

## SELECT INDIAN POLITICAL THINKERS AND THE IDEA OF PEACE

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The idea of peace has multiple dimensions. Since the emergence of new nation-states, weapons of mass destruction have gradually emerged. Although human control over brute power has been sensitively strengthened, this human superpower needs to be controlled. The human power needs to be checked because unending human power will destroy everything, even the human itself. That is why many thinkers have gradually emerged to protect human society with the means of peace and harmony. Peace, in this context, refers to safeguard human life. Many Indian thinkers have devoted themselves to the protection and maintenance of peace. The body of literature with regard to the idea of peace in the Indian political thought is highly significant. Sri Aurobindo, M.K.Gandhi and Dr. Radhakrishnan are excessively important for their contribution to the development of peace in India. The paper primarily focusses on the idea of peace constituted by the Indian political thinkers. The main proponents for the Indian school of peace are Sri Aurobindo, M.K.Gandhi and Dr.Radhakrishnan. The paper has been divided into three parts, discussing the ideas of each thinker and how the concept of peace finds a place in their philosophy. In the first part, the ideas of Sri Aurobindo have been elaborated. Sri Aurobindo emphasized on the religion of humanity to create a new kind of human unity in the context of Indian civilization. The main purpose of any religion, according to Aurobindo, is not any kind of dogma or any kind of rigid ideology, but to blend the values of liberty, equality, and fraternity. So, the central argument in the analysis of Sri Aurobindo's idea of human unity and peace rests upon the combination of the values of liberty, equality and fraternity (Mahapatra and Mahapatra:2004:p.150).*

**KEYWORDS:** *Human Control, Human Power, Protect Human Society, Peace Finds A Place in Their Philosophy*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The second part discusses the ideas of M.K.Gandhi. In this part, a Gandhian world order, based upon his thoughts and ideas, has been analyzed. Gandhi has tried to constitute a new world order which will be based upon the principles of peace and humanity. The main argument of this part is linked with the Gandhian idea of peace. Gandhi has argued that peace can only be achieved through non-violence and truth. He emphasized upon holism and considered the significance of societal, structural, religious and spiritual aspects (Yadav:2005:p.446). Gandhi considered that the individual and social structures are interlinked and integrated with each other and peace can only be achieved in the totality of the system. The main theme of this part is based on the idea of an integrated social order that Gandhi enumerated.

In the third part, the ideas of S.Radhakrishnan has been elaborated. Radhakrishnan has emphasized upon the idea of peace and nonviolence. The central argument of this part rests upon the significance of democracy. To Radhakrishnan, without

democracy, peace cannot be achieved. He neglected the western concept of nationalism and stressed on man's psychological evolution, arguing that peace will be achieved on the basis of the psychological evolution of the man. The final part of the paper attempts a comparative analysis of the thoughts of these three dominant thinkers.

### **Significant Indian Thinkers**

Indian thinkers were by no means less effective than the west in terms of intellectual quality. They have tried to constitute their ideology of peace contextualizing it against the backdrop of Indian culture and civilization. In this entire discussion, three Indian thinkers are significant - Sri Aurobindo, M.K.Gandhi and Dr. Radhakrishnan. Indian thinkers, from all quarters of the time, have emanated the idea of peace and stability to make the world more. These Indian thinkers have deeply contributed to the arena of war and peace, probing into the relationship between nation-state and peace. In Indian political thought, peace has got acceptance from most thinkers. Peace is not a material requirement for the attainment of a good life. But peace is an ideological requirement to possess a peaceful social order. The Indian thinkers have thus contributed both materialistically and ideologically in the field of peace.

### **Sri Aurobindo**

Sri Aurobindo was a great political thinker, philosopher and also a great revolutionary patriot. Romain Rolland regarded Sri Aurobindo as, "the highest synthesis of the genius of Europe and Asia". Rabindranath hailed him as a 'great exponent of the spiritual message of India' and Radhakrishnan declared him as the greatest intellectual person the age. Hence, Sri Aurobindo was a great social and political thinker of his own time. Actually, he was a great exponent of the idea of human unity. Aurobindo considered man as a spiritual being in content. To him, without spirituality human society can never exist.

### **Idea of Peace and Internationalism**

Actually, Aurobindo's idea of peace is highly linked with the idea of internationalism. The idea of humanity as a single race actually begins with common life and a common general interest. The European political thought and ideas has also emphasized upon the commonness among the people.

Internationalism is the attempt to go beyond the national idea, beyond the self-interest of the people in order to connect with the larger world order. Sri Aurobindo developed this idea of internationalism and tried to constitute a new variant of internationalism on the basis of Indian culture and civilization. The idea of internationalism was born out of the eighteenth century. Flourished through the ideals of the French Revolution, these idea as later went on to play a great role in the ideals of humanity and solidarity in the society.

Sri Aurobindo has also been influenced by the great ideals of humanity and commonness. To European political thinkers, over excessive nationalistic ideas were really very dangerous, so they turn towards international ideals. To Au-

robindo, Indian civilization was far different; it is enriched with traditions and harped on the unity among the people. Thus, to Aurobindo, humanity and unity will be establishing trough 'sentiments, feelings, natural sympathies and mental habits of men' (Vyas:1987:p.51).To sum up, Aurobindo's idea of humanity was a synthesis of spirituality and traditionalism.

Hence, for Aurobindo, human ideas originated through the synthesis of sentiments and feelings, and no such unity can be possible without the application of 'feelings' and 'natural sympathies'. Until and unless a man is ready for the 'profound change' in the entire world, no such behavior will be successful in this purpose. Hence, to Aurobindo Ghosh, humanity was equal to peace, and natural peace will only be possible through the unity of thoughts and sentiments. The process of peace is exclusively standing upon the minds of the people and their behavioral attitudes. For this reason, Aurobindo Ghosh has tried to unite the people on the basis of feelings which would bring about a change the behavior of the people, leading to a point from which social peace, stability, and harmony can be constituted. Actually, peace has a unique characteristic in itself. Peace and peaceful social order are closely associated with each other, and Aurobindo Ghosh has emphasized on 'Peaceful Unity' and peaceful social unity of every individual.

#### **Aurobindo Ghosh: Internationalism and Human Unity**

To Aurobindo Ghosh, the idea of human unity is very much significant to establish a peaceful world order. Internationalism and human unity are closely associated with each other. Internationalism denotes to the gathering of many states, and human unity denotes to the assimilation of many people. According to Aurobindo, a nation arises because of circumstances; the nation actually represents the will of the particular society. So, the creation of the nation is deeply depending on the circumstances of a particular social order. On the other side, human unity is the precondition of international peace and internationalism. At the level of world-state there is many advantages like-peace, economic well-being, security, social activity, and the progress. The social and political ideas of Aurobindo Ghosh have developed through his two works, namely, 'The Human Cycle' (1918) and 'The Ideal of Human Unity' (1919). Furthermore, the idea of human unity has also flourished through works like, 'Live Divine' and 'Savitri'. Aurobindo has essentially highlighted the greatness of Indian civilization in his work- 'The Ideal of Karmayogin.' To him, human unity is necessary because every human being has a basic impulse of creating harmony and destroying disharmony. He has never neglected the value of reason and rationality. Aurobindo had great trust on reason, that reason will unite the people. Because every human being wants to transform themselves from the character of 'inertia' to 'purity'(Mukhopadhyay:2013:p.333).Hence, to Aurobindo nature has its own rules and system through which human unity can be established. Natural rules of unity and solidarity of the individuals always encourage the other individuals to constitute a normal social order and a stable society.

In 1909, after getting freedom from the jail, Aurobindo, again emphasized upon the very notion of 'human unity.' Aurobindo has searched the idea of humanity within the roots of society and human nature. Without human society, human unity will no longer be possible to be established. So, human unity and peace are the two sides of the same coin, and cannot be separated.

### **M.K.Gandhi and His Idea of Peace**

M.K. Gandhi was born on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1869 in Porbandar. Gandhi was essentially a religious man but his religion was not the religion of a common man. Gandhi's religion was "religion not in the sense of subscription to dogmas or conformity to ritual, but a religion in the sense of an abiding faith in the absolute values of truth, love and justice, and persistent endeavor to realize them on earth." Gandhi was very much intensely religious, and that is why he attempted to infuse religion into politics(Vyas:1987:p.61).The Gandhian idea of religion was far different from the religious beliefs of a divided society. Gandhi was a person who believed in a plurality of religion. Gandhi's view of history was unique in character and was universal in nature. His interpretation of history can be described as the "non-violent interpretation of history." To Gandhi, man has made progress from uncivilized life to civilized life. Gandhi did not accept history in a mechanistic sense. Violence, he believed, was the evil of human society. The primary mission of the human society, according to Gandhi is to prohibit violence and war. Thus, Gandhi has tried to constitute a new social order where every individual should be free from disharmony and violence.

Gandhian ideals were standing upon the principles of peace and stability. So, according to him whatever achieved through the means of violence they will never act as a path of real human progress. To Gandhi, "History teaches one that those who have, no doubt with honest motives, ousted the greedy by using brute force against them, have, in their turn, become a prey to the disease of the conquered." Hence, Gandhi completely raised his voice against the brute force, power and especially the means of state power and ruling. Thus, Gandhi actually advised that, "I do not want to take power into my hands. By abjuring power and by devoting ourselves to pure and selfless service of the voters, we can guide and influence them. It would give us far more power real power than we shall have by going into the Government."

For Gandhi, the way of peace was the way of truth. Gandhi has always tried to lead the freedom movements guided by peace. In other words, peace was the precondition for Gandhi to maintain a mass movement. Whenever the mass movements became violent, Gandhi has withdrawn the movement. However, peace was also equivalent to truth. Truthfulness was more important than the peacefulness. There is no half-way between truth and non-violence on one side and untruth and violence on the other. To Gandhi, the attainment of freedom, whether for the world, a nation or a man, they must try to attain the goals of non-violence by themselves. Non-violence is the central part of the Gandhian idea of peace, without non-violence, no such peaceful society can exist. To sum it up, non-violence and peace are two sides of the same coin.

Peace and humanism were the preconditions of a developed and free society, according to Gandhi. He has always searched for truthfulness and morality within human nature. To Gandhi, India must strive for peace, but not violence. India must be a freed country not by the means of war or violence which would degenerate the society into a worse situation, like the nation states of Europe. Although the 'science of war' has much developed, a nation like India must strive for 'freedom through peace'. Hence, the Gandhi an idea of peace is essentially shot through the idea of freedom, and thus, Gandhi has always been the pathfinder of peace and freedom. Hence, Gandhi wanted the people of India should make an honest attempt to achieve social progress. And due to that reason, one must stop running after political power which actually corrupts the human mind and human society(Vyas:1987:p.64).

**Dr. S. Radhakrishnan**

Dr. S. Radhakrishnan was another exponent of the India school of peace. Actually, he was an 'impressive exponent of Indian Philosophy.' He was a democrat. According to him, democracy was the most valuable thing in the modern world. According to him, "Essentially, a democrat is one who has that trait of humanity, the power to put himself in the second place, to believe that he may possibly be mistaken and his opponent probably right." He refuses the ideal of nationalism as a 'natural instinct.' Rather he calls it as 'an acquired artificial emotion' and also added that "man as he is, need not be regarded as the crowning glory of evolution."

He has the opinion that the next stage of evolution will not be man's psychological evolution but the evolution of the mind itself. In the new age, people will be more interactive and awareness will be generated more among the people.

**Attainment of Peace**

S. Radhakrishnan was a great Philosopher and Educationist. He had a belief that truth and peaceful world order will actively unite people and then they must be able to achieve peace in a new world. Here 'new world' denotes to the more stable and democratic world order. To him, people must understand the fact that plurality is not a problematic factor, but they have to be free from conflict and violence. He had a conviction that on the basis of peace, society will be more beautiful and more stable.

Radhakrishnan was a follower of democracy because democracy enriches new life. For him, parliamentary democracy is the best instrument for the 'ascertainment of expression of the public mind.' In Radhakrishnan's thought, the idea of 'public mind' repeats itself. Democracy is derived from the two Greek words, which means people and power. Literally, it means the 'rule of the people.' The rule of the people is the central part of the ancient meaning of democracy. Democracy is also based on the idea of protecting the rule of the people and maintaining the discipline of the social order.

Radhakrishnan has emphasized the rule of the people. When people naturally come together for a common purpose and constitute a 'government' then the system may be termed as people's democracy. Radhakrishnan was the most significant thinker of peace and democracy. To him, when a democratic system becomes peaceful then only the democratic order may be regarded as a perfect democratic order. A remarkable and genius exponent of peace and democracy, Radhakrishnan emphasized that peace is the precondition of any democratic order.

Above all, he has emphasized upon parliamentary democracy. Because parliamentary democracy at one hand maintains stability in a nation and on the other hand maintains a peaceful political order. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan was a philosopher of peace, humanity and real parliamentary democracy.

Hence, the Indian and the Western thinkers, reflecting on the idea of peace, have emphasized upon the non-application of deadly weapons. Although the human power for destruction has increased devastatingly, the imperatives for restricting human power is the most significant fact... The weapons of mass destruction have to be restricted and controlled in order to constitute a stable and peaceful society. The theory of peace and war has multiple dimensions within it. For example, W.H.R. Vivers, G.Eliot Smith and W.J. Perry expressed that war was invented in pre-dynastic Egypt.

Ashly Montagu expressed that war came to the world with the transformation of an agricultural state to a modern developed state. Hobhouse, Wheeler, and Ginsberg have expressed that primitive tribes developed warfare. Pitirim A Sorokin has also expressed a similar kind of opinion in his work, "Reconstruction of Humanity".

Although, B. Malinowski has expressed that 'war does not exist among the primitives' in his work freedom and civilization. R.G. Collingwood in his work, 'The New Leviathan' has stated that "the earliest human communities of which we know seemed not to have waged war." Hence, the theory regarding war and peace is multiple, and not similar in nature. The Indian school of peace has tried to deconstruct the basic ideas regarding war and peace. The thoughts of the proponents of the Indian school have a significant impact on the theoretical field of peace and war. Hence, it will be very difficult to highlight any single idea. War and peace both are deeply embedded in human nature. No such single theoretical background can finalize the causes and effect of peace and war. Love and aggression, both are closely linked with human nature. Hence, an open-ended discussion of war and peace is very much needed to analyze the nature of peace systematically and rationally. Since, the ancient time, many schools have highlighted on peace and nonviolence, but the Indian school of thought has outlined many new ideas which will be significant for a long time.

### **The Commonness and Differences among the Indian Thinkers**

The Indian political thinkers have primarily stressed the idea of world peace, but there are some similarities and difference among them. Firstly, Sri Aurobindo is best known for his idea of humanity. To him, humanity refers to the idea of common life and common general interest. Sri Aurobindo had also tried to develop the idea of new internationalism on the basis of Indian culture and civilization. The commonness between Aurobindo and Gandhi is that both of the thinkers have primarily emphasized upon the idea of human unity. Both thinkers have tried to constitute the notion of the 'emergence of human self', the idea of spirituality also comes here. But there are some differences among the thinkers. The three thinkers such as Aurobindo, Gandhi and Radhakrishnan have emphasized upon the negativity and hindrances of the 'nationalism'. However, while Aurobindo rests on the spiritual human being, the Gandhian ideology rests on the progressive self of the individual. Similarly, Radhakrishnan has a conviction that Indian civilization will be more effective than western civilization. The differences are also here; while Radhakrishnan relies on democracy for the attainment of peace, Gandhi has strongly criticized the west-centric idea of democracy.

Secondly, M.K.Gandhi is best known for his idea of truth and non-violence, the idea of peace is also related to the notion of truth. The similarities between Gandhi and other Indian thinkers are that, all of the thinkers have tried to constitute the notion of 'peaceful world order'. Nonetheless, the meaning and manifestation of 'peaceful world order' is different for the three Indian thinkers. Gandhi has stressed on the concepts like-the transformed individual, a de-centralized polity, self-sufficient economy and non-exploitative international order. The other thinkers such as Aurobindo and Radhakrishnan have tried to focus on peace in the context of Indian culture and civilization. Their idea of peace is far more different than the concept of 'Gandhian world order' (Yadav:2005:p.447). So, there are some fundamental differences between the Indian thinkers, for this reason, the idea of peace has changed in time to time.

Thirdly, S.Radhakrishnan is best known for his notion of 'democratic world order' and 'self-regulated individual'. The similarities with Gandhi and Aurobindo are that all the three thinkers have emphasized upon the significance of the self of the individual. They have tried to build up the notion of 'self-regulated moral individual'. All of these three thinkers have primarily focussed on the 'self' of the individual and to them, without the self there is no such idea of peace that can be established. Self is the container of peace. These three thinkers have neglected the identity of a selfish individual. For the attainment of peace, one has to neglect the selfish character and selfish attitudes as a whole. Nonetheless, there are some differences between Radhakrishnan, Aurobindo and M.K.Gandhi. Radhakrishnan has essentially emphasized upon the notion of democracy. For Radhakrishnan, democracy is the best instrument for the 'ascertainment of expression of the public mind'. He has stressed upon the notion 'public mind' again and again. The major difference between Aurobindo, Gandhi and Radhakrishnan is that while Aurobindo and Gandhi had criticized the western idea of democracy, Radhakrishnan has primarily emphasized upon the classical Greek notion of democracy. According to Radhakrishnan, 'democracy' is the pathway to social harmony and peace. Hence, Radhakrishnan has a conviction that democracy will generate the idea of 'rule of the people'. Society will be more peaceful and beautiful by the manifestation of 'rule of the people'. However, all three thinkers have tried to constitute the notion of peace in different ways. So, the notion of peace has been prioritized and accepted by all three thinkers.

## CONCLUSIONS

Gandhi has expressed that ahimsa (non-violence) and Satya (truth) are synonymous with each other. Here, non-violence is not only an ethical character of the individuals but is also associated with the ontological reality. For Gandhi, through the way of non-violence every 'human being remains human', peace being the primary ingredient or element of every human society. Hence, the philosophers of the Indian School have perfectly emphasized upon peace, in both pragmatic and idealistic sense. Mostly, Gandhi has deeply contributed to the theory of peace in a nation-state or peace in a particular society. Violence and non-violence are equally available in every human action. And every society has a dual nature of violence and non-violence, but every human being must try to reach for the sphere of non-violence and peace. Hence, both Western and Indian schools of peace have greatly contributed to the field of peace and stability in itself. Both schools have expressed the importance of morality and the importance of humanity.

Nonetheless, the Indian School of thought has emphasized on the role of the state in the promotion and application of peace. Each and every nation-state has its own society, own culture and own heritage, but the philosophers from both the school have argued that peace and stability is the backbone of every developed nation-state and also the entire society. Hence, a peaceful life and peaceful individual is the main source development and stability in every nation-state.



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