



## Communism: A Gandhian Approach to Social Tensions

Dr. B.V.V. Bala Krishna, Course Coordinator, Dept of Political Science, Adikavi Nannaya University, Rajamahendravaram, AP-533296.

**Abstract:** Tension is a part and parcel of reality. There is some kind of tension in everything and everyone. These are natural and may be necessary also. But when tension increases beyond a level this can be damaging. When we pull a wire some tension is produced in the wire. When we increase the strength of the pull beyond a level the wire will snap. What is true of the wire is also true of individuals and societies. Man is an individual. As an individual he is an amphibian, partly physical and partly spiritual. This physical-spiritual pull creates tensions in him. While Man's spiritual part is responsible for his morality, religion and his idealism, his physical part is responsible for his egoism, selfishness, immorality etc. In addition to being an individual man is a social being also. He likes to live in society and forms groups for his welfare. He identifies to some extent with the group to which he belongs. Those who are born into the group also do the same thing. When there arises a threat, imaginary or real, to a group or an individual as a member of the group, from another group, then social tensions arise. Social tensions are similar to the complex of emotions that arise when the individual's instinct to survival is threatened. There is fear, anxiety, anger etc. There will be an element of ignorance also. The rational element in the individual is reduced to the minimum. What happens to the individual, more or less happens to the social group also. Social tension is thus a complex emotion in the context of a group. This paper explains gandhian approach to social tensions

**Key words:** egoism, selfishness, immorality, Social tension

### Introduction

Social tensions are as old as human society. But only in modern times this has become a matter of concern. This may be because people did not have the courage to express their feelings openly. But with the emergence of free nations and free people the individuals are getting courage to express their sentiments, their grievances etc. This creates a chain reaction and sometimes results in social tensions. Social tensions are a grave concern for all right-thinking people because these are not conducive to peace and prosperity of the people. Social tensions could lead to unnecessary loss to life and property of the people.

### Gandhian Approach to Social Tensions

Gandhiji is not a sociologist or a philosopher or a moralist or an economist or a religious man in the strict sense. But he is everything rolled into one. In fact, he is a humanist par excellence and it is this humanism that has led him to take interest in everything. His humanism is the natural outcome of his fundamental philosophical position which may be stated as 'Advaita'. In many occasions he has claimed himself to be an advaitin. But this claim need not be considered in the context of the advaita of Shankar. Gandhiji's advaita is the common man's advaita. Though this has many things in common with Sankara's view, there are differences also.

Gandhiji's 'advaita' has led him to accept the unity of everything. There is an unseen power of which we have only a



glimpse. Our intellect cannot comprehend it fully. We can have only a partial vision of it. This unseen power is the Sat or Absolute Truth. Our partial vision of it is only Satya or relative truth. This Sat is God. It is truth. Our partial vision enables us to name it. That is why there are many names of God and many religions. As truth is essentially one we are one. By implication all men are brothers. In truth we are not but our partial vision gives prominence to differences and we, in our empirical existence, are carried away by the idea of differences forgetting the truth. It is our forgetting of the truths and our overemphasis on the differences that lead to social tension. Social tensions are thus the product of our ignorance, the ignorance of our real spiritual nature and the unity of everything.

Gandhiji was aware of the evil consequences of social tensions. As a matter of fact Gandhiji is a product of social tensions. He had firsthand experience of social tensions in South Africa. It is the South African crucible of colour prejudice that made Mr. Gandhi a Mahatma.

Gandhiji's approach to social tensions was not a piece meal approach. It is an integrated approach to reduce all possible tensions of all kinds. His approach was based on sound philosophical and consequently sound moral and religious principles. The means he adopted was nonviolence because only nonviolence was in conformity with the Truth. If all are essentially one and if we are aware of this, then there can be no social tension. And Gandhiji knew that social tensions could be avoided if the truth is brought home. As social tensions are the product of emotions and ignorance Gandhiji tried

to control such situations by an appeal to reason and our spirituality. In fact Gandhiji's satyagra has been meant to achieve this purpose only. It is an important fact that in majority of cases, if not all, his approach worked miraculously. References may be made to two historical satyagrahs of Gandhiji. These were the fasts at Calcutta and Delhi just after the partition of India. In both places as Stanley Jones says 'he wrought' miracles. In Calcutta the fast changed the hearts of the embittered people overnight. Peace crept into the minds of the people. Lord Mountbatten's words in relation to the miracle that had happened at Calcutta are relevant here. He said, "What 50,000 well- equipped soldiers could not do, the Mahatma has done. He has brought peace. He is a one-man boundary force". Peace lasted at Calcutta. The battle of Delhi was greater. The tensions were great. Delhi was a cesspool of hate. Gandhiji drew up eight points on which Hindus and Moslems must come to agreement or he would fast unto death. All the eight points were in favor of the Moslems. Gandhiji staked his life on their fulfillment. It was a gamble for peace. But it worked. It was a miraculous achievement. What was his approach here? It was moral and spiritual. It was an appeal to reason. It was an appeal to man's conscience. It was an appeal to man's higher nature, his spiritual nature. It worked Gandhiji knew that if a right appeal is made to the spirituality of man it could work and Gandhiji had no occasion to regret about his method. He knew that if the aim and the method are right then one need not bother about the consequences.

Gandhiji' I knew that it is not sufficient to meet individual situation of social tensions. There are many areas of



tensions and different types of tensions. His approach was to meet all these situations. Social tensions could arise from economic differences, religious differences, caste differences, linguistic differences etc. If it could be brought to the mind of the people that these differences are not ultimately real and that it is meaningless and unproductive to cherish these differences and in the long run harmful to humanity itself, the chances of social tensions arising could be reduced.

His approach to social tensions was a total approach. It was meant to reduce the areas of tension. His economic programmers were meant to make every individual economically self-sufficient. By insisting that different religions are essentially same Gandhiji was trying to make people tolerant to other religions. Gandhiji wanted everyone to follow his own religion without any thought of converting others to his religion because one man's religion is as good as another man's religion. Gandhiji also wanted all the languages to develop equally. In short Gandhiji wanted everyone to show respect to every other man's way of life, belief and ideas.

He wanted people to realize the truth that we are essentially one and our differences are not ultimately real. This realization could help all to co-operate with all others in all spheres of life, using everyone's talent and capacity to increase the quality and quantity of the welfare of all. What he envisaged was a kind 'Communism' where everyone utilizes his ability and talent to the maximum extent so that the quality of our life could be enhanced, which would in turn spiritualize our life. This spiritual

realization is an antidote to social tension.

### Conclusion

What happens to the individual, more or less happens to the social group also. Social tension is thus a complex emotion in the context of a group. This paper explains Gandhian approach to social tensions. In short it is 'Communism', a new socio-religion-economic system that could be an answer to the problem. It is such a system that Gandhiji was aiming to achieve though he did not describe it as such.

### References:

1. A Gandhian approach to social tensions, MK Kutty, Savant's Mission
2. V.P.Verma: The Political Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi and Sarvodaya 8<sup>th</sup> edition (Agra 1980-81).
3. M.K. Gandhi "Hind Swaraj" in "The Collected works of Mahatma Gandhi" Vol X, The publications Division, Govt. of India 1985.
4. Tendulkar, *Life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi*, Vol 7,
5. *Collected works of Mahatma Gandhi* Vol 75,