

Non-violence, Peace and Terrorism: An Analysis in Gandhian Perspective

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Abstract:

It is almost clear that peace and non-violence are opposed to terrorism in the sense that the presence of the later dispels the other two. Currently the globe is witnessing the effective presence of the later for which reason the globe is conspicuously missing peace and non-violence. The article deals with the conceptual analysis of the terroristic acts to arrive at the cause of it so that we can expect peace and non-violence in human society. Since in Gandhi's thought and action peace and non-violence occupy significant place the analysis will be attempted primarily from Gandhian perspective.

Key concepts: *World Peace, Culture of Peace, Swaraj, Peace Education, Internal and external terrorisms, Value based society.*

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NON-VIOLENCE, PEACE AND TERRORISM: AN ANALYSIS IN GANDHIAN PERSPECTIVE

Peace and Non-violence

Peace and non-violence appears as the two sides of a coin. Very often peace is easily equalised with the absence of violence. Of course the absence of violence happens to be one of the essential conditions for the establishment of peace but not the soul condition. Smooth running or functioning of society/ state/ nation is normally treated as in peace. The presence of differences in the spheres like, political, religious, economics, ethnic, etc. are quite obvious in human society. But such differences leading to riots or war situations affect the peace of the society. For last few decades the magnitude of the differences and the consequences of those differences have become so harmful for the social living that expectation of 'peace' has become rare and remote.

World-Peace: Peace is such a concept which is not only important in individual, single family, small society, state, nation levels but also a necessity in global level too. But when we talk of 'world-peace' or 'peace on the whole of the earth' sounds purely utopian, referring to a never realisable state. Theoretically considering 'world- peace' with a positive note refers to the state when there is understanding, friendship, good-will and co-operation among all the nations of the world and with a negative note it would be that there should be no possibility of conflicts and war situations among nations.

At present everywhere the materialistic attitude of man happens to be the strongest barrier in the path of the world-peace. It is because one of the significant features of modern civilization of the present century is to become the slave of the machines, weakness for the luxurious amenities, the desire for the rapid growth of industrialization and above all the attempt to make the nation self sufficient in nuclear weapons. The clash of interest pervades everywhere, among individuals, groups of believers of different religions, among communities sharing different cultures, and also among nations. The unlimited thirst for material progress in the long run kills the moral fibre of the common mass.

Once American President, Kennedy remarked that 'Mankind must put an end to war or else war would put an end to mankind,' In Gandhian way I would like revise it 'Mankind must put an end to violence or else violence would put an end to mankind,' The time has come, man has to realize: 'no peace'- 'no planet'. In Russellian way it would be saying the time is approaching, mankind has to commit suicide. In this perspective it can be pointed out that since violence always invites further violence and there can be no end to this process Gandhi relied on the principle of *ahimsa* or non-violence that rests on the virtues like love and truth.

Terrorism

The globe is facing the challenge of terrorism in its every corner. Although rebellions were found to be there in all ages and terrorisation was adopted here and there but due to less effective media of the time neither it could influence others nor was the magnitude of the loss conspicuous. Following to the World War II the scenario changed all over the world and some political powers in the international level tacitly backed terroristic activities for their malafied interests. Cold war was replaced by the hot war.

The terroristic attacks have reached the climax in the 21st century. The opening year of the subsequent millennium witnessed world's worst incident, destruction of the WTC towers of America, caused by the terrorists on September 11th of 2001. Here it quite important to point out that the after math of 11th September 2001 has is made it clear to what extent a terrorist act can climb. Its occurrence may be treated to be geographically regional. But its effect was global. Probably for this reason the U.N. General Assembly in December 2001 expressed that terrorism creates such an environment where people's right to live free from fear has been taken away from them. Further in the 58th report entitled 'Human Rights: A Uniting Frame Work' submitted by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has mentioned that "An effective international strategy to counter use human rights as its unifying framework. The suggestion that human rights violations are permissible in certain circumstances is wrong. The essence of human rights is that human life and dignity must not be compromised and that certain acts, whether carried out by state or non-state actors, are never justified no matter what the ends. ...A reckless approach towards human life and liberty undermines counter terrorism measures." ¹

Sometimes man feels helpless before the cruelties caused by the terrorists. The irony is that in every terrorist attack, the victims are mostly the civilians or common people, who are mostly innocent and cannot help in any manner fulfilling the demand of the terrorists. Still they try to damage the public properties in a spectacular way to make aware to others that further damages can be done if the demands are not fulfilled. Thus terrorism as an activity mostly projected towards the administrators or the rulers of the state/country on the plea that because of their negligence or high-handedness some section the people are deprived of their rights/facilities.

It is true that the terrorists don't act for their personal gain. With some exceptions the terrorist's fight is mostly for the sake of some greater cause. The most unfortunate outcome of such dedicated commitments for greater causes are found to be ending with merciless killing of innocents, destruction of public life and wealth and increase of a lot of unsocial activities. The most important factor connected

with terrorist acts is that however important the demands may be, utilization of the method of terrorization cannot be treated as justifiable method to fulfil the demands. In other words, whatever noble cause might be there, if the method of violence is adopted then no terrorist act is justifiable either legally or morally. The major problem lies with the terroristic act is that it gives rise to many harmful consequences. For example, terrorist act continues with the abuse of human rights. The human right abuses increases further when terrorism is defended by counter-terroristic acts. Terrorism both in the form of domestic as well as international found as two sides of a single anti-social phenomenon. It establishes an assault against the protection of liberty and security of the common mass, along with a threat to the peaceful atmosphere in the globe. It has the greatest bearing on the peace of the globe, which is the most cherished human necessity.

Gandhian approach

Gandhi was influenced by such Vedic view which says that the world is an abode for all created beings (*visvam bhavatyeka nidam*) or the ideal of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*² ('One World - One Family'). In this framework there is no space for terrorism or violence. To combat terrorism Gandhian approach would be purely ethical as well as practical. He had many programmes in his mind the follow up which must have helped in rooting out terrorism in the long run. There has been the necessity of developing a culture of peace for which peace education is also required. Therefore for him the basic requirement was establishing a value based society aiming at bringing up a society constituting ethical humans.

Culture of peace:-There is the necessity of talking an attempt of developing a culture of peace. "Just as war begins in the minds of men, peace also begins in our minds." It is our culture that influences our activities towards violence or peace. Thus the culture of peace is required. This is possible through peace-education. Gandhi considered that peace-education is essential from the very early stage.

Peace education:-Gandhi wanted that man should be educated on the philosophy of peace and non-violence from the very primary or infant stage everywhere. The knowledge on *ahimsa* and peace should be the essential part of learning.

Value-based society:- Gandhi believed that all social problems have moral links. That is why he thought of an ideal social order having ethical foundation. He designed a new education system where the value education has to be imparted from the very primary stage. The education should aim at yielding people believing in the 'rule of dharma'. For the purpose he also suggested many innovative principles in his work "*Hind Swaraj*" in 1909. His fundamental argument was that military strength of India to fight against Britishers can never succeed, so India's strength

should be linked with the ethical behaviors of its citizens. Now it can be felt that the idea of 'Swaraj' can very well be treated as the means to fight against violence and terrorism.

Terroristic acts are used in various ways and in different types of circumstances for which the attempts to arrive at a consensus definition of terrorism has not become successful. The only thing common is that it involves violence that disturbs the peace of the society. So also is the case with finding the method of facing the terrorization. A single method will never be helpful for the various types of causes behind terroristic acts. However, the various types of terroristic acts can be put under two distinct forms while thinking about the method of retaliation. Those two are namely, internal or domestic (which is confined to the state/nation) and external or international (where several countries are involved and affected). Accordingly different ways are to be followed for peace.

So far as the internal issues of India are concerned Gandhian approach would be in tune with our own cultural tradition where emphasis has been attached in ethical man making procedure. Peace was never belittled in our tradition. Rather peace invocations are profound in our Vedic³ and Upanisadic literatures. For ethical man making process the Gita's suggestion to follow *svadharma* unconditionally is also very much significant. In this context the following words of Prof. Das is quite significant. He writes "The programme of society building or nation building begins with building of one's own house and building of one's own person. So terrorism, it appears, hugely blown up version of the deviations from the plan of man building and home building. The macro-level problem has a micro-level beginning and therefore the solution of the big problem must be seen in the small things of life."⁴ This approach to fight against terrorism possibly the best approach for domestic varieties. This approach may be treated as the preventive approach as maintained by Allen in the following manner. It is written by him that "the greatest strength of Gandhi's philosophy of establishing relation of non-violence, peace, and civilizational harmony: preventive measures for gradual long term changes that involve identifying and transforming root causes and causal determinants that keep us trapped in escalating cycles of violence. ... Key to this preventive approach is Gandhi's famous analysis of means and ends."⁵

Taking the external or international terrorisms into account the approach need to be radical. Terroristic acts are always purposive. The method of terrorization is utilised to achieve some goal. The programmes of terrorism are mostly decided by the leader of the group. The leader has to be identified and steps are to be taken to paralyze him and his strength very carefully without affecting others even if

necessary by killing him. It is possibly a very suitable practical approach for external terrorisms.

Here a question may be raised that in such cases violence has been involved as it may lead to kill the terrorist/ terrorists. But it may be pointed out that killing of a terrorist need not be treated as violating the right to life of him. It is because by becoming a terrorist he/she has lost his/her claim for any constitutional/fundamental right. Taking the Gandhian perspective into consideration it can be said that it is unquestionable that Gandhi was firmly opposed to violence and terrorism in any circumstance for any good reason. Gandhi, who had taken attempt to lynch the biggest peace-movement against Britishers, was also an all time votary of truth and non-violence. His approach to combat terrorism in non-violent way suggests the steps like, tolerance, deliberation, retaliation and hard retaliation. Hard retaliation against terrorists would never amount to consider that they are deprived of their human rights in any way. It is because by becoming terrorists they cease to be eligible to demand human-rights of common human being. They are non-humans in human form. If rationality is the yardstick for being treated as human then how can a species in human form not hesitating to kill innocent beings be considered as a human being? He is not only a criminal in the eyes of law but a non-human in the ethical plane. Just like, Gandhian suggestion that killing the mad elephant causing the destruction of huge crops and putting end to lives of other animals or humans cannot be treated as violence, in the similar vein if any terrorist dies in the process of hard retaliation need not be treated as violence.

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