

**CHAPTER-V**

**THEORY AND PRACTICE OF *AHIMSĀ* AND  
*SATYĀGRAHA* IN SOCIO-POLITICAL  
TRANSFORMATIVE MOVEMENTS ACROSS THE  
WORLD**

American civil rights movement refers to African-American Civil Rights Movement which was an attempt toward achieving true equality for African-Americans in all aspects of society. The movement emphasized on fundamental issues of freedom, respect, dignity and economic and social equality. It aimed at outlawing racial discrimination against African Americans in and renovating voting rights in Southern states. The movement was qualified by major operations of civil resistance.

### **5.1. Martin Luther King Jr. and the Civil Rights Movement**

The American civil rights movement has been the most important social movement in the United States. Civil rights organisations had headed the struggle for equal rights for the Negroes. They forced legislation to ensure voting rights for the Negroes and in securing them better opportunities for education and employment. They were active in breaking down the remnants of America's 'caste' system. For any political purpose the civil rights movement was perhaps the only social force in the United States accomplished of mobilising hundreds of thousands of people, both Negro and white. In the beginning of 1954 Supreme Court decision outlawing segregation in public education, the movement has effectively pressed for increased opportunities for Negroes. Striking actions such as that of the Freedom Riders of the early 1960s and the militant sit in movement in the South had focussed attention on the predicament of the American Negro. They brought pressure on governmental authorities to speed the process of desegregation. The neglect of civil rights issues by both political parties and the sense that the liberation of African peoples was outpacing that of African-Americans in the United States. For him the Civil Right movement was not just about race. It is about to a new

relationship between people from different backgrounds, between America and the world, between humanity and God.

The strict devotion to non-violent means by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., had various provocations. He represents the depth of Gandhian beliefs in the American civil rights movement. What Gandhi has understood by his struggle to be truth King interpreted it as agape love. Black power was the result of a desire for effective political power for Negroes. They were in conviction that Negroes must be more self-reliant if they are to achieve their justified place in American society. It was a revolutionary turn in the civil rights movement which has the support of working class Negroes. Under the impact of 'Black Power', the movement takes a totally violent complexion depends on whether it gets wise leadership and a more concerned response from the whites. King asserted that African-Americans had waited over three centuries to receive the rights granted to them by God and the U.S. Constitution.

In society, individual rights are protected to some extent by custom and public opinion. Civil Rights are requirements imposed on government to take affirmative action to assure equal privileges of all its citizens under the law. The feature of civil rights is equality. The significance of equality has different meanings to different people. For most of the Americans equality means that every individual, regardless of race, religion, gender and so forth, should have the same opportunity to recognise his or her full potential without unjust barrier placed before them, either by government or private institutions.

The Civil rights advocates fight to ensure that individuals are treated equally, no matter what group they belong to. For example, if a woman is

refused a promotion for the reason that she is a female, then her civil rights have been violated and she is entitled to just compensation. Of course, the same goes for individual members of other groups such as Blacks, Latinos, Native Americans and the disabled.

To protect Americans' civil rights, the U.S government, since the 1960s, has implemented programs to ensure that individuals who suffered past discrimination are brought in to valued roles in society. For instance, women have been excluded from occupying positions of leadership in corporate America and blacks and other racial minorities have been excluded from valued positions in higher education. As a whole, programmes designed to rectify these inequalities are referred to as affirmative action.

Throughout its history, the United States has struggled with the notion of equal rights. Despite its claims to being a country dedicated to equality and freedom, the U.S record on civil rights is spotty, especially given its treatment of blacks. Although many groups have fought for equal treatment, concern here is with the struggle of blacks because their struggle set so many precedents for other group struggles and because, of course, it was the group from which Martin Luther King Jr. came. The black struggle for civil rights is divided into three separate phases: Slavery, Segregation and Reconstruction and the Civil Rights Movement. Each phase can be categorized by a significant political thrust of its time presented by a landmark Supreme Court case, which set the tenor for that period.

### **5.1.1. Slavery**

From the 1600s until the Civil War's end in 1865, most blacks fundamentally did not have any civil rights because they were slaves and treated as no more than property. To be sure, many Americans opposed slavery and wished to put an end to the institution. Henry David Thoreau went to jail over his opposition to slavery.

Nevertheless, there were many who opposed slavery and they tried unsuccessfully to use legal means to abolish the institution. The most famous Supreme Court case regarding slavery during this period was Dred Scott V. Sandford. Born into slavery, Scott found himself first in Illinois and later in Wisconsin Territory, both of which prohibited slavery. With the help of his original owners, Scott charged for his freedom on the grounds that since he was in a free state, he should be a free man. However, the Supreme Court ruled, seven to two, that Scott was not a citizen and therefore not a free man. Further, the court held that slaves were never thought of or spoken of as anything except property. So, how could 'property' possess a right to freedom? Scott remained a slave and slavery remained a steadfast institution.

Dred Scott represents the Supreme Court's boldest defense of the institution of slavery. Political scientists like to point out that this ruling exposed a profound paradox of the U.S Constitution. It upheld the idea of liberty that all men are created equal, yet it also affirmed the idea of owning human beings as property and slaves. Thomas Jefferson famously said that freedom and slavery, as opposite as heaven and hell, were both codified in the U.S Constitution. This ruling, by a very conservative Court, also held that

Congress had no power to ban slavery in the western territories, which is where Scott found himself and thus it severely restricted what the national government could do regarding slavery. Most important, many historians believe this ruling unintentionally hastened the Civil War (1861-1865), which marks the beginning of the second period of struggle for black civil rights.

### **5.1.2. Segregation and Reconstruction**

With the North's victory in the Civil War, not only was slavery abolished as a legal institution, but also three constitutional amendments were passed to ensure equality for the former slaves and their progeny. These are called the Civil War Era Amendments. The 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment (1865) abolished slavery, the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment (1868) gave former slaves full citizenship rights and equal protection of the laws, and the 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment (1870) gave former slaves (male only) the right to vote regardless of race, colour or previous condition of servitude. Although the Civil War Era Amendments guaranteed former slaves freedom and civil rights at least on paper blacks were still very far from achieving equality in reality. After all, slavery lasted hundreds of years and left a legacy of deep scars that are still healing today.

Immediately after the Civil War, freed slaves actually enjoyed some power. Many were elected to public office and government agencies, such as the Freedman's Bureau, were created by congress to help former slaves adjust to their newfound freedom. Nevertheless, the starting line for former slaves was certainly not equal to that of whites. For instance, slavery and its abolishment created a new, instant class of Americans who were uneducated, poorly skilled and politically disenfranchised.

Jim Crow Laws instituted the system of segregation in the South that legally and forcibly kept blacks from exercising their full rights to equally and prohibited them from participating in the full range of American opportunity.

Segregation laws had a devastating and humiliating effect on the lives of the blacks. Without having participated in forming the laws and policies that created their societal exclusion, blacks were forced to use separate schools, buses, restaurants, hotels, libraries, bathrooms and even drinking fountains. Consider for instance, the difficulty blacks had while travelling long distances using interstate busing companies. Frequently, a busload of white and black passengers would stop at a whites restaurant, at which point whites could disembark and enjoy a hot meal while blacks had to remain on the bus. Or consider blacks who might be travelling in their own vehicles. If they wanted to stop for rest and refreshment, they had to find restaurants and hotels that would serve them. Too often, however, black travellers would be forced to pull off the road and eat and sleep in their cars, having found a restaurant or hotel that would serve their kind. Imagine the sense of fear and insecurity a black family must have felt while passing through a strange place, exposed and vulnerable while spending the night in their own vehicle. Besides segregating blacks, Jim Crow Laws also prevented blacks from voting or otherwise taking an active role in politics.

### **5.1.3. The Civil Rights Movement**

The third period is called the Civil Rights Movement. The ruling not only outlawed segregation in public schools, but it also opened the door to decisions that dismantled segregation in other areas, such as public transportation and

restaurants. But despite this ruling, blacks discovered that their long, hard battle for civil rights was far from over. Although the court said public schools must be desegregated with all deliberate speed, few schools actually were desegregated even 10 years after the ruling.

King's non-violent resistance exposed the brutality and violence of white segregationists in the South, including high-ranking officials such as Alabama Governor George Wallace. This compelled Congress to pass landmark civil rights legislation. In 1964, Congress passed, and President Lyndon B. Johnson signed into law, the Civil Rights Act, despite a lengthy filibuster by southern senators attempting to derail passage. The Civil Rights Act outlawed discrimination in public accommodations and employment on the grounds of race, colour, religion, national origin or sex. The act not only helped guarantee equal rights for blacks in education, employment and voting, it also led to creation of affirmative action programs for minorities and women who suffer from discrimination. Additionally, in 1965, Congress passed the Voting Rights Act to guarantee equal voting rights for blacks.

The Civil Rights Movement reached its heyday during a tumultuous period in American history. Besides the black struggle for equality, many other important struggles were waged. Inspired by the successes they observed in the black community, women, Native Americans and Latinos began organizing and demonstrating for equality. Some groups became radical and violent. Black nationalists formed groups that were not afraid to use violence and terrorism in pursuit of their goals.



Many of the same reasons the civil rights movement influenced American social movements, appear to also be the source of its influence on international movements. The major exception is that the civil rights movement did not serve as the training ground for many of the activists who initiated movements outside the United States. What is clear, however, is that numerous international movements were influenced by the US civil rights movement. A similarity that movements share across the world is that they usually must confront authorities who have superior power. The major challenge for such movements is that they must develop a collective action strategy that will generate leverage enabling them to engage in power struggles with powerful opponents.

“Peace and security demand the teaching of the history and practice of non-violence. If communities learn how to fight for justice, human rights and democracy without bloodshed, their resulting comprehension can influence the growth of new social, political and economic institutions and how such entities are to be shaped for governance. The expectations of a people can be affected by whether their way of life is based on nonviolent norms.”<sup>1</sup> “Mahatma Gandhi led what was essentially a liberation movement to expel the British from India through nonviolent resistance, while also using nonviolent techniques to address structural violence the violence caused by poverty, colonialism and caste. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. the symbolic leader of the American civil rights movement used nonviolent struggle as a form of social protest and mobilization for legal reforms.”<sup>2</sup>

“Both Gandhi and King defy simplistic interpretations or quick characterizations. Their uniqueness suggests that no particular mold shapes great leaders of non-violent movements. They both believed that nonviolent

approaches can be adopted by anyone with the will and desire for positive social change. Both believed in nonviolence as a universal principle and a transcendent value, yet they understood that not anyone could make their commitment. Nonviolent behaviour was for both of them a means of transforming relationships and creating peaceful transitions of power. In fact, they learned through their own endeavours that nonviolent methods were effective whether religiously motivated or not.”<sup>3</sup>

Both of them convinced that nonviolent struggle was the most practical way of wielding power while minimizing harm. Nonviolence was the force created from Truth and love. Gandhi thought love was stronger than anger and fear because it was more intelligent and led to conflict resolution rather than to destructiveness.

“Gandhi initiated social revolution in India aimed at the provision of basic human rights for the untouchables rights to use public wells for water, rights to go to school and rights to use the temples for worship. He was not against caste in an absolute sense and he preferred that persons knew their occupation or profession just as they knew their sex, because they would then be able to concentrate instead on inner growth and social rehabilitation. He thought that caste could act as a trade union of sorts, protecting them, yet he believed that it should not limit people’s possibilities or bind them into economic exploitation.”<sup>4</sup>

“Gandhi was eager to prove that nonviolent action could be instrumental on a grand scale, the provincial struggle also showed that his principles and

techniques could be effective in helping India address her internal problems and it proved that anyone could refine his strategy.”<sup>5</sup>

Gandhi demonstrated the power of *Satyāgraha* in militant struggles in the following areas

- a. Against racism in South Africa.
- b. Against imperialism and colonial rule in India.
- c. On behalf of the harijans or untouchables and against the caste system.
- d. For political awareness and participation by all people.
- e. Against economic exploitation and on behalf of the poorest peasants and workers.
- f. Against internecine strife between the Hindus and Muslims.
- g. Against sexism and cruelty toward women.
- h. For non-violent methods of struggle or *Satyāgraha*.

Dr. Mordecai Wyatt Johnson encouraged young African-American to study Gandhi because of the kinship he saw between the situation in the united states for blacks and the struggle of the Indian people against the British.

Gandhi was compelling and provocative to King in a practical sense. Gandhian concepts seemed akin to spiritual principles, religious beliefs or sacred doctrines. But King was not searching for religious support his contentions were based on arithmetic the disadvantages of any minorities adopting a policy of violence rather than principle.

“King saw that the non-violent struggle was comprised of five elements. First non-violent resistance is not a method for cowards. It is the way of the

strong. It is not a method of stagnant passivity. Second, it does not seek the humiliation or defeat of the opponent but rather understanding and the awakening of a sense of morality. Third, it is aimed at the evil that one is trying to expunge, not at the persons involved. Fourth, the willingness to suffer any consequences is transformational. Fifth, the resister refuses to use violence but also rejects inward violence of the spirit and hate, choosing instead to reach for love.”<sup>6</sup>

It was after the boycott that King’s coalescence of agape love and democracy were brought together and focused in profound certainty about the power of non-violent action for achieving them.

No longer viewing non-violent struggle as solely a practical matter, King acknowledged the moral and spiritual value of what Gandhi had taught the world.

Both Gandhi and King were able to make connections between the local struggles close to them and those of more transcendent implications. Gandhi transmuted what began as fierce nationalism into canons of self governance and independence. King transformed the cause of one minority’s omission from citizenship into the perfection of democracy and freedom for all and a struggle against poverty and war. While their precepts, principles and techniques are universal in their implications, these two leaders showed that the arsenal of non-violent struggle could be tailored to address specific needs, cultures, religions, politics and actors and actresses in any struggle.

Non-violence is not the only thing that Gandhi and King have in common. Each has become a mentor a thousand times over. Each informs contemporary

efforts for social change and justice. Their impact has been directly felt in struggles across the globe. Their individual and cumulative legacies are clearly visible. Nonviolent resistance has enlarged and expanded a testament to its ability to work constructively in almost any country or any century. Gandhi's codification and King's amplifications made it better understood and more accessible.

“Well, I would say that I owe a great deal to Mahatma Gandhi for my own commitment to nonviolence, I would say that we gained the operative technique for this movement from the great movement that took place in India. Now of course, there are differences and we recognize these differences. We are in a different cultural situation. The Indian people constituted a numerical majority seeking to gain freedom in a situation where a numerical minority ruled, where in the United States we are a numerical minority. Also there is a distinction between integration and independence. On the one hand a foreign invader is being driven out, in America we are seeking to gain freedom within a situation where we will have to live with the same people the minute we get that freedom and so there are differences, but I think that the basic philosophy itself, the basic method is the same and that is that it is possible to stand up against an unjust system resistive with determination and yet not stoop to violence and hatred in the process.”<sup>7</sup>

The struggle against racial segregation in Montgomery, Alabama, a synthesis of Gandhi's method of non-violence and the Christian ethics of love is the best weapon available to Negroes for the struggle for freedom and human dignity. King saw non-violent struggle comprehensively. It was philosophically and theologically grounded. It was a means of power. The dignity and courage

that it inspired also meant an end to demoralization. The method of non-violence permits a struggle to go on with dignity and without the need to retreat. It is a method that can absorb the violence that is inevitable in social change whenever deep-seated prejudices are challenged. Martin Luther made it clear that “if in pressing for justice and equality in Montgomery, we discover that those who reject equality are prepared to use violence we must not despair, retreat or fear. Before they make this crucial decision, they must remember whatever they do, we will not use violence in return. We hope we can act in the struggle in such a way that they will see the error of their approach and will come to respect us. Then we can all live together in peace and equality.”<sup>8</sup>

According to Martin Luther non-violence is an important method, a significant method and it is a method that he would like to recommend. It is such a method that all of the oppressed peoples of the world must use if justice is to be achieved in a proper sense. “There are several basic things that we can say about this method of non-violent resistance, this technique of non-violence. And these things are basic, these things are important and understanding this method and this technique in confronting the problems of discrimination and of segregation and standing out against the forces of injustice.”<sup>9</sup>

First of all it is not a method of submission or surrender. To some this method leads to stagnant complacency and deadening passivity and so it is not a proper method to use. The non-violent resister opposed to the evil such as he is protesting against as a violent resister. “Now it is true that this method is nonaggressive and passive in the sense that the non-violent resister does not use physical aggression against his opponent. But at the same time the mind and the emotions are active, actively trying to persuade the opponent to change his ways

and to convince him that he is mistaken and to lift him to a higher level of existence. This method is nonaggressive physically but it is aggressive spiritually. It is passive physically, but it is active mentally and spiritually.”<sup>10</sup>

“Non-violence as we think of it today is a technique of action. It seeks to effect change and it operates in a conflict situation. But before acting on this method, we need to understand the undergirding philosophy, its theoretical basis. There is no ultimate dichotomy between theory and action. Action without theory is aimless and misguided and theory without action is empty and meaningless abstraction.”<sup>11</sup>

#### **5.1.4. Martin Luther begins with the following basic precepts**

1. “Non-violence means first and foremost a strict adherence to truth. This carries with it honesty and integrity. But the minute we talk of truth some difficult questions arise:

What is truth?

Man in his finiteness cannot know absolute truth. Truth is the whole therefore we must find some absolute guide that can lead us up the road of truth. This leads to the second precept of non-violence.

2. This principle is non-injury. It is action based on the refusal to do harm. It is renunciation of the will to kill or to damage so that the only test of truth is action based on the refusal to do harm. But non injury may simply be a refusal to inflict external violence. There needs to be something to prevent internal violence.

3. Non-violence is absolute commitment to the way of love. Love is not emotional bash; it is not empty sentimentalism. It is the active outpouring of one's whole being into the being of another.
4. The highest expression of love is self-suffering. Non-violence recognizes the creative value of suffering.”<sup>12</sup>

King didn't want such type of peace which means accepting second class citizenship. If peace means keeping mouth shut in the midst of injustice and evil he didn't require. If peace means a willingness to be exploited economically, dominated politically, humiliated and segregated he didn't want. So in a passive non-violent manner he suggested to revolt against this peace.

For King, the first principle for the civil rights movement was that the means must be as pure as the end. The end represents the means in process and the ideal in the making. This originated with Gandhi's rejection of any differentiation between the method and the goal. King's own ethical framework corresponded with the Mahatma's views and he thought it impossible to use destructive methods and achieve constructive results. Just as it was important at the start of a struggle to reach out to the opponent or persuade one's antagonist, reconciliation was essential at its end. His principle is that to achieve a non-violent community one must have to practice non-violence. This congruity is an essential part of King's concept of the beloved community. King defined violence as the method of violence seeks to humiliate and to defeat the opponents and therefore it leads to bitterness. But the method of non-violence seeks not to humiliate or not to defeat the oppressor, but it seeks to win his friendship and understanding of the opponents. So the aftermath of non-violence is reconciliation.



He believed that the great glory of democracy is the right to protest for rights. The reason why didn't advocate violence is because violence ultimately defeats itself. It ultimately destroys everybody. He didn't want to follow the old eye-for-an-eye philosophy is that it ends up leaving everybody blind. When we see in the history most of the revolutions have ended up by destroying property. In the final analysis they were seeking to overthrow an existing government. But in this situation the uniqueness of this revolution is that it is a quest on the part of millions of Negroes and their allies in the white community to make the nation live up to its basic principles that stand in the constitution and the declaration of independence.

“Occasionally violence is temporarily successful, but never permanently so. It often brings temporary victory, but never permanent peace... If the American Negro and other victims of oppression succumb to the temptation of using violence in the struggle for justice, unborn generations will be the recipients of a long and desolate night of bitterness and their chief legacy to the future will be an endless reign of meaningless chaos.”<sup>13</sup>

King was convinced that for practical and moral reasons non-violence offers the only road to freedom. In violent warfare one must be prepared to face ruthlessly the fact that there will be casualties by the thousands. The practical aspect of non-violent resistance is that it exposes the moral defences at the same time and it breaks down his morale.

To King violence is not only impractical but also immoral. He was agreed with Gandhi that non-violent struggle required greater courage than violence. King counselled those who felt angry and hopeless in the face of racial injustice

to put their energies into non-violent strategies. He thought that individual acts of violence merely responded to the symptoms of deeper ills, whereas a coherent use of non-violent direct action could address the core problem.

“To return violence for violence does nothing but intensify the existence of violence and evil in the universe. Someone must have sense enough and morality enough to cut off the chain of violence and hate. It is ultimately the strong man who can do this. He who accepts violence without returning it is much stronger than he who inflicts it.”<sup>14</sup>

## **5.2. Aung San Suu Kyi: Democracy and Human Rights Movement in Burma**

Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San uu Kyi stands alongside Mahatma Gandhi, the Dalai Lama and Martin Luther King in the international struggle for freedom and human rights for the past twenty years she has been the voice for democracy in Burma. She is the leader of the struggle for human rights and democracy in Burma. Her non-violent struggle for democracy and human rights is one of the most extraordinary examples of civil courage in Asia in recent decades. She has encouraged the people of Burma to stand up for their rights despite their fears of persecution. In 1992 the United Nations Commission on Human Rights adopts a resolution on the situation of human rights in Myanmar by consensus.

By the word democracy Aung San Suu Kyi means “democracy is about your job and your children’s education; it’s about the house you live in and the food you eat; it is about whether or not you have to get permission from somebody before you visit your relatives in the next village, it’s about whether

or not you can reap your own harvest and sell it to the person you want to sell it to. The struggle is about their everyday life. It's no use saying to a farmer that democracy is about better investment rules: that makes no sense to him at all. But democracy is about securing him the right to sow what he wants to and to reap at the time he thinks the harvest is ready and then to sell it to whomsoever he thinks will give him the best price. That's democracy."<sup>15</sup> For a businessman democracy is a system where there are sound commercial laws which are upheld by the institutions of the state, so he knows his rights and what he is allowed to do or not. He knows how to protect himself if anybody infringes those rights. Such as for a student democracy is the right to be able to study in good schools and in peace. So democracy is the right to discuss political views with friends and to have the right to sit down at the tea shop on the campus and can talk whatever wants. "If you want democracy, it is no use depending on either me or the NLD alone. What democracy means is government of the people, by the people and for the people. If you want democracy, you will have to work for it. You have got to join in. The more people are involved the quicker we will reach our goal."<sup>16</sup> She has called the democracy struggle revolution of the spirit. She told "a people who would build a nation in which strong democratic institutions are firmly established as a guarantee against state induced power must first learn to liberate their own minds from apathy and fear."

Myanmar gained independence from Britain in 1948, and experienced civilian rule until 1962. While deriving a great deal of inspiration from Gandhi and her father, Aung San Suu Kyi has also added her own independent reflections to what has become her political platform. The keynote is the same

profound simplicity as she sees in her father. The central position given to human rights in her thinking appears to reflect a real sense of the need to protect human dignity. Man is not only entitled to live in a free society; he also has a right to respect. On this platform, she has built a policy marked by an extraordinary combination of sober realism and visionary idealism. And in her case this is more than just a theory: she has gone a long way towards showing how such a doctrine can be translated into practical politics.

Aung San Suu Kyi is the leader of the struggle for human rights and democracy in Burma. Her returning to Burma in 1988 to care for her mother coincided with the outbreak of a spontaneous revolt against twenty six years of political repression and economic decline. Aung San Suu Kyi quickly emerged as the most effective and articulated leader of the movement and the party she founded went on to win a colossal electoral victory in May 1990. Under house arrest, she has lived in truth. She is an outstanding example of the power of the powerless. By dedicating her life to the fight for human rights and democracy in Burma Suu Kyi is not only speaking out for justice in her own country, but also for all those who want to be free to choose their own destiny. She always insisted that the movement should be based on a non-violent struggle for human rights as the primary object.

From a state of profound isolation, Burma has moved quickly and obviously on to the world stage, especially in the assertion by its people of the need for basic human rights. The emergence of Aung San Suu Kyi at the core of the Burmese struggle for human rights and the unique role she has played are the consequence of three facts. It has bound her life inextricably to the modern history of her country.

First of all, she is the daughter of the unquestioned architect Aung San, of independent Burma in the modern period. His role was a unifying figure of unblemished character with a vision of a free and democratic Burma. It was he who led the struggle for independence from British colonial rule and from the Japanese occupation. Undoubtedly, Aung San has become a powerful symbol and martyr of Burmese freedom. His legacy has made Aung San Suu Kyi an appropriate symbol of the people's legitimate rights and aspirations.

Secondly, the identification of daughter and father carries with it the terrifying prospect of history repeating itself. The current military dictatorship came to power twenty eight years ago overthrowing the elected government formed by Aung San's surviving associates in the aftermath of his assassination. Having established without free and fair elections a system based on a single socialist party the military dealt with strikes and demonstrations. When the period of mass demonstrations began in 1988 the government adopted a policy of intimidation and severe restrictions on freedom of information. The military naturally focused its attention on the leadership of the opposition.

The historical legacy which Aung San Suu Kyi represents is undoubtedly awkward for the military government. A second martyrdom would hardly be to its advantage, whether in the short or the long term. But these facts are not sufficient to explain the role which she has come to play. By open letter to the government, speeches to public meetings and demonstrations in the formation and leadership of the NLD conducted when necessary at gunpoint she stuck consistently to a small number of fundamental themes which made her the moral and spiritual focus of the popular movement to restore human rights.

- i. Priority must be given to the restoration of human rights- freedom of speech, of assembly, of political organisation, of information, free elections, freedom from fear which are currently denied in Burma, and which are the only true basis for national unity and social evolution. Political and economic reform, she maintains will only be possible after these rights have been constituted in Burmese society.
- ii. The only legitimate and effective means to this end are non-violent ones.
- iii. The conduct of states and their governments requires principles which must always be distinguished from personalities, factions and merely tactical issues. This means, in the Burmese case that it is not the military as such which is the enemy of human rights; the military remains, at base, a friend and has its own legitimate sphere in government. The problem of human rights has arisen in Burma because the military under the dictatorship of Ne Win, usurped the exercise of government. It should return to its normal honourable role.
- iv. Personal and collective discipline is crucial. Short term objectives such as mass demonstrations, the formation of political parties and elections are worthless if human rights are not consistently observed. Members of the NLD and all other opponents of the military dictatorship must not actively provoke the military to do anything more than lay down its ill-chosen methods.

These principles reflect the inspiration which Aung San Suu Kyi derived from her study and reflection on Gandhi's philosophy and practice of non-violent civil disobedience. They were demonstrated repeatedly in the conduct of

her campaign of public meetings and demonstrations. They remain no less evident in her cool response to the intimidation and slander which the military government has continued to direct against her. Long term observers of the Burmese scene stress that it was Aung San Suu Kyi who first introduced the issue of human rights into Burmese political discussion.

Popular passions naturally mounted during the year of mass demonstrations as government acts of violence increased. Aung San Suu Kyi's reasoned insistence on the sole legitimacy of non-violent means and the priority of human rights has proven the only enduring answer: by her example and her prevention of bloodshed. She was able to establish a real alternative for the people who otherwise face only submission. The third and crucial fact about Aung San Suu Kyi's unique place in Burma today thus stands out very clearly. Facts of parentage may have provided her with immediate and special public recognition; her heartfelt and determined insistence on higher principles is certainly appropriate to the deep reverence in which the memory of her father is generally held. But it is the guidance she has brought to a highly unstable situation sustained by the personal force, courage and sound judgement manifest in her words and actions that continues to provide the main hope for Burma.

The arrest and long isolation of Aung San Suu Kyi place the strongest possible importance on the response of the international community. Without her active presence and the principled approach she has taken, prospects for stability and peaceful development are far from clear. The military government has indicated the road it proposes to follow. The elections which were held in May 1990 resulted in a landslide victory for Aung San Suu Kyi's party. The results were interpreted both in Burma and internationally as a referendum on

Aung San Suu Kyi's proposed leadership of a free and democratic Burma. The military however has simply refused to hand over power, keeping her and other leaders under lock and key using its superior force and intimidation to maintain control. International observers having declared the election free of corruption the military have not dared to declare it void. Instead it has indicated that it will consider the transfer of power only when a new constitution is written. Such a brutal democratic process points the way to continued violence. The military's determination to retain power despite widespread opposition is paralleled also in the presence of armed separatist movements among the main non Burma ethnic groups. The three facts which have led Aung San Suu Kyi's unique role in the Burmese struggle for human rights have also made her the natural and primary focus of international attention. In 1990 she was awarded in Norway the Thorolf Rafto Memorial Prize for Human Rights and the European Parliament awarded her the Sakharov Prize for freedom of Thought. The aim here is to bring together for a wider audience a summery of the main elements in the development of Aung San Suu Kyi's thought and action in defence of human rights in Burma. Her instance that violent and non-violent means belong to strictly separable domains of human action reflects her personal experience of the sad consequences of their mixture in Burmese history.

Upon her release in July 1995, she immediately resumed the struggle for political freedom in her country. In 2000 Aung San Suu Kyi was imprisoned when she tried to visit Mandalay in defiance of travel restrictions. Although released unconditionally in May 2002 she was put in prison after a clash between her supporters and a government backed mob in 2003. After an operation in 2003 Suu Kyi was allowed to return home, where she remain under



house arrest until her release in November 2010. In 6<sup>th</sup> June 2008 the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Burma, Tomas Ojea Quintana presents his first report to the Human Rights Council. Aims include:

1. “The immediate release of Aung San Suu Kyi as an initial step in the reconciliation process to be followed by the release of all other political prisoners.
2. The setting up of an effective mechanism to establish the whereabouts of those who have reportedly disappeared during and after the crackdown on the peaceful demonstrations in September 2007 and to provide information on the progress of this work.

Conclusions include:

1. The human rights situation in Burma has not improved since the previous report and critical issues still have to be addressed.
2. The regime’s constitutional referendum process lacks transparency, free debate and dissemination of information among the public.
3. An unknown number of individuals are still missing since the crackdown on the September-October 2007 pro-democracy protests.
4. The number of political prisoners stands at 1900.”<sup>17</sup>

Every speech and public statement made by Aung San Suu Kyi seem to represent an active violation of the government ban on opposition meetings and activities. Each event provided a pointed opportunity to spread her message of non-violence and human rights to an ever wider audience. “Aung San Suu Kyi further clarified the NLD position in response to the demands of student organizations on the formation of an interim government. She returned the

discussion once again to first principles: she declared that her party was aiming neither for an interim government nor for the election, but was seeking the attainment of basic human rights as soon as possible. She said that her party's position was that if these basic human rights are achieved one of the rights free and fair elections will materialize.”<sup>18</sup>

Everybody understands the basic human instinct for freedom and security as well. “Not just students, there have also been elderly men who have advocated armed struggle. They think this government is so lacking in good intentions that the only way to get democracy is by crushing them through force of arms. I think it's sheer frustration that drives them to this conclusion and the fact that the attitude of the authorities is so extreme. Extremism begets extremism.”<sup>19</sup>

Aung San Suu Kyi did not intend to bring changes through violence. Because she was afraid of if they achieve democracy in that way they will never be able to get rid of the idea that bring about necessary changes through violence. The very method would be threatening all the time. There are always people who don't agree with democracy. If they achieve it through violent means there will be the hard core of those who have always been against democracy movement who will think, “It was through violence that they changed the system and if we can develop our own methods of violence which are superior to theirs, we can get back the power.”<sup>20</sup>

In 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2007 the Dalai Lama issues a statement appealing to freedom loving people all over the world to support Burma's non-violent

movement and calling for the release of fellow Nobel Peace Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi.

### **5.3. The Dalai Lama: Democracy and Human Rights Movement in Tibet**

The Dalai Lama is a proponent of secular democracy. His perspective is that the aim of life is happiness. By the word democracy he means that it is based on the principle that all human beings are equal, that each of us has the right to live freely and happily. While ignorance leads beings into endless frustration and suffering wisdom frees them. Buddhism recognizes that “human beings have a right to dignity, that all members of the human family have an equal and inalienable right to be free. This freedom is expressed not just on the political level but also on the basic level, where everyone should be free from fear and need. Whether rich or poor, educated or not, whatever country we come from, whatever religion we follow, whatever ideology we espouse, each of us is above all a human being like any other.”<sup>21</sup> China forced a reluctant but utterly defeated Tibet to sign the 17<sup>th</sup> –point treaty. It promised that Tibet’s traditional social structure, its religion and the powers and privileges of the Dalai Lama would be kept intact. In return for this guarantee, Tibet was forced to agree to become a part of China.

In 1954, the Dalai Lama made a trip to China to meet with all the top Chinese leaders. Buddhist Tibet’s honeymoon with Communist China did not last long. Colonialism or liberalism the victims were the Tibetan people, whose ranks were decimated by a series of violent campaigns which China conducted in Tibet.

With the assistance of the Indian government the Dalai Lama created a modern Tibetan school system. It was only after he managed to build a viable and vibrant Tibetan refugee community that he launched into a sustained international campaign to collect support for the cause of Tibet. His efforts resulted in the creation of an enormous and still growing international constituency to restore Tibet's rights.

After the death of Mao Tse-tung in 1976, China entered a period of liberalisation. Chinese leaders invited the Dalai Lama to send representatives to Tibet to assess the situation there. The Dalai Lama sent four fact finding missions to Tibet and two exploratory delegations to tackle the real business of negotiating with the Chinese government.

In 1987 the Dalai Lama addressed the United States Congress in Washington D.C., unveiling his Five Point Peace Plan for Tibet which called on China to transform Tibet into a zone of peace, respect the fundamental human rights of the Tibetan people, halt its population transfer into Tibet, respect the environmental and ecological integrity of the Tibetan plateau and negotiate on the issue of Tibet.

In 1988 at a sitting of the European Parliament in Strasbourg, France, the Dalai Lama outlined his Strasbourg Proposal in which he conceded that Tibet would be willing to become a self governing democratic political entity in association with the People's Republic of China. Both these proposals were rejected by China as being a disguised form of Tibetan independence. In exile, the response was outrage from the younger refugees who considered the second proposal a sell-out.

In Dalai Lama's three commitments in life he mentioned that "in democracy we admit the necessity of pluralism in political life. But we hesitate when it's a matter of the diversity of beliefs and religions. Despite their different concepts and philosophies, all the chief religious traditions bring us the same message of love, compassion, tolerance, temperance and self-discipline. They also have in common their potential to help us lead a happier life."<sup>22</sup> In 1989 hundreds and thousands of Chinese students were killed simply because they demanded democracy and more accountability of the government to the Chinese people. That year the international community gave belated recognition to the efforts of the Dalai Lama by awarding him the Nobel Peace Prize. He was honoured with the prize for his constructive and forward looking proposals for the solution of international conflicts, human rights issues and global environmental problems. But mainly he was awarded the prize for his consistent opposition to the use of violence in his struggle for the liberation of Tibet.

Reacting to his being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, the Dalai Lama said that it did not add to or subtract from his true vocation of being a Buddhist monk. But he said in his acceptance speech that he was happy to receive it on behalf of the six million Tibetans because this award represents worldwide recognition and support for the just cause of the Tibetan people's struggle for freedom and self determination.

"The Tibetan issue is not only a human rights issue it also involves environmental problems and the issue of decolonization. The most important issue at present is the question of Chinese population transfer. At this moment we need more support to stop this demographic change. This is very, very crucial. Whatever way you can show support, we appreciate it very much."<sup>23</sup>

The Tibetans were extremely disturbed by the perpetual sufferings. Dalai Lama's concern was extreme and he was astonished what the result of all these tragic developments will lead to. He does not believe that repression is a viable solution in the long run. The best way to go forward is to resolve the questions concerning Tibetans and Chinese through dialogue and Dalai Lama has defended this position for a long time. What he was looking for is a significant autonomy for the Tibetan people, capable of guaranteeing the long term survival of their Buddhist culture, their language and their distinct identity. The rich Tibetan culture is part of the general cultural heritage of the People's Republic of China and it can be beneficial for their Chinese brothers and sisters.

#### **5.4. Anna Hazare and the Lokpal Bill Movement**

Anna Hazare is one of India's well acclaimed social activists. Hazare is a significant figure in India. As he told the dream of India as a strong nation will not be realised without self reliant villages, this can be achieved only through social commitment and involvement of the common man. He led movements to promote rural development and punish corruption in public life.

The social barriers and discrimination that existed due to the cast system in India have been largely eliminated by Ralegan Siddhi villagers. It was Hazare's moral leadership that motivated and inspired the villagers to shun untouchability and caste discrimination. Marriages of Dalits are held as part of community marriage program together with those of other castes. The Dalits have become integrated into the social and economic life of the village. The upper caste villagers built houses for the lower caste Dalits by *shramdaan* and helped to repay their loans.

The Gandhian philosophy on rural development considers the Gram Sabha as an important democratic institution for collective decision-making in the villages of India. Hazare campaigned between 1998 and 2006 for amending the Gram Sabha Act, so that villagers have a say in the village's development. The state government initially refused, but eventually gave in to public pressure. It became mandatory to seek the sanction of the Gram Sabha for expenditures on development works in the village.

In 1991 Hazare launched the Bhrashtachar Virodhi Jan Andolan (BVJA, People's Movement against Corruption), a popular movement to fight against corruption in Ralegaon Siddhi. In the same year he protested against the collusion between 40 forest officials and timber merchants. This protest resulted in the transfer and suspension of these officials.

On 9 August 2013, Anna's office announced his anti-corruption organisation Bhrashtachar Virodhi Jan Andolan (BVJA) is no longer tackling corruption issues at a personal or social level. In an email circulated to India Against Corruption's membership, the veteran Gandhian's office has clarified that Anna focused on Janlokpai, Right to Reject, Right to Recall, Farmers problems, Change in Education in System.

#### **5.4.1. Cast Discrimination**

At Ralegan Siddhi formerly cast discrimination have been changing. When 17 Dalit families were unable to repay their bank loans the people of the villages decided to help them out. They tilled the land owned by the Dalits and cultivated it. The sale of the produce went towards the repayment of the loans. This is a real sense of change at Ralegan Siddhi. According to Anna Hazare

“cast based, religion based, status based and gender based prejudices have to be removed. People have become selfish and self centred. They do not seem to think beyond themselves. They seem to believe in ‘mine is mine and yours is mine too.’ Because of this, the poor are suffering as the rich are busy grabbing more and more. The gap between the haves and the have-nots is widening.”<sup>24</sup> So Hazare points out that to bring about a change in society, social workers and organisers have to be ready to become stones in the foundation.

When Mahatma Gandhi and his followers decided to force the British to leave the country, it was a do or die situation. People stepped forward with determination and fought for independence. It was hoped that the divide and rule policy would end with the departure of British. So Anna Hazare believed that the unity amongst the villagers is a source of great strength. From Swami Vivekananda’s writings he had understood that helping and serving others should be one’s ultimate goal in life.

#### **5.4.2. Right to Information Movement**

In the early 2000s Hazare led a movement in Maharashtra state which forced the state government to enact a revised Maharashtra Right to Information Act. This Act was later considered as the base document for the Right to Information Act 2005 (RTI), enacted by the Union Government. It also ensured that the President of India assented to this new Act. On 20 July 2006 the Union Cabinet amended the Right to Information Act 2005 to exclude the file noting by the government officials from its purview. Hazare began his fast unto death on 9 August 2006 in Alandi against the proposed amendment. He ended his fast on 19 August 2006, after the government agreed to change its earlier decision.



### **5.4.3. Lokpal Bill Movement**

In 2011, Hazare participated in the *satyāgraha* movement campaigning for the passing a stronger anti-corruption *Lokpal* bill in the Indian parliament. Known as the Jan Lokpal Bill, this had been drafted by N. Santosh Hegde, a former justice of the Supreme Court of India and Lokayukta of Karnataka, Prashanta Bhushan, a senior lawyer in the Supreme Court and Arvind Kejriwal, a social activist, along with members of the India Against Corruption movement. The draft incorporated more stringent provisions and gave wider power to the *Lokpal* than the government's 2010 draft. These included placing the Prime Minister within the ambit of the proposed lokpal's powers.

#### **5.4.3.1. Hunger Strike**

Hazare began an indefinite fast on 5 April 2011 at Jantar Mantar in Delhi as part of the campaign to form a joint committee comprising government and civil society representatives. He wanted this committee to draft a bill that had more stringent penal provisions and gave more independence to the *Lokpal* and *Lokayuktas* (ombudsmen in the states). The fast came after his demand was rejected by the Prime minister, Manmohan Singh. Hazare said that he will fast until Jan Lokpal Bill is passed.

The movement attracted attention in the media, and thousands of supporters. Almost 150 people reportedly joined Hazare in his fast. Social activists, including Medha Patkar, Arvind Kejriwal, former IPS officer Kiran Bedi and Jayaprakash Narayan lent their support. People showed support in social media. In addition to spiritual leaders Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, Swami Ramdev, Swami Agnivesh, the former Indian cricketer Kapil Dev and many

other celebrities supported him. Hazare decided that he would not allow any politician to sit with him. The protesters rejected Uma Bharti, Om Prakash Chautala and others when they visited the protest. On 6 April 2011 Sharad Pawar resigned from the group of ministers formed for reviewing the 2010 draft.

Protests spread to Bangalore, Mumbai, Chennai, Ahmedabad, Guwahati, Shillong, Aizawl and other cities. On 8 April 2011 the Government accepted the movement's demands. On 9 April it issued a notification in the *Gazette of India* on formation of a joint committee. It accepted the formula that it should be co-chaired by a politician and a social activist. The notification stated that the Joint Drafting Committee shall consist of five nominee ministers of the Government of India and five nominees of the civil society. The five nominee Ministers of the Government of India are Pranab Mukherjee, Union Minister of Finance, P. Chidambaram, Union Minister of Home Affairs, M. Veerappa Moily, Union Minister of Law and Justice, Kapil Sibal, Union Minister of Human Resource and Development and Minister of Communication and Information Technology and Salman Khursheed, Union Minister of Water Resources and Minister of Minority Affairs. The five non-politician nominees were Anna Hazare, N. Santosh Hegde, Shanti Bhushan Senior Advocate, Prashant Bhushan, Advocate and Arvind Kejriwal.

On the morning of 9 April 2011 Hazare ended his 98-hour hunger strike. He addressed the people and set a deadline of 15 August 2011 to pass the bill. He said that Real fight begins now. We have a lot of struggle ahead of us in drafting the new legislation, We have shown the world in just five days that we

are united for the cause of the nation. The youth power in this movement is a sign of hope.

Hazare said that if the bill did not pass he would call for a mass nation-wide agitation. He called his movement as second struggle for independence and he will continue the fight. Hazare threatened on 28 July 2012 to proceed with his fast-unto-death from the next day on the Jan Lokpal Bill issue. He also stated that country's future is not safe in the hands of Congress and BJP and he would campaign in the coming elections for those with clean background. On the third day of his indefinite fast, Anna stated that he will not talk even to the Prime Minister till his demands are met. On 2 August 2012 Hazare said that there was nothing wrong with forming a new political party but, he would neither join the party nor contest elections. Team and Anna have decided to end their indefinite fast on 3 August 2012 at 5PM after which the team will announce their decision to enter politics.

#### **5.4.3.2. Draft Bill**

During the meeting of the joint drafting committee on 30 May 2011, the Union government members opposed the inclusion of the prime minister, higher judiciary and the acts of the MPs under the purview of the Jan Lokpal in the draft bill. On 31 May, Mukherjee sent a letter to the chief ministers of all states and party leaders seeking their opinion on six contentious issues, including whether to bring the prime minister and judges of India's Supreme Court and High Courts under the law's purview. But the civil society members of the drafting committee considered that keeping them out would be a violation of the United Nations Convention against Corruption.

Hazare and other civil society members decided to boycott 6 June 2011 drafting committee meeting to protest the forcible eviction of Swami Ramdev and his followers by the Delhi Police from Ramlila Maidan on 5 June 2011, while they were on a hunger strike against black money and corruption and doubting the government's seriousness.

On 6 June 2011, the civil society members wrote to Mukherjee, explaining reasons for their absence and also asking government to go public on the major issues. They also decided to attend only future meetings that were telecast live. On 8 June at Rajghat, describing his movement as the second freedom struggle, Hazare criticised the Government for trying to discredit the drafting committee and threatened to go on indefinite fast again from 16 August 2011 if the Lokpal Bill had not passed. He also criticised the Government for putting hurdles in front of the Bill and for maligning the civil society members.

#### **5.4.3.3. Indefinite Fast**

On 28 July 2011 the union cabinet approved a draft of the Lokpal Bill, which kept the Prime Minister, judiciary and lower bureaucracy out of the ombudsman's ambit. Hazare rejected the government version by describing it as 'cruel joke' and wrote a letter to Singh announcing his decision to begin an indefinite fast from 16 August 2011 at Jantar Mantar, if the government introduced its own version of the bill without taking suggestions from civil society members. Hazare wrote:-

Why are you (government) sending the wrong draft? We have faith in Parliament. But first send the right draft, our agitation is against government, not Parliament. The government has overlooked many points. How will it fight

corruption by excluding government employees, CBI and prime minister from the Lokpal's purview? We were told that both the drafts would be sent to the Cabinet. But only the government's draft was sent. This is a deceitful government. They are lying. How will they run the country? Now I have no trust in this government. If it is really serious about fighting corruption, why is it not bringing government employees and CBI under Lokpal?

Within twenty four hours of cabinet's endorsement of a weak Lokpal Bill, over ten thousand people from across the country sent faxes directly to the government demanding a stronger bill. The Mumbai Taxi Men's Union, comprising over 30,000 taxi drivers supported Hazare's fast by keeping all taxis off the roads on 16 August. Lawyers of Allahabad High Court described the government proposal as against the national interest and pledged their support to Hazare by hunger strike at Allahabad on 16 August. On 30 July Vishwa Hindu Parishad supported his fast by saying movement for an effective anti-corruption ombudsman needed the people's backing.

On 1 August 2011, Public interest litigation was filed in the Supreme Court of India by Hemant Patil, a Maharashtra-based social worker and businessman, to restrain Hazare, alleging that Hazare's demands were unconstitutional and amounted to interference in the legislative process.

#### **5.4.3.4. Arrest and Aftermath**

On 16 August 2011, Hazare was arrested, four hours before the planned indefinite hunger strike. Rajan Bhagat, spokesman for Delhi Police, said police arrested Hazare for illegally gathering in a Delhi park to begin his hunger strike, claiming that Hazare refused to meet police conditions for allowing the

protest. The conditions included restricting the fast to three days and the number of protesters to 5,000. Later in the afternoon, Hazare refused bail. The magistrate dispatched him to Tihar jail for seven days. After announcements by Prashant Bhushan, local television, and social media sites, thousands marched in support from the India Gate to Jantar Mantar.

Media reported that about 1,300 supporters were detained in Delhi, including key members of the India Against Corruption movement such as Arvind Kejriwal, Shanti Bhushan, Kiran Bedi and Manish Sisodia. Other reports other protests with people courting arrests in different parts of the country. Opposition parties came out against the arrest, likening the government action to the emergency imposed in the country in 1975. Both houses of Parliament adjourned over the issue.

After four hours in detention he was released unconditionally on a request by the police, but refused to leave Tihar Jail. He demanded unconditional permission to fast at Ramlila Maidan (Ground) and refused to leave. Hazare continued his fast inside the jail. After his arrest, Hazare received support from people across the country. There were reports of nearly 570 demonstrations and protests by Anna supporters across the country. Due to the millions of protesters nationwide, the government allowed him to begin a public hunger strike of fifteen days. After talks with public authorities, Hazare decided to hold his protest at Ramlila Maidan, New Delhi. On 20 August Hazare left the Tihar Jail for the Ramlila Grounds.

#### **5.4.3.5. Fast at Ramlila Maidan**

On 20 August 2011 thousands came to show their support for Hazare, while his advisers made television appearances to rally public support and defend themselves against criticism that their protest campaign and refusal to compromise is undermining India's parliamentary process. The National Campaign for People's Right to Information (NCPRI) condemned Hazare's deadline for passing the bill as undermining democracy, which operates by holding wide-ranging consultations and discussions, allowing for dissent and evolving a consensus. ...He has the right to protest and dissent. But nobody can claim it as an absolute right and deny the right of dissent to others.

The Congress party confirmed that Maharashtra Additional Chief Secretary (Home) Umesh Chandra Sarangi (who has a history of mediating between Hazare and officials) was meeting with him again to find points of consensus and defuse the situation. On 21 August tens of thousands watched Hazare as he sat on an elevated platform. It was reported that Hazare at that point had lost more than seven pounds since beginning his fast. Despite this he stated that he will not withdraw his hunger strike until the Jan Lokpal bill is passed in the Parliament. He can die but he will not bend. Hazare ended his fast on 28 August, after the Lokpal Bill passed unanimously.

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