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# GANDHI NEWS গান্ধী সংবাদ

Vol.13, No.4



## মহাত্মাজীর প্রতি সুকান্ত ভট্টাচার্য

চল্লিশ কোটি জনতার জানি আমিও যে একজন,  
হঠাৎ ঘোষণা শুনেছি : আমার জীবনে শুভক্ষণ  
এসেছে, তখনি মুছে গেছে ভীকু চিন্তার হিজি বিজি।  
রক্তে বেজেছে উৎসব, আজ হাত ধরো গান্ধীজী।

এখানে আমরা লড়েছি, মরেছি, করেছি অঙ্গীকার,  
এ মৃতদেহের বাধা ঠেলে হব অজেয় রাজ্য পার।  
এসেছে বন্যা, এসেছে মৃত্যু, পরে যুদ্ধের ঝড়,  
মহাস্তর রেখে গেছে তার পথে পথে স্বাক্ষর,  
প্রতি মুহূর্তে বুঝেছি এবার মুছে নেবে ইতিহাস—  
তবু উদ্দাম, মৃত্যু আহত ফেলি নি দীর্ঘশ্বাস :  
নগর গ্রামের শ্মশানে শ্মশানে নিহিত অভিজ্ঞান :  
বহু মৃত্যুর মুখোমুখি দৃঢ় করেছি জয়ের ধ্যান।  
তাই তো এখানে আজ ঘনিষ্ঠ স্বপ্নের কাছাকাছি,  
মনে হয় শুধু তোমারই মধ্যে আমরা যে বেঁচে আছি—  
তোমাকে পেয়েছি অনেক মৃত্যু-উত্তরণের শেষে,  
তোমাকে গড়ব প্রাচীর ধ্বংস-বিকীর্ণ এই দেশে।  
দিক্দিগন্তে প্রসারিত হাতে তুমি যে পাঠালে ডাক,  
তাই তো আজকে গ্রামে ও নগরে স্পন্দিত লাখে লাখ ॥

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# GANDHI NEWS

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জানুয়ারি-মার্চ, ২০১৯

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## Editorial

### A Brief Note on Non-Violence

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**R**akhal Chandra De, in his article *Ahimsār Krama Bik s* (The gradual Development of Non-violence) published in *Lokswaraj*, (January 2002, pp 43-44) has traced the development of the creed of Non-Violence. He argued that in Vedic literature non-violence has been prescribed as the supreme religion. The Vedas condemn violence.

The people long ago, how long none can tell, killed animals and lived on meat. This was necessary for bare sustenance of life. So this was not treated as an acts of violence. We take rice, vegetables and leaves of trees. This is not violence. The slaughter of animals for food has continued for ages. Some were afraid that animals will be extent from the earth. If the practice of animal slaughter continues, they were in search of alternatives. They turned to fruits available from trees. Agriculture, that is to say, cultivation of rice and other items of cereals, expanded. This was the first step towards non-violence. The habit of meat eating continued. The sages encouraged vegetarian foods. They instructed that meat should be taken only on special occasions such as social ceremonies like *sraddha ceremony*



and all types of *yagna* ceremony. This was the second step towards non-violence. The *yagnas* were marked by extravagant ceremonies. The purpose of ushering in a non-violent society was defeated.

Lord Buddha raised his voice, inter alia, against animal sacrifice. Lord Mahabir was steadfast in his opposition to all sorts of violence. In spite of their noble messages, the intensity of violence is ever on the increase. Many believe that retaliation is the only panacea. A tooth for a tooth and an eye for an eye has now become the unavoidable maxim of human existence. If Pakistan manufactures a couple of nuclear bombs, India should retaliate by manufacturing five bombs. Peace is a mirage. People now-a-days depend on three types of power : money power, muscle power and technological power. The struggle for power paves the way for war and destruction. What we need, argues, Rakhal Chandra De, is a superior power, a self-strengthening power. This is what Mahatma Gandhi experimented in his life. Dey explains that man should transcend both violence and non-violence. This is what is known as steadiness in spirit (*sthiti* or *Brahmishthiti*). The evolution of *Ahimsa* is directed towards this goal. The march of non-violence has started with vedic non-violence and has evolved through the lives and messages of Buddha, Mahavira and Gandhi.

In this connection, Dey has criticised certain observations of Bhavani Prasad Chattopadhyay expressed in his article *Yuddha Chai Na, Yuddha O Chai* (we don't want war, we want war also) published in *Lokswaraj*, (Buddha and Rabindra Jayanti Number, May 2001). Chattopadhyay has concluded his article with quotation from Tagore. *Andhak rer utsa hate utsarita Alo/Sei to tomar Alo* (The light emanates from the source of darkness. That is your light). Chattopadhyaya suggests that the title of Rakhal Chandra De's article should have been *Ahimsa Prayoger Kramabikas* (the evolution of the application of non-violence) instead of *Ahimsar Kramabikas* (The Evolution of *Ahimsa*). Evolution implies both creation and destruction. Gandhi firmly believed that Truth and Non-violence are two sides of the same coin. He reiterated times without number that Truth is god. Should we entertain the ideas as propounded by Rakhal Chandra that truth and non-violence as embodied in god have birth, death and development? Who is the creator of that sort of non-violence? What is violence? In an learned article entitled "Bichinta" published in *Lokswaraj* (January 2002) Bhavaniprasad has analysed the validity of Gandhian thoughts in the light of crises/complexity of contemporary world.

On September 11, 2001 the Taliban supremo Osama Bin Laden, who was nurtured by American imperialism, struck a death blow to the heart of U.S. symbol

of power, economy pride and arrogance. Laden was empowered with superior and superb demonic technological skill. A question was raised what would have been the reaction of Mahatma Gandhi, if he lived on that date.

Issues framed by De are as follows : Does Chattopadhyay mean that the light of non-violence emanates from the darkness of violence. De rejects the idea. Can violence be ever complimentary to non-violence? Does non-violence lack something that can be found only in violence. De conjectures that Chattopadhyay may feel strongly that non-violence may lead to inertia (Klaivya). The possibility of inertia may be resisted by violence. Non-violence is not the only repository of inertia. Non-violence or love is a soul-force, a superior force, the soul force stands for all that is good. Men turn to soul force when they are incapable of resorting to muscle-power. A coward can never be a non-violent. Violence itself is a weak force, how can it compensate the possible deficiency in non-violence.

Bhavani Chattopadhyay wrote a rejoined to Rakhhal Chandra De's "Ahimsar Kramabikash". Chattopadhyay vehemently asserts that he never meant in his article to say that because of possible deficiencies in non-violence, he advocates violence. He never meant it and he never implied its aforesaid article. He reminded that when seed dies and gives birth to tree, the tree does not become complimentary to seed. The tree grows as a separate entity. It is not wrong if some one believes that violence is darkness and non-violence is light. It is quite common that man transcends violence and transformed as a non-violent soldier. Chattopadhyay bemoans that De has thoroughly misunderstood and misinterpreted his contents.

Let us listen to the message of Gandhi on the eternal value of Non-violence :

'I regard the employment of the atom bomb for the wholesale destruction of men, women and children as the most diabolical use of science. What is the antidote? Has it antiquated non-violence? No. on the contrary non-violence is the only thing that is now left in the field. It is the only thing that the atom bomb cannot destroy. I did not move a muscle when I first heard that the atom bomb had wiped out Hiroshima. On the contrary I said to myself, unless the world adopts non-violence, it will spell certain suicide for mankind (*Harijan*, 29 September, 1946).



# Gandhi takes refuge in Buddhism

## RELATION OF BUDDHISM TO HINDUISM

(A part of Gandhiji's speech in reply to Rangoon Corporation's address as reported in M. D.'s article entitled "With Gandhiji in Burma" is given below.)

Many Buddhists in Ceylon, as if by instinct, claimed me as their own, and in spite of my protestations that I was a Hindu of Hindus, they claimed me and I felt it an honour that they claimed me as one of their own. Undoubtedly, if the Buddhists of Ceylon, Burma, China and Japan would claim me as their own, I should appropriate that honour readily, because I know that Buddhism is to Hinduism what Protestantism is to Roman Catholicism, only in a much stronger light, in a much greater degree.

*Young India*, 28-3-'29, p. 97 at p. 99

## BHAGAWAN BUDDHA

(From "Recent Riots in Burma")

I have the greatest veneration for the Buddha. He is one of the greatest preachers of peace. The gospel of the Buddha is the gospel of love.

*Harijan*, 20-8-'38, p. 226

## THE MESSAGE OF BUDDHA

(Originally appeared under the title "Message to Buddhists")

The following is the text of the speech delivered by Gandhiji at Vidyodaya College, Colombo in reply to an address presented to him by the All Ceylon Congress of Buddhist Associations :

"I thank you very sincerely for the address that you have given to me. I appreciate the courtesy, in that you have supplied me with a translation of your address in advance. I am equally grateful to His Holiness and the priests for the benediction that they have pronounced just now. I shall always esteem it as a great privilege that I have received this benediction this afternoon, and I can give His Holiness and the priests in the presence of this Assembly the assurance that I shall always strive to deserve that benediction. ...

### **Am I a Buddhist?**

"You do not know perhaps that one of my sons, the eldest boy accused me of being a follower of Buddha, and some of my Hindu countrymen also do not hesitate to

accuse me of spreading Buddhistic teaching under the guise of Sanatana Hinduism. I sympathize with my son's accusations and the accusations of my Hindu friends. And sometimes I feel even proud of being accused of being a follower of the Buddha, and I have no hesitation in declaring in the presence of this audience that I owe a great deal to the inspiration that I have derived from the life of the Enlightened One. Indeed, at an anniversary celebration in the new Buddha Temple that has been erected in Calcutta I gave expression to this view. The leader in that meeting was Anagarika Dharmapala. He was weeping over the fact that he was not receiving the response that he desired for the cause which was close to his heart and I remember having rebuked him for shedding tears. I told the audience that though what passed under the name of Buddhism might have been driven out of India, the life of the Buddha and his teachings were by no means driven out of India. This incident happened I think now three years ago, and I have seen nothing since to alter the view which I pronounced at that meeting. It is my deliberate opinion that the essential part or the teachings of the Buddha now forms an integral part of Hinduism. It is impossible for Hindu India today to retrace her steps and go behind the great reformation that Gautama effected in Hinduism. By his immense sacrifice, by his great renunciation and by the immaculate purity of his life he left an indelible impress upon Hinduism and Hinduism owes an eternal debt of gratitude to that great teacher. And if you will forgive me for saying so, and if you will also give me the permission to say so, I would venture to tell you that what Hinduism did not assimilate of what passes as Buddhism today was not an essential part of Buddha's life and his teachings."

### **Hinduism and Buddhism**

"It is my fixed opinion that Buddhism or rather the teaching of Buddha found its full fruition in India, and it could not be otherwise, for Gautam was himself a Hindu of Hindus. He was saturated with the best that was in Hinduism and he gave life to some of the teachings that were buried in the Vedas and which were overgrown with weeds. His great Hindu spirit cut its way through the forest of words, meaningless words, which had overlaid the golden truth that was in the Vedas. He made some of the words in the Vedas yield a meaning to which the men of his generation were utter strangers, and he found in India the most congenial soil. And wherever the Buddha went, he was followed by and surrounded not by non-Hindus but Hindus, those who were themselves saturated with the Vedic law. But the Buddha's teaching like his heart was all-expanding and all-embracing and so it has survived his own body and swept across the face of the earth. And at the risk of being called a follower of Buddha I claim this achievement as a triumph of Hinduism. Buddha never rejected Hinduism, but he broadened its base. He gave it a new life and a new interpretation. But here comes the point where I shall need your forgiveness and your generosity, and I want to submit to you that the teaching

of Buddha was not assimilated in its fulness whether it was in Ceylon, or in Burma, or in China or in Tibet. I know my own limitations. I lay no claim to scholarship in Buddhistic law. Probably, a Fifth Form boy from Nalanda Vidyalaya would plough me in a Buddhist catechism. I know that I speak in the presence of very learned priests and equally learned laymen, but I should be false to you and false to myself if I did not declare what my heart believes.”

### **The Belief in God**

“You and those who call themselves Buddhists outside India have no doubt taken in a very large measure the teaching of the Buddha, but when I examine your life and when I cross-question the friends from Ceylon, Burma, China or Tibet, I feel confounded to find so many inconsistencies between what I have come to understand as the central fact of Buddha’s life and your own practice, and if I am not tiring you out, I would like hurriedly to run through three prominent points that just now occurred to me. The first is the belief in an all-pervading Providence called God. I have heard it contended times without number and I have read in books also claiming to express the spirit of Buddhism that Buddha did not believe in God. In my humble opinion such a belief contradicts the very central fact of Buddha’s teaching. In my humble opinion the confusion has arisen over his rejection and just rejection of all the base things that passed in his generation under the name of God. He undoubtedly rejected the notion that a being called God was actuated by malice, could repent of his actions, and like the kings of the earth could possibly be open to temptations and bribes and could possibly have favourites. His whole soul rose in mighty indignation against the belief that a being called God required for his satisfaction the living blood of animals in order that he might be pleased, animals who were his own creation. He, therefore, reinstated God in the right place and dethroned the usurper who for the time being seemed to occupy that White Throne. He emphasized and redeclared the eternal and unalterable existence of the moral government of this universe. He unhesitatingly said that the law was God Himself.”

### **What is Nirvana?**

“God’s laws are eternal and unalterable and not separable from God Himself. It is an indispensable condition of His very perfection. And hence the great confusion that Buddha disbelieved in God and simply believed in the moral law, and because of this confusion about God Himself, arose the confusion about the proper understanding of the great word *nirvana*. *Nirvana* is undoubtedly not utter extinction. So far as I have been able to understand the central fact of Buddha’s life, *nirvana* is utter extinction of all that is base in us, all that is vicious in us, all that is corrupt and corruptible in us. *Nirvana* is not like the black, dead peace of the grave, but the living peace, the living happiness of a soul which is conscious of itself, and conscious of having found its own abode in the heart of the Eternal.”

### Buddha's Greatest Contribution

“The third point is the low estimation in which the idea of sanctity of all life came to be held in its travels outside India. Great as Buddha's contribution to humanity was in restoring God to His eternal place, in my humble opinion greater still was his contribution to humanity in his exacting regard for all life, be it ever so low. I am aware that his own India did not rise to the height that he would fain have seen India occupy. But the teaching of Buddha, when it became Buddhism and travelled outside, came to mean that sacredness of animal life had not the sense that it had with an ordinary man. I am not aware of the exact practice and belief of Ceylonese Buddhism in this matter, but I am aware what shape it has taken in Burma and China. In Burma especially the Burmese Buddhists will not kill a single animal, but do not mind others killing the animals for them and dishing the carcasses for them for their food. Now, if there was any teacher in the world who insisted upon the inexorable law of cause and effect, it was inevitably Gautama, and yet my friends, the Buddhists outside India, would, if they could, avoid the effects of their own acts. But I must not put an undue strain upon your patience. I have but lightly touched upon some of the points which I think it my duty to bring to your notice, and in all earnestness and equal humility I present them for your serious consideration.”

*Young India*, 24-11-'27, p. 392

### A DIALOGUE WITH A BUDDHIST

(By M. D.)

#### The Meaning of Prayer

Gandhiji had enough time to think and write during his recent visit to Abbottabad, especially as he was kept free of many engagements and interviewers. But even there he had some interviewers—not of the usual type interested in politics or topics of the day but of the unusual type troubled with ultra-mundane problems. History has it that discourses on such problems used to take place in this region hallowed of old by the steps of the followers of Buddha. One of the interviewers of Gandhiji described himself as a follower of Buddha, and discussed a problem arising out of his creed. He is an archaeologist and loves to live in and dream of the past. Dr. Fabri—for that is his name—has been in India for many years. He was a pupil of Prof. Sylvan Levy and came out as assistant to the famous archaeologist Sir Aurel Stein. He served in the Archaeological Department for many years, helped in reorganizing the Lahore Museum, and has some archaeological work to his credit. Delving deep in Buddhistic lore has turned him into a stark rationalist. He is a Hungarian and had in the past corresponded with Gandhiji and even sympathetically fasted with him. He had come to Abbottabad specially to see Gandhiji.

He was particularly exercised about the form and content of prayer and would very much like to know what kind of prayer Gandhiji said. Could the Divine Mind be changed by prayer? Could one find it out by prayer?

“It is a difficult thing to explain fully what I do when I pray,” said Gandhiji. “But I must try to answer your question. The Divine Mind is unchangeable, but that Divinity is in everyone and everything—animate and inanimate. The meaning of prayer is that I want to evoke that Divinity within me. Now I may have that intellectual conviction, but not a living touch. And so when I pray for Swaraj or Independence for India I pray or wish for adequate power to gain that Swaraj or to make the largest contribution I can towards winning it, and I maintain that I can get that power in answer to prayer.”

“Then you are not justified in calling it prayer. To pray means to beg or demand,” said Dr. Fabri.

“Yes, indeed. You may say I beg it of myself, of my Higher Self, the Real Self with which I have not yet achieved complete identification. You may, therefore, describe it as a continual longing to lose oneself in the Divinity which comprises all.”

### **Meditation or Imploration?**

“And you use an old form to evoke this?”

“I do. The habit of a life-time persists, and I would allow it to be said that I pray to an outside Power. I am part of that Infinite, and yet such an infinitesimal part that I feel outside it. Though I give you the intellectual explanation, I feel, without identification with the Divinity, so small that I am nothing. Immediately I begin to say I do this thing and that thing I begin to feel my unworthiness and nothingness, and feel that someone else, some higher Power has to help me.”

“Tolstoy says the same thing. Prayer really is complete meditation and melting into the Higher Self, though one occasionally does lapse in imploration like that of a child to his father.”

“Pardon me,” said Gandhiji, cautioning the Buddhist doctor, “I would not call it a lapse. It is more in the fitness of things to say that I pray to God who exists somewhere up in the clouds, and the more distant He is, the greater is my longing for Him and find myself in His presence in thought. And thought as you know has a greater velocity than light. Therefore, the distance between me and Him, though so incalculably great, is obliterated. He is so far and yet so near.”

### **My Prayer not on a Different Level**

“It becomes a matter of belief, but some people like me are cursed with an acute critical faculty,” said Dr. Fabri. “For me there is nothing higher than what Buddha taught, and no greater master. For Buddha alone among the teachers of the world said : ‘Don’t believe implicitly what I say. Don’t accept any dogma or any book as infallible.’ There is for me no infallible book in the world, inasmuch as all were made by men, however inspired they may have been. I cannot hence believe in a personal idea of God, a Maharaja sitting on the Great White Throne listening to our prayers. I am glad that your prayer is on a different level.”

Let it be said in fairness to the Savant that he is a devotee of the Bhagavadgita and the Dhammapada, and those are the two scriptures he carries with him. But he was arguing an extreme intellectual position. Even here Gandhiji caught him from being swept into the torrent of his logic.

“Let me remind you,” said Gandhiji, “that you are again only *partially* true when you say my prayer is on a different level. I told you that the intellectual conviction that I gave you is not eternally present with me. What is present is the intensity of faith whereby I lose myself in an Invisible Power. And so it is far truer to say that God has done a thing for me than that I did it. So many things have happened in my life for which I had intense longing, but which I could never have achieved myself. And I have always said to my co-workers it was in answer to my prayer. I did not say to them it was in answer to my intellectual effort to lose myself in the Divinity in me! The easiest and the correct thing for me was to say, ‘God has seen me through my difficulty’.”

#### **Karma Alone Powerless**

“But that you deserved by your Karma. God is Justice and not Mercy. You are a good man and good things happen to you,” contended Dr. Fabri.

“No fear. I am not good enough for things to happen like that. If I went about with that philosophical conception of Karma, I should often come a cropper. My Karma would not come to my help. Although I believe in the inexorable law of Karma I am striving to do so many things, every moment of my life is a strenuous endeavour, which is an attempt to build up more Karma, to undo the past and add to the present. It is therefore wrong to say that because my past is good, good is happening at present. The past would be soon exhausted, and I have to build up the future with prayer. I tell you Karma alone is powerless. ‘Ignite this match,’ I say to myself, and yet I cannot if there is no co-operation from without. Before I strike the match my hand is paralysed or I have only one match and the wind blows it off. Is it an accident or God or Higher Power? Well I prefer to use the language of my ancestors or of children. I am no better than a child. We may try to talk learnedly and of books, but when it comes to brass tacks—when we are face to face with a calamity—we behave like children and begin to cry and pray and our intellectual belief gives no satisfaction!”

#### **Did not Buddha Pray?**

“I know, very highly developed men to whom belief in God gives incredible comfort and help in the building up of character,” said Dr. Fabri. “But there are some great spirits that can do without it. That is what Buddhism has taught me.”

“But Buddhism is one long prayer,” rejoined Gandhiji.

“Buddha asked everyone to find salvation from himself. He never prayed, he meditated,” maintained Dr. Fabri.

“Call it by whatever name you like, it is the same thing. Look at his statues.”

“But they are not true to life,” said the archaeologist questioning the antiquity of these statues. “They are 400 years later than his death,” said he.

“Well,” said Gandhiji, refusing to be beaten by a chronological argument, “give me your own history of Buddha as you may have discovered it. I will prove that he was a praying Buddha. The intellectual conception does not satisfy me. I have not given you a perfect and full definition as you cannot describe your own thought. The very effort to describe is a limitation. It defies analysis and you have nothing but scepticism as the residue.” Was it of such people that Pope wrote?—

“With too much knowledge for the sceptic side,  
With too much weakness for the stoic’s pride,  
He hangs between; in doubt to act or rest;  
In doubt to deem himself a god or beast;  
In doubt his mind or body to prefer;  
Born but to die, and reasoning but to err;  
Sole judge of truth, in endless error hurled,  
The glory, jest and riddle of the world.”

### Be Humble

But to proceed, “What about the people who cannot pray?” asked Dr. Fabri.

“Be humble,” said Gandhiji, “I would say to them, and do not limit even the real Buddha by your own conception of Buddha. He could not have ruled the lives of millions of men that he did and does today if he was not humble enough to pray. There is something infinitely higher than intellect that rules us and even the sceptics. Their scepticism and philosophy does not help them in critical periods of their lives. They need something better, something outside them that can sustain them. And so if someone puts a conundrum before me, I say to him, ‘You are not going to know the meaning of God or prayer unless you reduce yourself to a cipher. You must be humble enough to see that in spite of your greatness and gigantic intellect you are but a speck in the universe. A merely intellectual conception of the things of life is not enough. It is the spiritual conception which eludes the intellect, and which alone can give one satisfaction. Even moneyed men have critical periods in their lives; though they are surrounded by everything that money can buy and affection can give, they find at certain moments in their lives utterly distracted. It is in these moments that we have a glimpse of God, a vision of Him who is guiding every one of our steps in life. It is prayer.’”

“You mean what we might call a true religious experience which is stronger than intellectual conception,” said Dr. Fabri. “Twice in life I had that experience, but I have since lost it. But I now find great comfort in one or two sayings of Buddha: ‘Selfishness is the cause of sorrow’, ‘Remember, monks, everything is fleeting’. To think of these takes almost the place of belief.”

“That is prayer,” repeated Gandhiji with an insistence that could not but have gone home.

### The Right to Kill Oneself

Dr. Fabri found that it was Impossible to take Gandhiji further on the point, but he stayed to ask yet another question. Buddha had excused monks who committed suicide. “What would you say to the right of man to dispose of his life? Life as life I hold of very little importance,” he asked.

“I think,” said Gandhiji, “that man has a perfect right to dispose of his life under certain circumstances. A co-worker suffering from leprosy knowing that his disease was incurable and that his life was as much an agony for those who had to serve him as it was for him, recently decided to end his life by abstaining from food and water. I blessed the idea. I said to him : ‘If you really think you can stand the trial, you may do so.’ I said this to him for I knew how different it is to die by inches from, say, suddenly killing oneself by drowning or poisoning. And my warning was fully justified, for some one tempted him with the hope that there was one who could cure leprosy, and I now hear that he has resumed eating and put himself under his treatment!”

“The criterion,” said Dr. Fabri, “seems to me to be that if one’s mind is completely obscured by pain, the best thing for him would be to seek *nirvana*. A man may not be ill but he may be tired of the struggle.”

“No, no.” said Gandhiji, correcting him as he was again running away with the thought that his view was identical with Gandhiji’s. “My mind rejects this suicide.

The criterion is not that one is tired of life, but that one feels that one has become a burden on others and therefore wants to leave the world. One does not want to fly from pain but from having to become an utter burden on others. Otherwise one suffers greater pain in a violent effort to end one’s agony. But supposing I have a cancer, and it is only a question of time for me to pass away, I would even ask my doctor to give me a sleeping draught and thereby have the sleep that knows no waking.”

Dr. Fabri got up to go with the parting wish that there may be many more years of helpful activity left for Gandhiji.

“No,” said Gandhiji with a hearty laugh, “according to you I should have no business to stay if I feel I have finished my task. And I do think I have finished mine!”

“No, I am convinced that you can serve humanity for many more years. Millions are praying for your life. And though I can neither pray nor desire anything—”

“Yes,” said Gandhiji interrupting him, “the English language is so elastic that you can find another word to say the same thing.”

“Yes,” said Dr. Fabri, “I can unselfishly opine that you have many years before you.”

“Well that’s it. You have found the word! Here too let me tell you there is the purely intellectual conception of a man being unable to live. If he has not the desire to live, the body will perish for the mere absence of the desire to live.”

As Dr. Fabri left he asked me if he might have Gandhiji’s autograph. “I have long had a desire for it,” he said, and contradicted himself as all votaries of sheer intellect must do. “Well,” said I, “Gandhiji has never claimed to be free from desire, and with every autograph he gives he desires to secure Rs. 5/- for Harijans!” “I know,” said Dr. Fabri, laughing, “it shall be given.”

*Harijan*, 19-8-'39, p. 237

#### MESSAGE TO THE FOONGIS

**(The following message to the *foongis* of Burma is reproduced from “With Gandhiji in Burma—IV” by M. D.)**

The real message to the *foongis* had been yet undelivered. Hundreds of monks met Gandhiji in Burma as in Ceylon, and nowhere did Gandhiji find an audience to draw him out. At one place there he rested satisfied with simply sounding a note of warning: “You who do well to own the Buddha as your teacher will do well to explore the limitless possibilities of non-violence. There are things in your practice which I have not been able to reconcile with the teachings of the Buddha but I do not propose to abuse your great hospitality by being critical at this moment.” In Mandalay which is a great centre of pagodas and monasteries, thousands of *foongis* had gathered to meet Gandhiji, but the noise was so great that it was impossible to speak at any length and with any seriousness. “You have,” he said, “as I conceive it, one of the greatest truths that the world can ever have uttered by one of the greatest teachers of mankind, viz., Ahimsa. If there had been a perfectly silent and a quiet atmosphere I would gladly have spoken to you upon that quiet doctrine. As it is I can only ask you to study the doctrine and reduce it to practice in every act of your lives. It is infinitely greater than the gems and the diamonds people prize so much. It can become, if you will make wise use of it, your own saving and the saving of mankind.”

In Tongoo, however, which was the last place visited in Burma, there was unusual silence and quiet in the great pandal that they had constructed for the occasion, and the *foongis* had the privilege of a great interpreter in the person of Tharawady U. Pu. I reproduce Tongoo speech *in extenso*.

“With this meeting ends what has been to me a most interesting and instructive tour in the interior of Burma. Delightful as my experiences of the people of Burma were when my visit some years ago was only confined to Rangoon and for a day only to Moulemein, that delight has been heightened by my experience during this tour even as far as Mandalay. It has been a great joy to me to see at all these meetings so many yellow-robed *foongis* and so many Burman sisters and brothers. As this will be for many years to come, if not for ever, my last address to an

audience such as this, I propose to submit a few remarks on what is to you and me dearest to our hearts.

It cannot be without purpose and meaning that all your addresses, no matter where presented, have approved of and blessed my message of non-violence and of the spinning wheel. I would, therefore, say a few words to you in explanation of what I understand by the message of Ahimsa. To me it is one of the most active forces in the world. It is like the sun that rises upon us unfailingly from day to day. Only if we would but understand it, it is infinitely greater than a million suns put together. It radiates life and light and peace and happiness. Why do we not see that light, that life, that peace and that happiness in a land that professes the law of Ahimsa? As I said in Mandalay only yesterday, it has appeared to me that the message of the Buddha, the Enlightened One, has only touched but the surface of the heart of Burma. I would like to apply one or two tests. Now I hold that where the law of Ahimsa reigns supreme, there should be no jealousy, no unworthy ambition, no crime. I read your criminal statistics and I find that you are not behind hand in the race for crime. Murder on the slightest pretext seems to me to be fairly common in Burma. I will, therefore, appeal to the friends on my left (the *foongis*) who are supposed to be the repositories of the Faith you have inherited from the Buddha. Having travelled in Ceylon and now fairly long enough in Burma, I feel that we in India have perhaps more fully, though by no means as fully as possible, interpreted the message of the Buddha than you have done. We have it in our Shastras that whenever things go wrong, good people and sages go in for *tapasya* otherwise known as austerities. Gautama himself, when he saw oppression, injustice and death around him, and when he saw darkness in front of him, at the back of him and each side of him, went out in the wilderness and remained there fasting and praying in search of light. And if such penance was necessary for him who was infinitely greater than all of us put together, how much more necessary is it for us, no matter whether we are dressed in yellow or not?

My friends, if you will become torch-bearers lighting the path of a weary world towards the goal of Ahimsa, there is no other way out of it, save that of self-purification and penance. So many priests are sitting here today. If some of them will take upon themselves the work of interpreting the message of the Buddha, they will revolutionize life. You will not be guided by rigid traditions, but will search your hearts and your scriptures and tear the hidden meaning lying behind the written word and vivify your surroundings. You will then find upon searching your hearts that it is not enough not to take animal life, but you must see to it that it is not taken for the pleasures of the palate. You will then at once realize that it is inconsistent with the doctrine of love for all that lives to turn our mouths into chimneys. I understand that drink is on the increase in a people so simple-hearted as the Burmese and in a climate which does not necessitate the drinking of the fiery liquid. You will immediately see on further research that there is no room for one who loves

everything that lives to have fear lurking in his breast. You will yourselves cease to fear authority and you will teach all round you to cease to fear anybody. I hope that these few words that I have spoken to you in all humility and from the bottom of my heart will be received by you in the same spirit in which they have been spoken. Since you have at all your meetings credited me with a spirit of non-violence and truth, I have endeavoured to interpret in the best way I could the message of non-violence and truth as I have understood it for an unbroken period of 40 years. May the words I have spoken find a lodgment in your heart and may they bear abundant fruit, and if they do, there should be no difficulty in all factions and parties combining together for a common cause. I thank you for having listened to me with such patience and in perfect silence.

*Young India*, 18-4-'29. p. 125

#### PLEA FOR BUDDHISTIC REVIVAL

Gandhiji addressed a large gathering in Ceylon of Buddhist young men on the premises of their association on the 25th November, 1927.

At the outset Gandhiji pleaded for toleration. He did not claim to be a scholar in any sense of the term. His first introduction to any religious study was through a single book, viz., Sir Edwin Arnold's *Light of Asia*, which fascinated and engrossed him. Ever since, the spirit of Buddha had haunted him, so much so that he had been accused of being a Buddhist in disguise. And as he had said on a previous occasion he accepted the accusation as a compliment though he knew that if he made any such claim it would be summarily rejected by orthodox Buddhists. As one, however, who had imbibed the spirit of Buddhism he would reassert in all humility, but unhesitatingly, if in a different language, what he said' on the previous occasion.

"There are some conditions," he said, "laid down in Hinduism for a proper prayerful study of religions. They are of a universal character. Remember also that Gautama was a Hindu of Hindus. He was saturated with the spirit of Hinduism, with the Vedic spirit, he was born and bred up in those exhilarating surroundings—exhilarating for the spirit,— and so far as I am aware, he never rejected Hinduism, or the message of the Vedas. What he did was therefore to introduce a living reformation in the petrified faith that surrounded him. I venture to suggest to you that your study of Buddhism will be incomplete unless you study, the original sources from which the Master derived his inspiration, that is, unless you study Sanskrit and the Sanskrit scriptures. But your duty, if you are to understand the spirit of the Buddha and not the letter of Buddhism, does not end there.



# The Gandhi Revival—A Review Article

Mark Juergensmeyer

Considering the sum total of its Indian and Western audiences, Richard Attenborough's *Gandhi* has become the most widely viewed cinematic portrayal of the man and one of the most widely seen films in history. It has accompanied a renaissance of interest in Gandhi that has been growing for several years, fueled in the West by the use of Gandhian techniques in the protests against nuclear weapons, and in India by the adoption of Gandhian social ideas in the radical wing of the Sarvodaya movement.

One result of this revival of interest has been a proliferation of Gandhian studies. At Delhi University, for example, the Department of Political Science has recently added an M.A. program in Gandhian politics, and at Harvard, Chicago, Wisconsin, Berkeley, and scores of other American campuses, courses featuring Gandhi have cropped up in the last few years. A spate of new books has been brought out and old books have been reissued to meet a growing public and academic demand. One might ask whether this is just a temporary phenomenon or whether the interest will be sustained, and whether the approaches to the study of

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*Gandhi*. Produced and directed by Sir Richard Attenborough. Distributed by Columbia Pictures, 1982.

*Tolstoy and Gandhi, Men of Peace : A Biography*. By Martin Green. New York : Basic Books, 1983, 319 pp. \$23.50.

*Sarvodaya : The Other Development*. By Detlef, K. Delhi. Vikas Publishing, 1980. 228 pp. \$20.

*Dharma and Development : Religion as Resource in the Sarvodaya Self-Help Movement*. By Joanna Macy. West Hartford, Conn. : Kumarian Press, 1983. 102 pp. \$ 13.75 (cloth), \$6.75 (paper).

*Gandhi and the Contemporary World : Studies in Peace and War*. Edited by K. P. Misra and S. C. Gangal. Delhi : Chanakya Publications, 1981. 253 pp. \$16.

*The Philosophy of Gandhi : A Study of His Basic Ideas*. By Glyn Richards. New York : Barnes and Noble, 1982. 200 pp. \$18.50.

Gandhian themes that are currently being developed are ones that will endure. In this article I shall look at the phenomenon and the literature and try to assess the field of Gandhian studies as a whole.

Why does the figure of Gandhi continue to be such a source of fascination? Attenborough's film supplies one answer, for it presents the picture of a lone moral individual triumphing over the conventional forces of authority in society. This image of moral strength outweighing conventional strength is the stuff of which the classic Western adventure, tale is made. It is the cowboy, the space hero, and all those cinematic incarnations of Jesus and Moses. This moral conqueror is also to be found in a certain kind of Indian heroic archetype : the noble renunciant who defies dharmic propriety for the sake of a higher spiritual truth. It is a mold shaped by the tales of the gods— both Shiva and Krishna defy convention for their own divine purposes — and it is a mold into which the movie image of Gandhi snugly fits.

One might argue that no one fostered this image more fervently than the Mahatma himself. This striving for moral perfection frequently protrudes from the pages of Gandhi's *An Autobiography : The Story of My Experiments with Truth* (Boston : Beacon Press, 1957). And in this sense, the movie is true to the spirit of the man, even if it may fudge a bit with some of the historical details. My guess is that if Gandhi had seen the film he would have been pleased. The movie, like Gandhi's own writings, pictures him as a reluctant saint in search of a cause. The question that remains is whether the image is an adequate interpretation of the man and his meaning, and this question lies behind much of the literature of Gandhian studies.

### Landmarks in the Field

According to *Publishers Weekly* there are over 400 biographies of Gandhi alone and many interpretive works besides. Most of this mass of Gandhian is hagiography, and reading it is rather like reading the lives of the saints. There are, however, two categories of Gandhian books worth considering more seriously : those that attempt to place Gandhi in a historical or intellectual context, and those that try to clarify what Gandhi was about. In each category there are landmark works.

Gandhi is remembered as the central figure in India's nationalist movement, and many of the historical studies of the man analyze his role in the critical period of India's emergence as an independent nation. Important works in this area include Judith Brown's *Gandhi's Rise to Power* (London : Cambridge University Press, 1972) and *Gandhi and Civil Disobedience* (London : Cambridge University Press, 1977), both of which meticulously detail the ways in which Gandhi was able to forge political linkages on local and regional levels. But how could such a shy man

capture the imagination of the masses? Probably the best answer to this question is Lloyd I and Susanne Hoerber Rudolph's section on Gandhi in *The Modernity of Tradition*, a long essay that has been reissued under the title *Gandhi : The Traditional Roots of Charisma* (Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 1983). The Rudolphs' splendid essay shows that Gandhi was able to fuse a traditional Hindu image of saintliness with the modern, role of a political broker, and it remains a standard for studies of Gandhi as a political actor.

The central historical task is that of properly telling and interpreting the story of Gandhi's life. Despite the plethora of attempts, no single biography of Gandhi may be called definitive. Multivolume works written by Gandhi's former colleagues and published in India are comprehensive in scope, but their objectivity suffers from the authors' reverent regard for their subject. This appreciative tone also characterizes the biographies of Gandhi that are most popular in the West, but some attain a standard of objectivity that makes them stand out. I would say that the most evenhanded presentations are to be found in two works : B. R. Nanda's reliable *Mahatma Gandhi. A Biography* (London : Allen and Unwin, 1958) and Geoffrey Ashe's intelligently written *Gandhi* (New York : Stein and Day, 1968).

Historical research on Gandhi has been greatly aided by two series of publications. One is the Indian government's monumental project of collecting and indexing all of Gandhi's writing—including his essays, interviews, and letters. Some eighty volumes of *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (New Delhi : Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1958 to the present) have been published, and the task is not yet complete. The other useful series is the reissue of the complete run of Gandhi's journal *Hanjan*, in which many of his essays originally appeared (Garland Press, New York, 1979).

The second category of Gandhian studies comprises those that attempt to explicate Gandhi's methods and approach. A landmark among these studies is Joan Bondurant's *Conquest of Violence* (Berkeley : University of California Press, 1967), the first book to present Gandhian strategy in a systematic way, which continues to be regarded as the most reliable analysis of Gandhi's campaigns for social and political change. Raghavan Iyer's *Moral and Political Thought of Gandhi* (New York : Oxford University Press, 1973) gives Gandhian ideas the consistency that he himself was unable to provide, and Erik Erikson's thoughtful psychoanalytic study, *Gandhi's Truth* (New York : W. W. Norton, 1969), has lifted Gandhi and his ideas out of the narrow context of South Asia and given them wide accessibility. Although he is vexed by Gandhi's moralism, Erikson is impressed with Gandhi's relentless pursuit of truth, which he likens to that of Freud.

As a group, these books present a much more complicated image of Gandhi

than that provided by the cinema and the hagiographies. They form the core works of a serious library on Gandhi. For the most part, recent works on Gandhian themes build on them, but a few recent works strike out in quite different directions.

### Recent Gandhian Studies in the West

One recent book that moves in a new direction approaches the scale and imagination of Erikson and the Rudolphs, and it comes from an unexpected quarter : literary analysis. Martin Green, in *Tolstoy and Gandhi, Men of Peace*, offers a double biography and a common assessment of the significance of the two men. Green regards Tolstoy and Gandhi as representative of an anti-imperialist sentiment that was rife at the turn of the century. In their private lives as well as in their public statements, he claims, the two tried to recover the sense of personal power that had been lost in the magisterial and global dimensions of great empires. Green sees both Gandhi and Tolstoy as political-literary figures : they were visionaries, creators of new images of the self in society. Green's ideas are exciting stuff, and his elegant prose adds to the reader's pleasure. If his thesis is right, it would help to explain Tolstoy's and Gandhi's fascination with one another, as well as the continuing interest in Gandhi by Westerners who, like Tolstoy, are visionary and anti-imperialist in temperament.

Most of the other recent books on Gandhi written in the West build on themes established by the landmark works, and extend them in one of two directions. Either they attempt further to systematize Gandhi's thought or to make it applicable to current social situations; some attempt both. Continuing in the vein of Iyer, Glyn Richards, in *The Philosophy of Gandhi : A Study of His Basic Ideas*, makes an effort to give Gandhi intellectual respectability by locating his ideas in the Indian philosophic tradition and comparing them with such Western thinkers as Tillich and Wittgenstein. Gandhi comes out of this analysis looking somewhat Vedantic, a guise that Gandhi the activist might not easily recognize. That aside, Richards's book is an interesting essay in comparative philosophy, and should be a useful contribution to what is becoming a lively field of comparative studies. Just out (and too late to review in this article) is Margaret Chatterjee's *Gandhi's Religious Thought* (Notre Dame, Ind. : Notre Dame University Press, 1984), which explores the Hindu roots of Gandhi's ideas and assesses the Christian contribution to them. Other recent works follow along the lines of Bondurant in their attempt to analyze Gandhi's strategy of conflict resolution and show its applicability to a wide range of situations. Gene Sharp's collected essays, entitled *Gandhi as a Political Strategist* (Boston : Porter Sargent Publishers, 1979), and my own *Fighting With Gandhi* (New York and San Francisco : Harper and Row, 1984) fall into such a category.

These Gandhian theories of conflict resolution and social change appeal to social activists as much as they do to scholars. For this reason, the field of Gandhian studies is parallel to that of Marxist studies : some of the more interesting statements about the theories have come from practitioners of the craft. The movements led by Martin Luther King, Jr., in the United States, Albert Luthuli in South Africa, and Danilo Dolci in Sicily are all traceable to the influence of Gandhi, and writings that have come from these movements are useful amendments to Gandhian thought.

### Gandhian Studies in India

Practical interest in Gandhi is perhaps even more apparent in India, where Gandhi's legacy is to be found not only in his writings but in movements dedicated to Gandhian forms of social change. Perhaps the most significant Indian extensions of Gandhian theory may be found in the activities of the late Jayaprakash Narayan (Commonly known as "J. P.") and his followers in the Gandhian Sarvodaya movement. The followers of J. P. are not the only ones who claim inspiration from the Mahatma, however, for in India everyone seems to own him, and there Gandhian studies are something of a national heritage. In fact, a bit of tension exists between those who hold to two quite different interpretations of Gandhi : Gandhi the national hero, who would endorse India's present course of development, and Gandhi the revolutionary, who would advocate radical social and economic change. Most of those who write and teach on Gandhian themes fall somewhere between the two extremes.

In the 1950s many Indian universities established chairs and programs in Gandhian studies, largely for reasons of national pride. Some institutions, including Punjab University at Chandigarh, set up whole departments devoted to Gandhi, and it became popular for universities to erect Gandhi Bhavans — small, architecturally interesting buildings intended for public seminars and discussions, presumably to focus on Gandhian issues. The version of Gandhi that was promoted in these buildings and programs was the more moderate one, and today many of these Gandhi Bhavans are unused and in disrepair. Few of the old-style Gandhian programs are flourishing. Newer programs, however, that advocate a more radical Gandhi and are being established in conjunction with departments of economics and political science, are doing quite well.

The recently published proceedings of a Gandhian symposium held in Delhi, *Gandhi and the Contemporary World*, edited by K. P. Misra and S. C. Gangal, indicate the diverse approaches to Gandhian studies in India. The contributors include former prime Minister Morarji Desai and other colleagues of the Mahatma, scholars, and activists. Some of the essays are homiletic in tone and plea for the

revival of Gandhian values in modern society. The best essays, one by K. P. Saksena on Gandhi's concept of human rights and another by S. C. Gangal on Gandhi's notion of world order, were written by scholars who are not Gandhian specialists as such, but who find in Gandhi's writings a progressive point of view and an aid in assessing contemporary political issues. The final essay in the book, written by a Gandhian activist, Devdutt, casts doubt over the whole enterprise of Gandhian studies and questions whether any study of Gandhian ideas, apart from the practice of them, is true to the spirit of the master.

Some Gandhian institutes have been established in India for the purpose of integrating his ideas and their application. The Gandhian Institute of Studies in Banaras promotes research projects on rural development and applied social studies, and the Gandhi Peace Foundation in New Delhi sponsors seminars, consultations, and stipends for a core of scholars who do research on Gandhian theory and practice. Both of these organizations publish journals : *Interdiscipline* in Banaras, and *Gandhi Marg* in New Delhi.

But even these institutes are considered suspect by the radical wing of Gandhians, which draws its inspiration from J. P. Narayan and much of its support from high school and college students who joined his movement for "total revolution" in the mid-1970s. Many of these students are still engaged in what are called "constructive programs," attempts at bringing about social and economic change in rural areas. The Gandhian students who continue their academic pursuits are the ones who are calling for the new graduate programs in political science and economics to promote a radical Gandhian restoration of traditional society. Their influence has been widely felt on Indian campuses, and recently a response to them has come from scholars in Bombay and Delhi who are sympathetic with Nehru's more secular and modern vision of India's future. In July 1981, these scholars issued a manifesto calling for a renewal of commitment to what they call "scientific temper." The manifesto was revised and reissued in 1983.

The best analysis of the radical Gandhian legacy is Detlef Kuntowsky's *Sarvodaya : The Other Development* (see J. Das Gupta, "Development and Poverty Reduction in South Asia—A Review Article," *Journal of Asian Studies* 42, Nov. 1982, pp. 105-17). Kuntowsky carefully traces the development of Gandhian socialism from Gandhi's discovery of John Ruskin's book, *Unto This Last*, and Gandhi's early experiments in Utopian community to the Bhoodan land reforms of Vinoba Bhave and the radical movement led by J. P. Narayan. Kuntowsky is especially mindful of the differences between a concept in theory and the way in which it is put into practice, and he sees a sort of dialectical relationship between the theoretical and the practical in the emergence of Gandhian socialism.

Only half of Kantowsky's book is about the Sarvodaya movement in India, however. The other half is about a transported form of Sarvodaya found in neighboring Sri Lanka, which is threatening to eclipse its Indian parent organization in innovative vitality. The lively Sri Lankan movement is the subject of two other recent books : Denis Goulet's *Survival with Integrity : Sarvodaya at the Crossroads* (Colombo : Marga Institute, 1981), which was reviewed in *Journal of Asian Studies* 42, May 1983, pp. 699-700), and Joanna Macy's *Dharma and Development : Religion as Resource in the Sarvodaya Self-Help Movement*. Macy's sensitive analysis of the movement makes it quite dear that the Sinhalese variant of Sarvodaya is conceptually quite different from, the Indian, and is religious in a more obvious way. The founder of the movement, A. T. Ariyaratna, derived his inspiration from the Gandhian movement in India, but he adapted Gandhian ideas to the Sri Lankan context. He employed Buddhist concepts of compassion and self-negation to create an indigenous concept of social sharing, and he utilized the traditional Buddhist notion of the righteous ruler to epitomize his idea of moral politics.

It remains to be seen whether Gandhian social and economic theories hold the key to the future of the undeveloped world, as Ariyaratna, along with J. P. Narayan, and Western Gandhian prophets such as E. M. Schumacher, have suggested. Most of those who write about Gandhi in both India and the West are content to envisage change on a much more individual level, and they see Gandhi's main significance as an inspirational and easily understandable model for personal piety and virtue. But even in a saintly view of Gandhi— such as that portrayed in Richard Attenborough's film— there is an implicit social dimension. Behind the hyperbole and hagiography is an image of a man of extraordinary moral achievement, someone who lived simultaneously as an ascetic and as a worldly crusader. Most of us find these two ways of dealing with the world to be well-nigh irreconcilable; their opposing requirements result in a moral tension that is felt by sensitive persons in almost every culture. Gandhi's apparent ability to surmount this ethical dichotomy is cause for international awe, and for this reason Gandhi continues to be seen as a potent model for moral action. His image has both social and personal dimensions, and its complexity and vitality guarantee that interest in Gandhi and his ideas will continue long after the current revival of excitement about them subsides.

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*Journal of Asian Studies*, February 1964, pp. 293-298



# The Way the World is Moving and the Insight and Foresight of Mahatma Gandhi

Sisir K. Dhar

*(Continuation from previous issue)*

## IV

Without a global revolution in the sphere of human consciousness, nothing will change for the better .... and the catastrophe towards which our world is heading will be unavoidable.

—Vaclav Havel, President, Czech Republic

We have indicated so far the way the world is moving today. Our analysis of and criticism against the present industrial civilisation have suggested, at least implicitly, the way it should move. We must now consider, as specifically as possible, what is to be done keeping even in view the summum bonum of happiness and mental development of man.

We must not allow any dogma to guide us. We must admit at the outset that this civilisation is so established that it cannot be ended completely and it is to be mended as substantially as possible. "It is no easy task to do away with a thing that is established," recognises Gandhi. Also, a civilisation, unlike erecting a building on a clean plot with a blueprint, is not imposed from above. It is a long-term evolution with an interaction between the existing condition and an awareness of emerging problems, new values, major innovation etc., and acculturation. Basing idealism on realism and not being just utopian, our aim shall be to create the ground for a more compassionate civilisation that also helps growth of constructive creativity in man. To the extent the endeavour succeeds, the wealth and power-grabbing character of this civilisation will weaken as also the ground for conflicts among men.

This civilisation cannot be rejected wholesale today as it is deeply entrenched and the society also will not give up the good things it has given except where they are too costly in terms of benefits and where constraints of resource and ecology intervene. With a strong condemnation of this civilisation, Gandhi is against so many

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*Presented at the U.G.C. sponsored National Seminar on 'The Relevance of Gandhian Thought in the 21st Century', organised by the Department of Gandhian Thought, Bhagalpur University on November 16-18, 1995.*

things in it but he accepts some of them as a “necessary evil.” Despite his criticism against machine, he recognises that destroying all machinery and mills “requires a higher simplicity and renunciation than the people are today prepared to pay for.” Also “machines will remain because, like the body, they are inevitable.” So he suggests how best those machinery which are needed may be handled to serve the people. He also urges our being guided not with a craze for machinery as such. Clearly, our approach should be of a reform and not a revolution. But then, sustained meaningful reforms over a long period and with a clarity of vision, gaining a momentum of their own, may in the long run signify revolutionary changes, minus the sound and fury.

True to the goal, we should think of a positive approach with an understanding of what is achievable at the most. The Report of the Club of Rome, indicating, it seems, a fairly comprehensive approach suggests that “we must be more explicit about the importance of values and ethics in different areas ..... Our efforts must be directed towards the creation of a sustainable world society, and caution dictates that the profligate life-styles in the industrialised countries should be curbed through a slowdown of consumption - which may, in any case be forced on us by environmental constraints. It is also imperative that renewed efforts be made to eliminate poverty throughout the world.” The approach does not smack of any utopian idealism nor also of any unidealised pragmatism. The approach is one of practical idealism. Its two concrete aspects are (a) curbing the profligate life-style through a slowdown of consumption and (b) elimination of poverty throughout the world. And, our action, unless guided with an appropriate philosophy of life, may follow a wrong direction. Hence the essentiality of an explicit recognition of the “importance of values and ethics,” the cornerstone of all endeavour for a better society. In Einstein’s words, “The most important human endeavour is the striving for morality in our actions. Our inner balance and even our very existence depend on it. Only morality in our actions can give beauty and dignity to life.” The creation of a sustainable society, that meets the needs of both the present and future generations, we hope, will follow the curbing of profligate life-styles. Such life-styles should not infect the LDCs where we are to eliminate poverty.

We have referred to some major evils in the modern civilisation. In it, the people are by and large in a state of tension, when peace and content, as distinct from transient pleasure and excitement, elude them. Clearly, this civilisation has shown what it can and cannot do. It has reached the end of its path and cannot offer anything new qualitatively. The materialist path does not lead to spiritual development. It keeps man opiated with ‘small’ things and keeps life arrested at a shallow level. Science may still help even larger exploitation of resources, some, but not enough, substitution of scarce resources etc., but resource constraints put a severe limit to

enhancement of mass production. Also, maximisation of production is not maximisation of happiness. And, science, ill-directed, may be the grave-digger of the human society.

“It is high time that civilised man turned his mind to fundamental things,” urged the famous psychologist, C. G. Jung. He reflected the profound feeling of great prophets and humanist thinkers, who have urged invariably that the way to happiness and self-development lies in freedom from the bondage of greed, ambition and selfishness - that Spinoza called “forms of insanity”, and in man’s striving to be “the king over himself; just, gentle, wise.” (Shelley). “Man’s happiness,” Gandhi affirms, “really lies in contentment. He who is discontented, however much he possesses, becomes a slave of desires. And there is no slavery equal to that of his desires.” “Civilisation, in the real sense of the term,” he holds “consists not in the multiplication, but in the deliberate and voluntary reductions of wants. This alone promotes real happiness and contentment, and increases the capacity for service.”

The concept of a ‘simple life’, often mentioned by Gandhi, has not originated with him - he attributes this to the sages of the old. But he lives a life that he preaches. The idea of a simple life has found an echo in the sensible minds of all times. If Zarathushtra says, “Practice simplicity in habits, simplicity of heart, and simplicity of character,” Jesus feels that “a man’s life consisted not in the abundance of things which he possessed.” Long ago, the stoic philosopher and emperor, Marcus Aurelius, said, “Remember, very little is required to make a happy life.”

Writing about England in 1802, Poet Wordsworth felt sorry that people adored “the idolatry of rapine, avarice and expense,” and “plain living and high thinking are no more.”<sup>12</sup> Romain Rolland’s terse comment is : “the more I have, the less I am.”<sup>12</sup> A great historian of science, George Sarton, asserts : “There is infinitely more virtue and glory in creating beauty, justice happiness than in creating wealth.”<sup>13</sup>

What do we really mean by a ‘simple life’? Gandhi gives a list of great men, “who deliberately embraced poverty as their lot.” But his prescription of simple life for the common man does not mean a strict regimen, that he prescribes for those who join his Ashram voluntarily. It is related to the level of moral growth of different individuals. He does not urge for a life of sack cloth and ashes for average people. Of course, ‘awakened souls’ from Buddha to Francis of Assisi do not wait to be urged for the path of utmost simplicity, which is of their own choice. Gandhi implores all for a conscious limitation of wants. Like Gandhi, Tagore also feels that “Man’s real needs are not many.” What Gandhi likes everyone to do is to strive earnestly to the best of one’s ability for simplicity. He hopes, a man’s earnestness will lead him ahead. (Actually, if we have any single lesson from the life of Gandhi, who happened to be a rather mediocre person and came to be regarded as a ‘Mahatma’, it is that earnestness carries a man ahead.) In the simple life that he visualises, he is particular about mans

health as also the basic needs - plenty of fresh, wholesome balanced diet; simple but artistic, durable clothes; sunny, airy, cozy dwellings amid agreeable surroundings. And the 'Father of the Nation' does not ignore even the need for proper sanitation and clean hygienic latrines also - matters trifling to most leaders. (His economic system is capable of meeting these needs. We may add here that he envisioned self-sufficient villages. Even if a village cannot become completely self-sufficient, the more self-reliant it becomes, the better it is for all.) With a spirit of understanding, he concedes the use of electricity for the masses though not for his Ashram. Perhaps, the 'practical idealist' (that he claimed to be) would not oppose one's ordinary fancies and hobbies, that might give one some innocent satisfaction.

Whether I am correct or not in my understanding of Gandhi on this point, I think ours should be a decent life, enriched with simplicity. One can cultivate simplicity without being a puritan. And morality is a mind's inward growth and not something imposed. Gandhi's simple life (rather extraordinary) and such qualities in him as cleanliness, dislike for gaudiness, his sense of discipline, punctuality, tolerance along with a firmness of conviction, placidity of mind and, above all, his compassion and never-failing sense of humour-all these reflect a simple decent mind. Overall, his life itself is an art in a simple setting. With a spirit of understanding, he would not demand the same simplicity from all. Following Cardinal Newman, Gandhi recognises "one step enough for me". More important than how much one has moved in the direction in which one moves - one step in the right direction paves the way for the next.

The simple life does not mean a complete rejection of matter - an absurdity. But for one aiming at elevation of mind, commodities are essentially for meeting needs. They shall not dominate the mind; and shallow consumerism, different from rational decent use, is not in tune with this aim. As Eric From puts it, "After he (man) has satisfied his animal needs, he is driven by human needs. While his body tells him what to eat and what to avoid - his conscience ought to tell him which needs to cultivate and satisfy, and which need to let wither and starve out."

Clearly, the question of self-restraint, so prominent in the thoughts of saints, Gandhi included - comes in as a vital element in human life. A man should exercise restraint when facing scarcity as also plenty. The acme of this self-restraint is 'non-attachment' ('anasakti' as enjoined in 'Gita'), on which Gandhi is so emphatic. This precious quality of mind prepares a man to face sorrow and happiness stoically. "What chiefly distinguishes man from the beast is," says Gandhi, "That man from the age of his discretion begins to practice a life of continual self-restraint."

"Self-control, though I will not for a moment deny its necessity on occasion," contends Bertrand Russell, "is not the best way of getting people to behave well. It has the drawback of diminishing energy and creativeness. It is like wearing heavy armour, .... Those who rely wholly upon self-control become stiff and timorous

through fear of themselves. But the impulses to which they allow no outlet continue to exist and, like rivers that are dammed, they must overflow sooner or later.” While accepting Russell’s argument we may point out that his criticism is not basically against self-control but against possible misuse through excesses.

No doubt, some amount of self-restraint is needed by man. But to be fruitful, this must not be an imposition. It must be cultivated with an awareness of its value. To recognise and feel its value, as that of all important things, is the first thing. A car must have a brake and the driver must know its use or the car will meet with an accident. So also, a man must know what to have and what not to have, how far to move and where to stop, and he must act according to the knowledge. Self-control in man is just like the brake in a car.

A word on science. Science can help and harm man— “a double-edged weapon,” says Gandhi. So also technology - “With the help of new technology a resource-poor country can overcome its natural handicaps,” says Stanislaw H. Wellisz.<sup>14</sup> We cannot oppose them in principle, but we guard against their misuse. Today, science gives man an unprecedented power. And as Shakespeare said, it is good to have the power of a giant but not to use it like a giant. Hence spiritual growth, meaning transcending the self and in the process overcoming one’s frailties, and self-control-actually two aspects of the same process-are all the more needed today. As Russell also points out, “To stop war, we must not only work on Governments; we must cleanse our own hearts of the poisons that make war seem inevitable : pride fear, greed, envy and contempt.” Gandhian wisdom emphasises on the same point rather in a perennial context, knowing that even if atomic weapons are abolished men may still hate and fight, if they remain slaves of passions and baser instincts.

Will not a simple life with unhurried contentment and peace become a dull, boring life? “A quiet life will be a boring life.” Russell feels.<sup>15</sup> I would submit that both joy and boredom are related much to the development or absence of man’s creative faculties, where the environment plays an auxiliary role, good or bad. We have noted that the industrial workers’ life is commonly dull, despite better material conditions. A man whom compassion relates to others, one actuated with a sense of beauty or one in quest of truth, is likely to create things good and beautiful and to enjoy the life. An artist like Abanindranath Tagore found satisfaction by creating excellent things with dry, discarded twigs, overlooked by others. To persons devoid of such qualities of mind and doing just some compulsory work, the life cannot but be dull and tiresome. Such a person does not live but only exists. The best life is one that is intensive and extensive in its creative endeavour. “Everything truly valuable in this human universe of which man can be proud has been brought into being and developed by his constructive creativity. .... For these reasons maximum cultivation and development of this creative grace is man’s paramount task of the present and the

future,” asserts Pitirim A. Sorokin.<sup>16</sup> The lives of great men from Buddha to Gandhi, Tagore and Vivekananda, and those before and after them - lives of dedicated humanists, thinkers and artists - exemplify how active and creative - and so joyful, a simple life can be. This is true also of a lesser man having a degree of creativity.

In short, a simple life society must be much less haunted with greed and selfishness and resultant evils, notably the conflict between man and man. In it, the conflict between man and Nature also will be less and the future generations will have a safer world. One will find immense meaning in Edward Carpenter’s argument, already stated, that Gandhi valued much, in the context of a simple life society. Naturally, it will be more nonviolent and more decent a society, cherishing more the richer values. “Simple living is a revolution by itself, for it goes against the prevailing taste and economy,” says Dr. Lohia.<sup>17</sup> We may add here that some grave evils like various forms of environmental pollution can be arrested only with a simple life and not by the industrial civilisation with its natural propensity.

But, how much simple can a simple life be today? For instance, we cannot give up electricity, railways and the like, not thought of in pre-modern simplicity. As stated, a simple life for the average people will not be one of ‘saffron robes.’ “It will not necessarily be a return to the old absolute simplicity,” says Gandhi. It shall be a decent life. Yet, our attitude counts much. If one is earnest, one can discard a lot of things, without much strain. Not only itemwise, even quantitywise one can reduce consumption by refusing to have anything beyond one’s real using capacity. Even such a reduction will mean a relatively simple life. And when one begins to realise the benefits of a simple life, one can move still ahead. Of course, those below the poverty line will have to rather ‘un-simple’ the life a bit, but not as much as to try to imitate the West. Actually, a ‘simple life’ is not only an idealist’s yearning, it is a ‘pragmatic must’ today.

The elimination of poverty throughout the world is an urgent matter for reducing suffering, animosity and injustice. It is not a civilised world so long as it continues to be rent with cries of poverty and hunger and the sighs of the unemployed. Both poverty and profusion or overmuch harm the soul. Thus, while Gandhi recounts that “In South Africa.... I observed almost invariably that the greater the possession of riches, the greater was the moral turpitude,” he is as aware that “grinding pauperism” cannot but lead to “moral degradation.” But the removal of poverty must honour the principle of simple life. Also, sanity demands that the IACs should curb consumption to save resources and the environment as also to remove gross inequality. This inequality also strengthens racial animosity that must go. An “economics of justice,” as Gandhi calls it. Must replace the predatory economics.

In our discussion we have related various evils and strikes in the world today attributable to the modern civilisation. I am not sure, how far an evil like male

domination is related to it. However, let all of us realise that where women advance, the society advances. There is another virulent disturber of peace in the world today, that rouses the beast in man - a sectarian or herd mentality, expressing itself through bitter hostility along racial, communal or similar sectarian lines. "The instinctive root of race hatred is fear of what is strange," feels Bertrand Russell. It seems to me that the herd mentality and sectarian hostility are also a product of an irrational refusal by an illiberal mind to adjust to pluralities of customs, mores, rituals, etc. Thus, both fear and intolerance are springs of this malady. Independent of the modern civilisation in its origin, it is also influenced by this civilisation when contestants fight with modern weapons for more power and material gains more fanatically. As in the power of various irrationalities, the herd mentality depends ultimately for its cure on more and better education of the misguided masses, while it afflicts modern countries also, and on firm action against ring leaders. Besides, where this mentality grows with a grievance of injustice, it demands removal of the same, if real, and greater clarification of the matter to all if it is not so.

How do we move ahead towards a society enshrining richer values? The society does not change itself. Man, the active force, is the builder. "It is man's privilege to overcome adverse circumstances," asserts Gandhi. True, none can live outside an environment that has its weight on man. But living within an environment, it is man who decides what to do or not to do and charts his path. The more developed a man is the more he moulds the environment and vice versa. In reality, it is the quality or character of man that is the basic determinant of the human life, leaving aside the very long-term course of Nature, or natural calamities. On the social plane, we must have desirable institutions, laws, programmes etc. But all these become as good or as bad as the human quality behind them. This human quality is shaped, most of all, by man's consciousness - his thinking and feeling. Thus, any social change must mean basically a change in the quality of man's consciousness. There is no social change if man remains unchanged. Side by side, the environment also should be reformed.

This means that we depend the most on education - on persuasion and moral appeal - in rousing the consciousness of a man. Values cannot be imposed by force. It is often said cynically that great, very great men have appealed to others from ages to be good and loving but with little impact. It is difficult to prove definitely the success or failure of great men in this sphere. Yet, it is reasonable to suppose that their contribution must have some impact on man's consciousness and culture and that our world might have been a poorer one without them. In our own time, we have seen how an unarmed Gandhi roused a nation from its age-long slumber and kindled a spirit of sacrifice even in ordinary, illiterate masses. But the fight begun by great men is not over. This is not always sustained worthily, while counter forces happen to be active. In any case, if the influence of good parents or guardians is undeniable, the

rote of ‘the guardians of mankind’ in our larger family cannot be denied.

Further, if incorruptible saints are not many in our world, incorrigible villains also are not many. The overwhelming majority of the population belongs to a third group of the average people. They are mostly aimless, confused and ill-directed today. Much more than the other two groups, they are amenable to education as also to environment. So, it is to be expected that honest, persistent and well-planned educational approach, side by side with efforts for reform of the environment, will not be in vain, though the change of mind is the slowest of all changes. We believe, as Gandhi did, in the basic goodness of these people despite their frailties and must look at them with sympathy and understanding. Selfishness, we may add, is a state of mental weakness, quite widespread, coveting more than what rational self-interest demands. It may be overoptimistic to banish it from the human society soon and entirely. Yet a combination of good education, good environment and the basic goodness of man may have an impact for the better on this evil trait.

Compassionate minds have held education in the true sense as the foundation of a good life. In Buddha’s words, “ignorance is the darkest night.” No doubt, most of the problems in the world today are made by humans, greedy, ignorant, biased and prejudiced. The modern civilisation has offered facilities for universal education and the benefit is spread extremely unevenly. Also, with all its worth, this education is imbalanced. Our literary education gives primacy to the education of the brain and is not value-oriented. Gandhi’s conception of the education, aiming at an all-round development of the child, is based on his formula of 3-H, education of the heart, hand and head. As he wrote : “I did not believe in the existing system of education.... I regarded character-building as the proper foundation of their (children’s) education and, if the foundation was firmly laid, I am sure that the children could learn all other things themselves or with assistance of friends.” While he “firmly appreciated the necessity of a literary training in education” he was convinced that “mere knowledge of letters” was not enough. Farsighted thinkers like Swami Vivekananda and Tagore also accorded primacy to the character-building education. Bertrand Russell also warns that “Unless men increase in wisdom as much as in knowledge, increase in knowledge will increase sorrow.” A gem of his idea is that “the good life is one inspired by love and guided by wisdom.”

Without denying at all the need for brain education, we must recognise that the human heart offers the deepest spring of man’s consciousness (and action) of his feeling, and even thinking and willing. With good brain education, but without the deeper feeling, one can be a scholar. But as Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam, wrote in one of his poems; “All the prophets were shepherds and plough men, and they brought imperishable messages which are there and will remain for ever.” (Translation mine). Also, as Prof. Amartya Sen says, it is to be admitted that so often Shakespeare or

Tolstoy have seen and expressed social truths more clearly than social scientists. This does not mean that what the heart says is always free from errors. But the 'imperishable messages' elevating the mind, appear to originate with a deep feeling. We do not know how much academic education Gautama had received, but we honour Buddha as an "Awakened soul", whose heart became restless and then wise with the sorrow of man. The same can be said of so many others, e.g. Ramakrishna Paramahansa, an almost illiterate person. Gandhi also was not a great scholar, who became a pathfinder with qualities of the heart-truthfulness, compassion and earnestness. "I am not built for academic writings, Action is my domain," he said with characteristic humbleness.

Therefore, following the Gandhian spirit and with loyalty to the goal of loftiness of mind, we emphasize that the 'education of the heart', illumining the vision, is the most basic of all education. Large number of universities and colleges bring out a large number of scholars. But not many of them retain any serious connection with their study after leaving the institutions, and not many of them are keen on larger questions of life or have any concern for the larger society. In India, it seems, very few even touch any serious books after having obtained a degree, while learning is a lifelong process. Commonly deemed educated, most of them are rather 'degree holders'. The knowledge they get, serving some practical needs, hardly develops a serious philosophy of life. With the education they get, they sever the connection at ease after the practical needs have been served.

This education does hardly awaken the heart and our "degree holders" are mostly 'sleep walkers'. "Ultimately, we are guided not so much by the intellect as by the heart," felt Gandhi. Reason is an extremely valuable faculty in man and when one is guided by heart one need not be indifferent to reason though one is at liberty, with caution, to transcend reason when one finds something too deep for reason. Extremely significant is a pronouncement by Bertrand Russell that "Instinct, intuition or insight is what leads to the beliefs which subsequent reason confirms or confutes" ... Reason is a harmonising, controlling force rather than a creative one. Even in the most purely logical realms, it is insight that first arrives at what is new.<sup>18</sup>

A valuable observation by M. N. Roy is that the present crisis in the world arises from man's failure to distinguish between what possesses lasting, perennial value and what have only ephemeral value. This failure to distinguish between what is healthy and what is alluring is too common. And this pinpoints the need, most essential for a value-oriented education or education of the heart. This education, more a communication from heart to heart for imprinting of values more than imparting of knowledge of theories and laws, does not promise any instant success. "Value education is not simply a matter of precept or curriculum construction and classroom-teaching. It is more practice than precept," says Ishwarbhai Patel.<sup>19</sup> "It is possible for

a teacher situated miles away to affect the spirit of the pupils by his way of living.” (Gandhi). Even if many have forgotten him today, and many more know really little about him, Gandhi is one of the greatest teachers that India has ever produced, beaming a moral appeal. In a family, affectionate and wise parents are the finest teachers. Even when the child is unable to fathom their wisdom, he feels the touch of the heart that, as Pascal said, has a language of its own. Actually, most persons are what they become in the early life. The teachers at institutions can influence, though having much less time at their disposal. Companions also influence. Unlucky is a child, influenced with heartless or wicked parents, companions, teachers and social leaders. On the impersonal plane, the wider society or the sociocultural milieu moulds the child highly. Its influence is rather negative today and hence there is a crying need for reformatory action here. The social and political leadership is rather poor not only in India but, it seems, in the world as a whole today in a context of humanist-ethical deficiency. The cultural and communication media, having a great moral responsibility must be attuned to a constructive creative role, that is much lacking.

The need for sound curricula though subsidiary, must be considered seriously by those earnest about blooming of decent qualities in man. We may only stress here that learning virtues begins the best in childhood. The child must be acquainted both at home and school with accounts of inspiring lives and humanity’s cultural achievements through ages. The history of wars, cruelties etc., though taught, must not cloud a child’s mind. He must know more of good things of life and must begin his onward journey with a robust optimistic outlook and not crippled with cynicism. Pessimism, fear etc., shaking confidence, and of course, ignorance, are the greatest enemies of progress. To a child, we must hold out alternative healthy models, ideas and programmes - things that deepen and broaden the mind, facing caterers of, as Tolstoy said, “growing insane luxury of the rich” and such other vulgarities and cupidities.

The influence of the materialist civilisation is so wide-spread that we may appear to be swimming against currents today. It is rather late today as the currents are strong enough, and yet it is never late as they are harmful enough. And, as Einstein points out, “His (Gandhi’s) work on behalf of India’s liberation is a living testimony to the fact that man’s will, sustained by indomitable conviction, is more powerful than material forces and seems insurmountable.” And, as Gandhi himself says : “Those who tread the path of virtue should not be disheartened by the thought that virtue is so rare in the world, and that they are in a minority. Their duty is simply to do the right, and leave the rest to God. They should never think of the result of their action; for the only reward of a thing well done is to have done it.”

We have advantage also. It is not that only parents and teachers at school teach. Highly important, borrowing a famous idea of Hegel, the thesis of this civilisation is producing its antithesis, telling on the life of the people. Man’s own condition, his

bitter experience, is a great teacher, creating a new awareness. It may act slowly but it acts. When, for instance, Stalin was consolidating his tyranny and basking in the glory of power, he was also helping weakening of its hold on the heart of the people. Thus, people who groan under the heels of a tyrant, come to realise the value of freedom. The discovery of nuclear weapons and the consequent horrors create a new awareness of the value of nonviolence. So also the people may come to learn that acquisitiveness or an urge to dominate can make one rich and powerful but does not give peace and joy, rather destroy them. In varying degrees, the need to tame the demoniac in man will be felt. The saints and thinkers warn against this demoniac they articulate what is inarticulate in the rest.

The unhappy results of man's shortsightedness are being felt more and more as the civilisation shows its cruel teeth more and more. Never before have so many conference, seminars, discussions etc. been held on the problems and maladies that this civilisation is creating. Very many of them are being organised in the West by thinkers and activists who know the affairs of this Western civilisation intimately along with a sound perception of the world as a whole. Although independent of Gandhiji, their thoughts and reactions are so strikingly similar on major aspects to that of Gandhi. Thus, Gandhi's basic thoughts have a universality and they do not appeal to only a handful of romantic idealists. Today, farsighted thinkers in the West also feel that material influence generates greed and selfishness and crudes spiritual values, profligate life-styles should be curbed; that poverty should be eliminated through out the world; and the society must be explicit about the importance of values and ethics. These are the thoughts for man's healthy body and healthy mind and will surface more and more with the passage of time. Those who envision a better society cherishing these thoughts are not swimming against currents. *Satyameva Jayate* - truth shall prevail. (End)

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# সাম্প্রদায়িকতা, দেশভাগ ও গান্ধীজি

গৌতম চট্টোপাধ্যায়

আজ থেকে ৭০ বছর আগে সাম্প্রদায়িক সংঘর্ষে বিচলিত, গান্ধীজি লিখেছিলেন, “হিন্দু-মুসলিম ঐক্য এবং এই দুই সম্প্রদায়ের মধ্যে বন্ধুতার চেয়ে জরুরী ও গুরুত্বপূর্ণ উপাদান আমাদের জাতীয় আন্দোলনে দ্বিতীয় কিছু নেই। হিন্দু-মুসলিম ঐক্য রচিত হলেই ভারতে স্বরাজ অর্জিত হবে।” (গান্ধীজি : ইয়ং ইন্ডিয়া, ১০ এপ্রিল, ১৯২৪)।

এর দেড়মাস পরে গান্ধীজি ৬ হাজার শব্দ-সংবলিত এক দীর্ঘ প্রবন্ধ লিখলেন : “হিন্দু-মুসলিম বিরোধ : তার কারণ ও তার সমাধান” (গান্ধীজি : ইয়ং ইন্ডিয়া, ২৯ মে, ১৯২৪)। এই প্রবন্ধে দৃঢ়তার সঙ্গে গান্ধীজি বললেন যে হিন্দু মুসলিম সখ্যতা স্থায়ীভাবে গড়ে ওঠা সম্ভব, কারণ “সেটাই স্বাভাবিক, এবং সেটাই উভয়ের পক্ষে প্রয়োজনীয়। মানুষের উপর আমার বিশ্বাস আছে, তাই আমি মনে করি হিন্দু-মুসলিম মৈত্রী অবশ্যই সম্ভব।” (তদেব)

স্বরাজের দাবিতে ভারতব্যাপী অহিংস অসহযোগ আন্দোলনের সময় যে ব্যাপক হিন্দু মুসলিম একতা গড়ে উঠেছিল, তা তখন ভেঙে গেছে।

সাম্প্রদায়িক অশুভ শক্তি মাথা তুলছে এবং শাসক ইংরেজ সাম্রাজ্যবাদীরা হিন্দু ও মুসলিম উভয় সাম্প্রদায়িক শক্তিকে উস্কিয়ে দিচ্ছে। এই অবস্থায় ১৯২৪-এর সেপ্টেম্বর মাসের মধ্য ভাগে, হিন্দু-মুসলিম সংঘর্ষের অবসান দাবি করে ও সাম্প্রদায়িক সম্প্রীতি কামনা করে, গান্ধীজি তিন সপ্তাহের জন্য অনশন করলেন, যার অবসান হ'ল

১৯২৪-এর ৬ অক্টোবর। এই অনশন ধর্মঘট করা হ'ল প্রসিদ্ধ খিলাফত নেতা মৌলানা মহম্মদ আলির বাসগৃহে। গান্ধীজির স্বাস্থ্যের উপর নজর রাখলেন দু'জন মুসলিম ডাক্তার। আর তাঁর সেবা-পরিচর্যা করলেন ভারতবন্ধু প্রসিদ্ধ খ্রিস্টান পাদ্রি—চার্লস ফ্রিয়ার অ্যান্ড্রুজ। হিন্দু-মুসলমান-খ্রিস্টান—সব ধর্মের মানুষের পারস্পরিক বিশ্বাসের ও বন্ধুতাপূর্ণ সহাবস্থানের এর চেয়ে উজ্জ্বলতর দৃষ্টান্ত আর কি হ'তে পারে?

অনশন ধর্মঘটের দ্বিতীয় দিনে গান্ধীজি একটি ছোট্ট প্রবন্ধ লিখলেন। “বৈচিত্র্যের মধ্যে ঐক্য!” তাতে তিনি লিখলেন : “এই মুহূর্তের সবচেয়ে বড়, প্রয়োজন এটা নয়, যে সব ধর্ম উঠে গিয়ে শুধু একটামাত্র ধর্মমত টিকে থাকবে; প্রয়োজন বিভিন্ন ধর্মের সমর্থকদের মধ্যে সৌভ্রাতৃত্ববোধ ও সহনশীলতা। ইংরেজ শাসকদের মধ্যে হৃদয়ের পরিবর্তন নাও ঘটতে পারে, কিন্তু এখন সর্বাত্মক আমাদের সংগ্রাম করতে হবে হিন্দু ও মুসলমানদের মধ্যে হৃদয়ের পরিবর্তন ঘটাতে। স্বাধীনতার জন্য সংগ্রামে জয়লাভ করতে হলে, সর্বাত্মক সাহস দেখিয়ে হিন্দু-মুসলমান জনসমষ্টিকে পরস্পরকে ভালবাসতে হবে, পরস্পরের ধর্মের প্রতি সহনশীলতা দেখাতে হবে, পরস্পরের উপর আস্থা রাখতে হবে। এর জন্য চাই গভীর আত্মবিশ্বাস। তা থাকলে তবেই আমরা আর পরস্পরকে ভয় করব না।” (অমৃতবাজার পত্রিকা, ২১ সেপ্টেম্বর, ১৯২৪)।

৬ অক্টোবর ১৯২৪, অনশন ভঙ্গের পূর্বমুহূর্তে ক্ষীণ, দুর্বল কিন্তু স্পষ্ট স্বরে গান্ধীজি তাঁর বন্ধু সি.

এফ. অ্যাড্‌জকে বললেন : “হিন্দুমুসলিম সৌত্রাড গড়ে তোলার জন্য আমাদের সবাইকে প্রয়োজন হলে জীবনও পণ করতে হবে।” (লুই ফিসার; গান্ধী, মেন্টর বুকস, নিউ ইয়র্ক ১৯৫৪, পৃ : ৭৮)। সমবেত অনুরাগীদের গান্ধীজি প্রশ্ন করলেন : “আচ্ছা, ইংরেজরা যখন ভারতে বসে গো-হত্যা করে ও গরুর মাংস খায়, তখন তো হিন্দুরা ক্ষেপে ওঠে না। অথচ মুসলমানরা গো-কোরবানী করলেই হিন্দুরা রেগে ওঠে। তাছাড়া যেসব গরু জবাই হবার জন্য বিক্রি হয়, সেগুলি হাটে-বাজারে বিক্রি করে টাকা উপার্জন করেন তো বহু হিন্দু। তাতে তো হিন্দুদের রাগ হতে দেখি না। আর গরুকে মাতা বললেও, তাদের যেরকম অযত্ন ভারতে হয়, তা বোধ করি পৃথিবীর আর কোথাও হয় না ... অর্ধভুক্ত, অস্থিচর্মসার গরুর পাল ভারতের কলঙ্ক।” (লুই ফিসার : পূর্বোক্ত)।

দ্বিতীয় বিশ্বযুদ্ধ বেধে উঠলে, গান্ধীজির মনে হল যে ইংরেজ সাম্রাজ্যবাদের অনিচ্ছুক হাত থেকে পূর্ণ স্বাধীনতা অর্জন আর বেশি দূরে নেই। সেই সম্ভাবনাকে বানচাল করার জন্য ইংরেজ শাসকরা যে অস্ত্রের উপর সবচেয়ে বেশি নির্ভর করছে তা হচ্ছে হিন্দু-মুসলমানের অনৈক্য ও বিরোধ। ১৯৪০-এর ৪ মে গান্ধীজি লিখলেন :

“ইংরেজরা ভারতকে নিজেদের তাঁবে রাখতে পারবে একমাত্র ‘বিভেদ সৃষ্টি করে শাসন কর’ নীতির সহায়তায়। হিন্দু ও মুসলমানদের মধ্যে জীবন্ত ঐক্য গড়ে উঠলে ইংরেজদের শাসন বিপন্ন হবে, তার অবসান হবে। ... সন্ধীর্ণ হিন্দু বা সন্ধীর্ণ ইসলাম আমি পছন্দ করি না। জোড়াতালি দেওয়া সমাধানের আমি বিরোধী। ভারতবর্ষ একটি বিশাল দেশ, সেখানে রয়েছে বহু বিভিন্ন সংস্কৃতি, যারা একে অপরের পরিপূরক। এই ঐক্য রচনা করতে যদি সময় লাগে, তো ধৈর্যের সঙ্গে আমাদের অপেক্ষা করতে হবে। আমাদের জীবনকালে এই ঐক্য সম্পূর্ণ না হতে পারে। কিন্তু এই বিশ্বাস নিয়ে আমি মরতে চাই, যে কোনও না কোনও ভবিষ্যতে এই ঐক্য পূর্ণতা লাভ

করবে। পাকিস্তানে তো বিদেশি দাসত্বের চেয়ে খারাপ কিছু হবে না।

ভারত ব্যবচ্ছেদের আমি বিরোধী, এতে কারুর কোনও উপকার হবে না। তবে এই সঙ্গে আমি এ কথাও জোরের সঙ্গে বলতে চাই যে ভারতের ৮ কোটি মুসলমান (১৯৪০-এর আদমসুমারী অনুযায়ী—গৌ. চ.) যদি মনে করি যে পাকিস্তানই তাদের ধ্যানজ্ঞান, তবে পৃথিবীর কোনও শক্তিই তাদের দাবি অগ্রাহ্য করতে পারবে না।” হরিজন, ৪ মে ১৯৪০, স্টেটসম্যান, কলকাতা, ৫ মে, ১৯৪০)।

সাম্প্রদায়িকতার সঙ্গে আপস করে কংগ্রেস আদর্শভ্রষ্ট হবে, স্বাধীনতা সংগ্রাম কলুষিত হবে। এই কথা ঘোষণা করে ১৯৪০-এর জুন মাসে গান্ধীজি লিখলেন : “এখন কংগ্রেস ভারতের জনগণের আশা ভরসা কেন্দ্র। সে যদি তার মূল আদর্শ থেকে সরে যায়, তাহলে খুবই ক্ষতি হবে।” (স্টেটসম্যান, ১৬ জুন, ১৯৪০)।

দ্বিতীয় বিশ্বযুদ্ধ শেষ হয়ে আসছে। গান্ধীজি সদ্য কারামুক্ত হয়েছেন। প্রখ্যাত রাজনীতিবিদ হিসাবে তিনি বুঝতে পারছেন যে এই যুদ্ধের শেষে ভারতের স্বাধীনতা অর্জনের সম্ভাবনা উজ্জ্বল। সাম্প্রদায়িক ভেদনীতি ও হিন্দু-মুসলমানের অনৈক্যই তখন স্বাধীনতালাভের পথে প্রধান বাধা। তাই গান্ধীজিই তখন উদ্যোগ নিয়ে বোম্বাইতে দেখা করলেন মহম্মদ আলি জিন্নাহর সঙ্গে, আন্তরিকভাবে চেষ্টা করলেন একটা স্থায়ী সমঝোতার ভিত্তি খুঁজে বের করতে।

১৯৪৪-এর ২৪ সেপ্টেম্বর গান্ধী তাঁর প্রস্তাবনা পত্রাকারে জিন্নাহকে লিখলেন :

“এই ধারণা থেকে আমি এগোচ্ছি যে ভারতবর্ষ দুই বা ততোধিক জাতের দ্বারা গঠিত নয়। ভারত একটি বৃহৎ যৌথ পরিবার যার অনেক সদস্য প্রধানত মুসলিম যাঁরা উত্তর-পশ্চিম অঞ্চলের বাসিন্দা যেমন বালুচিস্তান, সিন্ধুদেশ, উত্তর-পশ্চিম সীমান্ত প্রদেশ এবং পাঞ্জাবের একাংশ, আর বাংলা ও আসামের একাংশ—যেসব অঞ্চলে মুসলমানরাই বিপুল সংখ্যাগরিষ্ঠ এবং তারা বাকি ভারত থেকে বিচ্ছিন্ন

হয়ে বসবাস করতে চায়।

আমি আপনাদের এই মূল বক্তব্য থেকে ভিন্নমত। তথাপি, ১৯৪০-এ গৃহীত মুসলিম লীগের লাহোর প্রস্তাবের ভিত্তিতে বিচ্ছিন্নতার প্রস্তাবটি আমি কংগ্রেসের ও সারাদেশের সামনে সুপারিশ হিসাবে রাখতে রাজি আছি, যদি আপনারা নিম্নলিখিত শর্তগুলি মেনে নেন :

(ক) অঞ্চলগুলির সীমারেখা নির্ধারণ করে দেবেন কংগ্রেস ও লীগ উভয়ের দ্বারা মনোনীত একটি কমিশন। নির্ধারিত এলাকাগুলির জনসাধারণের মতামত জানতে হবে প্রাপ্তবয়স্ক সব মানুষের ভোটাধিকারের বা এই ধরনের কোনও পদ্ধতির ভিত্তিতে।

(খ) যদি ভোটের রায় বিচ্ছিন্নতার সপক্ষে যায় তাহলে আমরা সবাই একমত হব যে ভারত বিদেশি শাসনমুক্ত হবার পর যত দ্রুত সম্ভব এই এলাকাগুলি একটি স্বতন্ত্র রাষ্ট্র গঠন করবে এবং তার মাধ্যমে দুটি স্বাধীন, সার্বভৌম রাষ্ট্র সৃষ্টি হবে।

(গ) বিচ্ছিন্নতা সম্বন্ধে একটি স্বতন্ত্র চুক্তি স্বাক্ষরিত হবে যার দ্বারা পররাষ্ট্র নীতি, প্রতিরক্ষা, অভ্যন্তরীণ যানবাহন ব্যবস্থা, শুল্ক ব্যবস্থা, বাণিজ্য প্রভৃতির প্রশাসন সন্তোষজনকভাবে স্থির করা হবে, কেন না এগুলি উভয় রাষ্ট্রের স্বার্থকেই রক্ষা করে চলবে।

(ঘ) এই চুক্তির মধ্যে উভয় রাষ্ট্রের সংখ্যালঘুদের স্বার্থরক্ষার যথাযোগ্য ব্যবস্থাও থাকবে। [গইয়ার ও আপ্লাদোরাই (সম্পাদিত) স্পিচেজ অ্যান্ড ডকুমেন্টস্ অন দি ইন্ডিয়ান কনস্টিটিউশন, ১৯২১-৪৭, ১৯৫৭, ২য় খণ্ড, পৃঃ ৫৪৯-৫০]

এত বছর পরে গান্ধীজির প্রস্তাবনা ঠাণ্ডা মাথায় বিবেচনা করলে যে কেউই মানবেন যে দুটি বন্ধুত্বপূর্ণ সার্বভৌম রাষ্ট্রের প্রস্তাবনাই করা হয়েছিল, অ-সাম্প্রদায়িক দৃষ্টিভঙ্গি থেকে। কিন্তু জিন্নাহ সরাসরি গান্ধীজির প্রস্তাবনা অগ্রাহ্য করেন এই কথা বলে যে তার মধ্যে স্বীকার করা নেই যে মুসলমানরা একটি স্বতন্ত্র জাতি।

গান্ধীজি এইসময়ই সিদ্ধান্ত করলেন যে জিন্নাহ

ও মুসলিম লীগের মূল-নেতৃত্বের সঙ্গে কোনও সমঝোতা সম্ভব নয় কারণ তারা ধর্মের ভিত্তিতে দ্বি-জাতিতত্ত্বের দাবি মেনে নিতে বলছেন এবং তা মেনে নিয়ে ভারত ব্যবচ্ছেদ করলে, সাম্প্রদায়িক বিস্ফোরণ ও সম্ভবত গৃহযুদ্ধ হবে, যাতে সর্বনাশ হবে হিন্দু-মুসলমান উভয়েরই এবং সমগ্র ভারতবর্ষের। ফায়দা ওঠাবে শুধু ব্রিটিশ সাম্রাজ্যবাদ ও তার পদলেহীরা।

১৯৪৫-৪৬ জুড়ে ভারতে সাম্রাজ্যবাদী যে গণবিস্ফোরণ হ'ল, তাতে হিন্দু-মুসলমান-শিখ ব্যারিকেড রচনা করে এক সঙ্গে আজাদীর জন্য লড়েছিল, আজাদ হিন্দ ফৌজের মুক্তির দাবিতে, নৌ বিদ্রোহে, শ্রমিকের সাধারণ ধর্মঘট, ছাত্র ও জোয়ানের গণসংগ্রামে! সেই গণঅভ্যুত্থানে শঙ্কিত ব্রিটিশ সাম্রাজ্যবাদ ১৯৪৬-এর ফেব্রুয়ারি মাসেই ঘোষণা করল যে বিলাত থেকে মন্ত্রীমিশন আসছে ভারতকে পূর্ণ ক্ষমতা হস্তান্তর করতে। ১৯৪৬-এর ১৬ মে বিলাতের থেকে আসা মন্ত্রিমিশন তাদের সুপারিশ প্রকাশ করলেন।

তাতে বলা হ'ল যে তারা ভারতের প্রায় সর্বত্রই “ভারতের ঐক্য রক্ষার জন্য গভীর আকাঙ্ক্ষার প্রকাশ” লক্ষ্য করেছেন, কিন্তু এটাও লক্ষ্য করেছেন যে “চিরদিন হিন্দু সংখ্যাগরিষ্ঠদের শাসনাধীন থাকার ভয়” মুসলমানদের মধ্যে রয়েছে। তাই জন্য মন্ত্রীমিশন ভারত ব্যবচ্ছেদের প্রস্তাবকে খুঁটিয়ে বিচার করেছেন কিন্তু তা মানতে পারেননি। বিশেষ করে বহু শত মাইলের ব্যবধানে পশ্চিম ও পূর্ব পাকিস্তান সৃষ্টি করা তাঁদের অবাস্তব বলে মনে হয়েছে। তাতে সংখ্যালঘুদের সমস্যার কোনও দিনই সমাধান হবে না।

মন্ত্রীমিশনের সুপারিশ খুঁটিয়ে পড়ে, গান্ধীজি তাকে স্বাগত জানান, “এই পরিস্থিতিতে এর চেয়ে ভাল সুপারিশ হতে পারত না” বলে।

মন্ত্রীমিশনের পরিকল্পনার বিশ্লেষণ ও তার পরবর্তী ঘটনাবলী এই প্রবন্ধের আলোচনার বিষয় নয়, কোনও না কোনও সময় তার উপর সবিস্তার

আলোচনার বাসনা রইল। ১৯৪৬-এর আগস্ট মাসের মধ্য ভাগ থেকে দেশে ভয়ঙ্কর সাম্প্রদায়িক সংঘর্ষ, গণহত্যা ও গৃহযুদ্ধের আকার ধারণ করল— প্রথমে কলকাতায়। পরে নোয়াখালিতে, তারপর বিহারশরীফে ও শেষ পর্যন্ত উত্তর ভারতে। এই সাম্প্রদায়িক সংঘর্ষে লক্ষ লক্ষ হিন্দু-মুসলমান-শিখ নরনারী ও শিশু প্রাণ হারাল, বহু লক্ষ সর্বস্বান্ত হয়ে পিতৃপুরুষের বাসভূমি ছেড়ে সীমান্ত পেরিয়ে বাস্তুহারা হল, একটা স্থায়ী সাম্প্রদায়িক বৈরীতার জন্ম হল।

সাম্রাজ্যবাদী বড়লাট মাউন্টব্যাটেন “দ্রুত ভারত ব্যবচ্ছেদ করে দুটি রাষ্ট্রকে জন্ম দিয়ে প্রশাসনিক দক্ষতার দৃষ্টান্ত স্থাপন করেছে”— এই নিরলঙ্ঘন ঘোষণা করলেন। রাষ্ট্রক্ষমতা মুঠোর মধ্যে রেখে, ক্ষমতার লালসায় মাউন্টব্যাটেনের প্রস্তাব প্রত্যাখ্যান করতে রাজী হলেন না কি নেহরু-প্যাটেল কি মুসলিম লীগের নেতারা। তার ফলে সাম্প্রদায়িক তাণ্ডব থামানোর কোনও ক্ষমতা তাঁদের রইল না, অসহায় দর্শক হয়ে রইলেন।

তখন ভারতের সেই ভয়ঙ্কর ও রক্তাক্ত অমারাএ, সাম্প্রদায়িক সম্প্রীতি ও মানবতার দীপ জ্বলে নিঃশঙ্ক চিত্তে উন্নত দাঙ্গাবাজদের পথ রুদ্ধ করে দাঁড়ালেন বৃদ্ধ গান্ধীজি—আত্মবিশ্বাস ও মানুষের উপর ভরসাকে সম্বল করে। ছুটে গেলেন নোয়াখালি, বিহার, ফিরে এলেন কলকাতায়, তারপর দিল্লিতে। সঙ্গে ইংরেজ বা ভারতীয় কোনও সৈন্যদল ছিল না, দলীয় রক্ষীবাহিনীও ছিল না। লাঠি হাতে গান্ধীজি একা, সঙ্গে মুষ্টিমেয় অনুরক্ত নারী ও পুরুষ। ১৯৪৬-এর অক্টোবর থেকে ১৯৪৮-এর ৩০ জানুয়ারি পর্যন্ত গান্ধীজির জীবন ও কর্মের এই শেষ ও শ্রেষ্ঠ পর্ব।

১৯৪৬-এর ১৬ আগস্ট, সারা ভারত মুসলিম লীগের “প্রত্যক্ষ সংগ্রাম” দিবসে কলকাতায় ব্যাপক সাম্প্রদায়িক দাঙ্গা শুরু হল এবং পরবর্তী তিনদিন তা গণহত্যা ও গৃহযুদ্ধের আকার ধারণ করল। সাম্রাজ্যবাদী এক সেনাপতির হিসাব অনুযায়ী এই

তিন দিনের কলকাতা হত্যাকাণ্ডে ৪ হাজার হিন্দু-মুসলমান নরনারী ও শিশু নৃশংসভাবে নিহত হয়েছিলেন, আহত হয়েছিলেন ১১ হাজার (ফ্রান্সিস টুকার : হোয়াইল মেমোরি সার্ভিস, লন্ডন, ১৯৪৯)।

এই নৃশংস হত্যাকাণ্ডের চেয়েও যা বেদনাদায়ক ও লজ্জাকর তা হচ্ছে এই মর্মান্তিক সাম্প্রদায়িক সংঘাত সম্বন্ধে জাতীয় নেতাদের প্রতিক্রিয়া। ১৯৪৬-এর ১৪ আগস্ট জহরলাল নেহরু ভারতের অন্তর্বর্তীকালীন প্রধানমন্ত্রীর দায়িত্বভার গ্রহণ করলেন—পরিপূর্ণ রাষ্ট্রক্ষমতা তখন প্রায় তাঁদের হাতের মুঠোয়। ফলে এই হত্যাকাণ্ড সম্বন্ধে ১৭ আগস্ট সাংবাদিকরা তাঁর মন্তব্য চাইলে, জওহরলাল বলেন : “কলকাতায় কিছু লোক অসভ্য ব্যবহার করছে বলে আমাদের গুরুত্বপূর্ণ কর্মসূচীর কোনও নড়চড় হবে না” (স্টেটসম্যান, কলকাতা ১৮ আগস্ট, ১৯৪৬)। ২/৩ দিন পরে যখন কলকাতার দাঙ্গার ভয়াবহতা দিল্লির মনসদে বসা কংগ্রেস নেতাদের প্রবল ধাক্কা দিল, তখন মৌলানা আবুল কালাম আজাদ সমস্ত দায়-দায়িত্ব মুসলিম লীগের ঘাড়ে চাপিয়ে দিলেন। (স্টেটসম্যান, কলকাতা ২০ আগস্ট, ১৯৪৬) আর জিন্নাহ সংক্ষেপে সাফ বললেন : “আমি বিশ্বাস করি না যে মুসলিম লীগের কোনও দায়িত্বশীল সদস্য এইরকম ভয়াবহ দাঙ্গায় অংশ নিয়েছেন।” (স্টেটসম্যান, কলকাতা, ১৮ আগস্ট, ১৯৪৬)। নবাবজাদা লিয়াকৎ আলি খাঁ এক পা এগিয়ে বললেন : “এই হিংস্র দাঙ্গার জন্য দায়ী কংগ্রেস। ... তারা যদি এইভাবে ভারতে হিন্দুরাজ প্রতিষ্ঠার চেষ্টা করেন, তাহলে ১০ কোটি মুসলমান তা প্রতিরোধ করবেন।” (স্টেটসম্যান, কলকাতা, ২৮ আগস্ট, ১৯৪৬)।

ক্ষমতার লালসায় ভারতের সমস্ত প্রসিদ্ধ নেতাই যখন সাম্প্রদায়িক তাণ্ডব প্রতিরোধের বদলে, পরস্পরের উপর দোষারোপে ব্যস্ত, তখন একমাত্র ব্যতিক্রম ছিলেন মোহনদাস করমচাঁদ গান্ধী, আর অবশ্যই কলকাতার সংগঠিত শ্রমিকশ্রেণী, বিশেষ করে ট্রাম শ্রমিক ও তৎকালীন ভারতের কমিউনিস্ট

পার্টি। এই প্রজন্মের মানুষ সে ইতিহাস বিস্মৃত। কিন্তু ১৬, ১৭ ও ১৮ আগস্ট যখন হিন্দু-মুসলমান জনতা পরস্পরকে উন্মত্ত হিংস্রতায় হত্যা করছিল তখন হিন্দু-মুসলমান ট্রাম শ্রমিক ও তাদের কমিউনিস্ট নেতারা লালবাগু হাতে রাজাবাজার ও পার্কসার্কাস ট্রামের মেসে মুসলিম ট্রাম শ্রমিকরা শতশত হিন্দু নরনারীর এবং ডোভার লেন ও বেলগাছিয়া ট্রাম মেসে হিন্দু ট্রাম শ্রমিকরা অগণিত মুসলিম নরনারীর প্রাণরক্ষা করেছেন, প্রাণ তুচ্ছ করে সশস্ত্র দাঙ্গাবাজদের রুখেছেন।

আর গান্ধীজি চলে এসেছেন কলকাতা ও নোয়াখালিতে, বললেন : “এই সাম্প্রদায়িক সংঘর্ষ লজ্জায় আমার মাথা নিচু করে দিয়েছে। এর জন্য দায়ী কলকাতার সকল নাগরিক। তাদের প্রচ্ছন্ন সমর্থন না থাকলে গুণ্ডারা কখনও এতবড় ও হিংস্র সাম্প্রদায়িক হত্যাকাণ্ড সংগঠিত করতে পারত না।” (গান্ধীজি, হরিজন, ২ সেপ্টেম্বর, ১৯৪৬)।

একদল কংগ্রেসকর্মী যখন অসহায়ভাবে গান্ধীজির সঙ্গে দেখা করে প্রশ্ন রাখে যে তারা কিভাবে এই ভয়াবহ দাঙ্গা প্রতিরোধ করবে, তখন গান্ধীজি বলেন “কলকাতার ট্রাম শ্রমিকদের দেখে শেখো কি করে দাঙ্গা রুখতে হয়”। (সোমনাথ লাহিড়ী : লেখকের কাছে স্মৃতিচারণ, ১৯ আগস্ট, ১৯৭৮)

নোয়াখালিতে, গান্ধীজি গেলেন ৭ নভেম্বর, ১৯৪৬, রইলেন দুর্গম, মুসলিম অধ্যুষিত গ্রামাঞ্চলে ১৯৪৭-এর ২ মার্চ পর্যন্ত। তাঁর প্রাত্যহিক কর্মসূচী ছিল কোনও না কোনও মুসলমান চাষির বাড়িতে আশ্রয় নিয়ে, ভোর ৪টে-তে উঠে, ফল ও ছাগলের দুধ (পেলে) খেয়ে ৩/৪ মাইল হাঁটা এবং সারা পথে হিন্দু-মুসলিম মিলনের সপক্ষে প্রার্থনা করা ও গ্রামবাসীদের সঙ্গে অবিশ্রান্ত সাম্প্রদায়িক সম্প্রীতির সপক্ষে কথা বলা। তাঁর বয়স তখন ৭৭। এইভাবে চার মাসে তিনি মোট

৪৯টি গ্রামে থেকেছেন ও প্রচার করেছেন। প্রথম দিকে তিনিও খুবই অসহায় বোধ করেছেন। তাঁর সঙ্গী নৃবিজ্ঞানী অধ্যাপক নির্মল বসুকে বারবারই বলতেন “আমি যে কি করি?” (নির্মল বসু : ডেজ্ ইউথ গান্ধী)।

তরুণ মার্কিন গবেষক ফিলিপ ট্যালবট সেই সময় নোয়াখালির কাছে একটা গ্রামে গান্ধীজির শিবিরে গিয়ে হাজির হন। চার দিন ধরে ট্রেন, বাস ও নৌকাতে চড়ে ও পরে কাদা ভেঙে হেঁটে তিনি গান্ধীজির পদযাত্রায় যোগ দেন। তিন মাস তিনি গান্ধীজির সঙ্গে ছিলেন। তার জীবন্ত বর্ণনা তিনি লুই ফিশারকে এক সাক্ষাৎকারে তখনই দিয়েছিলেন :

“কাদাভরা পথে খালি পায়ে হেঁটে গান্ধী চলেছেন, তাঁর দু’পায়ে ফোঁস্কা। প্রথম দিকে শতকরা ৮০ জন মুসলিম অধিবাসীর অনেকেই তাঁকে গালমন্দ করত। গান্ধী চটতেন না, বলতেন : রাজনৈতিক নেতারা এদের বিভ্রান্ত করেছে। বাঁশের বিপজ্জনক সাঁকো পেরিয়ে যেতে হত। একটা গ্রামে গান্ধী ২/৩ দিন থাকতেন, গ্রামবাসীদের নিয়ে প্রার্থনাসভা করতেন, ঈশ্বর আল্লা এক ও অভিন্ন, তাঁর সন্তান হিন্দু-মুসলমানরাও এক ও অভিন্ন, এই কথা অবিশ্রান্ত বলে যেতেন। ক্রমে ২০/২৫ লক্ষ অধিবাসীর মন তিনি জয় করলেন, নোয়াখালির ঐ ব্যাপক অঞ্চলে শান্তি ও সম্প্রীতি ফিরে এল। গান্ধীর সঙ্গে ১০/১৫ জন স্ত্রী-পুরুষ সঙ্গী, কোনও রক্ষীবাহিনী নেই। সে এক আশ্চর্য অভিজ্ঞতা” (লুই ফিশার : গান্ধী, পৃঃ ২৬৪-৬৫)।



১৯৪৬-এর ৫ ডিসেম্বর নোয়াখালি থেকে এক সংক্ষিপ্ত বিবৃতি দিয়ে গান্ধীজি বলেন : “এখন আমি যে দায়িত্ব কাঁধে নিয়ে চলেছি, তা আমার জীবনের সবচেয়ে জটিল ও কঠিন দায়িত্ব। যে কোনও সম্ভাবনার জন্য আমি তৈরি এইখানেই প্রকৃতপক্ষে পরীক্ষিত হবে আমার সেই মন্ত্র ‘করেঙ্গে ইয়ে মরেঙ্গে’। ‘করেঙ্গে’ মানে এখানকার হিন্দু ও মুসলমানরা শান্তি ও সম্প্রীতিতে ফের বসবাস করতে সম্মত হবে, আর নয়তো ‘মরেঙ্গে’ মানে সেই উদ্দেশ্য সাধনের জন্য আমি আত্মবলিদান করব।” (লুই ফিশার : পূর্বোদ্ধৃত)।

নোয়াখালিতে যখন গান্ধীজি ‘একলা চল রে’ বলে দাঙ্গার আগুন নেভাচ্ছেন; তখন পাশের জেলা ত্রিপুরাতে দাঙ্গার আগুন নেভাতে লালবাগা হাতে এগিয়ে এসেছিলেন ১০ হাজার গবির মুসলমান চাষি, দুই কমিউনিস্ট নেতা মুকলেসুর রহমান ও কৃষ্ণসুন্দর ভৌমিকের নেতৃত্বে, হাসুনাবাদ থানায়। তাঁদের সেই বীরত্বপূর্ণ প্রতিরোধের কথা শুনে তাঁদের আশীর্বাদ জানিয়েছিলেন গান্ধীজি। ইতিহাসের এই স্মরণীয় ঘটনাও আজ মানুষের স্মৃতি থেকে প্রায় মুছে গেছে।

ইতিমধ্যে সাম্প্রদায়িক সংঘর্ষ ছড়াল বিহারে, নিহত হ’ল প্রায় ১০ হাজার নরনারী, তাদের বেশিরভাগই মুসলমান (যেখানে নোয়াখালিতে নিহতদের প্রায় সকলেই ছিল হিন্দু)। দারুণ ক্রোধে জওহরলাল বললেন : “বিমান থেকে বোমাবর্ষণ করে ভারতের মানচিত্র থেকে বিহারকে উড়িয়ে দেব।” গান্ধীজি তাঁকে মৃদু তিরস্কার করে বললেন : “ওটা তো ব্রিটিশদের শেখানো পদ্ধতি।” (লুই ফিশার : গান্ধী, পৃঃ ১৬৩)।

এবার গান্ধী ছুটলেন বিহারে, সঙ্গে অধ্যাপক নির্মল বসু। তিনি এক সাক্ষাৎকারে দুই দশক পড়ে বলেছেন : “সে এক বিচিত্র অভিজ্ঞতা। বিহারশরীফের এক গ্রামে ৪/৫ হাজার চাষির সভা, বেশিরভাগই হিন্দু। গান্ধীজির প্রার্থনা সভা ও বক্তৃতার পর তারা সবাই বলল : বাপুজি আমরা দাঙ্গা চাই না, শান্তিতে বসবাস করতে চাই। গান্ধীজি প্রশ্ন করলেন

: তাহলে দাঙ্গাবাজদের রুখে দাঁড়াওনি কেন? তারা জবাব দিল : বাপুজি, ওদের হাতে লাঠি ছিল, রুখেতে গিয়ে পারিনি, মাথা ফেটেছে। গান্ধীজি বললেন : কাছে এসো, দেখি মাথায় কোথায় ক্ষত চিহ্ন? লজ্জায় সভা মাথা নিচু করল। তখন গান্ধীজি বললেন : দাঙ্গার জন্য তোমরা সবাই দায়ী— কেউ নিজে দাঙ্গা করেছ, বাকিরা তাদের প্রশয় দিয়েছ। এখন যদি সত্যই অনুতপ্ত হও, তাহলে নিজেরা পরিশ্রম করে, মালপত্র দিয়ে মুসলমান ভাইদের পুড়ে যাওয়া ঘরগুলি আবার গড়ে তোল, তাদের মনে ভরসা এনে দাও।” অধ্যাপক নির্মল বসুর সঙ্গে এই লেখকের সাক্ষাৎকার, ১৩ আগস্ট, ১৯৬৮)।

১৯৪৭-এর ৯ আগস্ট গান্ধীজি আবার এলেন দাঙ্গাবিধ্বস্ত কলকাতায় বেলেঘাটায় আশ্রয় নিলেন দাঙ্গায় পোড়া বাড়িতে, পাশে সহীদ সুরাবর্দি। প্রথম দুদিন হিন্দুরা এসে তাঁকে গালিগালাজ করল, টিল পাটকেল ছুঁড়ল (স্টেটসম্যান, কলকাতা ১১ ও ১২ আগস্ট, ১৯৪৭)। তারপর মেজাজ বদলাতে শুরু করল। ১৪ আগস্ট দুপুর থেকে হিন্দু মুসলমান পরস্পরকে ছুরি মারার বদলে আলিঙ্গন করতে লাগল। মধ্যরাত্রি থেকে লক্ষ লক্ষ হিন্দু-মুসলমান নরনারী পরস্পরকে আলিঙ্গন করল। অবিশ্রান্ত মিছিল গেল বেলেঘাটায়, গান্ধীজিকে সশ্রদ্ধ নমস্কার জানাতে। সে এক অবিস্মরণীয় দৃশ্য। স্টেটসম্যান, কলকাতা, ১৬ আগস্ট, ১৯৪৭, স্বাধীনতা, কলকাতা, ১৬ আগস্ট, ১৯৪৭)।

১৯৪৭-এর ২৬ আগস্ট, ভারতের শেষ ইংরেজ বড়লাট লর্ড লুই মাউন্টব্যাটেন এক তারবার্তায় গান্ধীজিকে লিখলেন : “পাঞ্জাবে ৫৫ হাজার সশস্ত্র সৈন্যদল আপ্রাণ চেষ্টা করেও বীভৎস সাম্প্রদায়িক তাণ্ডব থামাতে পারছে না। আর কলকাতা তথা বাংলায় আপনি একলা দাঙ্গা থামিয়েছেন। আপনাকে অভিনন্দন।” (ভি. জি. ড্যালটন : গান্ধী ডিউরিং পার্টিশন, লন্ডন, ১৯৭০, পৃঃ ২৩৪)।

১৯৪৭-এর ১ সেপ্টেম্বর কলকাতায় আবার দাঙ্গা বেঁধে গেল। গান্ধীজি আমরণ অনশন করলেন।

রাজাগোপালাচারি তাঁকে বললেন : গুণ্ডাদের কি চেতনা বদলাবে? গান্ধী জবাব দিলেন : গুণ্ডারা কি করবে জানি না, কিন্তু সারা কলকাতার শুভবুদ্ধি সম্পন্ন মানুষের চেতনা যদি বদলায়, তো গুণ্ডারা কোণঠাসা হবে, কলকাতায় মানবতাবোধ ফিরে আসবে। তারই জন্য আমার অনশন” (স্টেটসম্যান, কলকাতা ২ সেপ্টেম্বর, ১৯৪৭)।

১ সেপ্টেম্বর থেকে ৩ সেপ্টেম্বর কলকাতার হাজার হাজার ছাত্র-ছাত্রী রাস্তায় নেমে এল—অবিশ্রান্ত মিছিলে ধ্বনি দিল “গান্ধীজিকে বাঁচাতে হলে কলকাতাতে শান্তি চাই” ও “হিন্দু-মুসলমান এক হও”। ৪ সেপ্টেম্বর দাঙ্গা সম্পূর্ণ থেকে গেল। গান্ধীজি অনশন ভঙ্গ করলেন। ছাত্র মিছিল তাঁর কাছে গেলে, তাদের নমস্কার করে নীরবে আশীর্বাদ জানালেন। (লেখকের নিজস্ব অভিজ্ঞতার ভিত্তিতে—লেখক তখন ছাত্র ফেডারেশনের কর্মীও শান্তি মিছিলের অংশগ্রহণকারী—গৌ. চ)।

এর কিছুদিন পরে নোয়াখালি, বিহার ও কলকাতার বীভৎস সাম্প্রদায়িক দাঙ্গার পর্যালোচনা করে গান্ধীজি লেখেন :

“দাঙ্গা তারাই বাঁধিয়েছে যারা গুণ্ডা নয়, গুণ্ডাতে পরিণত হয়েছে। গুণ্ডা সৃষ্টি করি আমরাই। আমাদের সহানুভূতি ও পরোক্ষ সমর্থন ছাড়া গুণ্ডাদের দাঁড়াবার কোনও জমিই থাকত না। ... গত এক বছরের নৈরাজ্যের সময় এই দুষ্কৃতকারীরা সমাজে সম্মানিত ব্যক্তিতে পরিণত হতে পেরেছে। ... এবার শুভবুদ্ধিসম্পন্ন নাগরিকদের কর্তব্য গুণ্ডাদের একঘরে করা। তার পথ অহিংস অসহযোগ—, এদেশে এবং সারা পৃথিবীতে। যা ভাল, তা নিজের জোরেরই টিকবে। যা মন্দ তা পরগাছার মত, ভালর কাঁধে চড়েই বাঁচতে চায়। সং মানুষেরা

সাম্প্রদায়িকতার বিরুদ্ধে দাঁড়ালেই, দাঙ্গাবাজ পরগাছারা আপনিই শুকিয়ে মরে যাবে।’ (গান্ধীজি হরিজন, ১৪ সেপ্টেম্বর, ১৯৪৭)।

এর কিছুদিন পরে আর একটি প্রবন্ধে তিনি লিখলেন : “সাম্প্রদায়িক তাণ্ডব হলেই আমরা নিজেদের দায়িত্ব এড়িয়ে অপরের উপর দোষ চাপিয়ে দিতে চাই। বলি : গুণ্ডারা দাঙ্গা করছে। কিন্তু আমরাই তো সমর্থন করে, উৎসাহ দিয়ে গুণ্ডাদের কবলে সমাজকে সাঁপে দেই” (গান্ধীজি : হরিজন, ১৭ নভেম্বর, ১৯৪৭)।

১৯৪৮-এর ৩০ জানুয়ারি দিল্লির জনসভায় হিন্দু-মুসলিম সম্প্রীতির জন্য প্রার্থনারত গান্ধীজি, রাষ্ট্রীয় স্বয়ম সেবক সংঘের হিন্দু সাম্প্রদায়িক ফ্যাসিস্ট আততায়ীর গুলিতে প্রাণ হারালেন। শহীদ হয়ে রক্ষা করলেন তাঁর “করেঙ্গে ইয়ে মরেঙ্গে”র শপথ।

আজ তার প্রায় অর্ধশতাব্দী পরে ভারতে এবং এই উপমহাদেশে (তথা অর্ধেক বিশ্ব) নতুন করে ধর্মীয় মৌলবাদ ও ধর্মাত্ম সাম্প্রদায়িকতার তাণ্ডব দেখা দিয়েছে। রাজধানী দিল্লীর ও বাণিজ্যকেন্দ্র বোম্বাই-এর প্রাদেশিক মসনদে গণসমর্থনপুষ্ট হয়ে ক্ষমতায় বসেছে সাম্প্রদায়িক ফ্যাসিস্ট শক্তিরাই। স্বাধীনতা সংগ্রামের শেষ পর্বে সাম্প্রদায়িক তাণ্ডবের বিরুদ্ধে গান্ধীজির নিঃশর্ত অভিযানের পাশে দাঁড়িয়েছিলেন কমিউনিস্টরাও—হাসনাবাদের মেহনতী কৃষক, কলকাতার ট্রাম শ্রমিক ও ছাত্র এবং শহীদ লালমোহন সেন। ১৯৯৫-তে সাম্প্রদায়িকতার ভয়াবহ বিপদ রুখতে এই প্রজন্মের কমিউনিস্টরা কি আর একবার গান্ধীজির উপদেশকে স্মরণ করবেন?

সৌজন্য : পরিচয়, জ্যৈষ্ঠ-শ্রাবণ ১৪০২, পৃ. ১৪১-১৫১



## বিশ্বভারতী প্রসঙ্গে রবীন্দ্রনাথ-গান্ধী পত্র বিনিময়

জহর সেন

বরীন্দ্রনাথকে ঘিরে বাঙালির আবেগের আতিশয্য কতটা আন্তরিক, সে সম্পর্কে অনেকেই সন্দেহান। স্বয়ং রবীন্দ্রনাথের মনেও এ বিষয়ে যথেষ্ট ক্ষোভ ছিল। বাঙালি জমিদারদের মধ্যে দানবীরের সংখ্যা নগণ্য নয়। নানা তীর্থস্থানে এর নিদর্শন ছড়িয়ে আছে। শিক্ষা বিস্তারের ক্ষেত্রেও ধনী ও মধ্যবিত্ত বাঙালির বদান্যতা সুবিদিত। কিন্তু রবীন্দ্রনাথের বিশ্বভারতীকে আর্থিক দৈনদশা থেকে বাঁচাতে কেন তারা অগ্রণী হন নি, এ প্রশ্নের সদুত্তর মেলে না।

১৯৩৩ সালের মাঝামাঝি বিশ্বভারতীর আর্থিক দুর্গতির কথা ভেবে রবীন্দ্রনাথ নিদারুণ ভেঙ্গে পড়েন। বোম্বাই, অন্ধ্র এবং সিংহল থেকে তাঁর আমন্ত্রণ এসেছিল। তিনি ভেবেছিলেন বোধহয় কিছু সুরাহা হবে এবার। ১৯৩৩ সালের ২ ডিসেম্বর বোম্বাই-তে ভারতীয় বণিক পরিষদের সভায় তিনি বলেন, তিনি কি শুধু নাচগান করতে এসেছেন? তাঁকে কি ভিক্ষার



ঝুলি নিয়ে দ্বারে দ্বারে ঘুরতে হবে? এখানে প্রায় কিছুই মেলে নি। ১৯৩৪ সালের ১০ মে সিংহলে তিনি আর্থনাদ করে ওঠেন, অনিচ্ছুক হৃদয়ের মানুষের কাছ থেকে অর্থ সংগ্রহ করতে গিয়ে তিনি কি আত্মহত্যা করবেন? (Must I kill gathering funds from unwilling hands?) এখানে তিনি দান হিসাবে পেয়েছিলেন সাতশ টাকার কিছু কম।

এই মর্মান্তিক বিপর্যয়ের সময় এন্ড্রুজ রবীন্দ্রনাথকে অনুরোধ করেন গান্ধীজীকে লিখতে পরিত্রাণের জন্য। ১৯৩৫ সালের ১২ সেপ্টেম্বর তিনি গান্ধীজীকে একটি মর্মস্পর্শী চিঠি লেখেন। এই চিঠিতে তিনি জানান, গত ত্রিশ বছরের বেশী সময় ধরে বিশ্বভারতীর জন্য জীবনের সবকিছু দিয়েছেন। অপেক্ষাকৃত অল্প বয়সে কারও সাহায্য না নিয়েই তিনি যাবতীয় বিপদের মুখোমুখি হয়েছেন। তাঁরই সংগ্রামের মধ্য দিয়ে নানাদিকে এই প্রতিষ্ঠান বেড়ে উঠেছে। ৭৫ বছর বয়সে পৌঁছে তাঁর মনে হচ্ছে দায়িত্বের বোঝা দুর্বল। তাঁর এই ব্যর্থতার জন্য নিজের বিচ্যুতিকেই তিনি দায়ী করেছেন। নিরন্তর ভিক্ষার অভিযানে প্রতিদিন তাঁর উদ্বেগ বেড়েছে। শরীর সম্পূর্ণ ভাঙনের মুখে। গান্ধীজীর কথা দেশের মানুষ শোনে। জীবনের অন্তিম নিশ্চিন্ত পর্বে তাই তিনি গান্ধীজীর শরণাপন্ন হয়েছেন।

ইংরেজিতে লেখা মূল চিঠির প্রাসঙ্গিক অংশ এখানে লিপিবদ্ধ করছি :

“Over thirty years I have practically given my all to this mission of my life and so long as I was comparatively young and active I faced all my difficulties unaided and through my struggles the institution grew up (in) its manifold aspects. And now, however, when I am 75 I feel the burden of my responsibility growing too heavy for me. Owing to some deficiency in me my appeals fail to find adequate response in the heart of my people though the cause that I have done my utmost to serve is certainly valuable. Constant begging excursions with absurdly meagre results added to the strain of my daily anxieties and have brought my physical constitution nearly to an extreme verge of exhaustion. Now I know of none else but yourself whose words may help my country men to realise that is their worth while to maintain this institution in fullness of its functions and to relieve me of perpetual worry at this last period of my waning life and death.”

এ সময়ে গান্ধীজী খুবই মগ্ন ছিলেন হরিজন সেবক সংঘ এবং নিখিল ভারতীয় গ্রামীণ শিল্প সমিতির সংগঠন গড়ার কাজে। বেশ কিছুদিন অপেক্ষা করার পর ১১ অক্টোবর তারিখে

গান্ধীজীর হাতে এই চিঠি দেন রবীন্দ্রনাথের দূত অনিল চন্দ। এই চিঠির উত্তরে গান্ধীজী ওয়ার্ধা থেকে ১৩ অক্টোবর রবীন্দ্রনাথকে লেখেন, এটা অভাবনীয় যে এই বয়সে রবীন্দ্রনাথ ভিক্ষার বুলি নিয়ে এখানে ওখানে ঘুরবেন। প্রয়োজনীয় অর্থ সাহায্যের প্রতিশ্রুতি রবীন্দ্রনাথকে জানান গান্ধীজী। ১৯৩৫ সালের ডিসেম্বর মাসের মাঝামাঝি গান্ধীজী অসুস্থ হয়ে পড়েন। সুস্থ হবার সঙ্গে সঙ্গেই নানা ধরনের রাজনৈতিক সমস্যায় তিনি জড়িয়ে পড়েন। রবীন্দ্রনাথও বিভ্রান্ত হয়ে পড়েন। বিশ্বভারতীর ঘাটতি তখন ৬০,০০০ টাকা। ইতিমধ্যে তাঁর “চিত্রাঙ্গদা” নৃত্য-নাটক যথেষ্ট সুনাম অর্জন করেছে। এই নৃত্য-নাটক থেকে অর্থ রোজগারের প্রত্যাশায় ৭৬ বছর বয়সে তিনি গেলেন পাটনায়, লক্ষ্ণৌতে, দিল্লিতে। ১৯৩৬ সালের ২৫ মার্চ তিনি দিল্লি পৌঁছান। সেদিন সন্ধ্যায় প্রার্থনা সভার পর গান্ধীজী গেলেন রবীন্দ্রনাথের সঙ্গে দেখা করতে। বিশ্বভারতীর আর্থিক সংকট প্রসঙ্গে বিস্তারিত আলোচনা হলো। গান্ধীজী কবিকে অনুরোধ জানালেন, প্রয়োজনীয় অর্থের সংস্থান হলে তিনি যেন শান্তিনিকেতনে ফিরে যান, এই পরিণত বয়সে ভিক্ষার বুলি নিয়ে আর যেন এখানে ওখানে না ঘোরেন।

১৯৩৬ সালের ২৭ মার্চ গান্ধীজী রবীন্দ্রনাথকে পাঠান ৬০,০০০ টাকার একটি চেক। সঙ্গে ছোট একটি চিঠি :

Dear Gurudev,

God has blessed my poor effort. And here is the money. Now you will relieve the public mind by announcing cancellation of the rest of the programme. May God keep you for many a year to come. Yours with love,  
M. K. Gandhi.

যিনি বা যাঁরা অর্থ দিয়েছিলেন, তাঁরা ছিলেন নাম প্রকাশে অনিচ্ছুক। তাঁরাও কবিকে চিঠি দেন। তাঁরা লেখেন, রবীন্দ্রনাথ শুধু ভারতের শ্রেষ্ঠ কবি নন, তিনি বিশ্বকবি। রবীন্দ্রনাথের কবিতা প্রাচীন ভারতের ঋষিদের কথা স্মরণ করিয়ে দেয়। চিঠির নীচে “বিনীত দেশবাসী” রূপে তাঁরা নিজেদের পরিচয় দেন।

কবি তাঁর আন্তরিক কৃতজ্ঞতা জানান, সংবাদপত্রে এক বিবৃতির মধ্য দিয়ে। তিনি শান্তিনিকেতনে ফিরে আসেন। সাময়িকভাবে বিপদ কাটলেও, কবির উদ্বেগ কাটেনি। নিজের অবর্তমানে বিশ্বভারতীর কি দশা হবে তা ভেবে তিনি অনুক্ষণ দুশ্চিন্তায় কাতর বোধ করেছেন। ১৯৩৭ সালের ১০ সেপ্টেম্বর কবি অসুস্থ হয়ে পড়েন। চিকিৎসার জন্য ডাঃ নীলরতন সরকার শান্তিনিকেতনে গেলেন। গান্ধীজী ও জওহরলাল নেহরু উদ্বেগ জানালেন টেলিগ্রাম মারফৎ। তাঁর রোগশয্যা থেকে গান্ধীজীও মহাদেব দেশাই মারফৎ ১৩,০০০ টাকার আর একটি চেক পাঠালেন রবীন্দ্রনাথের নামে। ১৯৩৭ সালের ৭ নভেম্বর রবীন্দ্রনাথ জানালেন গান্ধীজীকে

অকুণ্ঠ কৃতজ্ঞতা। গান্ধীজীর ঔদার্যে তিনি পেয়েছেন গভীর শান্তি ও স্বাধীনতা। চল্লিশ বছর ধরে তিনি একক সংগ্রামে অবতীর্ণ হয়েছেন। প্রতিবেশী মানুষের কাছ থেকে পেয়েছেন বৈরী ঈর্ষা, কিন্তু সাহায্যের হাত নয়। জীবনের অন্তিম পর্বে এসে গান্ধীজীর কাছ থেকে তিনি পেয়েছেন ঔদার্যের বিভূতি মণ্ডিত প্রশ্নাতীত সহানুভূতি। তাই তাঁর ক্ষুধিত আত্মা আনন্দে অভিভূত। মূল চিঠির কিছু অংশ এখানে উল্লেখ করছি।

“Your love for me has greatly exceeded my expectation and I assure you that the gift you have bestowed on me is a gift of profound peace and of freedom from daily worries that had been sapping my strength. I have struggled almost single-handed for about forty years for a cause which has failed to find a helping hand in a neighbourhood jealously antagonistic and therefore when I am nearing the end of my journey suddenly to be blessed with an unquestioning sympathy lavish in generosity overwhelms my famished heart with joy.”

পরের দিন গান্ধীজী এই চিঠির উত্তরে জানান, ঈশ্বরের ইচ্ছায় এবং কবির পরিশ্রম ও প্রার্থনার ফলেই এটা সম্ভব হয়েছে।

১৯৪০ সালের ১৭ ফেব্রুয়ারি গান্ধীজী শান্তিনিকেতন এসেছিলেন। যাবতীয় বিপদের হাত থেকে বিশ্বভারতীকে রক্ষার অনুরোধ জানান রবীন্দ্রনাথ। ১৯ ফেব্রুয়ারি গান্ধীজী রবীন্দ্রনাথকে এক চিঠিতে জানান, বিশ্বভারতী জাতীয় প্রতিষ্ঠান এবং নিঃসন্দেহে আন্তর্জাতিক প্রতিষ্ঠানও বটে। শান্তিনিকেতন গান্ধীজীর দ্বিতীয় ঘর। ১৯৪০ সালের ২ মার্চ হরিজন পত্রিকায় গান্ধীজী দেশবাসীর প্রতি আকুল আহ্বান জানান, বিশ্বভারতীর দৈন্যদশার অবসান ঘটাতে। রবীন্দ্রনাথের তিরোধান ঘটে ১৯৪১ সালে। বিশ্বভারতী কেন্দ্রীয় বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ে রূপান্তরিত হয় ১৯৫১ সালে।

এই প্রবন্ধের মূল সূত্র : নেপাল মজুমদার, “বিশ্বভারতী রবীন্দ্রনাথ অ্যান্ড গান্ধীজী”, দি বিশ্বভারতী কোয়টার্লি, গান্ধী নামবার, ভল্যুম ৩৫, নং ১, ২, ৩ ও ৪, পৃ. ৬২-৮০

## গান্ধী বন্দনা

ইংরেজ তুমি ভারত ছাড়ে যাঁর সে আহ্বান—  
যাঁর কথাতেই কোমর বাঁধে হিন্দু মুসলমান!  
যাঁর ডাকেতে উঠল কেঁপে ব্রিটিশ সেনার দল,  
উড়ল ধ্বজা তেরঙ্গা ওই খুলল রে শৃঙ্খল।  
সে মোদের মোহন গান্ধীজী,  
জাতির জনক বলেন সবাই ডাকেন বাপুজী।।

সত্যগ্রহ, অহিংসা আর ডান্ডি অভিযান,  
ধিক্কারিলে সাহেবরাজে ফেরালে সম্মান।  
আইন অমান্য অসহযোগে তুমিই পথিকৃৎ,  
কাঁপিয়ে দিলে ব্রিটিশ হৃদয় নাড়িয়ে দিলে ভিত।  
চরকাতে ওই কাটলে সুতো মায়েরই সম্মানে,  
বুঝিয়েছিলে হে দেশনেতা স্বদেশীকতার মানে।  
তুমি মহাত্মা গান্ধীজী  
জাতির জনক বলেন সবাই ডাকেন বাপুজী।।

“করেঙ্গে ইয়া মরেঙ্গে” ডাকে আনলে স্বাধীনতা,  
শস্য শ্যামল ভারত ভূমে খুশির বারতা।  
মুক্ত করি ভারতমায়ের শৃঙ্খল বন্ধন—  
নুতন ভারত গড়লে হে বীর তুমি নিরঞ্জন।  
সার্থ শতবর্ষে জানাই তোমায় সম্মান  
হে মহাত্মা পূজি সবে লহ প্রণাম।।

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মধ্য কোলকাতা ডাক বিভাগ  
৮/৩/২০১৯



# DIRECTOR-SECRETARY'S REPORT

on  
the Programme and Activities at  
Gandhi Smarak Sangrahalaya, Barrackpore  
from January, 2019 to March, 2019

## ■ In-house Activities :

### 1. Day-long Programme for Underprivileged Children (27.01.2019) :

Gandhi Smarak Sangrahalaya, Barrackpore celebrated the 70th Republic Day with the participation of Underprivileged Children at its premises. The Sangrahalaya organized a day-long Programme for such children of local and adjacent areas of Barrackpore. The Children were visited the Sangrahalaya and they were



explained the information about all the exhibits of the Sangrahalaya. They were also shown a Patriotic documentary film regarding the Indian Freedom



Movement. The Sangrahalaya arranged four separate playing activities based on the theme of Republic Day of India for the children by dividing them into two groups. The Children also performed some group dances with several Patriotic songs. At the end of the programme the Sangrahalaya awarded the prizes according to their scores of



several activities to all the participants of two groups. By spending a whole day at Gandhi Smarak Sangrahalaya and by participating in the programme of celebration of the 70th Republic Day, such children had learned a lot of things about the significance of this particular day of our Country.

#### ■ Outreach Activities :

##### 1. Participation in the Inaugural Programme of National Level Quiz Competition, Organized by BITM, Kolkata (29.01.2019) :

With the country celebrating the 150<sup>th</sup> Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, Birla Industrial & Technological Museum (BITM) in Kolkata, National Council of Science Museums, Ministry of Culture, Government of India organized a Nationwide School level Quiz Competition, involving hundreds of students, to pay homage to our 'Father of the Nation'. The theme of the quiz is



“Mahatma Gandhi: Life and Works”. The inaugural programme for this National level Quiz Competition was held on January 29, 2019 at BITM, Kolkata. The Director-Secretary of Gandhi Smarak Sangrahalaya, Barrackpore was invited in this inaugural programme



as the Guest of Honour. Shri Jahar Sirkar, Former Secretary, Ministry of Culture, Government of India was also present as the Chief Guest.

## 2. Participation in the 43<sup>rd</sup> International Kolkata Book Fair, 2019 (31.01.2019-11.02.2019) :

On the occasion of the 150<sup>th</sup> Birth Anniversary year of Mahatma Gandhi the Sangrahalaya took many initiatives to highlight the several messages of 'Gandhi-150' to all kinds of people. As a part of such activity the Sangrahalaya participated in the 43<sup>rd</sup> International Kolkata Book Fair which was held from January 31 to February 11, 2019 at Central Park Fair Ground, Salt Lake, Kolkata. The Sangrahalaya held a Stall at there by setting up some thematic temporary exhibitions on Mahatma Gandhi like 'Life & Works of Mahatma Gandhi',



'Gandhiji & Bengal' and 'Mahatma Gandhi & the World'. The various exhibits were set up by displaying of photographs, write-ups, Stamps, Posters, Models of Charkha and the Cottage in which Gandhiji used to stay at Sabarmati Ashram, some original collections of Hand-spun Threads by several of our National Leaders and the Photostat copies of Gandhiji's Letters in

different languages and his Bengali Hand Writing. A special Photo Album composed of 100 original photographs on the life of Mahatma Gandhi was also displayed in the stall. The several



Vice-Chancellor of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad University of Technology, Kolkata on January 31, 2019. Many eminent personalities, general people and the students had come to visit the stall and they had gained a lot of knowledge about Gandhiji from the several exhibits of the Sangrahalaya's stall.



publications of the Sangrahalaya related to Gandhiji were also displayed in the stall to create the interest of the people about Mahatma Gandhi. The stall was inaugurated by Professor Saikat Moitra,



### 3. Participation at the District Level Environment Fair (01.02.2019 and 02.02.2019) :



Office of the District Magistrate & Collector, North 24 Parganas, Govt. of West Bengal, organized a District Level Environment Fair, 2019 for 2 days at Kachari Maidan, Barasat on February 1 and 2, 2019. The Organizer invited the Gandhi Smarak Sangrahalaya, Barrackpore to participate in this Fair for 2 days. The Sangrahalaya set up an Exhibition Stall at the place and set up



some temporary exhibitions on life and works of Mahatma Gandhi along with Gandhiji's Views on Nature & Environment. Shri S. Banerjee, A.D.G.M, visited



the Stall on the first day. The students from various schools of North 24 Parganas district also came to visit the Gandhi Smarak Sangrahalaya's Stall.

#### 4. Participation in the Two Days' National level Seminar, organized by Asiatic Society (February 12 and 13, 2019) :



The Asiatic Society organised a Two days' National level Seminar on 'Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi' on February 12 and 13, 2019. They invited the Gandhi Smarak Sangrahalaya to take part in this Seminar. The Director-Secretary of the Sangrahalaya participated in the Seminar as a Speaker and the topic of his deliberation was 'Rethinking Gandhian Thought : Issues and Challenges'.



**5. Participation in The National Seminar Organized by Akshay Kumar Maitreya Heritage Museum of North Bengal University (12.3.2019) :**



The Akshay Kumar Maitreya Heritage Museum of North Bengal University organized a day-long National Seminar on 'Less Explored Archaeological Heritage & Objects of North Bengal' on March 12, 2012 at their institution. They invited the Director-Secretary of the Sangrahalaya as Special Guest in this seminar. The Director-Secretary presented his deliberation on 'Revolution in Display of Archaeology in Modern Way' at this seminar. The key-note address was delivered by Shri Rajesh Purohit, Director of Indian Museum, Kolkata.



**6. Participation in the Programme, organized by Department of Post, Central Kolkata Division, for the occasion of Celebration of 150th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi at Sr. Supdt. of Post Offices, Kolkata (19.03.2019) :**

Department of Posts Office of the Sr Supdt. of Post Offices, Central Kolkata



Division, organized a programme for the occasion of Celebration of 150th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi at their Office on March 19, 2019. They requested the Gandhi Smarak Sangrahalaya to arrange a special exhibition on 'Life & Works of Mahatma Gandhi along with several

posters on Stamps related to Gandhiji, which had been released in several occasions by more than 100 countries of the World. The Sangrahalaya arranged the exhibition at their office premises and it was



inaugurated by Shri Samar Bagchi, Former Director of BITM, Kolkata. At the inaugural part of the programme they organized a discussion on various issues related to Gandhiji and Shri Bagchi presented his deliberation. The

programme was ended by an Audio-Visual Spot Quiz on Life & Activities of Mahatma Gandhi and the quiz was conducted by the Director-Secretary of Gandhi Smarak Sangrahalaya, Barrackpore.





### ■ Mobile Exhibitions :

#### 1. Mobile Exhibition & Day-long Programme at Aguibani High School, West Midnapore (06/01/2019) :

The Gandhi Smarak Sangrahalaya, Barrackpore had reached on January 6, 2019 at Aguibani High School in the district of West Midnapore for organizing the Mobile Exhibition on 'Three Great Personalities - Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore, Mahatma Gandhi and Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose'.



#### 2. Mobile Exhibition & Day-long Workshop on Gandhian Concept of Rural Development & Education organized by ABS Academy, Durgapur (04.03.2019) :

Gandhi Smarak Sangrahalaya, Barrackpore was invited by the ABS Academy,

Durgapur, in Burdwan District at their institute to organize an Exhibition cum Workshop on Mahatma Gandhi's Ideas on Rural Reconstruction and Education on March 4, 2019. The Sangrahalaya reached at the institution and set up an exhibition on Gandhian concept



of rural development, entitled "*India of My Dreams*". At the inaugural session the Director-Secretary of the Sangrahalaya delivered an elaborate presentation on 'Gandhiji's 18-Points Communal Structures - An Unique Package of Social Development'.

At the end of this presentation a documentary film on Rural Reconstruction and Educational Concept of Mahatma Gandhi was shown. At the end of the Workshop the Audio-Visual



Spot Quiz on Life & Activities of Gandhiji was arranged by the Sangrahalaya for the students and Faculty Members of the institution and the winners of the quiz programme were awarded the prizes by the Sangrahalaya.



### ■ Group Visits:

1. A group of 11 foreign visitors from Auckland, New Zealand, came to visit the Sangrahalaya on January 5, 2019. They were provided with a guided tour of the



Sangrahalaya. After visiting the galleries one of the Administrative Director commented “*beautiful & Very interesting*”.

2. A group of 9 visitors from Barrackpore Poribesh Bandhab Society came to visit the Sangrahalaya on January 7, 2019. After visiting the galleries one of the Members commented “*Well maintained & heritage should be preserved*”.





3. Thirty seven students of Ichapur Academy H.S. Ichapur, along with their teachers visited Gandhi Smarak Sangrahalaya on January 12, 2019. They were provided with a guided tour of the Sangrahalaya. On seeing the display of



various galleries of the Sangrahalaya one of the Teachers of the institution commented '*Outstanding*'.

4. Sixty students of Sodepur Sushil Krishna Sikshayatan, Sodepur, along with their teachers visited Gandhi Smarak Sangrahalaya on January 14, 2019. They were provided with a guided tour of the Sangrahalaya. After ending their visit one of the Teachers of the institution commented '*Satisfactory*'.





5. Two sixty nine students of Ariadaha Sarbamangala Balika Vidyalaya, Ariadaha along with their teachers came to visit the Gandhi Smarak Sangrahalaya on January 22, 2019. They were provided with a guided



tour of the Sangrahalaya and shown the documentary entitled '*Muktir Banhisikha*'- Role of Barrackpore in the Freedom Movement of India. After visiting the Sangrahalaya one of the Teachers of the institution commented '*Outstanding*'.

6. On February 1, 2019 forty five students of the Mansarat High School, Puratanramgarh, Falta came to visit the Sangrahalaya along with their teachers. They were provided the guide service for explaining the various exhibits of the Sangrahalaya. One of the Teachers of the institution commented in visitor's book that they were very pleased to visit the museum.





7. Twenty nine students of Vivekananda College, Madhyamgram, along with their teachers visited the Sangrahalaya on February 4, 2019. The Sangrahalaya delivered a brief information about the Museum at the beginning and the students observed all the exhibits in different galleries of the Sangrahalaya to learn their knowledge about Gandhiji with their patience. After completing their visit one of the Teachers of the institution commented in visitor's book '*Informative and acknowledged by students*'.



8. The students of Nivedita Vidyapith, Barrackpore came to visit the Sangrahalaya for two times in the month of February, 2019. The first group of forty eight students along with their teachers visited the Sangrahalaya on February 22, 2019 and the second group of forty seven students along with their teachers came at

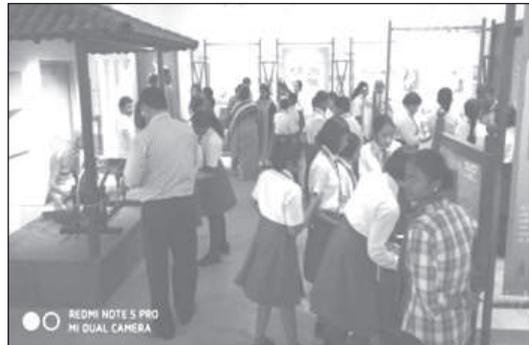


Sangrahalaya on February 25, 2019. They were provided with a guided tour of the Sangrahalaya and shown the documentary titled 'Muktir Banhisikha'- Role



of Barrackpore in the Freedom Movement of India. After visiting the Sangrahalaya one of the Teachers of the institution commented '*Wonderful experience along with having lot of info*'.

9. The Stem World School, Barrackpore along with sixty four students and their teachers visited Gandhi Smarak Sangrahalaya for 'teaching and learning' on



March 7, 2019. After visiting the Sangrahalaya one of the Administrators of the institution commented *'Well organized and very good supportive staffs thanks from Team Stem'*.

10. Thirty five students of R. K. V. Mission, Mandarmoni, East Midnapore along with their teachers came to visit the Gandhi Smarak Sangrahalaya on March 9, 2019. The Sangrahalaya provided them the guide services to explain the information about the various



exhibits in the galleries. One of the Teachers of the institution commented in visitor's book - *'Well organized'*.

11. One thirty two students of Alipur Satish Chandra Pal high School, Alipur, Hooghly, along with their teachers visited Gandhi Smarak Sangrahalaya on March 15, 2019. They were provided with a guided tour of the Sangrahalaya



and shown the documentary titled *'Muktir Banhisikha'*- Role of Barrackpore in the Freedom Movement of India. After visiting the Sangrahalaya one of the Teachers of the institution commented *'Excellent'*.

■ **Special Visits:**

‘Shri Manoj Dehury, Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Culture, Government of India came to visit the Gandhi Smarak Sangrahalaya, Barrackpore for monitoring the upgradation and renovation work of the Sangrahalaya on March 16, 2019. He was also provided a guided tour in the galleries of the Sangrahalaya.



■ **Media Coverage:**

- i) VOA Bangla - an online News Portal covered the documentary news about Gandhi Smarak Sangrahalaya in their portal on January 31, 2019.
- ii) DD Bangla telecasted the news on ‘Gandhi-150’ Stall of Gandhi Smarak Sangrahalaya, Barrackpore at 43rd International Kolkata Book Fair, 2019. The News was telecasted on February 7, 2019 at 10-30 pm in their programme entitled ‘Camera Cholche’.

