is not a single virtue or a single quality of it is a collection of virtues, or qualities. It is a spirit, a way of life, a religion or as Gandhi says, 'the Law of one's being'.

Gandhi brings out another argument to reveal the lowliness of violence to non-violence. Violence causes bitterness in the mind of those against whom it is used and this brings out a motionless more violent retort against the user. Violence leads to counter violence which calls out more violence. But this is not the case with non-violence. Maybe the utmost skill of Gandhi was his ability to win the admiration and even the warmth of his adversaries, and set up a conversation with those who disparate him, so that reason and kindness may appear from the perplexity of the battle and enhance the ethical consciousness of both the adversaries. In this way hate could be bowed into love and enmity to friendship. Two anecdotes will demonstrate this. They are as follows:

In 1914 at the end of his career in South Africa, Gandhi sent general Smuts the gift of a pair of sandals which he had made for him in prison. Smuts wore the sandals for many years and in 1939, on Gandhi's 70th birthday, he returned them in friendship with the following remarks:

"I have worn these sandals for numerous a summers even though I may feel that I am not admirable to stand in the shoes of so great a man. It was my fortune to be the adversary of a man for whom even then I had the highest respect. He never forgot the human background of the condition, never lost his temper or succumbed to hate, and preserved his gentle wit even in the most horrible annoying situations. His conduct and spirit even then, as well as later, contrasted patently with the callous and vicious forcefulness which is in craze in our days".

The second story relates to the last years of his life when the might of British Empire had been stunned by the rising cadence of the nonviolent freedom movement led by the 'naked fakir' and independence was just a question of era. Learning from Lord Mountbatten about the engagement of Princess Elizabeth, (Queen Elizabeth II), Gandhi set a gift of a table cloth from his spinning wheel for the princess. Transmitting this gift to her, Lord Mountbatten wrote that although it was a simple Khadi cloth, it was spun with care and love by Gandhi himself and deserved to be potted among her most valuable crown jewels.

Non-violence of Gandhi provides a drive force for social change and the dynamics for the struggle towards radical revolution. His concept of nonviolence was that of harmony and not of divergence. It was of care and service and not of profit and antagonism. It was a new underlying principle for change. Gandhi asserted: 'Violence is bred by discrimination, nonviolence by equality'. Thus truth and nonviolence meant to him the liberation of man, the resurgence of his inner self and the quest of communal affluence.

However it is usually, conceived that the relation between nonviolence and truth is that of means and end, I do not think that it is inevitably so. If we insisted on,

bearing in mind nonviolence as a means, we would be debasing nonviolence and plummet it to an influential role. Of course, nonviolence can be a means, but it is much more than that. It is love, and love for Gandhi is the ultimate reality. That is why between reality, love and nonviolence one cannot make any biased severance in the utter sense. On the contrary, one must find an absolute ontological uniqueness.

One can develop Gandhi's philosophy of nonviolence from his two metaphysical concepts:

(1) One is **fallibilism**, the idea that you can be erroneous as regards the details of circumstances or your internal accent. It is your responsibility to refrain from violence because the one that you injure may be right and you may be wrong.

(2) The other is the **ontological** concept of truth or 'What really is'? According to Gandhi we are all ultimately one. Consequently, if I injure you, I am injuring myself; I bound my ability for self-realization as much as your juncture for self-realization.

Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence has orientation to yet another important Indian concept of *trana* — the will to live. It is supposed that the greater the *tanha*, the more cruel and violent a man becomes in his rational attitude. Gandhi thus says that when a man is entirely ready to die he will not even wish to suggest violence. The desire to kill is in contrary fraction to the willingness to die. The votary of Ahimsa must seek to reduce himself to zero and to put himself last among his fellowmen.

Non-violence is an indemnity against the peril that you may injure or kill those who have right on their side. In nonviolence there is the idea of a reflective and profound agreement with everything that lives. There is necessarily a conversation in nonviolence, because through it you wish to induce the other party and bring him to discover in you not his adversary but a man like him.

Such is my study of Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence. Having, gained the viewpoint, there remains slight qualm that Gandhi's memorandum is more pertinent today than ever before. The circumstances of current humanity present a gloomy depiction of molder, squalor and deflation. Tranquility is the lament need of detracted, beleaguered humankind. Man seems to have lost all faith in himself; as a result desperation about the future of the race has reached its edge. We are at the cross roads of history-Gandhi wanted to organize us for life in disarmed humanity. We must drag out of the humanity of trouble and abhorrence and get ready to work on the basis of co-operation and harmony, Love and self-suffering are Gandhi's substitutes for war.

The will to rebellion is strongest when circumstances are at their nastiest. The consciousness of the utmost menace to being endurance and its cultural view seems to be the clearest today. In such a repugnant condition Gandhi's memorandum of non-violence holds out the merely hope for mankind. It is one of the tragedies of history that the extreme exponents of non-violence died as a result of violence. Gandhi's application of nonviolence extends from the negligible set to the universal humanity. Non-violence releases an incredible ethical vigor and is even more blessing, to the practitioner as well as to one on whom it is practiced. It makes for an ambiance of understanding, benevolence, communal trust and co-operation. Yet the large numbers of people, both as the leaders and the philosophers have to comprehend the stakes in

the human conditions today. Make a serious vow on behalf of peace and eloquent their principles lucratively. And yes, the model of non-violence is the one that is meant to become personified. It must be echoed in all situations and find in all circumstances a firm characteristic mode of action.

Conclusion:

I would like to suggest that in the tempest of annihilating material supremacy, a great spiritual accountability rests on India. Writing in his book, 'One World and India', Arnold Toynbee says: "But you have incurred a quite dreadful duty both to Gandhiji and to history —I mean the duty to go on setting an Indian example of non-violence to rest of the humankind. If India were ever to fail to live up to this Indian ideal which is the premium and consequently, the most demanding, inheritance, in your Indian heritage, it would be a poor lookout for a mankind as a whole". And in Gandhiji's own words, "The utmost tribute that friends can do me is to enforce in their own lives the programme that I stand-by, or to resist me to their utmost if they do not believe in it". Yes, there may be some sort of failure in Gandhi, as it is with every human being. But to speak of his total failure is unrelated. In-short, here the need is to examine, has Gandhi's non-violent world order failed us or have we failed it through our plan of action?

References:

1. Gandhi, M.K. (1948). *An Autobiography, (My Experiments with Truth)*, Navjivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 11.
2. Law of Manu, (1958). (A Collection of Gandhi's writing on Hinduism), Ahmadabad Publishing House, 6, 47-78.
3. Ibid. p. 239.
4. Ibid. pp. 17, 117.
5. Murthy, K. (1979). *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism*, Madras University Press, 12.
6. Datta, D.M. (1968). *Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi*, Calcutta University Press (Calcutta), 101.
7. Letter in *the Modern Review*. (October, 1916).
8. *Young India*. (12 June, 1924.)
9. Cortright David. (2006). *Gandhi and Beyond: Non-violence for an age of terrorism*, Paradigm Publishers.
10. Gandhi. M. K. (Dec.1909). *Hind Swaraj*, Gujarat Columns of Indian opinion.
11. Misra, R.P. Ahimsa: The Way to Peace, (ed., by Jonathan K. Crone and Jordi Augustic-Panarda, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi).
12. Borman, W. (1986). *Gandhi and non violence*. New York: State University of New York press.
13. Bose, A. (1987). *Dimensions of peace and non-violence. The Gandhian perspective*. Delhi: Gian Publishing House.
14. Richard, G. (1991). *THE PHILOSOPHY OF GANDHI, (A study of his basic ideas)*, United Kingdom by Curzon Press Ltd., Richmond, Surrey, TW9 2QA
15. Gregg, Richard B. (1960) .*The Power of Nonviolence*, Greenleaf Books, 1197 Main Street, Hartford-04220.