

Understanding the Significance of Satyagraha in Post-Independence India: Reflections on the Role of Gandhian Social Movements

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Introduction

Gandhi emphasized on the power of soul-force or love-force encapsulated in Satyagraha. This force that emanates from the self, played a major role not only in freeing the country from the clutches of the British rule, but through this nonviolent means of resistance, he also brought about a churning among the marginalized, suppressed sections with respect to how they see themselves. In *Hind Swaraj*, he mentions:

‘What is a nonviolent means?’ It will take long practice to standardize the meaning and content of this term. But the means thereof is self-purification and more self-purification. What Western thinkers often lose sight of is that the fundamental condition of non-violence is love, and pure unselfish love is impossible without unsullied purity of mind and body.¹

Establishing a bond between the mind, body and soul, Gandhi, further, argued for a Swaraj that would restore the dignity and self-dependence of every single individual. He emphasized on self-reform and self-governance so as to treat the larger social, environmental and political problems pertaining to untouchability, education, domination of alien rule, unjustified exploitation of natural resources and so on. He, thus, asserts that India will be free, only if, we become free by adhering to the basic lesson of Swaraj which is to rule ourselves. This is the reason that he had no fear of the British as such. He believed that if we were just with ourselves and if did not let our individuality be engulfed by modern means like machinery, we can even befriend Englishmen, who could support us in moving towards our goals. He, therefore, refuted the notion that his Swaraj merely dealt with

removing the British from seats of power in the country. He even warned against the idea of replacing the ‘White sahibs’ with the ‘Brown sahibs’. Hence, it can be said that the self-belief that Gandhi hints at, forms the basis of individual as well as collective Swaraj.

It is also to be noted that Gandhi’s vision of India was deep and substantive because he argued for a holistic, harmonious relationship between human, nature, culture in the spheres related to social, political and economic. He took such a holistic connection to already exist in the Indian civilization. Gandhi saw the possibility of achieving the goal of a non-hierarchized world in Indian civilization. According to him, a true civilization shows humans the path of duty. Following this path of duty leads to understanding of the significance of morality, which basically calls for having self-control. For Gandhi, self-realization is linked to self-control and both these formed the stepping-stones towards attaining Swaraj. Hence, Swaraj focused on substantive freedom defined in terms of a holistic freedom at the level of the individual that was to be in relation to the freedom of the larger society. He could foretell how modernity, capitalism and Western framework would ultimately be leading to a nasty power game introducing hierarchies, dependence and a kind of submission and slavery in the name of freedom. In this context, Gandhi writes:

This civilization takes note neither of morality nor of religion. Its votaries calmly state that their business is not to teach religion. Some even consider it to be a superstitious growth. Others put on the cloak of religion, and prate about morality. But, after twenty years’ experience, I have come to the conclusion that immorality is often taught in the name of morality. ...Civilization seeks to increase bodily comforts, and it fails miserably even in doing so.²

Today, we see Gandhi’s apprehensions coming true. Stark binaries are visible between human beings and

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nature, mind and body as well as between modern and traditional values. Hierarchies in every sphere had been normalized either implicitly or explicitly. In the name of 'national interest', 'development', 'welfare', people were being forced to submit silently without any dissent. Putting the matter more explicitly, Anuradha Veeravalli argues:

As a consequence of the necessary surrender of self-governance for security and peace, dissent is not merely a suspect but a criminal act under the law of the modern nation state. All pretensions of 'deliberative democracy' evaporate as soon as the state is challenged with the possibility of self-governance, whether individual or communitarian, economic, political or social.³

The above argument highlights that what we have achieved is only formal freedom and there was still a long way to go before we realized true Swaraj. The modern state has tried to focus on homogenizing the differences in a way that serves its own interests. It has suppressed plurality of voices so as to give ascendancy to a "monolithic rationality with the vision of a caricaturized civil society resounding with the din of political correctness in the midst of a violent war fought by the self-proclaimed angels of rationality and the equally self-proclaimed defenders of the faith."⁴ Thus, the state turns intolerant towards any scheme that does not fit its interests. Such intolerance and implicit or explicit ways of violent suppression of different waves of ideas, thoughts and actions reinforce the monolithic concept of rationality, suiting only a few sections of the society. Dissent that represents the voices of different marginalized people is necessary to save the real spirit of democracy and allow plurality to flourish in the country. Highlighting the centrality of dissent in a democracy, Soli J. Sorabjee states, "The right to dissent is the hallmark of a democracy, indeed its very essence. In a real democracy the dissenter must feel at home and ought not to be nervously looking over his shoulder fearing captivity or bodily harm, or economic and social sanctions for his unconventional or critical views."⁵ In the very recent times, state's fear of dissent can be clearly gauged by the desperation it has shown in brutally suppressing voices of students in Jawaharlal Nehru University, Jamia Millia Islamia, and of its own citizens all over the country protesting against the Citizenship Amendment Act, 2020.

Taking clue from the above explanation it can be said that Satyagraha can offer a way towards introducing substantive changes, overcoming unjust oppression and re-building society, politics and economics in an integrative, non-hierarchical framework. In order to discuss this argument, the paper is thus divided into two broad sections. The first section focuses on explicating the meaning of Satyagraha as propounded by Gandhi. The

second section discusses how Satyagraha has manifested itself as creative force against injustices prevailing during the post-Independence times. In this context, the paper highlights three nonviolent resistances that kept Satyagraha at the centre of their struggle. These are: Chipko Movement in 1970s, Jal Satyagraha in 2012 and Jan Andolan in 2018.

I. Meaning of Satyagraha

The genesis of Satyagraha as a principle could be traced even before it was identified with the same name. As Gandhi mentions, "The principle called Satyagraha came into being before that name was invented. Indeed when it was born I myself could not say what it was."⁶ An atmosphere of ambiguity that envelops these lines put forth the possibility that this principle was entirely a novel idea which made it difficult to weave Satyagraha in the ordinary fabric of practices for resistance so far available.

Gandhi's cautious approach in letting Satyagraha to be not mixed with 'passive resistance' confirms his conviction in the principle of Satyagraha being exclusive. Differentiating Satyagraha from passive resistance, Gandhi makes it clear that his passive resistance was about the 'soul force' which was a weapon of the strong and fearless. According to him, Satyagraha (Satya-Truth; Agraha-Firmness) is a "force which is born of Truth and Love or non-violence".⁷ On the other hand, passive resistance that was interpreted by the English people was a weapon of the weak.

Contrasting passive resistance with Satyagraha, Gandhi emphatically argues:

brute force had absolutely no place in the Indian movement in any circumstances... no matter how badly they suffered, the Satyagrahis never used physical force and that too although there were occasions when they were in a position to use it effectively.⁸

These few lines encapsulate the strength and a firm belief of the Satyagrahi in the principle of *ahimsa*. An unflinching faith in Satyagraha or truth-force lends the Satyagrahi not only an unwavering conviction in the cause for which he or she is fighting but also infuses the courage and energy to bear suffering on the self to the extent that "pain to a Satyagrahi is the same as pleasure."⁹ The ability of a Satyagrahi to bear intense pain germinates from the moral strength that defined Satyagraha.

Unlike many philosophers like Hobbes and Machiavelli, Gandhi presented an unprecedented picture of human nature. Instead of eulogizing war and justifying humans as full of greed for power, Gandhi believed that humans have the force of love within themselves and this is the

reason that life is not actually nasty, short and brutish. His absolute denial of 'history' as the sole determinant of love force and his assertion on the soul force or love force being natural becomes lucid in the following lines he said:

History, then, is a record of an interruption of the course of nature. Soul-force, being natural, is not noted in history.¹⁰

Such a firm faith in the goodness of human nature, not historically recorded and yet existing in reality forms the core of Gandhi's Satyagraha.

Gandhi did not limit this belief (of love force being natural to humans) to the Satyagrahis only but also extended it to the opponents as well. He endeavoured (as a Satyagrahi) to make the opponent as a friend and not an enemy. Gandhi, thus, aimed at breaking the divide between 'us' and 'them', as can be observed in his anxiousness that Rajendra Prasad describes in 'Satyagraha in Champaran'. Rajendra Prasad explains:

What he [Gandhi] was anxious about was the trouble of the tenants should disappear and friendship established between the two parties, and their relations should be such that each should wish well of the other.¹¹

These sentences put forth the concern of Gandhi as a Satyagrahi not only for the suppressed and marginalised but also for the exploiter.

Gandhi upheld that the heart of the opponent could be converted by a Satyagrahi through the means of love force. The conversion of the opponent is to be achieved by relevant, sane arguments, morally upright nonviolent actions and self-suffering by a Satyagrahi. Gandhi included persuasion, civil disobedience and fasting in Satyagraha. Therefore, it can be said that Satyagraha when seen as a method for conflict resolution is based on concrete steps. It is based on thorough understanding of the context and the parties involved.

It was not as though Gandhi did not take into account the dimension of winning or losing in a Satyagraha. He was concerned about the cost-benefit calculations as well, but not always from the prism of utilitarianism. But the true essence of Satyagraha lies in that it goes beyond such a cold calculation of the consequences. Therefore, Gandhi aptly says, "The very nature of Satyagraha is such that the fruit of the movement is contained in the movement itself."¹² It was due to this reason that Gandhi was uneasy with the end of Kheda Satyagraha and remarks,

Although, therefore, the termination was celebrated as a triumph of Satyagraha, I could not enthuse over it, as it lacked the essentials of a complete triumph. The end of a Satyagraha campaign can be described as worthy, only when it leaves the Satyagrahis stronger and more spirited than they are in the beginning.¹³

Thus, true Satyagraha, aims at moral, physical, social upliftment of each Satyagrahi.

Gandhi, further, explains that as Satyagraha proceeds, it is the Satyagrahi who tends to become stronger and is on the gaining side as compared to the opponent. He states:

The adversary is not a Satyagrahi, Satyagraha against Satyagraha is impossible, and is not bound by any limit of maximum or minimum... Therefore, as a Satyagraha struggle is prolonged, that is to say by the adversary, it is the adversary who stands to lose from his own standpoint, and it is the Satyagrahi who stands to gain.¹⁴

These sentences direct towards the benefits that are implicitly present in Satyagraha.

According to Gandhi, Satyagraha does not perish with time but expands unlike other struggles that get reduced as it moves further. He states:

A Satyagraha struggle progresses onward, many another element helps to swell its current, and there is a constant growth in the results to which it leads... For in Satyagraha the minimum is also the maximum, and as it is the irreducible minimum, there is no question of retreat, and the only movement possible is an advance.¹⁵

It is progressive in nature and the intensity of actions taken by a Satyagrahi gradually escalates as the struggle gets tougher. Apart from fighting for the issue and positively impacting the parties involved, Satyagraha envelops the possibility of constructive work for the betterment of the society at large. Gandhi emphasized on the virtue of self-dependence because of which he considers constructive programme as one of the paths to create substantive change. He asserts that the constructive programme may otherwise and more fittingly be called construction of Poorna Swaraj or complete independence by truthful and non-violent means. Complete independence through truth and non-violence means the independence of every unit, be it the humblest of the nation, without distinction of race, colour or creed. This independence is never exclusive. It is, therefore, wholly compatible with interdependence within or without.¹⁶

The above sentences explain that for attaining complete independence, constructive programme is important. According to Gandhi, constructive programme directs towards a search for truth which should be carried out in a nonviolent manner by focusing on not only the external world but the internal self. Therefore, a harmony between the external and the internal is indispensable in the scheme of Gandhi's constructive programme. For the overall development of the masses, Gandhi relied on educating the concerned people. Rajendra Prasad explains Gandhi's faith in education in Champaran Satyagraha by mentioning:

It was the opinion of Mahatma Gandhi that one of the main reasons of the sufferings of the tenants of Champaran was their ignorance.... Mahatmaji had accordingly decided that arrangement for spread of education was as necessary among them as the redress of their grievances.¹⁷

It should be noted here that for Gandhi, education was not mere knowledge of letters. Education, according to Gandhi, should ensure character-building in moral and ethical terms. The kind of education that Gandhi endorsed encapsulated strengthening the inner- self. Therefore, it can be said that for Gandhi, the 'search for truth' was at core of Satyagraha and this search demanded more than a mere struggle. It called for building a constructive society, for a better future, apart from just winning the struggle. Winning or losing at any cost was not its fundamental condition.

II. Satyagraha in Post-Independence India

Soon, after the removal of British rule, Gandhi's ideas were given a backseat and India witnessed a bloodbath in the form of Hindu-Muslim riots as the aftermath of Partition. August 15, 1947 was not a day of celebration for Gandhi. It was a day when he fasted and prayed. He was utterly disappointed with violence that his own countrymen were spreading. Gandhi was left alone with only a few true followers.

The India of his dreams did not crystalize in reality. "I would prefer to die rather than live in an India where such brutalities are practiced,"¹⁸ Gandhi declared on October 1, 1947. The post-Partition riots had blighted Gandhi's plans of establishing a truly, nonviolent and harmonious India. Looking at the failure of people to take nonviolence as a creed, as a philosophy, Gandhi, introspectively and critically, mentions just 10 days before Independence that:

...our non-violence was of the weak. But the weak of heart could not claim to represent any non-violence at all. The proper term was passive resistance. Passive resistance was a preparation for the active resistance of arms. Had it been the non-violence of the strong, the practice of a generation would have made the recent orgies of destruction of life and property impossible.¹⁹

Although, Gandhi recognized the loophole in the resistance, but he also made it clear that the faulty execution of nonviolent struggle does not stain the inherent worth that nonviolence holds. His unwavering faith in the nonviolence as a creed is evident in his belief that when nonviolent in all its purity can be applied only by the strong.

Gandhi had already predicted that, "Mankind is at the crossroads". "It has to make its choice between the law of the jungle and the law of humanity."²⁰ He warned

against the dismal condition that India would be in future if it followed the path of violence. Describing the incompatibility between democracy and violence, Gandhi said, "...Democracy and violence can ill go together. The States that are today nominally democratic have either to become frankly totalitarian or, if they are to become truly democratic, they must become courageously non-violent."²¹

The question now arises that, after so long, has Gandhi's predictions come true? Is India a false democracy? Has the legacy of Satyagraha died? If yes, then, is there something being done to redress it? How is the Gandhian legacy being valued and practiced in contemporary times? In order to answer these questions, as aforementioned, the paper discusses the significance of three movements that took place in the post-Independence India and kept Satyagraha as their focal point. Through a study, these movements it can be deciphered that Satyagraha is flexible enough to survive even in the present circumstances, where violence in every form, has been ascending.

Satyagraha reflects the unflinching faith in Gandhi's legacy of nonviolent struggle. Instead of resorting to violent means, these movements chose to resist wrong or evil through Satyagraha. The essence of these Satyagraha lies in the conscious choice of these movements to not only follow the footsteps of Gandhi, but also, understand the post-Independence context, issues and nature of the post-colonial state. It is because of these reasons that these struggles have presented new, innovative forms of Satyagraha. Without discounting on the core values of Gandhian nonviolent resistance, they have succeeded in strengthening the significance of Satyagraha in the post-Independence India.

According to Vandana Shiva and J. Bandopadhyay, "The Chipko Movement is, historically, philosophically, and organizationally, an extension of traditional Gandhian Satyagraha. Its special significance is that it is taking place in post-independence India." Forest Satyagraha throughout India had begun in the pre-Independence times right from 1930-31. These were against domination of the British government over forest resources and exploitation of these resources for commercial interests that was making the common pool of forest produce, an exclusive commodity.

The political struggle for social justice and sustainable ecology in Garhwal was carried forward with the influence of eminent Gandhians like Mira Behn and Sarala Behn. This continuation of Gandhian struggle became imperative. The reason behind it was that although, after an enormous loss of life, Satyagraha was successful in reviving some of the traditional rights of the village communities to various forest product, but the objective of growth in financial terms continued. This objective

still directs the contemporary forest management in post-Independence India and that too, with even greater ruthlessness, since it is now carried out in the name of “national interest” and “economic growth”.

Unveiling the dangerous consequences of tagging injustices as “economic growth” and in “national interest”, Pablo Kala aptly highlights in context of the people being displaced due to construction of dams in the Narmada valley:

The dominating discourses of the state and its institutions are shot through with state-centred and, under the sign of globalization, corporate-biased — abstractions like ‘national interest’, ‘administrative requirements’, and ‘development’. Through such abstractions it seeks to erase the rights of particular communities, and erase difference and diversity in the interests and propagation of the same. These abstractions are encoded with hegemonic geopolitics and geoeconomics — perpetrated by the agents of the state and globalization — for which the people and the environment of the Narmada valley are simply dispensable.²²

Jal Satyagraha, led by Narmada Bachao Andolan in Khandwa district of Madhya Pradesh ended after 17 days on 10 September 2012 with a victory for the people affected by the Omkareshwar dam. The State had to lower the water level in the Omkareshwar reservoir from 190.5 meters to 189 meters, to abandon its plan to increase the water level to 193 meters, and to announce that it would comply with the Supreme Court judgment of 11 May 2011, requiring allotment of a minimum of 2 hectares of land to each displaced cultivator family.²³ The Jal Satyagraha made headlines and raised a consciousness among the audiences regarding the issue. This movement, like Chipko Andolan, made the cause, the means for raising Satyagraha. As encroachment on forests was the issue in Chipko Andolan, the Chipko activists decided to embrace the same forests, ready to sacrifice their own lives, similarly, Narmada Bachao Andolan found the way of carrying out their movement by submerging half their body in waters of Narmada.

Apart from *Jal Samarpan* (sacrifice in the waters), the mass movement represented by NBA came up with a plethora of new strategies and programmes on nonviolent lines. Village-level *samitis*, tehsil-level coordination committees, *Samvad Yatra* (Dialogue March), Narmada fair, *padyatras*, village-level protest actions, collective fasts in all the villages (*chulhabandh*), vehicle rally around the Narmada, *dharnas* (sit-ins), demonstrations, formation of a youth wing of the organization, establishment of a *sankalp-stambh* (Pillar of Resolve) proclaiming the people’s right over land, water and forest, *Nyaya Yatra* (Justice March), *Satyagraha* in 20 June 1999 in Domkhedi (Maharashtra) and in Jalsindhi (Madhya Pradesh), *Manav Adhikar Yatra* (Human Rights March), ‘Narmada

Sangharsha Parikrama’ and so on are examples of ways in which the movement resisted.

Joining the trail of such nonviolent responses was Jan Andolan, 2018, a foot-march from Gwalior to Morena in Madhya Pradesh, participated by 25,000 landless Satyagrahis from all the states of the entire country, under the leadership of P.V. Rajagopal, the founder of Ekta Parishad. Walking on busy roads and highways, these Satyagrahi claimed that earth is for every one and right to a piece of land, sufficient enough to sustain an individual and her or his family is a basic, natural right that need not require any papers to prove ownership over it. In fact, prior to Jan Andolan, 2018, Ekta Parishad-led Jan Satyagraha, in 2012, organized a march from Gwalior to Delhi, participated by one lakh landless Satyagrahis, Jan Samvad Yatra and Janadesh in 2007, again a foot-march to encourage marginalized communities to come forward for expressing their grievances and galvanize support in a nonviolent manner.

The Chipko Movement that became a national campaign in 1970s and 1980s was a struggle on a multi-dimensional front. It represented conflicts over forest resources at the scientific, technical, economic, and ecological levels. The underlying argument of the Chipko Movement that the main products of the forests are not timber or resin, but soil and water, clearly put forth the substantive goal of the movement which was not only to save the economic benefits that the local people reaped from the forests but to protect the entire ecology by saving forests. Moreover, it aimed at protecting the forests and preserving cultures along with maintaining the livelihood means of the local people. The bond of humans with nature reflects from the following sentences spoken by one of the Chipko activists, “Chipko had a very humane appeal: Cut me down before you cut down the tree. The tree is far more important than my life, it is the basis of my survival.”²⁴ Respecting nature and treating its resources as the basis of survival has resulted in deepening the link between nature, culture and humans.

As aforementioned, Western concept of rationality and dominance of scientific over traditional knowledge has given a backseat to the harmonious relationship between human and nature, yet, these movements highlight how the wounds of depreciating ecological assets affect the local people and ruin the treasure of traditional knowledge. This can be calibrated by the receding trust of the people in their own traditional knowledge about the river Narmada as narrated by one of the respondents:

When the Narmada would swell we would know rains were coming - the river and the rain were related. Now everything depends on the dam and the dam gates. The upper dams have affected the system of nature. Earlier we would know the four months when the monsoon would be here. In the third and

fourth months, on full moon days, the river would swell. During the rains the river would behave just like a 'nala' - from all its catchments it would swell and be a torrent and after a few days it would return to normal. Now because of the dam nothing is predictable, because the water is not flowing anymore and it depends on water released from the upper dams. Therefore it brings changes to traditional knowledge of how the river behaves - the knowledge system of the river.²⁵

The discussion above directs towards the homogenizing, mainstreaming tendency of the modern nation state by removing all the differences that come in their way of establishing ascendancy of modern values, interests, institutions and structures. Thus, quoting Pablo Kala would not be an exaggeration here, as he writes:

For the poor, the lower castes, the adivasis, it was neither development nor progress. It is an erasure of difference, through homogenizing technologies and cultures of development; an erasure of resources, through exploitation for corporate profits; and an erasure of life worlds through displacement. It is erasure without end. Since their consent to be erased has not been sought, the victims of erasure have but one path open to them. They must resist.²⁶

Resist they must but these Satyagraha also highlight how, following the lines of Gandhi, the struggle can be meaningful only if it is understood that it is for building a constructive and sustainable future for all rather than targeting a particular institution, state or individual. In this context, Ramesh Sharma, one of the national conveners of Ekta Parishad, views dialogue to be a major factor is driving democracy in the right direction. He explicated that re-exploration and dialogue is supported by Ekta Parishad. He says, "Nobody is 'enemy', it is 'opponent'. Democracy moves through dialogue with the opposition, while enmity stops this."²⁷ From these sentences it is clear that how Gandhian social movements, like Ekta Parishad today, have succeeded in erasing the difference between the 'self' and the 'other.' Taking the discussion further, P.V. Rajagopal asserts that the three premises based on Gandhian values on which the politics of Ekta Parishad rests are *samvad* (dialogue), *sangharsh* (struggle) and *sanrachna* (constructive work). According to him, this allows for a sustainable and future-oriented Satyagraha.

Here, an analysis of modern societies by Prof. Ajay Gudavarthy²⁸ explicates the point clearly. He divides these societies into two kinds of structures, the dynamic and the dialectical. Placing social movements in the latter category, he states that dialectical structures try to resolve contradictions rather than just balance them which the dynamic structures do. Moreover, the dialectical structures are "transformation centric"²⁹ as they "look at relations in terms of a process."³⁰ Thus, they aim at realizing substantive democracy as these structures focus upon building human solidarity instead of functional

solidarity which moves according to the dictates of the market and "guarantees successful execution of transactions in a market society."³¹

Apart from the tangible victories that these Satyagraha have achieved at different time periods, in different contexts and with respect to different issues, the significant point is that these Satyagraha have been able to strike the dormant concerns for environment, they struck the consciousness of the masses towards the on-going injustices, either overtly or covertly. For instance, they have strongly put forth the need for re-defining development. Gandhian social movements have the strength to put forth a substantive form of dissent that can meaningfully question the exploitative structures and can also highlight the on-going crisis of liberal democracy. In this context, Alberto Melucci, in one of his articles, explains "Contemporary forms of collective action act as revealers, exposing that which is hidden or excluded by the decision-making process. Collective protest and mobilization bring to light the silent, obscure or arbitrary elements that frequently arise in complex systems decisions."³² The Gandhian social movements as a form of collective action act as 'revealers' as suggested by Melucci. These movements unveil the exploitative ploy that the state builds up in the name of 'development', 'national interest' and 'welfare.'

In this context, Vandana Shiva and J. Bandopadhyay write:

The deliberate introduction of this false and dangerous dichotomy between "development" and "ecology" disguises the real dichotomy between ecologically sound development and unsustainable and ecologically destructive economic growth. The latter is always achieved through destruction of life-support systems and material deprivation of marginal communities. Genuine development can only be based on ecological stability which ensures sustainable supplies of vital resources.³³

The above lines explicate that Satyagraha launched by the Chipko movement seeks to be a part of encouraging ecologically sustainable development instead of becoming an obstacle in the process of development.

Talking about Jal Satyagraha, it can be argued that through this Satyagraha a fundamental developmental challenge came to the limelight. Jal Satyagraha made it clear that building dams at the cost of lives of people and their environment amounts to unjust and destructive development. In the larger picture, it can be observed that Narmada Bachao Andolan succeeded in putting across the table the issue of building large dams. It forced the World Bank to review its decision of funding these projects not only in India but throughout the world. Sanjay Sangvai rightly highlights, "It was for the first time in the Bank's history that it agreed for a review of any Bank-

funded ongoing project.”³⁴ The World Bank, which was the largest lender for the Sardar Sarovar Project, pulled back the funding and also decided to constitute a World Commission on Dams. It noted the unaddressed social and ecological questions and made such recommendations to the governments that should be incorporated before constructing large dams.

Likewise, it can be observed that Ekta Parishad’s Jan Andolan 2018 emphatically stood for land ownership rights for both women and men. With the vision of strengthening three concrete models of community-based governance (gram swaraj), local self-reliance (*gram swawlamban*) and responsible government (*jawab deh sarkar*), this Satyagraha *padyatra* made substantive demands with respect to declaration and execution of National Homestead Land Rights Act and Women’s Agriculture Entitlement Act, Announcement and implementation of National Land Reform Policy, activation of the National Land Reform Council and the National Land Reform Task Force set up by the Government of India. Moreover, it demanded the establishment of Monitoring System at National and State level for effective implementation of Forest Rights Act, 2006 and Panchayat (extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996, along with Fast Track Court for quick disposal of land related cases.

Therefore, these Satyagraha ask the pertinent question, which is “Development for whom?” many such relevant question that are often brushed aside or overlooked by the state are being asked in the contemporary times through Satyagraha.

Conclusion

To conclude, it can be argued that Satyagraha opens up the avenues for reflection, for innovation, and for envisioning a more humane and meaningful future. Thus, it goes beyond the limits of resistance and winning over the opponent. It places a whole new space for deliberating and acting towards creating a just world and this is where its creativity lies. The present capitalist structure has frozen our minds due to which reliance over violence (the paraphernalia for the execution of which are ample) has been made easier. But, Satyagraha, demands finding the resources for the struggle from within, from the nature, due to which, in any context, it is possible, provided that one pushes the self to have a substantive relationship with the internal as well as the external.

Notes

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