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M K Gandhi: A True Believer of “Ahimsa and Satyagraha”

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ABSTRACT: One among the basic and prominent reasons behind the existence of great personality Mr. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was to spread the message of truth and non-violence (ahimsa) that too at a time when the forces of belligerence and aggression controlled the maximum parts of earth. He proved out to be perpetual spirit who leads us in the course of harmony, peace and non-violence. Gandhi was born in Gujarat, at Rajkot in middle categorized conventional Hindu family and obtained his early schooling in India. Following which Gandhi left for London where he achieved the qualification of barrister-at-law. Mahatma Gandhi was the firm promoter of the cult of Ahimsa or Non-violence and truthfulness. Gandhi believed in the definitive victory of Non-violence over violence like Jesus Christ, Chaitanya and Lord Buddha believed. Force or violence, according to him, is insanity which cannot sustain. “So eventually, force or violence will bow down before non-violence”. Gandhi not only waged a war opposite the British imperialism, but in addition to this he declared even created a battle against the forces of injustice, unrighteousness, untruth throughout the world. Despite of this fact which Gandhi himself confessed that non-violence or ahimsa was not his inborn virtue, the ideology of truth and non-violence is the nucleus and core of Mahatma Gandhi’s political contemplation. He simply states “In the journey of searching for truth I find ahimsa. I have only retrieved it, never discovered a new.” As a point of fact truth and ahimsa are very much integrated with Gandhi’s philosophy of life and social adjustments. Gandhi believed that non-violence (ahimsa) lies within the truth and in the same way truth is in ahimsa (non-violence). He also used to believe that God is truth but later he observed that truth is God. That is why Gandhi named his struggle as “Satyagraha” i.e. Truth, in which the Satyagrahi will always be the follower of ahimsa (non-violence), which will be his/her lifelong obligations.

KEYWORDS: Satyagraha, Non-Violence (Ahimsa), Characteristics of Non-Violence, Recognition of Truth and God, eminence and attributes of Satyagrahi.

I. INTRODUCTION

Gandhi was like a great ambassador behind the philosophy of Truth and Non-violence. He had a great significance to the perception of Truth and Non-Violence, Truth or Satya, Ahimsa or Non-Violence is the roots of Gandhi’s philosophy. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi took his birth in the western part of British-ruled India on October 2, 1869. A timorous child, he was married at thirteen to a girl of the same age, Kasturibai. Gandhi's family sent him to England in 1888 to study law soon after the death of his father. The foreign conditions compelled him to find interest in the philosophy of nonviolence, as articulated in the Bhagavad-Gita, Hindu sacred scripture, and in Jesus Christ's Sermon on the Mount in the Christian Bible. Having passed the bar, Gandhi returned to India in 1891 and he found little victory in his efforts to do law. For the change of scenery, Gandhi went to South Africa for a year where he accepted a position to assist a lawsuit. He founded the Indian National Congress, which worked and helped him for achieving the further Indian interests, and commanded an Indian medical organization that fought on the British side in the Boer War (1899-1901), in which the British conquered the last independent Boer republics. After the war, Gandhi's reputation and fame as a leader grew swiftly and he became even more determined in his personal principles, practicing sexual abstinence, relinquishing modern technology, and developing satyagraha-literally "soul force." Satyagraha was a technique of non-violent struggle, often called "non-cooperation," which Gandhi and his associates used as a big tool against the white governments in South Africa with a great effect.

Meaning

By the opinion of Mahatma Gandhi, ahimsa involves the utmost altruism or selflessness. It means, if anyone wants to recognize himself or if he want to explore the truth, he has to conduct himself in such a manner that others can find his space entirely safe. This is the way of ahimsa according to Gandhi. He did not believe non-killing alone to be the only method of nonviolence instead to him, non-violence is not a pessimistic concept but an optimistic sense of love.

He conversed of loving the wrong-doers, but not the wrong. Gandhi had sturdily opposed any kind of obedience to wrongs and injustice in an unresponsive manner. He considered that the wrong-doers can be defied only through the separation of all dealings with them.

Nature of Gandhi's philosophy of Truth and Non-Violence

According to Gandhi, non-violence never evades violence. Instead, it carries on a regular effort against arrogance and aggression. This is why he did not regard the peace lover as non-violent. Gandhi considers non-violence to be a very influential dynamic force. The supporters of peacefulness would never move away at the sight of violence. They would somewhat devote themselves to the job of changing the hearts of entertainers of violence through self-torture for setting up truth. According to Gandhi, "To move fearlessly into the dreadful jaws of violence is called non-violence". Thus, in Gandhi's concept of non-violence there was no place for shyness or cowardice. He believed hostility to be preferable to weakness. Moreover while mentioning on this matter in his editorial entitled "The Doctrine of the Sword", he says that, given a choice between cowardice and violence, he would prefer violence. But he firmly believed that non-violence was undoubtedly superior to violence and clemency was far manlier than punishment.

Evaluation of the content

Despite the fact that Mahatma Gandhi accord the principle of „truth and non-violence“ an essential position in all his activities all through his life, he realized that the common people of India and even the majority of the contemporary Congress leaders had not accepted non-violence as a "creed". For this reason he commented that he had doubt as to how many persons fully believed in the creed of non-violence. But he thought that his movements did not at all depend on non-violent workers as believers in the creed of non-violence. He considered it to be adequate for his purpose if they followed the print principle in practice. Like those days, today also there is acute shortage of person really believing in the creed of non-violence. Consequently, clash of narrow selfish interests, struggles for power, world-wide competition for weapons of mass destruction, struggle for establishing hegemony, etc. have brought the world on the verge of a deep crisis. In the opinion of the followers of Gandhi, the relevance of the Gandhian concept of truth and non-violence cannot be ignored or denied at all. However, the Marxists think it to be a utopian idea as it is impossible to put the principle in practice.

Satyagraha, the Centre of Gandhi's Contribution to the Philosophy of Nonviolence

It will be good here to examine what Stanley E. Jones calls "the centre of Gandhi's contribution to the world". All else is marginal compared to it. Satyagraha is the quintessence of Gandhism. Through it, Gandhi introduced a new spirit to the world. It is the greatest of all Gandhi's contribution to the world.

What is Satyagraha?

Satyagraha (pronounced sat-yah-graha) is a compound of two Sanskrit nouns satya, meaning truth (from 'sat' - being with a suffix 'ya', and agraha, meaning, 'firm grasping' (a noun made from the agra, which has its root 'grah' - 'seize', 'grasp' with the verbal prefix 'a' - 'to' towards). Thus Satyagraha literally means devotion to truth, remaining firm on the truth and resisting untruth actively but nonviolently. Since the only way for Gandhi getting to the truth is by nonviolence (love), it follows that Satyagraha implies an unwavering search for the truth using nonviolence. Satyagraha according to Michael Nagler literally means 'clinging to truth' and that was exactly how Gandhi understood it: 'clinging to the truth that we are all one under the skin, that there is no such thing as a 'win/lose' confrontation because all our important interests are really the same, that consciously or not every single person wants unity and peace with every other. Put succinctly, Satyagraha means 'truth force', 'soul force' or as Martin Luther would call it 'love in action'. 'Satyagraha has often been defined as the philosophy of nonviolent resistance most famously employed by Mahatma Gandhi, in forcing an end to the British domination. Gene Sharp did not hesitate to define Satyagraha simply as "Gandhian Nonviolence."

Gandhi View of Satyagraha

Satyagraha was not a preconceived plan for Gandhi. Even in his life culminating in his "Bramacharya vow", prepared him for it. He therefore underlined: Events were so shaping themselves in Johannesburg as to make this self-purification on my part a preliminary as it were to Satyagraha. I can now see that all the principal events of my life, culminating in the vow of Bramacharya were secretly preparing me for it.

The Basic Precepts of Satyagraha

There are three basic precepts essential to Satyagraha: Truth, Nonviolence and self-suffering. These are called the pillars of Satyagraha. Failure to grasp them is a handicap to the understanding of Gandhi's non - violence. These three



fundamentals correspond to Sanskrit terms: Sat/Satya – Truth implying openness, honesty and fairness ⊥ Ahimsa/Nonviolence – refusal to inflict injury upon others. ⊥ Tapasya – willingness to self-sacrific

Qualities of a Satyagrahi

(Nonviolence Activist) Gandhi was quite aware that there was need to train people who could carry on with his Satyagraha campaigns. He trained them in his “Satyagraha Ashrams”. Here are some of the basic qualities of expected of a Satyagrahi.

- A Satyagraha should have a living faith in God for he is his only Rock.
- One must believe in truth and nonviolence as one’s creed and therefore have faith in the inherent goodness of human nature.
- One must live a chaste life and be ready and willing for the sake of one’s cause to give up his life and his possessions.
- One must be free from the use any intoxicant, in order that his reason may be undivided and his mind constant.
- One must carry out with a willing heart all the rules of discipline as may be laid down from time to time.
- One should carry out the jail rules unless they are especially dense to hurt his self-respect.
- A satyagrahi must accept to suffer in order to correct a situation.

II. CONCLUSION

Gandhiji was an angelic being, a source of inspiration to his people. He was a messiah for the tortured and oppressed humanity. He is a spirit of non-violence, peace and love. We can say that both Truth and Non-Violence are closely interrelated. They are the same sides of a same coin. A critical account of the Gandhian concept of Non-Violence shows that Gandhi was not aware of the deep rooted aggressive instinct in man. Contemporary psychologist have pointed out that this instinct plays a major role in the human mental life. Gandhi did not play sufficient attention to it. His account of Non-Violence seems to be more dependent on his readings of religious texts than on psycho-social considerations. This is a major critical point that may be raised against the Gandhian conception of Non-Violence. If Non-Violence is the expression of the life-instinct within man then violence is the expression of the death-instinct.

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