Mahatma Gandhi: As Apostle Of Truth, Non-violence And Tolerance

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi is known to the world as Mahatma Gandhi and Father of the Nation through the outstanding contribution to the humanity. Like all great men in the annuls of history, he was a man of paradoxes, contradictions, prejudices, peculiarities but against these human frailties, he was standing as a colossus in the political arena of the 20th century with his infinite goodness, as the seeker of truth, as the follower of non-violence and tolerance and as the harvester of the greatest gift of mankind, love. Gandhiji had sharpened his moral weapon of non-violence against in India and successfully driven them out through his strangest peaceful revolution. For this purpose, he had honed his people through the organized and disciplined campaign of non-violent civil disobedience against the guns, bayonets and lathi sticks of rulers.

It is really strangest revolution for the people of the other countries. How can change the mindset of the enemies through a peaceful, unarmed and passive resistance? William L. Shirer said, “Our time had never seen anyone like him: a charismatic leader who had aroused a whole continent and indeed the consciousness of the world; a shrewd, tough politician, but also a deeply religious man, a Christ like figure in homespun loincloth, who lived humbly in poverty, practised what he preached and who was regarded by tens of millions of his people as a saint.”

Gandhiji was an orthodox Hindu in his way of living but he had actually followed the moral principle of Christ in his spiritual life. He was the stronger follower of Christ than rulers. He may be the first politician in the world to apply the moral principles of the Gospel of Matthew.

“You have heard that it was said, you shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy. But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you that you may be children of your heavenly Father.” Gandhiji had successfully implemented the moral weapon of unarmed resistance in his freedom struggle. His moral strategy was suited to the Indian masses. Because Indians basic nature is tolerant and non-violent. A sheep cannot behave like a tiger. His democratic unarmed resistance against rule had brought miracle in the history like an anti-biotic to the body of the subcontinent. His strategy and logic was impeccable. He said, “The want us to put the struggle on the plane of machine guns where they have the weapons and we do not. Our only assurance of beating them is putting the struggle on a plane where we have weapons and they have not.”

Gandhiji always spoke very calmly and without any bitterness against the lawless repression of the enemies. had practised many barbarities on the Indians and also imprisoned him without any legal prosecution. He never showed any slightest trace of bitterness against the English men. Jallianwalla Bagh massacre in 1919 had again convinced Gandhiji about the mighty power of and need to prepare his organization and the people of India in line with non-violent disobedience. He said, “It gives you an idea of the atrocities perpetrated on the people of the Punjab. It shows you to what length government is capable of going, and what inhumanities and barbarities it is capable of perpetrating in order to maintain its power.” Gandhiji did not want to pull his people towards the calamity of death. He had passionately loved his country and countrymen.

Gandhiji was very hopeful and had full confidence in solving the socio-economic problems, communal problems between Hindus and Muslims and also the problems of the millions of depressed classes. He strongly believed that truth, tolerance and love could amicably resolve all the internal problems when Indians become the masters of their own land. In a question to William L Shirer, Gandhi said, “All these problems will be fairly easy to settle when we are our own masters. I know there will be difficulties, but I have faith in our ultimate capacity to solve them and not by following your Western models but by evolving along the lines of non-violence and truth, on which our movement is based and which must constitute the bedrock of our future constitution.” Gandhiji’s philosophy was panacea in the independent movement and also could be panacea to post-independent India. But his unexpected assassination had put the whole country into the darkness. Therefore, then Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru in his extempore broadcast on All India Radio announcing the news of Mahatma Gandhi’s assassination on 30 January 1948 in a choked voice with deep grief. “The light has gone out of our lives and there is darkness everywhere. Our beloved leader … the father of our nation, is no more.”

Mahatma Gandhi was the light, life and truth to the India. His intellectual courage and radiance were always reflected in his words. In 1922, he was convicted under section 124-A of Indian Penal Code with sedition charges. At the time of the prosecution, he was asked to make a statement by the English judge. He proved himself as a true patriot, true prophet of truth and non-violence and true lawyer to defend his country and countrymen and accepting the sedition charges obediently and made strongest statement in the court. His statement had reflected the intellectual radiance of Mahatma Gandhi and also reflected his truthful understanding and courageous expression. “The law itself in this country has been used to serve the foreign exploiter. My unbiased examination of the Punjab Martial Law cases has led me to believe that at least ninety-five per cent convictions were wholly bad. My experience of political cases in India leads me to the conclusion that in nine out of every ten the condemned men were totally innocent. Their crime consisted in the love of their country. In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, justice has been denied to Indians as against Europeans in the courts of India. This is not an exaggerated picture. It is the experience of almost every Indian who has had anything to do with such cases. In my own opinion, the administration of law is thus prostituted consciously or unconsciously for the benefit of the exploiter… Section 124-A, under which I am happily charged, is perhaps the prince among the political sections of the Indian Penal Code designed to suppress the liberty of the citizen. Affection cannot be manufactured or regulated by law. If one has no affection for a person or system, one should be free to give the fullest expression to his disaffection, so long as he does not contemplate, promote, or incite to violence. But the section under which I am charged is one under which mere promotion of disaffection is a crime. I have studied some of the cases under it, and I know that some of the most loved of India’s patriots have been convicted under it. I consider it a privilege, therefore, to be charged under that section. I have endeavoured to give in their briefest outline the reasons for my disaffection. I have no personal ill-will against any single administrator, much less can I have any disaffection toward the King’s persons. But I hold it to be a virtue to be disaffected toward a government which in its totality has done more harm to India than any previous system.”

Gandhi’s integrity, nobility and overall greatness had reflected in his arguments in the court. He was not fighting against the English men in individual level but he was fiercely fighting against imperialism. He was absolutely fighting against system but he was loving the English persons in system.

Gandhiji’s genius was noticed by the people in the 45th annual convention of the Indian

National Congress at Karachi in 1931. While drafting the resolution for the congress in collaboration with Mahatma Gandhi, Nehru had seen in Gandhi a political genius at his best. Karachi congress had witnessed his marvellous spirit of leadership and magnificent control over the masses. He was the chief architect of the resolution for the convention in which he had earmarked the concept of the future constitution of the independent India. The congress adopted this resolution on fundamental rights and economic policy. This resolution on fundamental rights passed by the Karachi session of congress had many socialistic provisions. The resolution was the product of heart to heart talk between the Gandhi and Nehru. Karachi resolution had definitely influenced the Constituent Assembly in drawing up the Indian Constitution. It was envisaged the spirit of the independent India's constitution. He was not only the father of the nation but also he was really the father of the Indian Constitution.

Gandhiji in his continuous meetings with other leaders of the minorities and depressed classes pleaded before them to submerge their differences and unitedly demand the freedom from. As the staunch follower of tolerance, he strongly believed that the internal differences could be settled either by an impartial tribunal or by a special convention of Indian leaders elected by their constituencies. He made his last appeal to the infighting countrymen.

"It is absurd for us to quarrel among ourselves before we know what we are going to get from government. If we knew definitely that we were going to get what we want, then we would hesitate fifty times before we threw it away in a sinful wrangle. The communal solution can be the crown of the national constitution, not its foundation, if only because our differences are hardened by reason of foreign domination. I have no shadow of doubt that the iceberg of communal differences would melt under the warmth of the sun of freedom."

Lord Mountbatten offered liberation package with a dividing idea. Gandhiji warned him, "You'll have to divide my body before you divide India." The ageing leader in his 78 age felt severe isolation politically and emotionally. His close aides like Patel and Nehru also proved more practical in their approach and renounced their master. With this isolated situation Gandhiji said, "I find myself alone, even Patel and Nehru think I'm wrong…They wonder if I have not deteriorated with age, May be they are right and I alone am floundering in darkness."

At the stroke of midnight on August 14, 1947, when Prime Minister, Nehru from the Red Fort proclaimed India's independence and the whole nation was in great celebration, Gandhi slept in a slum in Calcutta. He was silent in the next day and spent most of his time in prayer. He made no public statement. It was a great tragedy in his life and also in the life of this nation. He was disheartened, saddened and humiliated by his own people. He had lived, worked and taught the people for non-violence, truth, tolerance and love. He had seen in his period the failure his principles and failed to take root among his own countrymen.

William L. Shirer recorded this tragedy, "He was utterly crushed by the terrible bloodshed that swept India, just as self-government was won, provoked this time not by but by the savage quarrels of his fellow Indians. Fleeing by the millions across the new boundaries, the Muslims from India, the Hindus from Pakistan, a half million of them had been slain in cold blood before they could reach safely. Desperately and with heavy heart, and at the risk of his life, Gandhiji had gone among them, into the blood socked streets of Calcutta and the lanes of smaller towns and villages, littered with corpses and the debris of burning buildings, and beseeched them to stop the slaughter. He had fasted twice to induce the Hindus and the Muslims to make peace. But, except for temporary truces that were quickly broken, too little avail. All his lifelong teaching

and practice of non-violence, which had been so successful in the struggle against, had come to nought. The realization that it had failed to keep his fellow Indians from flying at one another's throats the moment they were free from shattered him." For 78 year old Gandhi, it was a great shock and bewilderment to his philosophy of non-violence, truth, tolerance and love.

Gandhiji was betrayed by his own countrymen and he was assassinated by his own religious man. His assassin had successfully silenced Gandhi physically with three bullets. But bullets cannot destroy his truth, non-violence and tolerance. His spirit of principles will shine for centuries to come. It was illumined the life of great men like Nelson Mandela in South Africa and Martin Luther King in United States of America and peace loving millions of the world. Gandhiji's martyrdom itself is caused to resurrect his principles and shine all over the world in eternity. Thus, his position as an apostle of truth, non-violence and tolerance in the political arena of 20th century is in its zenith.

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