

Mahatma gandhi - an extraordinary human being



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Mahatma Gandhi was indeed a great soul, an extraordinary human being, a man with a tremendous appeal to the people. But, unfortunately, he was a misfit in India. Karma or fate, or God, or whatever you want to call it, made a mistake when they sent him down to the land of Bharat. For at heart, Gandhi was a European, his ideals were a blend of Christianity raised to an exalted moral standard and a dose of liberalism “à la Tolstoy”. The patterns and goals he put forward for India, not only came to naught, but sometimes did great harm to a country, which unquestionably he loved immensely.

Furthermore, even after his death, Gandhism, although it does not really have any relevance to Modern India, is still used shamelessly by all politicians and intellectuals, to smoke-screen their ineffectiveness and to perpetuate their power. To understand Gandhi properly, one has to put in perspective his aims, his goals, and the results today.

One has to start at the beginning. There is no doubt that after his bitter experiences with racism in South Africa, he took to heart the plight of fellow Indians there. But what did he achieve for them? Second class citizenship! Worse, he dissociated them from their black Africans brothers, who share the same colour and are the majority. And today the Indians in South Africa are in a difficult position, sandwiched between the Whites who prefer them to the Blacks, but do not accept them fully as their own and the Blacks who often despise them for their superior attitudes. Ultimately, they sided with the Moderate Whites led by De Klerk and this was a mistake as Mandela was elected and the Blacks wrested total power in South Africa -and once more we might have an exodus of Indians from a place where they have lived and which they have loved for generations.

The Mahatma did a lot for India. But the question again is: What remains today in India of Gandhi's heritage? Spinning was a joke. " He made Charkha a religious article of faith and excluded all people from Congress membership who would not spin. How many, even among his own followers believe in the gospel of Charkha? Such a tremendous waste of energy, just for the sake of a few annas is most unreasonable", wrote Sri Aurobindo in 1938 (India's Reb 207). Does any Congress leader today still weave cotton? And has Gandhi's khadi policy of village handicrafts for India survived him? Nehru was the first to embark upon a massive " Soviet type" heavy industrialization, resolutely turning his back on Gandhi's policy, although handicrafts in India do have their place.

Then, nowhere does Gandhi's great Christian morality find more expression than in his attitude towards sex. All his life he felt guilty about having made love to his wife while his father was dying. But guiltiness is truly a Western prerogative. In India sex has (was at least) always been put in its proper place, neither suppressed, as in Victorian times, nor brought to its extreme perversion, like in the West today. Gandhi's attitude towards sex was to remain ambivalent all his life, sleeping with his beautiful nieces " to test his brahmacharya", while advocating abstinence for India's population control. But why impose on others what he practiced for himself? Again, this is a very Christian attitude: John Paul II, fifty years later, enjoins all Christians to do the same. But did Gandhi think for a minute how millions of Indian women would be able to persuade their husbands to abstain from sex when they are fertile? And who will suffer abortions, pregnancy and other ignominies? And again, India has totally turned its back on Gandhi's policy: today its birth

control programme must be the most elaborate in the world -and does not even utilize force (except for a short period during the Emergency), as the Chinese have done.

For all the world, Gandhi is synonymous with non-violence. But once more, a very Christian notion. Gandhi loved the Mahabharata. But did he understand that sometimes non-violence does more harm than violence itself? That violence sometimes is “ Dharma”, if it is done for defending one’s country, or oneself, or one’s mother, or sisters? Take the Cripps proposals for instance. In 1942, the Japanese were at the doors of India. England was weakened, vulnerable and desperately needs support. Churchill sent Sir Stafford Cripps to India to propose that if India participated in the war effort, Great Britain would grant her Dominion status (as in Australia or Canada) at the end of the war. Sri Aurobindo sent a personal letter to the Congress, urging it to accept. Nehru wavered, but ultimately, Gandhi in the name of non-violence put his foot down and the Cripps proposal was rejected. Had it been accepted, history might have been changed, Partition and its terrible bloodshed would have been avoided. Gandhi also never seemed to have realised the great danger that Nazism represented for humanity. A great Asuric wave had risen in Europe and threatened to engulf the world and it had to be fought -with violence. Calling Hitler “ my beloved brother”, a man who murdered 6 million Jews in cold-blood just to prove the purity of his own race, is more than just innocence, it borders on criminal credulity. And did not Gandhi also advise the Jews to let them be butchered?

Ultimately, it must be said that whatever his saintliness, his extreme and somehow rigid asceticism, Gandhi did enormous harm to India and this harm

has two names: Muslims and Untouchables. The British must have rubbed their hands in glee: here was a man who was perfecting their policy of rule-and-divide, for ultimately nobody more than Gandhi contributed to the partition of India, by his obsession to always give in to the Muslims, by his obstinate refusal to see that the Muslims always started rioting – Hindus only retaliated; by his indulgence of Jinnah, going as far as proposing to make him the Prime Minister of India. Sri Aurobindo was very clear about Hindu-Muslim unity: “ I am sorry they are making a fetish of Hindu-Muslim unity. It is no use ignoring facts; some day the Hindus may have to fight the Muslims and they must prepare for it. Hindu-Muslim unity should not mean the subjection of the Hindus. Every time the mildness of the Hindu has given way. The best solution would be to allow the Hindus to organise themselves and the Hindu-Muslim unity would take care of itself, it would automatically solve the problem. Otherwise we are lulled into a false sense of satisfaction that we have solved a difficult problem, when in fact we have only shelved it.”

(India's Rebirth, p. 159)

Gandhi's love of the Harijans, as he called them, was certainly very touching and sprang from the highest motivations, but it had also as its base a Christian notion that would have found a truer meaning in Europe, where there are no castes, only classes. Glorifying the scavenger as a man of God makes good poetry, but little social meaning. In the words of Sri Aurobindo: “ the idea that it needs a special “ punya” to be born a Bhangi is, of course one of these forceful exaggerations which are common to the Mahatma and impress greatly the mind of his hearers. The idea behind is that his function is an indispensable service to society, quite as much as the Brahmin's, but

that being disagreeable, it would need a special moral heroism to choose it voluntarily and he thinks as if the soul freely chose it as such a heroic service to the society and as reward of righteous acts- but that is hardly likely. In any case, it is not true that the Bhangi life is superior to the Brahmin life and the reward of special righteousness, no more that it is true that a man is superior because he is born a Brahmin. A spiritual man of pariah birth is superior in the divine values to an unspiritual and worldly-minded Brahmin. Birth counts but the basic value is in the soul behind the man and the degree to which it manifests itself in nature". (India's Rebirth, p. 201) Once more Gandhi took the European element in the decrying of the caste system, forgetting the divine element behind. And unfortunately he sowed the seeds of future disorders and of a caste war in India, of which we see the effects only today.

Non-violence, you say? But Gandhi did the greatest violence to his body, in true Christian fashion, punishing it, to blackmail others in doing his will, even if he thought it was for the greater good. And ultimately, it may be asked, what remains of Gandhi's non-violence today? India has fought three wars with Pakistan, had to combat the Chinese, has the second biggest army in the world and has to fight counter-insurgency movements in Punjab, Assam and Kashmir. Gandhi must have died a broken man indeed. He saw India partitioned Hindus and Muslims fighting each other and his ideals of Charhka, non-violence and Brahmacharya being flouted by the very men he brought-up as his disciples.

However, his heritage is not dead, for it survives where it should have been in the first instance: in the West. His ideals have inspired countless great

figures, from Martin Luther King, to Albert Einstein, to Nelson Mandela, the Dalañ-Lama or Attenborough and continue to inspire many others. Gandhi's birth in India was an accident, for here, there is nothing left of him, except million of statues and streets and saintly mouthing by politicians, who don't apply the least, bit what Gandhi had taught so ardently.

History will judge. But with Nehru on one side and his westernised concept of India and Gandhi on the other, who tried to impose upon India a non-violence which was not hers, India was destined to be partitioned. Thus when the time came, India was bled into two, in three even, and Muslims took their pound of flesh while leaving. India never recovered from that trauma and today she is still suffering from its consequences. Yet has anybody really understood the lessons of history?

P. S. The history of India's independence movement would be incomplete without mentioning the West's contribution. Perhaps the redeeming factor for the Britisher's utters insensitiveness, lies in Sister Nivedita's recognizing India's greatness and consecrating her life and work not only to India but to its independence. The Theosophical Society started in 1875 by Mrs Blavatsky, a Russian and an American, Colonel Olcott, and brought to glory by Annie Besant, has also done a great deal to further abroad Hinduism's cause. Its philosophy is founded upon the recognition of Hinduism as one of the highest forms of revelation, as Mrs Besant wrote: " The action to pursue is to revitalize ancient India to bring back a renewal of patriotism, the beginning of the reconstruction of the nation". Unfortunately, the Theosophical Society got often bogged down in concentrating on the " magical mystical Orient".

Subhash Chandra Bose is a legendary figure in Indian history. His contribution to the freedom struggle made him a brave hero of India. He left his home and comfort with the determination to liberate his motherland. Subhash Chandra Bose believed that an armed rebellion was necessary to get independence from the British rule.

He was born on 23rd January, 1897 in Cuttack, Orissa. His father, Janaki Nath Bose had migrated to Cuttack to work as a barrister. His mother's name was Probhabati. While studying in Presidency College Calcutta, he organized an attack on the British Principal, Mr F. E. Oaten. As a result, he was expelled from the college. The principal had made derogatory remarks about the Indians in his lecture. This showed Subhash's love for his motherland.

Subhash qualified the I. C. S Examination with a brilliant record. But he gave up the service to join in the Non-Co-operation Movement in 1921. He was advised by Gandhiji to work under Chittaranjan Das, (known as Deshbandhu), a prominent political leader in Bengal. There he became a youth educator, journalist in a Bengal weekly ' Banglar Katha', and commandant of the Bengal Congress volunteers. He also worked as the Principal of National College established by C. R Das. When Das became the Mayor of Calcutta, Subhash was appointed as the Chief Executive Officer of the Corporation.

He was soon deported to Burma (Myanmar) because he was suspected of having connection with secret revolutionary movements. In 1927, he was released. He became the Mayor of Calcutta in 1930. Subhash looked after the affairs of the Bengal Congress after the death of D. R Das. He was

elected as the President of the Bengal Congress. He was imprisoned several times for his patriotic activities.

During his enforced exile, he wrote *The Indian Struggle, 1920-1934*. He pleaded India's cause with European leaders. In 1936, Subhash returned from Europe but was arrested by the British Government. He was elected as the President of the Indian National Congress for two consecutive years in 1938 and 1939. During 1938, when Subhash Chandra Bose was its president the Congress set up a National Planning Committee under the chairmanship of Jawaharlal Nehru. Nehru, other leftists and Gandhiji urged for the public sector in large-scale industries as a means of preventing concentration of wealth in a few hands.

In 1939 Subhash Chandra Bose had been re-elected President of the Congress even though Gandhiji had opposed him. Following political difference with Gandhiji, he resigned from the Congress. Subhash Chandra and many of his left-wing followers then founded the Forward Bloc. When he gave a call for an all Indian protest on 9th July against an AICC resolution, the working committee took disciplinary action against him, removing him from the presidentship of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee and debarring him for holding any Congress office for three years.

Subhash Chandra Bose's ideas for liberation were radically different. He was a Swarajist, but he belonged to the extremist faction of the Congress. He believed that Gandhiji's method for freedom would take time. He wanted complete independence of India soon.

In 1940, Subhash was again incarcerated for his rebellious activities through the Forward Bloc. On 26 January 1941, he escaped in disguise from India. He traveled through Kabul, Moscow, Japan and Germany. In Germany, along with some Indians, he made regular broadcasts from a German sponsored Azad Hind Radio. Subhash Chandra knew many foreign and Indian languages. He used to make patriotic speeches in English, Hindi, Bengali, Persian, Tamil, Telegu, Gujarati and Urdu.

In 1943, Subhash moved to East Asia and organized the Azad Hind Fauj (Indian National Army). He went to Tokyo and Prime Minister Tojo declared that Japan had no territorial designs in India. Bose returned to Singapore and set up the Provisional Government of free India on 21st October, 1943. He proclaimed a free Provisional Government with Andaman and Nicobar as its territory.

In 1945, the Indian National Army invaded India and occupied Imphal and Kohima, Subhash Bose set up two INA head-quarters, in Rangoon and in Singapore and began to reorganize the INA. Recruits were sought from civilians, funds were gathered, and even a women's regiment was formed. But unfortunately, Japan was defeated in the World War II. So INA also lost Japanese support. In August 1945, while Bose was fleeing South-east Asia, it is believed that, his plane crashed.

However, the efforts of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose along with Gandhiji's Quit Indian Movement resulted in India's freedom. Subhash popularly called as 'Netaji' was a great patriot and a determined fighter. His attempts for

India's independence were unique among all the freedom fighters. Once he said, " I have not found one single instance when freedom has been won without foreign aid. " Therefore, he sought help from the enemy countries of Britain.

Netaji was a patriot to the last drop of his blood. In his passionate love for the motherland, he was prepared to do anything for the sake of liberating his country. In a speech, he once mentioned " All my life, I have been the servant of India, and until the last hour of my life, I shall remain one. My allegiance and loyalty has very been and will ever be to India alone, no matter in what part of the world I live".

Netaji had no formal training. But he was a great organizer and was one of the greatest orators of the freedom struggle. He gave the nation the famous salutation and slogan of " Jai Hind". He have the INA, the rousing war cries of ' Delhi Chalo' (March on to Delhi) and ' Total Mobilization'. He inspired the Indian soldiers with the world - " Give me blood, I will give you freedom". He himself was inspired by the courage of Rani Jhansi Lakshmibia of Jhansi. Hence, he formed a Rani Jhansi battalion. This battalion consisted only of women and proved an impressive asset for the freedom struggle.

Netaji indeed, was a dedicated, devoted and dynamic hero of the Indian National Movement. He is the pride of India. In a proposal in 1992, Netaji was posthumously awarded with the ' Bharat Ratna'. But since his death is yet, a controversy, and keeping in view the sentiments of his family members and public, the Government of India cancelled the proposal.