

Gandhi : Through The Prism Of Foreign Scholars

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ABSTRACT

Our propensity to lay undue stress on 'quantity of goods' and 'quantum of profits' has relegated man to the background and in the process greed has taken precedence over needs. Accordingly, there came to be built a scientific and industrial civilization of monstrous dimensions resulting in mass production of luxuries, environmental degradation, mass unemployment, growing rich-poor divide, violence and other associated complexities. In short, the new technology and its consequences are incompatible with human nature and the resource endowment of the world. The simple way out is to return to Gandhian gospels, to elemental simplicities of life, to sublimation of human desires and wants. And, that in turn would ensure beauty and peace in life.

Key Words : Sufism, 'Haqq', Humility, Catholicity, austerity, Bible, Quran, Gita, Avestas, Blasphemies, Idiosyncrasies, Hyperboles, Satyagraha

In the Course of time a series of studies have been published which have shower interest in the philosophy of Gandhi, that, particularly in foreign scholars. Many schools of thought see no other way out of this terrible contrast than one of violence. Yet violence itself is making for much misery. Mahatma Gandhi was always for non-violent social change. India got its political independence without violence. Gandhian thought was not of a passive nature; it did constitute a revolution in thinking. So it seems clear that his thought deserves being spread again.

With this state of affairs the work of Mahatma Gandhi has in a few years come back to our minds. Almost suddenly we now become aware of the possibility that in many respects he may have had messages also for the world of to-day. In the new light of what we were almost unaware of ten to fifteen years ago we shall receive inspiration from what India's great spiritual leader already several decades ago was teaching. In his book, 'Small Is Beautiful', E.F. Schumacher,¹ a very celebrated and widely read author, declares that debates on desirability of limits to growth are meaningless unless we go beyond quantity considerations and enter into the realm of quality judgments. Our propensity to lay undue stress on 'quantity of goods' and 'quantum of profits'² has relegated man to the background and in the process greed has taken precedence over needs. Accordingly, there came to be built a scientific and industrial civilization of monstrous dimensions resulting in mass production of luxuries, environmental degradation, mass unemployment, growing rich-poor divide, violence and other associated complexities. In short, the new technology and its consequences are incompatible with human nature and the resource endowment of the world. The author feels that the way out is

to return to Gandhian gospels, to elemental simplicities of life, to sublimation of human desires and wants. And, that in turn would ensure beauty and peace in life.

Prof. George Paxton in his work 'Gandhi and War'³ gives an account of how Gandhi's ideas about nonviolence evolved into an abiding article of faith over time and how his initial ambivalence with regard to war culminated into making him a confirmed pacifist. Violence cannot be destroyed by counter violence. Mankind has to get out of violence only through nonviolence and love. Counter hatred only increases the surface as well as the depth of hatred. Gandhi, however, considered cowardice worse than war and should there be a choice between the two, preference must go to the latter. In the book "We do not Want Violence; the Gandhi Controversy: A Contribution to Practical Philosophy written by Christan Bartolf, Piet Dijkstra compares the ideologies of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Buber.

Prof. Amalendu in his article 'Gandhian Concept of Equitable Equality' remarks that this is a "new concept in peace studies, which consists of (a) harmony of the heterogeneities, (b) uniformity of diversities, (c) equality with justice and (d) equity of equalities."⁴ The goal or end-result of the above is 'homonoia' or union of hearts at the behavioural level in society. Gandhi used justice or equity as value determinant and homonoia as the union of hearts in the human and social behavioural process. Gandhi used nonviolence as the best and most effective means of changing human mind, effecting revolution in human consciousness and uniting the human and social beings under the

common platform of human progress and human feeling type of bondage. In his work 'Non-violent Philosophy and Culture of Peace: Gandhi's Contribution' Prof. Guha observes, "Human Peace is a culture which is the outcome of the feelings of humanity and humanism." He discusses the role of nonviolence, training in nonviolence and peace, and in his concluding remarks observes that "Gandhi's concept and philosophy of peace is considered to be secularist and humanist." He quotes Gandhiji "I must love my enemy, I must apply the same rules to the wrong-doer who is my enemy or stranger to me, as I would do to my wrong doing father or son." Prof. points out that Peace has to be a positive peace. He discusses the impact of concepts and ideologies of several historical personalities in the evolution of this concept - Chinese Schools of Thought, European Schools of Thought and other schools of thought.⁵ He observes, "From confrontation to cooperation, hegemony to harmony, chauvinism to equitable equality, alienation to transparency, are the very basic missions and visions of peace philosophy." His analysis is that All these three great preachers for peace-Gautama Buddha, Gandhi and Ikeda opt for horizontal dialogues and approaches for removing wrongdoings, misunderstandings and crisis formation, as well as for reconciliation and self-realization. Nonviolence develops a culture of peace which (i) develops human instinct of propensity to forgive, (ii) removes the instincts of taking revenge, (iii) develops the rationality of tolerance and (iv) overcomes as well as prevents the evil spirit of direct violence." Earlier the author remarks that "nonviolence is neither a submissive and passive acceptance of violence pressed by the aggressor on nonviolent people, nor a coward and subjugated a helpless in the society." Mr. Daisaku Ikeda, the Japanese thinker has quoted: "Gandhi's struggle in the

name of nonviolence was a battle to make the people strong and wise. Gandhi was a rare leader who chose to live in the midst of the masses, sharing their sorrow and happiness and working to dispel the fear of authority bred by long years of colonial life.”

Mr. Michelle Myres in his work 'Why Gandhi's Principles of Non-violence are Relevant Today' makes a fervent appeal to encourage peace studies and academics. The fact that the people belonging to various races and religions can live together in harmony and conflicts can be resolved without war and violence should be demonstrated in practice as Gandhiji actually did. Violence breeds more violence, similarly peace would breed more peace.⁶ Hence shun violence and practice peace, counsels the author. Mrs. Nageen Sai Zinovieff in her work 'Gandhi's Philosophy and Sufi Doctrine' observes that Gandhiji has repeatedly asserted that he has not propounded any new philosophy or cult. He has only said what is already there in different religious scriptures. Many of his ideas are common with Sufism as they are with other religions too. His basic teaching that 'God is Truth' is similar to that of the Sufis who call God 'Haqq' meaning truth. Sufis are also known to have faith in dynamic nonviolence and love like Gandhi. Humility, Catholicity, austerity, simplicity, selfless service - all are basic to Gandhian as well as Sufi ideals. Mrs.NageenSaiZinovieff in her article 'Gandhi and Imperfect Religion' remarks that Gandhi was a highly religious man. But he was not a blind follower of either Bible, Quran, Gita, or Avestas as he did not consider them to be revelations of God directly.⁷ They contain blasphemies, idiosyncrasies and hyperboles. Gandhi exercised his judgment about every scripture including Gita as he could not let a

scriptural text supersede his reason. Gandhi believed in the oneness or God. He advocates a religion of service to humanity as the ultimate aim of coming closer to God, for he believed that man was created to know his Maker who is love, light and truth.

Mr. Paras Ramoutar from Trinidad in his work 'Need to Revisit Gandhi's Message' remarks that to a world tormented by violence, unpeace, threat of nuclear war, armament, terrorism etc. and his ideals are the only hope. Abiding faith in God, truth, love, nonviolence, Satyagraha and their practice in actual dealing in life can rid the world of its present predicament and foster a culture of peace and universal brotherhood. The influence of Gandhian nonviolent thought has greatly effected the western and other parts of world. His views of nonviolence was reflected in the civil Right movement, lead by Martin Luthar king Jr., and in South Africa lead by, Nelson,Mandela.⁸ Gandhian thought of nonviolence is more effective and relevant in this present era and have the potentialities to present the antidote to present crisis.

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