



Mahatma Gandhi and Govinda KC: embodiment of non-violent strength

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Abstract

The paper is an attempt to raise voice in favor of the weak, the downtrodden and the dispossessed people in the world. The movement of peace and non-violence is an accepted and well tested method to strengthen the poor and dispossessed people. For instance, both regimes of the Rana in Nepal and the British Raj in India were governed by the autocratic rulers depriving people of basic their rights to freedom, justice and equality. But the people in these countries rose peacefully in revolt against the brutal autocratic governments of Nepal and India. People today have realized the need to pursue and practice their movement of non-violence sincerely and with a moral commitment. So that any government, howsoever oppressive, is compelled to eschew its brutal power and is prepared to serve the nation and its people. Gandhi used the weapon of non-violence and peace to defeat the British Raj and bring freedom or 'Swaraj' to India and its people. Nepal's Prof. Dr. Gobinda KC, a crusader for Medical Education Sector in the interest of the poor and marginalized people, is comparable with Gandhi for his dedication to and struggle for justice and equity. Precisely speaking, Mahatma Gandhi and Govinda KC stand on the same pedestal for their selfless service, struggle and sacrifice.

Keywords: non-violent Gandhi, selfless service, a devout and staunch soul, freedom, justice, equality as well as equity etc.

Introduction

Gandhi's 72nd Memorial Day (2020) reminds us of freedom, justice and equality for humanity in the world. Gandhi stands tall among all human beings. Gandhi's Memorial Day is celebrated from the core of people's heart all over the world. On 30th January 2019, the 71st Memorial Day of Gandhi, a Nepalese Think Tank held a talk program on "Mahatma Gandhi: Peace, Non-violence and Humanity". The talk program was organized by Dilli Raman Kalyani Regmi Foundation in cooperation with the Embassy of India. The Chief Guest Prof. Dr. Ganga Prasad Upreti, the Chancellor of Nepal Academy Prof. Dr. Ganga Prasad Upreti, the Special Guest of program His Excellency Mr. Manjeev Singh Puri, Indian Ambassador to Nepal, Prof. Dr. Jayaraj Acharya, Former Ambassador to UN, Mr. Ganesh Shah, Former Minister, and the Chairperson of Dilli Raman Kalyani Regmi Foundation, Dr. Tulsi Prasad Bhattarai, the host of the function, spoke on the occasion highlighting Gandhi's qualities and his contribution. The 30th January every year is celebrated as the Memorial Day of Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhi, a messenger of peace, fought for the independence of Bharat (India). The same day marks the martyrs' day in Nepal. Acharya mentioned that "the Rana regime in Nepal and the British Raj in Hindustan (India) had hijacked the freedom of people in a brutal way" (30). The massacre of peace activists and fighters of freedom always remains indelible in the mind of the people. On the occasion, Prof. Jayaraj Acharya opined that "the use of weapons is common in all wars" (30). In the same vein, Sun TZU further mentions that "war bestows power to the warrior who follows the intrinsic path of arms and ammunitions" (37). On the contrary, Gandhi fought with the English giants and won "the great war of independence as a devout follower of www.dzarc.com/education

peace and non-violence" (25). The British thought that power would spring from the barrel of a gun. Acharya stressed that "Gandhi reversed the paradox of the power emanating from the barrel of a gun and reaffirmed his faith in the invincible power through peace and non-violence" (30). Gandhi's sacrifice was valued by renowned people like Dilli Raman Regmi, a senior politician and an eminent historian of Nepal and others from different countries.

Prof. Dr Govinda KC, a champion of reform in medical education, has made a strong plea for a drastic change aimed at helping the poor and dispossessed people of the country. This cause led him to observe fast unto death 18 times. He started, only recently, his 19th fast unto death hunger strike for ensuring equality in medical infrastructure. For the strike, Prof. KC selected the Babira Musto Mandir (temple), a remote area in the far western Jumla district of Nepal. Earlier, Dr. KC had left Kathmandu, the capital of Nepal, to treat the poor, old, orphan, and homeless people in the remote mountain area of the Himalayan Range. Acharya highlighted that "the sight of Prof. Dr. Govinda KC's physical appearance would remind one of Mahatma Gandhi known to all Indians as Bapu" (30). Dr. KC with a stick in his hand and accompanied by a dog, served the people in remote villages. His clothes included a pyjama, a shirt and sleepers on his feet. His demand was the government should earmark a budget for improvement in the medical sector. His fast unto death strike, not once but so many times, testified to mistrust of people in the democratically elected leaders to fulfill their promises. Now 64, still unmarried, Dr. KC spent his entire life in medical teaching and devoted himself to serving the poor hard-working people of the nation. Dr. KC learnt from his mother that he should work and, if need be, sacrifice himself for the education and wellbeing of the

poor, dispossessed and downtrodden people. For instance, Rabindranath Tagore, a well-known scholar of India, also quotes, in a spirit of humanistic fervor, that "there is only one history, the history of man. All national histories are merely chapters in the larger one. And we are content in India to suffer for such a great cause"(119).

Materials and methods

How Gandhi reverses the gun culture

Prof. Dr. Govinda KC's fight is comparable with the Civil Disobedience Movement (Satyagrah) of Bapu Mahatma Gandhi in India. Dr. KC, a saint owing to his selfless involvement in the Medical Education sector, is a true citizen of Nepal fighting for the health and education of the ordinary people. This writer had noticed that the audience looked upon Dr. KC as a true follower of Gandhi with a strong voice in favour of the poor people. Many supporters and sympathizers of Prof. Dr. Govinda KC believe that government must address his genuine demands soon. Such demands of Dr. KC for people, if not addressed, would be a setback or even a moral defeat for the government of Nepal. Prof. Jayaraj Acharya compared KC's fast- unto- death with Gandhi's non-violent revolution" (on January 30) Persons, like Gandhi and KC, are fired by missionary zeal for people's rights through peaceful but powerful movement.

January 30 is considered an important date to change ills and evils, aberrations and incongruities in politics which generate personal greed and other undesirable activities. Puri said that "Gandhi was a great fighter for peace in the world" (A Talk on Gandhi 30). He was fully convinced that the world needs the truly non-violent people, not the greedy people who preach violence (Desao, 2008) [4]. Truth is the strength in non-violent people's life. Gandhi, when he returned from South Africa, became a revolutionary figure by using the weapon of non-violence. His non- violent revolution proved to be a powerful strategy in the history of politics not only in India but also in other parts of the world (Desao *et al.*, 2008) [4]. Gandhi drew the attention of the English rulers to this important message that the path of truth which ultimately would become victorious would weaken all the forces of oppression and colonization.

Results and discussions

Gandhi and Gobinda KC: a true warrior of people's movement

Gandhi changed and electrified the frail and weak heart of the poor people by enlightening them with the slogan of equality and transparency. Gandhi fought for the elevation, in socio-cultural and national interest, of the dignity and prosperity of the far remote and marginalized groups of the nation. In the present context in Nepal, Dr. Govinda KC, who possesses a robust and staunch soul, was lying on the death bed, ironically in a democratic country, for people's rights and justice (Yadav, 2015) [13]. He was regarded as a great warrior of peaceful movement for the nation building project, though the concerned authorities remained unconcerned (Acharya *et al.*, 2019) [1]. Despite tremendous resources in Nepal, people are being brain drained for foreign employment (Yadav, 2015) [13].

Nepalese politics is like an expensive and luxurious profession for some people who own cars and Pazers" (Acharya *et al.*, 2019) [1].

Dr. Charan Prasai, a staunch civil society member of Nepal, in a zoom interview, spoke in favour of Prof. Dr. Govinda KC and supported his strike on the 14th day of his 19th Fast unto death. This zoom interview was held on October 2, 2020, with a view to putting pressure on the government to help KC end his strike by fulfilling his demand without delay. Dr. Prasai (2020) [8] requested the media to analyze how the government continued to smother the frail voice of the poor and deprived them of their rights. Dr. KC (2020) [8] requested the media and civil society to raise their voice against the capitalist exploitation of hospitals, which encouraged the rich people to enjoy the fruits of education by pushing the poor people towards permanent illiteracy. Dr. KC stood firm on his demand as he opposed a system of medical education that only widened the gulf between the poor and the rich people. Prof. Dr. Jayaraj Acharya, former ambassador of Nepal to UN, supported Dr. Govinda KC's demands and spoke out in his favor on the 72nd Memorial Day of Gandhi on 30th January, 2020. Dr. KC's selfless demand for equality in medical education has earned him many supporters and sympathizers. The right of the poor people to cost-effective medical education is categorically mentioned in the Nepalese constitution (on September 20, 2015, articles 31, 35, 40 & 51). Dr. KC believed in the saying that "a negative fear of threatening danger was not enough"(Nehru, 1946) [6]. The government can no longer invent an excuse to deflect people's attention from reasonable demands of Dr KC.

Gandhi and KC: fighters for truth, justice and equity

Prof. Dr Jayraj Acharya (2019 *et al.*,) [1] further raised his voice for Dr. KC who was on the 16th fast unto death for 24 days to get his demand fulfilled by the government. It may be recalled that Dr. KC, since his day one fast-unto-death, has not sought any kind of professional or personal privileges from the Nepal Government. His demand was just for justice and equity for the poor and dispossessed people of the nation in Medical Education Sector. Dr. KC (2020) [8] explicitly conveys the message to his readers that his strategy of 'Satyagraha' (civil disobedience movement) in Nepal has become an insignia like the badge of the military. He has, till now, embarked upon fast-unto- death 19th times for the health, and education of the poor people in the nation. Dr. KC's movement has cast a spell on all people in the nation. His emphatic call for public health and education has fallen on deaf ears as if the government in Nepal is "mocking and undermining the marginalized voice of the poor people" (Spivak *et al.*, 1999) [10].

Equality and transparency

His Excellency the Ambassador of India to Nepal, Mr. Manjeev Singh Puri (2019) [9], expressed his views about the relevance of Gandhi to independence movements in the world. Gandhi remained a successful follower of non-violence because he had asserted himself as a pioneer and initiator of non-violence (Puri *et al.*, 2019) [9]. He further praised Gandhi's

capability and strength in nation building politics, and the role he played in non-violent movement (Nehru, *et al.*, 1946) [6]. Gandhi's selfless service was for the betterment of the poor and marginalized people in the world (Desao, 2008) [4]. The question as to who could be the top ranking personality in the world can be answered, without hesitation, in favor of Mahatma Gandhi, because Albert Einstein, the most world class scientist and the well-recognized person, had kept a decorated picture of Bapu (Gandhi) on his reading table in the study room (Puri *et al.*, 2019) [9]. Gandhian teaching influenced the low caste people, the downtrodden and backward in the mainstream of national development (Gandhi *et al.*, 1944) [5]. He worked to uplift their spirit of nationality, independence and self-respect. He never ignored the frail and weak voice of the Dalit and downtrodden people of society (Puri *et al.*, 2019) [9]. His undying mission of life would remain unforgettable forever and will be remembered by all generations. His principles are based on "equality and transparency, justice and equity among people of all castes, creeds and religions" (Nehru *et al.*, 1946) [6].

Conclusion

Inspiration from Gandhi and Govinda KC

Gandhi's revolution, as stated earlier, was a quest for truth and non-violence. Gandhi remains an immortal soul. He embodies the ocean of humanity. Dr. Tulsi Prasad Bhattarai (2019) [2], the chairperson of the program, shed light on Dr. KC's strike. His fast- unto-death was based on Gandhi's teaching about four wild animals-jackal, swallow, leopard and bee. They give us a symbolic lesson. Specially, leopard hunts the weak animals, swallow collects stray particles to weave the nest and food for its infants, jackal digs its tunnel for its own safety and bee collects honey for the use of other creatures in both space and on earth (Bhattarai, 2019) [2]. All four types of animals possess "the qualities of aggression and compassion" (Dasthakur, 2016) [3]. Some of them are aggressive while others are compassionate, but the path of non-violence includes all creatures and works for redemption of humanity from distress. While Gandhi returned from South Africa in 1917 to attend the youth's program in his motherland, very few people knew him that time (Gandhi *et al.*, 1944) [5]. They saw him cleaning the sewage, streets, pavilion and roads a few days before the program day (Puri *et al.*, 2019) [9]. Gandhi, thus, conveyed a message as a stimulant to youths of his country that they could learn from his real-life experience and feel encouraged to render service of a similar nature. Really, Gandhi has been a towering figure to energize the mind and soul of all human beings (Nehru *et al.*, 1946) [6]. We should derive inspiration from the non-violent philosophy practiced by Gandhi, the father of the nation, during India's freedom movement. Prof. Dr. KC, as stated earlier, is an intrepid fighter for justice and upholds the principles of truth, peace and non-violence to achieve his noble goals. His repeated fasts unto death bear testimony to this statement. In a nutshell, the message of Mahatma Gandhi popularly known as Bapu and Prof. Dr. Govinda KC is the movement of truth, peace and non-violence would empower the poor people with their frail voice. The

teaching of these saintly figures would make the gun culture useless and ineffective and enable the oppressed and downtrodden people in the world to exercise their legitimate rights fearlessly and with confidence. Non-violence is a great asset that would give tremendous strength to whoever possesses this asset and empower him, morally, mentally and emotionally, to face challenges with conviction and commitment. Both Gandhi and Govinda KC, the fighters for justice, equality and peaceful transformation of society, set an example for succeeding generations to achieve a great deal by resorting to non-violence as a powerful means of changing the existing system based on discrimination, injustice, bigotry and disparity.

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