

Russo-Ukraine War: How Gandhi can show the way!

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"...The greatest revolution of our time is, therefore, a procedural revolution, removal of injustice through a mode of action characterized by justice. The question here is not so much the contents of justice as the mode to achieve it. Constitutional and orderly processes are often not enough. They are then transgressed by the use of weapons. In order that it should not happen and that man should not ever get thrown around between ballot and bullet, this procedural revolution of civil disobedience has emerged. At the head of all revolutions of our time stands this revolution of Satyagraha against weapons although it has in actual effect made only a faltering appearance to date." ('Marx, Gandhi and Socialism', Preface)

This article is a sequel to my two earlier articles – '*Russia-Ukraine War: Why Civil Resistance Doesn't Work?*' and '*In Favor of Non-violent Human Civilization*'. The aforesaid articles are essential if one intends to comprehensively ascertain the essence of the present one.

The Russo-Ukraine War has entered its eighth month. Russia has formally annexed the four provinces of Ukraine into the Russian Federation by conducting a referendum on its behalf. Ukraine continues to intensify efforts for NATO membership, for more weapons from allied countries and for more sanctions on Russia. It is feared that this war may soon become a war between Russia and the West. Russia has threatened to use its nuclear weapons in the early days of the war itself. It has been recently reiterated. If Russia uses nuclear or other non-conventional weapons, Ukraine and its allies can do the same. This situation has once again proved that the regulatory and governing system of modern civilization is neither able to prevent wars, civil wars and various other violent conflicts from starting, nor to end them swiftly when they start. The simple reason for this is that the foundation of modern civilization and the world order that runs it is mainly laid on the logic of violence. In this very system, the activities of non-violence and peace can't run while sitting in the lap of violent civilization.

The regulation/governance of the present-day world order of modern civilization is carried out through the United Nations and its various units, and organizations like the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organization, the World Economic Forum, the various forums/organizations catering economic-

strategic-geopolitical interests of a few select countries, embassies/consulates established in all foreign countries etc. This world order, working under the above mentioned global institutions, is a set of six intertwined layers of political-system, diplomatic-system, military-system, economic-system, intellectual-system and religious system in different countries and on the international level. Under this system, a huge NGO-network also functions, which is called the safety valves of this system. On the forums of global organizations, a competition for supremacy is generally seen instead of establishing mutual relations on the basis of equality and understanding among all the small and big countries. The five superpower countries have the veto power to invalidate any resolution/decision, and these powerful countries often violate the rules and regulations of the United Nations.

Since the Washington Consensus in the 1980s, global economic institutions and the leadership of various countries have been facilitators of corporate capitalism. In this way, as David C. Korten explains in his book titled '*When Corporations Rule the World*', the world is comfortably ruled by the big corporations. With the Washington Consensus, countries which were liberated from centuries of colonial domination, have been caught in new neocolonial clutches. Various types of violent confrontations, including the wars that have been going on for the last four decades, can be considered to be the part of the neo-colonial process.

Decisive change in this system is hardly easy. The reason for this is not only the strong fortification of this system, but the efforts made by the people opposing it do not have the necessary seriousness and commitment. Because there is always a fear of being left behind on the path of modern civilization in the minds of the opponents of modern civilization and the system that runs it. The concept of capitalist development has taken a deep root not only in the minds of the common people of developed countries but also in the minds of underdeveloped countries. The founders and defenders of this civilization have a big role in instilling this fear, be they the capitalist or the communist. There is no occasion for long debate on this controversial subject here. It may, however, be thought that an objective and futuristic view of 'development' from the initial phase of capitalism to the present should be taken, freed from the fear of being left behind. Only then can some effective decisions be taken in favor of justice and peace in order to usher in a new future.

On the basis of the past experience, a different role can be explored only after seriously considering the role of modern knowledge and science that has happened so far. By doing this, the achievements of modern civilization so far will not be merged anywhere. One can note that a different understanding and interpretation of Renaissance in Europe, and the idea of an alternative modern civilization based on it, has existed. Due to the planning of the achievements of the Enlightenment in favor of a violent modern civilization, that stream could not develop further. Thus, it can be assumed that modern civilization is not necessarily doomed to be violent.

It would be foolhardy to wish that this world order can be changed overnight. Only with a well thought out long term plan can there be a possibility of bringing about a gradual change in this. If there is such a genuine initiative, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi can be instrumental in that effort. It is true that an indulgent view on violence will remain at the heart of modern civilization for a long time in the future. Therefore, Gandhi's philosophy of human civilization and modern civilization can be put aside for the time being. Only by adopting his mode of action a few steps can be taken towards putting modern civilization on the axis of non-violence. In this journey, Gandhi will ultimately prove to be a good companion for all.

Gandhi has done this experiment. He had given a decisive challenge to the world's most powerful colonial power by providing courage and vision to a subjugated and fearful society. His experiment had an impact on the continents of Asia and Africa as well. In his tribute to Gandhi in the Person of the Century issue of Time magazine Nelson Mandela has said, 'When the colonized man had given up thinking and his sense of being was lost, Gandhi taught him to think and revived his sense of strength.' Along with this Gandhi in order to counter injustice, enriched the world including India with an unprecedented mode of protest.

We all know that Gandhi had penetrated deep into the maze of modern violent civilization. For a long time, he also maintained his struggle with the power of non-violence. But he could not come back alive from that maze. The path shown by him is being made on the world stage. After Gandhi, many struggling personalities of the world adopted Gandhi's path to resist injustice and tyranny. They include Nelson Mandela of Africa, Desmond Tutu, Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, Kenneth Konda of Zambia, Martin Luther King Jr. of America, Václav Havel of Czechoslovakia, Lech Walesa of Poland, satyagrahis of Tiananmen Square in China, non-violent freedom fighters of Tibet, Irom Sharmila etc.

prominently. In India, there have been many thinkers and leaders like Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar, Acharya Narendra Deva, Jayaprakash Narayan, Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia, and Kishan Patnaik, who believed in the path of non-violence. They all have contributed to Gandhi's legacy of non-violent struggle in their own way.

In this context, there would also be a pertinent question that with Gandhi, can the initiative towards non-violent civilization be taken from the land of India? In the presence of Gandhi, India was established as a gracious and exemplary nation-society on the world stage, despite colonial domination. But in the last days he was openly disregarded and eventually murdered. After the assassination, the tendencies of his business and repudiation gained momentum, which have become quite a quirk in the 'New India'. In such a situation, a big resolution will be needed to start this initiative from India. Anyway, it should be an inclusive and global venture.

Initially two things can be done. First, to restore the mutuality of the relationship between man and nature, a relationship which was distorted by capitalism by rendering it competitive. Second, to advance human civilization not on the power of arms and market, but on the strength of humanity-centered thoughts. Needless to say, Gandhi's understanding of humanity included the entire non-human animal world as well. So that the never-ending treasure trove of prosperity remains open with possible equality at the level of the whole world. If these two things continue to be done through various mediums - especially education, arts and entertainment mediums - then violence and the accompanying environmental destruction will gradually be stopped.

This task will have to be taken up first by the scholars and intellectuals. Unfortunately, today there is an acute vacuum of leader-intellectuals in the world. This also becomes a valid reason to critically investigate the so-called development of modern civilization so far. If the true march towards non-violent human civilization commences, then leader-intellectuals will emerge. With them the role of diplomats will also change. Many of those civil society activists who are a part of the NGO network also want to get rid of violent civilization. Their role will also undergo a change. In such an environment, the new generations which will come with a new thinking will be better equipped to keep under check the weight of weapons kept on the chest of humanity and their trade.

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