

Gandhi will live with truth non-violence and love

Prem Singh

Some Gandhians are feeling indignant about the special issue of 'Antim Jan' on Savarkar. It is a monthly magazine published by a government organization, 'Gandhi Darshan and Smriti'. Some journalists, intellectuals and party spokespersons/leaders too have expressed their unhappiness over the special issue. Gandhi's great-grandson Tushar Gandhi's statement also has come against the same. 'Gandhi Darshan and Smriti' is an organization related to the life and thoughts of Gandhi. Opponents believe that this institution's special issue on Savarkar is part of the 'Hindutva' agenda of the present government. They say that by doing so the government has tried to distort Gandhi's philosophy and reduce his stature.

Gandhi received recognition due to his life, his role in Indian politics, and his philosophy based on his beliefs. This was evident on the amphitheater of India and the world. Even after he was gone, Gandhi's stature has remained unchallenged in the world. The reason behind this was his life and philosophy. Indeed, Gandhi's leadership in the decisive phase of the Indian independence movement, has emerged as an illustration and an ideal in the history of human civilization. His role and philosophy are reflected on the thought patterns of the entire human civilization. This is why Einstein said that generations to come would hardly believe that such a man made of flesh and blood ever existed on earth. It would be important to note that the great scientist Einstein, who considered Gandhi the most significant leader among all the world leaders, never had a personal meeting with Gandhi.

The history of human civilization should not be a chain of times based on human tendencies such as falsehood, violence, hatred, deceit, cowardice, conspiracy, malice, animosity, greed, and so on. Humanity therefore needs Gandhi – in order to maintain truth, non-violence and love at the root of life. If, due to merely the misplaced efforts of some people with limited understanding, Gandhi's philosophy could possibly be distorted and his stature reduced, then his life and impact could not have left an undeniable mark on the history of human civilization. Those who are concerned about the distortion of Gandhi's philosophy and attempts to belittle his stature, should make themselves good Gandhians before questioning the activities of their opponents. Only then the existence of Gandhi will find true permanence. Gandhi did not consider opponents as his enemies even if they came to

support the British and oppose the freedom movement. He had human feelings for the British themselves who subjugated India because he had a new perspective to fight his opponents.

Attempts have been made in India in the past to make Gandhi stand out in comparison to other personalities. Some weigh him with Bhagat Singh, some with Ambedkar, some with Jinnah, some with Karl Marx, some with Mao. Despite all this, Gandhi remains the same, because of his role and philosophy. The same is the case with those people, by comparison, who make attempts to reduce the stature of Gandhi. The basic point is that Gandhi's role and philosophy cannot be undone by any government, party, or individual effort.

Modern industrial civilization is trapped in a vicious cycle of violence, counter-violence and acute indulgence with consumerism. The crisis of human civilization is spread everywhere - earth, sea and space. Millions of species of animals and plants have become extinct amidst voluptuousness of greed and material ambition. India itself is badly in the grip of this civilization. Gandhi, especially in the midst of the horrors of Partition, himself felt that anti-humanity had won in spite of his best efforts to avoid it. But his faith in humanity was not shaken. He admitted that 'Whenever I am disappointed, I remember that truth and love have always triumphed in history. There were tyrants and murderers and for some time they also seemed to be invincible, but in the end, they were defeated ... Always remember this thing.'

If we make a genuine effort, the meaning of Gandhi's existence will remain in spite of the false narratives. It is not necessary that everyone should understand the simple grandeur of Gandhi. But there is no need to get angry or take cudgels against such people. Gandhi himself was no longer needed by Nehru, Patel and Maulana. But as we know, even then Gandhi's relevance was not diminished in the slightest manner. Had he not been murdered, he would have lived with the ordinary people of India and Pakistan, or in the jails of independent India and Pakistan while continuing to adhere to his role and philosophy!

The problem is not that the RSS distorts Gandhi. The problem lies with Gandhi's claimants. They can't explain why they need Gandhi? For 'the last man'? But the truth is that by pushing back Gandhi's last man, they have brought in the 'aam aadmi'. Their leader sits with pictures of Bhagat Singh and Ambedkar on his both sides. He knows that his ideal party, the RSS/BJP, will one day bring Gandhi down. But the point to realise is that despite even this,

Gandhi's relevance will not end. Gandhi is not dependent on institutions and governments.

Why does India need to make a show-piece of Gandhi? If Gandhi is turned into a show-piece, then different leaders and governments will decorate and use him in their own way in the country as well as abroad. The Congress had been doing this very well for a long time. The need is to follow the example of the real Gandhi. Then he will not be used in favor of Savarkars or for their competition, nor in favor of corporate capitalism. When you have been busy making 'India of Gandhi's dreams' for the last thirty years, what big crime has the special issue of 'Antim Jan' committed?

(The writer associated with the socialist movement is a former teacher of Delhi University and a Fellow of Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla.)