

s Sk N T g,

e g

e = S o

RIS "V"-â\200\234;-;-â\200\230:Jt1 g Nalamiet DUk B S Lt N Bl

R

QUESTIONS : SPEECH 42 : 1973 GANDHI MEMCRIAL LECTURE {

g
%
!
1
-
i
â\200\234~

1. Page 6, para. 3

Is that 'R600 and three years imprisonment' or 'R6CO or three years imprisonment'?

2. Page 7, para. 1, last sentence

It is a pity that you omitted the largest religious group of the Indians, the Hindu5 especizlly as Gandhi was a Hindu. Would you like to insert a footnote to

say that the word 'Hinduism' was mistakenly deleted from the speech or are you not justified in doing this?

*â\200\234A\NDHI AND CONTEMPORARY SOUTH AFRICA' : THE 1973 GANDHI MEMORIAL LECTURE DELIVERED BY THE HON. M. GATSHA BUTHELEZI AT THE GANDHI PHOENIX SITTLEMENT : SUNDAY THE 7TH OCTOBER, 1973.

To be asked to deliver an address in commemoration of one of the greatest figures of our timÃ©s such as Mahatma Gandhi was:- is to say the least an over-awing experience. I am filled with trepidation and humility, and I cannot find words because Gandhi's 'shadow', as we Zulus would put it,

SO overshadows almost all his contemporaries, that'bne is left with nothing to say but to praise the Almighty for bleÃ©ing humanity- withâ\200\224so great a life as Gandhi's.

I think it is just as well to take a casual look at the world into which he was born on the 2nd October, 1869. Mohandas Karanchand Gandhi, was born at the height of the British might, when Britain was not sparing herself in expanding the British Empire. The British Empress' crown sparkled with 'jewels' which represented her Britannic Majesty's conquests in the process of Empire-expansion. 'The greatest and the most shiny of all these jewels was India: 'The conquest of India, spread over the century from Plassey to the Matiny was the main stride towards European domination of Asia, and most others followed from it. British bower radiated from India; other territories were taken with the help of Indian troops, often at the eÃ©xpense of the Indian tax-payer, Psychologically the effect was even greater, WhÃ©rpver else the Briton went he felt and Spoke as representative of the pÃ©wer at whose feet Â¢rouched a hundred million Hindus; he saw other 'natives' as so many

Â¢rouching Hindus in different guises' i i

This was the India into which he was born and in which he grew up.

His good background and family standing enabled. him to proceed to

London to further his studies. We are told that in London which he = loved whilst studying there, he had abyqued a deep respect for things British-British law, British justice, British hygiene and British humanitarianism, > And yet one can't help speculating how confusing

all this was in so far as there was a lack of correlation between these great ideals, and actions carried out in the name of all these, in

India,

The doubly ,standards must have appalled him. The arrogance of the conquerors in India must have caused revulsion for the ychang man, particularly the view which must have been common that the British

were doing a favour for India and the Indian people in colonizing

India 2/0'000

India. One writer depicting to us the contemporary scene at this time during the last century has this to say on this very point:

'The civilizing mission was now all the rage, whereas in earlier years it had often been rejected as too expensive. It was easiest of all

to believe that what was good for Europe must be even better for the 'natives'. By now the white man had worked himself into a high

state of self-conceit; but all through the century his reaction to

any natives who tried to reject the blessings of civilized rule was that of Dr. Johnson to rebel Americans: 'They are a race of convicts and ought to be thankful for anything we allow them short of hanging.'³ This was the society into which he was born. It was a society-structured on violence. If discrimination against Indians by their British conquerors irked him it must have worried him to watch the

caste system in India, where his own people discriminated against each other.

He was born about 12 years after the Mutiny. This has been an attempt by his people to push off by violent means, the yoke of oppression. There had been occasional mutinies before on a smaller scale. 'There had in fact been occasional muhities, sometimes ending in ringleaders being blown from the mouths of cannon - a style of military execution that told its own tale about this new empire.'⁴ Violent force was the formula for maintaining the status quo. 'At Calcutta, 'the city of palaces' the English occupied stately homes round the wide green space of the Maidan, and never went near what they called the 'Black Town', if they could help it. An Englishman's bungalow was

very much his caste, standing in a large walled space or 'compoïnd', a miniature of the squire's park, where he could be out of sight or sound of any Indians but his own underlings'. So that all Indians were almost untouchable in the eyes of the Colonizers except for servants who ministered to them. What a common pattern(!), he was

to find out later on when he came to South Africa.

The Muliity representing attempts by his own people to get freedom by violent means must have made an indelible impression on his young mind. India he must have realized would never be forgiven for that uprising. Many acts of revenge against the Indians were carried out with callous-

ness and cruelty. The situation that then existed is vÃ©ry well summed

MPE Be sion

â\200\231\)

el o

up in these words: 'The bitterness that India has always felt was now felt on both sides, and the gulf had become impassable'. 5

The presence in India and domination of the scene by the British did not as we have seen improve matters: 'The aristocratic streak in these English rulers made for an aloof and chilly manner, and Indian environment stiffened it. They came to think of themselves, it has been remarked, as a caste infinitely above all the rest. If Hindus complained of being looked down on, they could always be reminded that their own treatment of one another especially untouchables, was worse. In Britian itself something like a caste mentality among retired Anglo-Indians reinforced social divisions already deep. A book was written about the Caste of Edinburgh, one of them consisting of the Seottish Capital's numerous pensioners from India: 'Brahmin' came

into use to mean a nob, someone boasting pedigree and blue blood.

As a deeply religious man who had studied most of the Religions of

the World he must have been deeply struck by the conflict human beings face from day to day in struggling all the time to do what is right and find that they enly succeed in doing the opposite summed up so well by St. Paul. 'The good which I want to do I fail to do; but what I do is the wrong which is against my will; and if what I do is against my will, clearly it is no longer I who am the agent, but Sin that has its lodging in me'. (Rom.7 vs.19, N.E.T. (1962))

* When he was called upom by Seth Dada Abdulla in 1898 to give legal representation to Indians in Natal, it was almost as if he had a

tryst with Destiny, to borrow Pandit Nehru's expression. In a sense the struggle of men of colour in Natal was the same as that of Indians in India. These people were British subjects and were suffering oppression under a British Colonial Government. It was a British set-up without the so-called British justice and fair-play. We see the traumatic experiences which influenced him to work out his philosophy of passive resistance or soul force, such as: his being pushed out of trains because he was a 'Coolie'. The humiliations of his people in the Transvaal were even more shocking. The shock of 'the weakness of

his people, their internal divisions, their petty bickerings, their rigid traditionalism which prevented them from identifying themselves

with other South Africans ...' (75 must have shocked him even more,

O/ v s ol

A e

On the 11th September, 1906, addressing 3 000 delegates of the Transvaal he clarified his Satyagraha. He stated that their goal

was not to conquer and dominate, but to stress the universal dignity and God-given equality of men. He told them that they would fight,

not with their bodies but with their souls, for soul-force was stronger than any gun and more enduring than any cannon. 'e... They would fight

with truth; so they called their weapon Satyagraha

His struggles during these years are too well known for me to recount here. His philosophy of soul-force earned India her freedom. This happened not because of violent exchanges. This happened ninety years after Karl Marx had written in 1857 after the Mutiny, quoting an Englishman's letter in a Newspaper: 'Every nigger we meet with we either string up or shoot'. It is interesting that the word 'Nigger'

was in common use in India particularly after the Mutiny.

There is no doubt that Gandhi's influence in South African Black politics over the years has been tremendous. Thus we see in 1945, even before India's independence, the African National Congress sent delegates to the Pan-African Congress (the fifth) in Manchester in October 1945, where they met many of Africa's young leaders, among them Kwame Nkrumah, Chief Akintola and Jomo Kenyatta. This congress while demanding for Africa 'Autonomy and independence', made a significant move when it endorsed Gandhi's passive resistance as the ONLY effective way of persuading alien rulers to respect the rights

of unarmed subject races. 9

In 1946 Smuts, on pressure from English-speaking Natal, enacted in May the 'Ghetto' Bill in order to segregate Indians in South Africa. In June the Indian High Commissioner was recalled by the Indian Government. The Indians in South Africa for the first time launched a passive resistance campaign. It was headed by two doctors, the articulate Yusuf Dadoo from the Transvaal and our own Gandhian, Monty Naicker. They were joined by other leaders such as Maulvi Ismail Cachalia and a Gandhian, Nana Sitae. 10

There were warnings enough for White South Africa in the growing interest taken in its policies at the United Nations, and from Gandhi in India who said that if the so-called Whites retained their prejudice and kept themselves in purdah their 'attitude of unreason' would mean a third war.

This Was/Secrecy

â\200\231\â

This was recalled at the time of Gandhi's assassination - a sad blow to the passive resisters in South Africa. Gandhi in the last message to them: had said: "What the Government of South Africa has done deliberately is not going to be changed suddenly, even for the sufferings of the brave men and women. This is said not to dampen the zeal of the fighters but to steel them for long and greater suffering. They must not expect the struggle to close quickly'. And the 'PASSIVE REGISTER' recalled that in 1910 Tolstoy had written to Gandhi, then in the Transvaal, to say that the passive resistance in South Africa is the most important activity the world can at present take part in, and in which not Christendom alone but all the peoples of the earth will participate. 11 It seems quite an irony of Fate that this Advocate of peaceful change should have died a violent death. It seems stranger still that Dr. Martin Luther King, his Disciple, also had to die a violent death, and also through the barrel of a gun.

His influence in Black poletics was also seen during the 1952 Defiance Campaign. It was stated clearly at the time that Congress had chosen non-violence because it recdgnised that the proportions of the different races and their permanence were of such a nature that violence would not solve the country's problems. It was during this campaign that

as a young man I met the Mahatma's son, the late Manilal Gandhi, who participated in the Defiance Campaign. The late Professor Zacchariah K. Mathews stated at the time that: 'We believe that a violent revolution would leave such an aftermath of bitterness and resentment that indeed the country would be unstable'. He also gave an historical reason, 'the example of the bitterness which has existed between the Afrikaners and the English speaking people as a result of the Boer

War and added that Congress had many Christians among its members'. 12

The leaders were aware that the Government would probably react with force, and indeed this happened at the time of a peaceful demonstration against passes in Sharpeville in 1960. But the alternative to resign themselves to the position was unthinkable and they were heartened

by the practical and moral effectiveness of Gandhi's struggle. 13 What do we now see on our South African political scene? Many actions by the powers-that-be, have served to confirm that our society is

based on violence and is relying more and more on such violence to maintain/6....

)).(
'..â\200\230- |

7 e
Â\$

/
H

7
]

gaintain the status quo. The extension of influx control throughout the Metropolitan Areas of South Africa and the extension of the system to African women, is vidlent in its effects on black people and the methods of maintaining it by force give the system a 'violent finish'. Acts such as the Group Areas Act have amounted to a dispossession of voiceless people by force. Acts such as the Reservation of Separate Amenities Act which provide for physical separation are violenf in their effect on Blacks. The racial differentiation in wage deter--minations even for professional people with the same qualifications, amount to an outrage of Blacks, who are deprived by force of law of

what they are entitled to in earnings by qualification and performance.

The deinal of a voice to Blacks in the law-making Legislature in Cape Town is also maintained by force.

The tragic rioting that took place at various places in October and

" November 1952, were a violent reaction to violence. Laws such as the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1953 which increased the maximum penalties for persons committed of offences, committed by way of protest against the law to R600 in three years imprisonment, sum up the determination of the State to maintain the status quo at all costse. The Act created new categories of offences : inciting anyone to commit an offence by way of protest against any law : and accepting any financial or other assistance for organized protest or resistance against the laws of the country. Maximum penalties for such offences are R1 000 or five years or ten lashes or a combination of any two of these. The penalty imposed for a second or subsequent conviction must include whipping or imprisonment. 14 Does this not amount to violence, particularly if the laws are passed and imposed by one

section of the population on other sections?

One can only assume that organizations like Pogo, whilst very regrettable, were founded by people in desperation in view of failure of any peaceful means, such as the one Gandhi founded to settle political differences between the rulers and the ruled. One must

place Rivonia in this category as well.

There are so many laws today that snuff out from the beginning, any attempts even at Passive Resistance that it would be interesting to

know what Gandhi's views would be, if he were alive at this time.

To Know/7.cees

To know whether there is still a place for non-violent protest in the kind of South Africa we live in is a 64 thousand dollar question. If there is, it is hardly visible at all. The banning of organizations and of people is seen by many as the death-knell of liberty in South Africa. That is why I have come here in a spirit of mourning, for the long list of the banned now includes the Mahatma's own granddaughter, Eli Ramgobin and her husband Mewa Ramgobin. On the long list appears the names of numerous black and white students. For those of us who are still naïve enough to hope for a non-violent change in South Africa, these actions make us appear in the eyes of many people here and outside, as either apologists for so much violence involved in maintaining the status quo, or as people who live in a Fool's Paradise. I would like to say that Christianity, Buddhism, Mohammedanism and Judaism have hope as a common feature.

We go on hoping, even against hope.

The world we live in has become more and more violent than the

world in which the Mahatma lived. We are living in a civilized jungle where the survival of the fittest by sophisticated weapons and means, seems to be the very purpose of living. The H jacking

of planes merely highlight a pattern of Regimes, in which many voiceless people through the world have to live. Not even experiences which are so fresh in our minds such as the jack boots on the necks of the powerless Jews in Germany, make any difference. There is too much talk about peace in our modern world and yet the powerful seem engaged everywhere in stock-piling armaments to ensure that they remain top dogs for all time. South Africa is no exception in this

respect.

Can Satfagraba provide an answer to the position of the Black man who feels so oppressed and so overwhelmed by physical force all around him? To be honest I do not know the answer to this, but all I can say is that it does break the hearts of those of us who do not believe in violence to see where we seem to be heading. All the measures that are designed to maintain the status quo in our land, seem unconsciously aimed at ensuring that people should lose all hope of a peaceful change in South Africa. Despite this, I think that the soul-force of the powerless millions still keeps them going. For me therefore, Gandhism is not quite dead, and my wish and prayer is that the powerful should see reason before this wears off, for the sun seems to be nearing the Western horizon. I appeal to my

powerful,;8 ...

powerful countrymen not to be lulled into sleep by what might be the proverbial calm before the storm.

References

1.

11.

V.G, Kiernan - The Lords of Mankind - Zuropean Attitudes to the Outside World in the Imperial Age (Penquin Books) pp. 25 to

26 Introduction.

Fatima Heer: Apprenticeship of a Mahatma (Published by the Phoenix Settlement Trust) p. 21.

V.G. Kiernan - The Lords of Mankind - quoted from The Life of Samuel Johnson, vol. 2 p. III (Dent edu. 1926).

Ibid. p.44

Ibid. p.49

Ibid. p.ih

Fatima Meer: Apprenticeship of a Mahatma, p.27

Ibid. p.78

Mary Benson: South Africa : The Struggle for a Birthright (Penquin African Library) (1966) p.90

Ibid. pp. 93 and 94

Ibid. p. 118

Ibid. p. 140

Ibid. p. 141

Action, Reaction and Counter-Action by Muriel Horrell (Research Officer S.A.I.R.R., July 1971) pp. 23 and 24,

â\200\231}â\200\2301