

A Department of International Studies,
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Satyagrahis in Independent India



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DIRECTOR'S NOTE

In the words of Mark Twain, “Whenever you find yourself on the side of the majority, it is time to pause and reflect.”. Any society which does not reflect and critique the fixed notions, is bound to stagnate. Critical analysis and deconstruction; reflecting with different perspectives always leads to marvelous explorations in the way we understand our society. The articles in this book are an attempt to understand the lives of people in contemporary India, through the perspective of Satyagraha. There is an attempt to reflect on the concept of Satyagrahis, only to discover that the concept of Satya or truth is extremely deep, beyond our surficial understanding.

At the heart of our University's vision is "Excellence.". Excellence can be obtained only when the mind is given a chance to think freely; not when it is enslaved by a rigid framework. When there is freedom to think, creativity and imagination come into place and eventually creates marvels. This initiative is not just an effort towards strengthening research culture among students but most importantly, allowing them to think differently and widen their horizons.

We were and will never be in short of facts and figures, but will always be in need of interpretations, analyses, deconstruction and varied approaches to develop a comprehensive understanding of the world around us. These are nothing but tiny steps in that direction.

I take this opportunity to congratulate all the students whose articles have been chosen to get published. I would also like to commend Dr Anurag Tripathi and Dr Vineeth Thomas and all faculties in charge for encouraging and guiding the students to develop their capabilities. Reading each of the articles was a delight. I look forward to more such efforts from students in the future.

Reverend Dr. Father Jose CC

Pro Vice Chancellor

CHRIST (Deemed to be University)

Bangalore.

EDITOR'S NOTE

It is often said, "Life is the ultimate teacher and we are the student." Each of us have anecdotes to share wherein the experiences of someone else had quite changed our thought alignment. It means that we learn from our individual experiences but we also learn a great deal from the experiences of others, especially personalities who have exhibited an unwavering devotion and contribution to the human community. The Indian society has also witnessed with pride such contributions from its members who have left us all a trail of learning's to ponder, carrying the nation and its people forward to make India a better place.

The essays present in this book highlight the contributions of such members in Independent India hailing from different spheres of life and vocation but marked by their stout devotion to truth and practice of non-violence in the face of adversities and testing times. These Satyagrahis in Independent India then become our incredible heroes whose defiant insistence to non-violence is a valuable lesson for each one of us and posterity to make this land a heaven on earth.

A.Linciya Saji

Anuroop Tantry

Nagadevika

Sahar Basharat

“Let no one say that he is a follower of Gandhi . . . You are no followers but fellow students, fellow pilgrims, fellow seekers, fellow workers.”

Harijan, March 1940

ELA BHATT- A GENTLE REVOLUTIONARY FOR WOMEN, WORK AND PEACE

- Kesiraju Sanskruthi

To be poor is to be vulnerable. The condition of being poor, of being self-employed, and of being a woman are all distinct yet interrelated states of vulnerability, said Ela Ramesh Bhatt (Nanavaty, 2018). A friend to the poor and self-employed woman of India, Ela Bhatt is a pioneer in women's empowerment and grassroots development in India. Born in 1933 to a privileged Hindu family in Ahmedabad, Gujarat; Ela witnessed the last and the most intense phase of India's struggle for freedom. This period, guided by the four pillars of Gandhiji's thought namely: simplicity, human values, Satyagraha and dignity of labour, inspired and shaped Ela Bhatt's journey.

After much resistance from her father, she went on to study English honors and later, law. In 1955, she joined the legal department of the Textile Labour Association (TLA). While working at the legal department of the TLA, Bhatt realised that women were performing crucial economic activities at the industry, but were unpaid. In an interview with Outlook magazine, Ela ben said, "My legal training was of no use to them because they were not covered by any legislation or entitlement of social security" (Bhatt, 2017). She discovered that the women did not need counselling on how to run a house, but needed help in defending their interests as paid workers, since they were not protected by any labour law (Webster, 2010). Hence, this led to the birth of SEWA (Self Employed Women's Association).

Self Employed Women's Association or SEWA was established in 1972, by Ela Bhatt with the goals of achieving full employment and self-reliance among women. SEWA is a National Trade Union with a membership base of over 1.5 million (2018) poor, self-employed women workers from the informal economy across 16 states in India (About, n.d.). The primary motive to start SEWA, was to organize women workers in a union, so that they would enjoy benefits that the workers in the organized sector receive. She opined that forming a union was beyond uniting to agitate against someone. The intention was to come together, to gain collective strength. By forming a union- a bond-, they affirmed their status as workers and as a result of coming together; they had a voice (Bhatt, Citizenship of marginals, 2010). Initially, SEWA faced rejection as a trade union. Ela ben

was questioned about SEWA as a trade union, since it lacked an employer-employee relationship, which meant that there was no “common employer” to agitate against. To this, she responded by stating that there may be an absence of a “common employer” but there is a presence of a series of exploiters (ExternalAffairs, 2012). They are exploited by intermediaries and are part of the unrecognized, unacknowledged, labour-intensive sector of the industry. SEWA was never established to collectively bargain with an employer or protest for a rise in wages and better conditions; but to empower women, economically and politically so they could experience “Swaraj” in its true sense.

Ela Bhatt’s biggest struggle has been against the pre-set notion of who a “worker” is. From chindi workers, embroiderers to rag-pickers and cart pullers, the informal sector workers and the self-employed women, were not classified as workers. Without an employer, they cannot be termed as “workers”, and since they are not considered workers, they are not allowed to form a trade-union. She fought for the rights of these employees and argued that the self-employed were the “Backbone of the Indian economy”. She argued that the definition of worker should include, “whoever contributes to the economy of the country or the household”. She challenged the existing definition of “worker” and succeeded in that battle, when SEWA was finally recognized as a national trade union in 2007.

By working with women in rural India, Ela Ben realised that there are two major challenges that stand in the way of women achieving economic self-sufficiency; namely lack of capital and high means of production. To resolve this issue, the SEWA family established their own cooperative bank with the vision to help women gain financial independence; the Shri Mahila Sewa Sahakari Bank Ltd. Inspired by the words of Chandaben (a member of SEWA), “We may be poor, but we are so many. Why don’t we start a bank of our own? Our own women’s bank, where we are treated with the respect and service that we deserve”, Ela Bhatt established the cooperative bank, which continues to support several women in India. This bank now has more than 4,500 shareholders (Bhatt, Ela Ramesh, 1977).

Through the establishment of SEWA, Ela Ben has not only empowered millions of women, who in turn empower several others but also, redefined the idea of peace in the 21st century. She opines that

peace is not the absence of war, but the absence of poverty. The SEWA family have proved through their work, that “peace” means women’s work, growth and equality (Nanavaty, 2018).

The Ramon Magsaysay Award Foundation Board of trustees conferred upon Ela Bhatt, the prestigious Ramon Magsaysay Award for “making a reality of the Gandhian principle of self-help among the depressed work force of self-employed women” (Bhatt, Ela Ramesh, 1977). Her leadership and the collective effort of women show the capabilities of women and how high they can fly, if only they are given the opportunity to do so. Armed with awards, accolades and most importantly the will-power and philosophy of nonviolent resistance, Ela Bhatt continues to work for the upliftment of the marginalized sections of the society in India.

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“There is no limit for a Satyagrahi nor there is a limit to his capacity for suffering. Hence there is no such thing as defeat in Satyagraha.”

Young India, 19-2-25, p.61

RE-IGNITING SATYAGRAHA POLITICS

- Vaishna Ashok

How does an ordinary man in his 70s become the face of a nationwide anti-corruption movement? India, ridden by corruption as instantiated by the 2G spectrum scam, 2010 Commonwealth Games and now the TRP scam, among myriad other corruption scandals, was shaken up when a 74-year-old man with humble origins sought recourse to indefinite hunger strikes, civil disobedience and mass mobilization to press the government to take a tough legislative stand on corruption. One of the most remarkable Gandhians of contemporary India, Anna Hazare, whose style of campaign nostalgically resonates with Gandhi's satyagraha, was a lone crusader for his cause before civil society joined him in what then became a powerful popular movement in Indian history.

Besides being a prominent figure in contemporary Indian politics, this former soldier who came from a family beset by financial struggles has also gained the respect and affection of local civil society as a community organizer. His fortuitous escape from death during the Indo-Pak War of 1965 drove him to introspect and deeply ponder over the purpose of his life. Inspired by the vision of Swami Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi and Vinoba Bhave, he found his calling in a life distinguished by social service and renunciation of material pleasures. His ideals of self-discipline, non-violence and self-reliance, moulded by these philosophers, fueled his broader vision of social justice. Perhaps, it is his vision for the nation that fuels his satyagraha.

Anna Hazare's anti-corruption campaign beginning in 2011 garnered thousands of supporters. His battle against corruption was initially locally-rooted. While undertaking a village transformation program in Ralegan Siddhi from 1975 onwards, he encountered a case of corruption by forest officers and went on an indefinite hunger strike in Alandi in Pune. His non-violent agitation induced immediate action by the authorities. In the following decades, he entered the political fray, repeatedly resorting to hunger strikes which led to the resignation of multiple ministers accused of corruption from the Maharashtra government. In 1991, Hazare formed an anti-corruption NGO, Bhrashtachar Virodhi Jan Andolan Nyas under which district-level vigilance committees were set up across the state.

His demand for a strong anti-corruption bill and the establishment of Lokpal, an independent anti-corruption ombudsman are considered watershed moments in Indian politics- a domain often held synonymous with corruption. Hazare's crusade is more significant in light of the fact that India was labelled the most corrupt country in Asia in 2017 by Transparency International, an anti-corruption NGO based in Berlin. The mass popularity of the anti-corruption movement can be attributed to his cause and his modus operandi of non-violent protest for social and political reform. Affirming his adherence to the fundamental principles of observing satyagraha- truth, non-violence and suffering, Hazare subjected his aging body to starvation as a means to an end. As Hazare persisted with his fast until his demands for a robust anti-corruption bill were met, notwithstanding his arrest and subsequent release, his following grew nationwide. He acquired allies such as Medha Patkar, Aruna Roy and major civil organisations such as NAPM. He has continued to hold satyagrahas for different causes since the resolution for Lokpal and Lokayukta was passed in 2013, most notably for government support to farmers. Writing letters to numerous ministers, including the Prime Minister, and requesting a space to stage his satyagraha, he expressed his opposition to the removal of the provision for declaration of property details of government officials and their relatives, and addressed the plight of farmers, lakhs of whom committed suicide in the past two decades. Though Hazare's efforts have given leverage to constitutional values, primarily accountability and transparency, the administrative crackdown on corruption is yet to kick-start.

Hazare and his followers meticulously plan, prepare and execute their plan of action. Recognising the need to increase the outreach of their movement "India Against Corruption", Team Anna has chalked out media strategies and relied on social media and media agencies to rally support and awareness of his satyagraha campaigns and intended message. This tactic was key in mobilising support from the youth. His symbolic message captured the consciousness of many when he meditated on the laws on Rajghat on Independence Day in 2011. His indefinite fasts and non-violent mass protests by his followers proved to be effective negotiation tactics and attracted the lower and middle classes. Occupation of specific spaces such as Ramlila Maidan with a crowd of supporters for the fast, accompanied with regular media briefings by members of Team Anna. Hazare followed in Gandhiji's footsteps and gave the issue of corruption a distinctly ethical dimension, rather than political.

He has consistently taken on the issues faced by those who live on the margins of society, who are often taken advantage of by financial and political elites. While it is his role in the anti-corruption satyagraha and his demand for enactment of Right to Information law that has brought him national recognition, his transformative initiatives in his hometown Ralegan Siddhi also merit attention. Following the Gandhian ideal of *gram swaraj* or village self-rule, Hazare stimulated reform in the village by initiating a watershed restoration project, banning alcohol, encouraging collective decision-making in Gram Sabha, urging women's political participation, establishing a community bank and getting families to commit to smaller families by introducing a moral and voluntary code of conduct. This code included voluntary labour, which aided in socialising the costs of the reconstruction projects. Hazare lives by the Gandhian spirit of one's life being one's message. Many local villagers recounted that Hazare led by example, cleaning up after open defecators, who eventually changed their ways, racked by shame. Hazare challenged traditional caste structures by organizing community weddings, which also released many families from the debt burden. While advocating for removal of caste-based discrimination and integration of Harijans into the village life, Hazare expresses, "It was Mahatma Gandhi's vision that every village should have one chamar, one sunar, one kumhar and so on. They should all do their work according to their role and occupation, and in this way, a village will be self-dependent. This is what we are practicing in Ralegan Siddhi."

Hazare's moral leadership and consensus approach has improved not merely the infrastructure in the village but the social, political and economic life of its residents. His adherence to the principle of decentralization is illustrated by his initiative in amending the Gram Sabha Act between 1998 and 2006 and inviting collective action and decision-making in education and irrigation in Ralegan Siddhi. Hazare seems to mould his work in the village by Gandhiji's writings in *Harijan*: "Our weapons are those of satyagraha expressed through the charkha, the village industries, primary education through handicrafts, removal of untouchability, communal harmony, prohibition, and non-violent organization of labour". Ralegan Siddhi, which appears to have fulfilled the Gandhian dream of *Gram Swaraj*, now stands as a sustainable village model, to be replicated for other cases of rural dysfunction in the country.

Hazare's campaigns are noteworthy due to his staunch belief in staying detached from government positions and political ambitions, which he regards as misleading forces. He emphasizes the concept

of popular sovereignty to redirect the government's attention to the needs of civil society. He dreams of a more equitable world, in consonance with nature and driven by rectitude.

As slogans such as “Anna nahi, yeh aandhi hai, desh ka doosra Gandhi hai” (“This is not Anna but a storm, he is the second Gandhi of the country”) resounded during the anti-corruption campaign led by Anna Hazare, laymen and scholars drew parallels between Hazare and Gandhi. Similarities between the two short bespectacled men dressed in white homespun cloth go beyond appearance. Both of them advocated for rural development and the cause of the downtrodden. Though Hazare has admitted his disapproval of being compared to Gandhi, he reverently evokes Gandhian messages in word and deed. Gandhi's opposition to indiscriminate industrialization, belief in moral fortitude as the guiding force to a harmonic and pure social and political existence, advocacy of a self-sustaining way of life and a life of renunciation and simplicity are shared by Hazare. Hazare's unwavering belief that India will progress by directing its focus to the development of villages resonates with the conviction of the nation's father. Hazare's opposition to globalization and rural-urban migration is directly driven by Gandhi's assertion of the need for self-sufficiency and expansion of villages.

Yet, many including Gandhi's grandson Tushar Gandhi, oppose this comparison on the grounds that Hazare's satyagraha targeted the government as an adversary, unlike Gandhi's satyagraha which was a means to reform an adversary. Others opine that while Gandhi would have endeavored to eliminate the root cause of corruption and would have adopted an approach of moral reformation, Hazare relies on the Lokpal bill to remedy the disease. Hazare's fasts have been called superficial and merely political hunger-strikes, and not Gandhian fasts of discipline. Yet one cannot deny that Hazare's willingness to sacrifice himself for a selfless cause is Gandhian.

His philosophy and actions too have not been immune to criticism; his emphasis on villages in an era of increasing globalization and urbanization has been censured as backward-looking while his Gandhian idealism in being a steadfast believer of a moral authority which will absolve the nation of the plague of corruption has been decried as counterproductive to administrative and national reform. His advocacy of the anti-corruption bill, which many view as draconian, to police the colossal bureaucratic system in India as well his immoderate views on retribution, such as public flogging for alcoholism, death penalty for corruption, and his stand on forced vasectomy for

population control have led liberals such as Arundhati Roy to brand his nationalism as “aggressive”, and even dub it “moral fascism”.

Though some of his principles may seem regressive and evocative of pre-colonial India, one can see through the veil of conservatism and apply his philosophy, which is in essence Gandhian, to all facets of life. To borrow Hazare’s words, "Education that does not develop social responsibility is not true education. What we have to teach is the practice of being human." In today’s rat race, one often totally disregards the virtue of being humane. His espousal of a disciplined and self-sustaining life and passive resistance become imperative for the reformation of wasteful and wayward contemporary generations.

While Hazare’s satyagraha campaigns may not have opened up new pathways for application of Gandhian tactics in contemporary politics, it did introduce the significance of active networking among urban intellectuals for a social movement (Sengupta, 2012, #). Hazare’s peaceful tactics and optimism, which many consider as idealism, has brought forth a moment of reckoning for the nation - to contemplate the impact of satyagraha politics and collectively endeavour to preserve morality in public and private life. While all Indians may not agree on Anna Hazare’s contributions, Hazare’s campaign and ideals serve as evidence of the encouraging fact that Mahatma Gandhi’s legacy persists in 21st century India.

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“A Satyagrahi has nothing to do with victory. He is sure of it, but he is also to know that it comes from God. He is but to suffer.”

Young India, 13-10-27, p.345

ACHARYA- THE REAL TEACHER OF POLITICS

- Kiran M. R

India which was once a colony of Great Britain stands today as the sixth largest economy in the world. When India got independence in 1947, we didn't have any constitution of our own so the Constituent assembly was formed to frame the constitution for the Union of India. The independence our nation received was the result of the sacrifices made by millions of patriots and a period of struggle extending up to two centuries. Each patriot and freedom fighter is a gem for the nation and one among them is J.B. Kripalani. He was an ardent follower of Gandhian Principles and was the member of the constituent assembly. Let us try to understand him better in this essay on life and political views.

Jivatram Bhagwandas Kripalani was born on 11th November 1888 in Hyderabad of Sindh Province presently in Pakistan. His father was Bhagwandas who was an officer in the justice department. The caring nature and taking people together were inculcated in him in his childhood itself because there were eight siblings and he was the sixth child. He did his primary school in Sindh province and higher school in Wilson college. Here he enjoyed reading English poems and appreciated it. But his views on British radically changed after the partition of Bengal. From his childhood, he was highly influenced by Bal Gangadhar Tilak's ideologies. This incident lit up a burning fire of patriotism in him. He completed his Master's degree in history and Economics in Fergusson College Pune. Later he joined as professor in L.S. College in 1912. His life as a teacher was remarkable. He imbibed the feeling of patriotism in students by advocating the principles of Swami Vivekananda, Swamy Ramathirta and Swami Ramakrishna Paramahansa. J.B. Kripalani was a very lean man but his way of teaching was like a roaring lion. And outside class he was very soft spoken, so many students admired his character and called him "Dada " with love.

Kripalani came in contact with Gandhi during the 1917 Champaran Satyagraha and this relation was memorable till the death of Gandhi. Gandhi's ideology and principles made a deep impact on Kripalani's life. He became an ardent follower of Gandhiji and upheld his values even after independence and continued it till the end of his life.

In 1919 he joined as professor of History in Banaras Hindu College and here he met his future life partner Sucheta who was also a professor and ardent follower of Gandhi. In 1920 he left his job and joined the non-cooperation movement. He valued freedom of nation more than his secured job. His sense of duty as a professor, means not only to teach the students but he too helped the freedom movement by arranging hiding places for freedom fighters and dedicated the majority portion of his salary to freedom struggle. He was imprisoned many times by British. But he did not stop his struggle.

He joined All India Congress and was made as general secretary in 1928 and his duty as general secretary continued for one decade. In 1946 he was made the president of All India Congress believing in his exemplary educational background and intellectual capability in handling people. He was a member in the constituent assembly and contributed immensely in framing the Constitution. He too was in the race for Prime minister post but respecting Gandhiji's words he and Sardar Patel withdrew their nomination. Indian Politics was changing gradually after Gandhi's death and Nehru became very influential in the country. Kripalani put forward his word that party members need to be consulted before making a decision. But Nehru rejected this proposal and did not give the value of what the party president should have got. In the next year 1951, he stood again for party president election but was defeated by Pushottamdas Tandon backed by Sardar Patel. Kripalani felt that congress was drifting away from Gandhi's principles so, came out of Congress and remained in opposition till the end. Politicians defect their parties and join other parties for power and monetary gains but Kripalani was a man with values and never compromised with it.

He formed Kisan Mazdoor Praja Party and later merged with Socialist party of India to form Praja Socialist Party. He contested the Lok Sabha election against Krishna Menon but Menon won a landslide victory. He won consecutively in the year 1957, 1962, 1968. He moved "no confidence motion" against Nehru after defeat in the China war. First, he was daring and courageous because no other leader even thought about it because Nehru had such a strong hold on Government. But the motion failed as it did not get a majority in the house. Second, he waited for the right time and this shows how he analyzed political situations. His wife Sucheta Kripalani remained in Congress and debated many times against each other in parliament but lived together in the same house.

His opposition to congress party continued even during Indira Gandhi's tenure. He felt that Indira's Government was more like a Dictatorship than democracy. When Indira Gandhi imposed a National emergency, Kripalani was one among the leaders to be arrested first. Later he collaborated with Jayaprakash Narayan and gave full support to the Janata party and Morarji Desai was appointed as The Prime minister on his recommendation. In spite of all political low and high tides in his life he equally concentrated on social life and protection of the environment. He joined hands with Vinoba Bhave and helped in revival of villages.

He authored many books and some of them are

1. Gandhi Marg
2. Praja Socialist Party
3. The Future of Congress
4. His autobiography- "My times"

Let us all take pride to tell, this man deserves the title "Acharya". As he continued to age his health deteriorated and took retirement from politics. But he promised to come back into politics when the need arises. His burning desire to fight for people filled courage and confidence in the hearts of people. It is our utmost duty to recognize all the freedom fighters equally and not emphasize only on a few individuals.

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“My advice is Satyagraha first and Satyagraha last. There is no other or better road to freedom.”

Harijan, 15-9-46, p.312

GANDHIJI'S CONSCIENCE KEEPER

- J. Aditya

Chakravarthy Rajagopalachari, better known as Rajaji, was born on 10 December 1878 to a village headman in Thorapalli, Tamil Nadu. He did his graduation from Bangalore's Central College and later became a lawyer. His long journey with the Indian National Congress began in 1906 when he attended the party's Calcutta Session. Motivated by a desire to serve the public, he was later elected to Salem's Municipal Council in 1911 and eventually became its Chairman. Rajaji came to know about Gandhiji's movements in South Africa and finally got to meet him in March 1919. From that time onwards, Rajaji became one of the closest disciples of the Mahatma. He participated in the anti-Rowlatt satyagraha and went to jail in 1921.

In 1937, Rajaji was elected as the premier of the Madras Presidency. The tenure was controversial for his promotion of Hindi. In 1939, he issued the Temple Entry Authorization and Indemnity Act of 1939 which allowed entry of Dalits and other lower caste communities into Hindu temples. Soon after this, Rajaji resigned in October 1939 after Lord Linlithgow, the viceroy, refused to consult Indians on World War II. Soon after this, Rajaji opposed the 1942 Quit India movement and supported a constructive dialogue with the British. He also wanted the Congress to mend its ties with the Muslim League. However, nothing to this effect took place, forcing him to resign in 1942.

In 1945, Rajaji came back to the Congress and was made the first Indian governor of Bengal in 1947. After that, he went on to become the first (and last) Governor-General who happened to be an Indian in 1948, serving till India became a republic. He would have become the first President of India if not for opposition from Sardar Patel and other members of the Congress who preferred Rajendra Prasad (Guha, 2008). Later, he became the Chief Minister of the Madras State after serving a short stint as India's Home Minister (after Sardar Patel's demise). However, Rajaji was forced to resign as Madras's Chief Minister in 1954 and went into retirement. It was the fallout of a controversy surrounding the Madras Scheme of Elementary Education of 1953. In a bid to reduce dropout rates, schooling duration was reduced to 3 hours a day and the students would spend the rest of the day learning the family profession. Dravidian groups denounced this as a casteist move. This move caused a lot of divisions within the Congress leading to Rajaji's resignation. The same year, he was

the first person to be awarded the prestigious Bharat Ratna along with Vice President Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan and Nobel Laureate CV Raman.

The worrying state of Indian politics and the Indian National Congress forced Rajaji to come back into the arena of politics again. He founded the Swatantra Party in 1959 (at the age of 81). He took this step after the Nagpur resolution of the Congress which called for land ceilings, take-over of food grain trade by the state and adoption of cooperative farming -(NCERT, 2007). In an essay titled “Why Swatantra?” Rajaji wrote that “The Swatantra Party stands for the protection of the individual citizen against the increasing trespasses of the State” (Rajagopalachari, 2016). This party had mixed electoral successes. It won 22 Parliament seats in the 1962 elections and an impressive 44 seats in the 1967 general elections, emerging as the largest Lok Sabha opposition party. However, its seat tally crashed down to 8 (from 44) in the 1971 general elections. Rajaji passed away on December 25, 1972 at the age of 94. The Swatantra Party too became defunct soon after his demise in 1974.

To this day, the Swatantra Party remains the only mainstream liberal party in India. While it is true that other liberal parties exist, none has managed to reach the stature of the Swatantra Party. Unlike any other party of its day, it openly opposed the socialism of the Congress in support of free-markets and property rights. The party never survived but it did leave behind a rich legacy for Indian liberals. As the historian Ramachandra Guha wrote, “its [Swatantra Party] chief contribution to Indian democracy was intellectual and ideological, through its searching criticisms of the economic and foreign policies of the ruling party. It achieved a sort of posthumous success when key elements of its credo...were, much later, adopted by the Congress party itself” (Guha, 2012).

Rajaji always had a special relationship with his mentor Gandhiji. Both believed in the pursuit non-violence, were devout Hindus, wanted to abolish untouchability and supported Hindu-Muslim unity. After being released from jail, Rajaji established a Gandhi Ashram in Tiruchengode, Tamil Nadu. Through this, he hoped to promote Khadi, prohibition, Hindu-Muslim harmony and the ending of untouchability. As the Mahatma was leading the iconic Dandi March in 1930, Rajaji took the initiative and led the Vedaranyam March. He and other volunteers walked for over 150 km from Tiruchirapalli to Vedaranyam to break the salt law. The march started on April 13 and culminated with Rajaji breaking the salt law by shouting “Vande Mataram” and making salt. Rajaji also took measures to fight untouchability and ensure dignity of labour like cleaning of toilets.

As his disciple, Rajaji was very devoted to Gandhiji but never refrained from criticizing him. In 1924, when Gandhiji was thinking of abandoning politics for social work, Rajaji chastised him. When the Mahatma attempted to do the same in 1934, Rajaji spoke in stronger words saying that “your retirement from the Congress will be a suicidal step” and “an intense and irrevocable feeling of defeatism will spread over the whole nation, and kill political hope and enterprise” (Guha, 2008). When the Quit India movement of 1942 was in full force, Rajaji again dared to defy consensus and registered his dissent with the Mahatma. He was someone who was always committed to his moral and conscience. It is for these reasons that Gandhiji referred to Rajaji as his “conscience keeper”.

The ties between Rajaji and Gandhiji was more than that of a master and his disciple. It extended to familial ties as well. In 1933, the Mahatma’s son Devadas and Rajaji’s daughter Lakshmi tied the knot. It was Rajaji who Gandhiji originally designated as his political heir before he (the Mahatma) moved on to Jawaharlal Nehru (Guha, 2008). The assassination of the Mahatma in 1948 deeply affected Rajaji. Upon hearing the news of the assassination, Rajaji immediately flew into Delhi from Bengal (for he was Bengal’s Governor then) and took a portion of the Mahatma’s ashes to immerse it in the Hooghly River. So overcome by grief was Rajaji, that “he perilously swayed forward” and had to be pulled back by others to avoid drowning in the river. When asked what happened, he said, “the ashes were pulling me” (Guha, 2008).

Even after the Mahatma’s demise, Rajaji continued to preach non-violence. This time, he targeted the atom bomb. Rajaji wrote articles urging the world to “throw all the atomic bombs in the deep Antarctic”. He visited the United Kingdom and the United States in 1962 to speak on the atomic bomb. Rajaji had a one-on-one meeting with the then US President John F Kennedy, who was so charmed that a 25-minute meeting turned out to be more than an hour long. Kennedy remarked to one of his aides that “seldom have I heard a case presented with such precision, clarity and elegance of language” (Guha, 2008).

One of the defining characteristics of Rajaji was that he was a very pragmatic person whose predictions were accurate. For instance, he was proved right in his decision to oppose the Quit India movement. The historian Ramachandra Guha writes

He [Rajaji] opposed the Quit India movement, saying that the need rather was for constructive engagement with the British. The Congress big shots didn't listen — and indeed forced him to leave the party — but in retrospect, he was proved right. By calling for a militant rebellion when the British were fighting a desperate battle for survival against Hitler and company, the Congress forfeited their trust. By sitting out the bulk of the war in prison, they [Congress leaders] allowed the Muslim League to go from strength to strength (Guha, 2008).

He saw the Partition as inevitable and even proposed a formula to this effect called the CR or Rajaji Formula by which Muslim League and Congress would demand independence from the British and form a temporary government at the centre. Soon after, a commission could be formed which would demarcating Muslim majority areas and hold a plebiscite on whether to form a new nation or not. However, this didn't gain much traction.

As the Home Minister of India, Rajaji also warned the Prime Minister Nehru about the nefarious designs of Communist China. Writing to Nehru, he said that he felt “hurt whenever Pannikar (the Indian Ambassador to China) tells us with extreme satisfaction that China is very friendly to us yet has no territorial ambitions. We do not want any patrons now, do we?” (Guha, 2008). After a series of border incidents in 1959, Rajaji wrote essays asking Nehru to abandon non-alignment, though he understood that Nehru wanted to avoid war. Rajaji felt that India should be aligned with the Western Bloc of nations. The belligerence of China towards India (a nation uninvolved in the Cold War) was another reason. History was witness when China gave India a bloody nose in 1962. Even then, Rajaji did not join the bandwagon of Nehru-bashers. At a time when many people were calling upon Nehru to evacuate Chinese forces from Indian territory, he wrote

Our armed forces can be used against this trespass....but no one can guarantee the localisation of conflict....The only legitimate and wise course is to drop the isolationist policy....and get into closer bonds of alliance with the World Powers...ranged against Communism (Guha, 2012).

Commenting upon Rajaji's acumen, Ramachandra Guha wrote "Rajaji could see, however, that it was not merely a failure of nerve, but of capacity, which could be remedied only through the forging of a new strategic alliance, with the West" (Guha, 2012).

Rajaji was a very astute scholar as well. He was an accomplished writer in both Tamil and English. Two of his most famous works include the retellings of the ancient Hindu epics Ramayana and Mahabharata. Rajaji liked to say that "the best service I have rendered to my people is the re-telling of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata" (Guha, 2008). When Rajaji went to jail in 1921, he carried with him "editions of the Mahabharata in Tamil and English, the Bible, a volume of Shakespeare, Defoe's Robinson Crusoe, a book on Socrates and a copy of the ancient classic of Tamil literature and philosophy, the Kural" (Guha, 2012). Age didn't deter him at all. In 1956, a journalist went to see Rajaji at his home and found "stacked on a desk in front of Rajaji... GK Chesterton's Father Brown stories; two books on modern biology; Lewis Mumford's *Conduct of Life*, Valmiki's *Ramayana* (in Sanskrit); and a few Tamil works". This was not the end for "waiting in a book-case along the wall, were twelve volumes of the speeches of Edmund Burke, and an edition of Shakespeare" (Guha, 2008). No wonder that RG Casey (Governor of Bengal from 1944-46) called Rajaji as the "wisest man in India".

Rajaji was also someone who liked to have a conciliatory attitude towards his rivals. Despite differences, he was a very good friend of Periyar, the reformist. This can be seen by the fact that Periyar confided in Rajaji about his decision to anoint a new political heir and marry Maniyammai, his [Periyar's] personal assistant. Periyar used to call Rajaji as "Acharyar". As far as his [Rajaji's] relation with Nehru was concerned, it was generally friendly too. They were never really close during the freedom movement due to contrasting backgrounds and worked together only from 1946. However, they soon came close due to their interest in literature and arts. "It was only to Rajaji, and to no other Congressman, that Nehru could write recommending a recent book on the British character by the anthropologist Geoffrey Gorer; or praise the beauty of the folk traditions of India" (Guha, 2008). When Edwina Mountbatten was to visit Chennai in 1954, Rajaji drew up a taxing itinerary for her. As in panic, Nehru wrote back to him saying "There is no mention in programme of her visit to you. This is the main purpose of her going to Madras". This shows the level of respect that Nehru had for Rajaji.

However, things started going downhill when Rajaji was worried by the centralisation of economy and the domination of the Congress. He wrote articles expressing his concern at the state of affairs and attacked the “megalomaniac” policies of Nehru (Guha, 2008). Soon enough, he formed the Swatantra Party. Nehru in turn referred to the Swatantra Party as “a mixture of the rottenest ideas imaginable” and as belonging to “the middle ages of lords, castles and zamindars” (Erdman, 1963). All this rivalry didn’t prevent Rajaji from writing a touching tribute to Nehru after he passed away in 1964. Writing in *Swarajya*, Rajaji said about Nehru

Eleven years younger than me, eleven times more important to the nation, eleven hundred times more beloved to the nation, Sri Nehru has suddenly departed from our midst and I remain alive to hear the sad news from Delhi-and bear the shock...I have been fighting Sri Nehru all these years over what I consider faults in public policies... But I knew all along that he alone could get them corrected. No one else would dare do it, and he [Nehru] is gone, leaving me weaker than before... But fighting apart, a beloved friend is gone, the most civilized person among us all. Not many among us are civilized yet.

God save our people (Guha, 2008).

All the above is not to say that Rajaji was a flawless man. Like any other human being, he had his flaws too. He served as the Premier of the Madras Presidency from 1937-39. Under him, the language of Hindi was made compulsory in educational institutions which led to a huge agitation. However, to his credit, Rajaji did oppose Hindi imposition and declared that Part XVII of the Constitution should “be heaved and thrown into the Arabian Sea” (Venkatachalapathy, 2007). During his tenure as the Chief Minister of the then Madras State from 1952-54, the controversial Madras Scheme of Elementary Education was introduced in 1953. The intention behind this was to ostensibly reduce dropout rates. Under this scheme, schooling duration was reduced to 3 hours a day after which students were sent back to home for learning the family profession. Dravidian groups denounced this as a casteist move and derisively referred to this as the Kula Kalvi Thittam (Hereditary Education Policy). This ultimately led to the resignation of Rajaji who was replaced by the stalwart K.Kamaraj. He also disapproved of women working and saw them as home-makers (Guha, 2008).

It is tempting to assign an ideology to Rajaji. If one goes by his views on women, nuclear weapons or prohibition of alcohol (which he supported, like his mentor Gandhiji), he is a conservative. However, Rajaji was someone who opposed ultra-conservative jingoism as well. In 1965, he criticised the then Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri for militarism. “There are fire-eaters in Delhi even in this decade who believe India is strong enough to govern border people by force of arms and maintain the Indian economy for grand plans”, said Rajaji (Bhattacharjee, 2016). The fire-eaters here referred to ultra-conservatives who supported harsh methods to solve the problems of the Northeast and Kashmir. If a person looks at the party Rajaji founded (Swatantra Party) and his support for free-market economics, one might call him a liberal. It is very difficult to say. The historian Ramachandra Guha rightly said that “Rajaji cannot be easily pigeon-holed into the convenient labels-liberal, socialist or conservative-of modern political thought. Guha “very reluctantly” labelled Rajaji as “a rather special kind of conservative” (Guha, 2008). The scholar Vasanthi Srinivasan called him a “theocentric liberal”. (Srinivasan, 2009).

At the end, one wonders as to how many of us really know about Rajaji? The plebeian might not have heard about him at all, as they might have heard or read about Gandhiji, Nehru, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, Sardar Patel etc. History students might know him as Gandhiji’s beloved follower and as the first (and last) Indian Governor-General. Students of political science might go a bit further and identify him as the founder of the erstwhile Swatantra Party. However, it remains a fact that Rajaji has largely remained a footnote in Indian history despite having served as Governor-General, Chief Minister and Home Minister among other things and being the first Indian to receive the Bharat Ratna. Rajaji refused to write an autobiography on the grounds that “one cannot help trying to show oneself in a good light”. Comparing himself to a matchstick, he described his smallness as his strength and argued that one must realise the insignificance of one’s own life in the vastness of space (Srinivasan, 2009).

The house in which Rajaji was born remains neglected (Vivek, 2018). “Even by the slovenly standards of Indian monument-maintenance, the Rajaji house nationalized in 1978, takes the biscuit. In the tiny, lightless, three-room house where lime dust coats the feet at every corner, the standout feature is a bronze painted bust of Rajaji that has little resemblance to the man.” wrote TR Vivek on the sad state of affairs. He [Vivek] rightly asked, “Does the first awardee of Bharat Ratna in 1955, India’s highest civilian award, independent India’s first and only governor-general, and a man who

laid the foundations of meaningful, constructive and democratic dissent in free India, deserve to be treated with such apathy in modern India?”. It is also true that no politicians or parties jostle to vie for Rajaji’s legacy as they do for other leaders like Netaji, Dr. Ambedkar and so on. However, Rajaji perhaps wouldn’t be bothered by this at all. As he said, “I am small. My smallness is my strength. It is the fortress in which I live”.

Rajaji may no longer be among us, but his ideas continue to live with us. After all, great people don’t die, they just leave their bodies and transform into great souls.

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“The conviction has been growing upon me, that things of fundamental importance to the people are not secured by reason alone, but have to be purchased with their suffering. Suffering is the law of human beings; war is the law of the jungle. But suffering is infinitely more powerful than the law of the jungle for converting the opponent and opening his ears, which are otherwise shut, to the voice of reason.”

Young India, 5-11-31, p.341

MEDHA TAI - CRUSADER FOR THE MASSES

- Sahar Basharat

The Narmada project (one of the largest river development projects in the world) sparked a huge wave of protests in the nation. An unsustainable project displacing around a million people, largely poor peasants and tribal communities, could not be allowed to go ahead especially when there was no guarantee of its proper functioning and neither was there any hope for the rehabilitation of all those displaced. It was then that Medha Patkar, a social activist among other things, moved to live among the tribes that inhabited the banks of the river and educated them of the repercussions of the Narmada Project. This then started a chain of events and the formation of a movement very well-known across the nation - the Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA).

Born in 1954 to Vasanth Khanolkar, a freedom fighter and labour union leader, and Indumati Khanolkar, a gazetted officer in the Post and Telegraphs Department, she earned an MA in Social Work from Tata Institute of Social Sciences. Since then, she has volunteered for multiple organisations across Mumbai, the North-Eastern states and Gujarat in order to help the downtrodden and poor. While working on her PhD on Economic Development and its impact on traditional societies the Narmada Valley Project was announced. On realising the enormous impact this project would have on tribal and peasant communities along with the environment, she left her PhD unfinished to support, educate and legally represent the communities and lead the way in forming the Narmada Bachao Andolan (Britannica, 2020).

Medha Patkar spearheaded the NBA which argued against the construction of thirty large and many small dams along the river Narmada. The reasons for this were plenty. The projects would cause immense ecological damage, inundate the adjacent forests and also cause depletion of habitat for multiple rare species. Alongside this, it would also displace around a million people whose livelihood depended on the river and the lands it watered through its streams (Bose, 2004). Medha Patkar, along with others who stood by her, argued that improvements in dry farming technologies, watershed development, multiple smaller dams, lift schemes for irrigation and drinking water and improved efficiency in utilising existing dams would yield better results as they were more sustainable and protected the livelihood of the communities that live along the banks of the river.

Medha Patkar showed unwavering strength and stride when standing by the communities that would lose their livelihoods and the environment that would suffer irrevocable damage. For taking this stand she was arrested multiple times and faced repression. She also engaged in many fasts and hosted satyagrahas. Since 1985, she began mobilising crowds to participate in peaceful rallies and protests. Her 22-day hunger strike in 1991 almost led her to lose her life and yet she undertook two more hunger strikes in 1993 and 1994 (Goldman Prize, n.d.). When the monsoons threatened to submerge the villages on the banks of the river, Medha Patkar was there joining the tribal residents in resisting evacuation from their homes.

The Sardar Sarovar Dam in Gujarat, one of the larger dams in the Narmada project was projected to submerge more than 37,000 hectares of forest and agricultural land which had a direct impact on locals and the regional biodiversity. It waters the four Indian states of Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Maharashtra. Many villages and the inhabitants have had to relocate because of the construction of the dam. However, because of inadequate resettlement by the government, many of the families have returned to their villages (Baesher, 2006) (Iyer, 2013). For this, Medha Patkar has held, and continues to hold, hunger strikes for the people affected. Some of her more recent fasts include the 17 days fast in Dhar Jail for proper rehabilitation of displaced people caused by the Sardar Sarovar Dam and her 9 days fast in 2019 after the Maharashtra government increased the water levels in the Sardar Sarovar Dam without adequate protective measures for those living nearby.

Apart from her unceasing contributions to the Narmada Bachao Andolan, Medha Patkar is also one of the founders of the National Alliance of People's Movements in 1996 which is an umbrella organisation that integrates various civil society movements and individuals that work towards highlighting people's issues. It advocates taking a local approach to local problems and involving communities in local projects in order to draw the most benefit for the people, environment and other stakeholders. It also stands against all forms of discrimination, injustice and exploitation and aims at bringing social, political and economic justice to all. It continues to exercise influence and lend support to various movements taking shape across India (Britannica, 2020).

When one reads about the contributions made by Medha Patkar to the various causes that support local communities, people who have been discriminated against and the environment which is being

destroyed, it is evident that she is a modern-day Satyagrahi fighting against all forms of injustice to help truth reign supreme. By giving a voice and a platform to those who have struggled, she brings with her a sense of courage and hope. Her involvement in and continuous efforts towards helping people and paving the way for a society that respects and protects their environment and takes into account the struggles of the commoner puts her in a position of admiration and acclaim. Much like the Mahatma himself.

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*“There is just the same inviolable connection between the means
and the end as there is between the seed and the tree.”*

‘Hind Swaraj’ and Other Writings

ARUNACHALAM MURUGANANTHAM- THE MAN TO WEAR A SANITARY PAD

- Meghna Manoj

There are a lot of topics in the country that are usually not addressed in a public forum and along with that comes numerous taboos and perceptions about them. Menstruation and menstrual hygiene is a subject, which is just addressed in medical colleges and hospitals but has never reached beyond that. A lot of taboo exists on the topics of menstruation as well the health issues associated with it. According to the United Nation's latest reports on menstrual hygiene, approximately 1.25 million people do not have access to safe and private toilets (UNICEF, 2019) Millions of women and girls lack awareness on how they should deal with it and measures they must take to ensure good health of their reproductive organs. This is not only the case with developing countries but also in developed nations where stigma on periods generally exists. One in ten girls, aged 14 to 21 years do not have access to menstrual products in the United Kingdom and are forced to use items like socks and cloth while they are menstruate as per the findings of The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health (Day, 2018)

During India's struggle for freedom, Gandhiji himself took to the streets and emphasized in public gatherings about the essence of sanitation and cleanliness in all households. He believed in making one's own body and surroundings clean enough to make it disease free. He strongly held the view that independence and creating hygienic conditions are equally important for all. Ensuring clean lavatories and construction of hygienic toilets was a responsibility according to Gandhiji to be shared by all. But his teachings and perceptions on such sensitive issues cease to spread after a certain period of time in the country.

Gandhi was not alone in that battle. Arunachalam Muruganantham, from Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu who is widely known as the 'man to wear a menstrual pad' continues to defy all the societal norms. He decided to manufacture low cost sanitary napkin making machines and eventually produce low-cost sanitary pads for women in rural India with the motive of creating clean conditions for women to tackle their menstrual days. His journey of making a change for the Indian rural population started in 1998, after he saw his wife using a dirty cloth during her menstruation days. He addressed that piece of cloth as one extremely dirty and unclean to an extent that he would refuse to use it to clean his motorcycle. Extremely worried, he went ahead and asked her as to why she never makes use of

a sanitary pad. She replied saying that their family would have to cut down on their household expenditure every month if she purchases them. Arunachalam was all the more bothered when he realised this is not just a problem faced by his wife, but his sisters and all the pre-menopausal women in his village. He took the decision to make a low-cost sanitary pad which could be used by all the women in his village without having to spend a lot on it. But his efforts and dedication came at a huge cost. His wife, sisters and mother abandoned him in his house. He was ostracized and often portrayed as a 'mad', 'dirty', 'shameless' guy in front of the whole village in the process of getting his work done.

In Amit Virmani's famous documentary 'Menstrual Man', Muruganatham talks about the obstacles and issues, both professional and mental, he had to face while trying to do some good for the society. He aspired to do something which would change the way every woman treated themselves in his village and the only way was to experiment. Being a machine operator, it would have been less difficult to assimilate and work on the machinery. But the complexity of a pad manufacturing machine made him realise that if he created a complex piece, then it would get really difficult for ordinary people who don't have enough knowledge about them to work on it. But creating simple pieces would make it even more easier for lay persons to work on it. This thought sowed the seeds of another impactful idea of building a sustainable livelihood for rural women wherein the women, both young and old could get trained to work on the machines and produce sanitary napkins themselves and Arunachalam Muruganatham finally succeeded in executing that idea. Founder of Jayshree Industries, Muruganatham supplies these machines to different parts of India and mainly to the self help groups in rural areas where he makes effort to prove his 'Two As' theory ie, Affordability and Accessibility. He ensures that these machines are reaching such groups and also gives a lot of importance on training women how to use it. Young as well as elderly women living in and around those areas must receive the pad packets if ever they cannot afford to buy the mainstream products from the bazaars.

Academy award winning documentary '*Period. End of sentence.*', tells the audience about the hesitation in people, and that too young girls while speaking about their monthly cycles. It is not just in movies, but in fact the sad reality of the societies is this. Cross-communication about it is not happening on a needed scale which results in lack of sufficient awareness on maintaining a stable reproductive health. Muruganatham's struggle was for that. If not create awareness directly, he

aspired to make something which would be beneficial for women in the long run. His perceptions on this issue is simple, yet so strong that it makes one over-think on this whole issue. His very criterion of a developed or a developing nation is not based on economic models that economists or governments refer to but a developed or developing nation is one wherein the women are healthy and they contribute majorly to the workforce of the nation. According to Muruganatham, a country cannot be called as powerful or even developed if the women there are finding it difficult to even buy or afford basic sanitary products. According to the National Family Health survey, only thirty six percent of the women population in India have access to sanitary napkins (International Institute for Population Sciences, 2017). Again much of its proportion were urban educated women. Changes do not come easily especially when one has to create a difference in the ways certain thoughts and ideas have been perceived by societies. He never attempted to create a hype about the work he had committed himself to and at no point did he demand public or media attention for it. His efforts and initiatives were targeting improvement of a certain section of the society. He just pursued very simple methods of striving towards his goal by working hard and simply put his heart and soul into what he felt should be changed and strived to make little differences in his society which is remarkable.

In India, women who are menstruating are denied a lot of basic rights such as attending schools or even colleges, entry to public areas such as temples, and even kitchen areas in their own houses! In many instances, they are not even subject to public gaze. In fact, many families justify saying that usage of sanitary pads loses their virginity, exposure to the public during their monthly cycles brings ‘bad’ influence on the families and what more. Since centuries this had been the conditions under which women lived. Even today in the schools in urban areas, menstrual awareness is created only among female students and never goes beyond that. In the case of rural areas, limited awareness has been created. This has to be changed. One of the prime reasons is that menstrual communication is not something that should be communicated to just female sections of the society but everyone equally. Secondly, there should be more campaigns carried out in its name so people are nudged to thinking scientifically and logically about it, instead of attaching taboos and irrational ideas to it. Communities across must know that such a huge lack of awareness can lead to all misconceptions on how to deal with menstruation and reproductive health.

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“The Satyagrahi, whilst he is ever ready for fight, must be equally eager for peace. He must welcome any honourable opportunity for peace.”

Young India, 19-3-31, p.40

SUNDERLAL BAHUGUNA – THE FATHER OF CHIPKO MOVEMENT

- A. Linciya Saji

The History, of all happenings which men, over time, were able to record during the brief period of their stay on earth deliver a significant connection to our natural environment, the emphasis on it is such that this nexus create a picturesque of human history as an indifferent play of our natural and social environment though the former's influence substantiates the consequences of the latter. But one must confess that this nexus of human history and their natural environment is subtle and too complex to comprehend the effects. It is implicitly present in every enquiry we have established for ourselves. And in short, our Natural Environment becomes one of the dear treasures of human survival but at the same time, becoming an unfathomable resource to human development over time. The world indeed had witnessed potential Environmentalists from time to time to reiterate this very truth. India has also witnessed the rise of warriors of Mother Earth whenever the need for such persuasion is required.

Our discussions on Indian Environmentalists will naturally lead us to this person, Sunderlal Bahuguna whose notable accomplishments in the pursuit to save Environment marked an indelible trail towards India's fight to protect its natural Environment. Bahuguna was born on 9th January, 1927 in Tehri, Uttarakhand. As a teenager, Bahuguna became an active participant in Social activities. The first social drive among his population includes his fight against untouchability practices. Collaborating with the women folks of his locality, Bahuguna also organised an anti-liquor campaign as a teenager. Though he comes from an affluent family, he had observed his mother doing the household chores straight to eighteen hours a day. This incident provides an impetus in the later part of his life to work towards the emancipation of Indian village women who were highly socialized with customs to carry on works considered only fit for women. He grew up as a Social Activist under the inspiration of Shri Dev Suman and his insistence on non-violence as a method against unjust opposition can be traced back to the strong influence that he had from Mahatma Gandhi and Shri Dev Suman. Bahuguna was associated with the Indian National Congress before the country's Independence and was looking after the job of mobilizing civilians to create resistance to the Colonial rule. Hence, one can say that Bahuguna's political career began at the age of thirteen.

He recalls an experience as a teenager where after hearing Gandhi's speech on how India can attain freedom only by spinning wheels as it surely creates employment for all, Bahuguna and his friends used to sit in the graveyard at night to spin the Khadi, thereby respectfully complying to Gandhi's words to make India a self-reliant country. Bahuguna in his youth was a representative of the Tehri Mandal group which provided him the opportunity to meet his hero, Gandhi upon whom he had a sense of wonder and awe. He opines the conversation with Gandhi where the latter said, **"You live in the Himalayas and are doing a task as gigantic as the Himalayas, that of bringing non-violence to the people. Carry on with this path of life"**. Bahuguna adopted Gandhian principles in his life and together with wife Vimla, they chose to live among the rural people in the foothills of Himalayas. There, they established their ashram and took up the job of educating the masses around them.

The life events of Sunderlal Bahuguna that prompt us to classify him as one of the admired Satyagrahis of Independent India resides in his sheer determination to show an impeccable courage in the face of adversities and above all his non-violent pursuit of accomplishing objectives whose benefits is reaped by the entire Society. And the act of what distinguishes a person such as him is their decisive response to events as every person residing in a particular social space is affected by the same events, what distinguishes them is their response. And what distinguished the women of Garhwali is also the same. And the women of Garhwali by their actions re-emphasised to the world the human commitment to protect our natural surroundings. Sunderlal Bahuguna and the women of the mountains stood against the government agencies that began to clear the forest. The deforestation of the Himalaya Mountains was staunchly opposed by Sunderlal Bahuguna who along with the women of the mountains ignited the Chipko Movement. The sanctity of the movement resides in the truth that it carries. The movement at its dawn did not create widespread support; in fact it remained unknown till the movement gained government attention for the slowdown in work. The famous slogan coined by Bahuguna for this conservation movement resonates the reality and how far we are from it, **"Ecology is a permanent Economy"**. The success of the movement is its influence today for many other peaceful protests happening in different parts of the country.

Another notable instance from his life is his active participation to stop the Tehri Dam project. The objective of the dam was to divert the water wandering through the mountain villages to New Delhi. The Tehri dam project began in 1972 when Sunderlal Bahuguna and others protested against it till

2004. They protested as the construction of the dam may prevent the water supply owed to the villagers and which also may result in the women of these villages waiting the entire night to receive their share of four litres water per day. Sunderlal Bahuguna took up the hunger strikes and petitioned the government to show his unwavering resolve against the construction of the dam. But, however, the dam was constructed and began to fill. Soon after that incident, Bahuguna and his wife were forced to move to a house upstream. But this downfall did not stop Bahuguna's conviction and he still continues to fight for ecological protection in the country. Looking back at Sunderlal Bahuguna's life and his fight against Ecological devastation, the inspiring factor for each one of us is his resolve to peaceful methods in times of adversities. The nation will still remember him as a person who was the first to point out the fallacies in the construction of the Tehri dam and vividly remember him for his propensity to create change at the grass root levels. The life events of Sunderlal Bahuguna teaches us that the significant way of living one's life is to make change among one's people without expecting any pay in turn. To that commendable attribution of Sunderlal Bahuguna we cherish the attitude of a humble human being who became a catalyst for change thereby motivating thousands of people to be environment-conscious through his methods which promoted a collective strength in the face of adversities to inspire posterity.

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“Satyagraha is literally holding on to Truth and it means, therefore, Truth-force. Truth is soul or spirit. It is, therefore, known as soul-force.”

Young India 23.3.1921

ACHARYA VINOBA BHAVE: FOUNDER OF THE BHOODAN MOVEMENT (GIFT OF LAND) - APARAJITA PAURANIK

- Aparajita Pauranik

"My mission is not to stave off revolution. I want to prevent a violent revolution and bring about instead a nonviolent revolution. The future peace and prosperity of the country depend upon the peaceful solution of the land problem."

These words by Acharya Vinoba Bhave are a testimony to his ideals of non-violence and peace. Born in a small village in Kolaba District, Maharashtra, Vinayak Narahari Bhave led a very simple yet inspiring life, finding creative and sustainable solutions for the problems in his surroundings. He is famously known for the "Bhoodan Movement" or the Land Donation Movement. In this movement, he asked the Indian landowners to consider him their son and donate 1/6th of their land to him. This, in turn, he donated to the landless farmers for cultivation. He started this on 18th April 1951 at Pochampally of Nalgonda district Telangana and traveled 28,000 miles on foot for this cause. After this gained popularity and support, he also started the "Gramdan" movement, asking whole villages for donations. He received more than a thousand villages in this process, thus finding solutions regarding the land problem, among the masses. Such was the charisma, ingenuity, and devotion of Bhave in uplifting India.

As a young boy, when Bhave went to study Sanskrit and the Hindu religious tradition in Varanasi, it was here that he came across Gandhi's patriotic speeches. After this, his correspondence with Bapu started and later he joined as his disciple in 1916. He soon became a close associate of Gandhi Ji and followed his principles wholeheartedly.

On April 8, 1921, Vinoba was sent to Wardha to take charge of an ashram by Gandhi Ji. This played a very crucial role in his life.. During his stay at Wardha, Bhave brought out a monthly 'Maharashtra Dharma' in Marathi. This included his essays on the Upanishads. This was later published as a weekly and included his essays on the Upanishads. His ideologies were directed towards principles of peaceful non-cooperation to achieve freedom.

Vinoba Bhave worked day and night to uplift “Harijans,” as called by Gandhi Ji, and to eliminate inequality prevalent in the society. He also adopted the term "Sarvodaya" from Bapu which simply means “Progress for All”. Sarvodaya is an example of the way Bhave looked at the world as one family and worked tirelessly his entire life towards this goal.

He also cared for humans and animals alike, and started a movement to ban the slaughter of cows. Any violence against the animals was not acceptable by him. A spiritual leader and a highly learned man, Vinoba was greatly influenced by the Bhagavad Gita and followed the doctrines in his life as much as possible. He also established several ashrams to promote a simple way of life, and many of his sermons included verses from the holy book. One of the notable ashrams that he established focussing on the divine, is the Brahma Vidya Mandir in 1959, which was a small community for women, aiming at self-sufficiency on the lines of Mahatma Gandhi’s teachings. This was a brilliant example demonstrating the way in which Bapu's principles can be adopted in our day to day practices.

Mahatma Gandhi was impressed by Vinoba Bhave to a great extent. On reading Vinoba Bhave's letter once explaining why he had not returned to the Ashram for a whole year, Gandhiji remarked: "So Gorakha [the disciple] has gone one better than Machchhindra [the master]. He is a Bhima indeed", and dictated this letter.

“I do not know in what terms to praise you. Your love and your character fascinate me and so also your self-examination. I am not fit to measure your worth. I accept your estimate and assume the position of a father to you. You seem almost to have met a long-felt wish of mine. In my view, a father is, in fact, a father only when he has a son who surpasses him in virtue. A real son, likewise, is one who improves on what the father has done; if the father is truthful, firm of mind, and compassionate, the son will be all this in a greater measure. This is what you have made yourself. I don't see that you owe your achievement to any effort of mine. Hence, I accept the role you offer to me as a gift of love. I shall strive to be worthy of it; and, if ever I become another Hiranyakashipu, oppose me respectfully as Prahlad, who loved God, disobeyed him.

It is true as you say that, though, outside the Ashram, you have scrupulously observed its rules. I never doubted that you would return. Besides, I had your written messages, read out by Mama. May God grant you a long life, and use you for the uplift of India.

I don't see any need for changes in your diet just yet. Do not give up milk for the present. On the contrary, increase the quantity, if necessary.

About the railways, no Satyagraha is required.

What is wanted is intelligent workers to carry on propaganda. In the issue in Kheda District, Satyagraha may possibly have to be offered. I am something of a tramp these days. In a day or two, I shall have to leave for Delhi.

More when you arrive. Everyone is looking forward to seeing you.”

Blessings from,

BAPU

(Gandhi, 1918)

When he had finished dictating the letter, Mahadev Desai recorded Gandhiji as saying, "He is a great man. I have always felt that I am fortunate in my dealings with Maharashtrians and Madrasis. Of the latter, there is none now. But no Maharashtrian has ever disappointed me. And among them all, Vinoba is beyond praise!"

In his lifetime he authored several books on spirituality and had command over many Indian regional languages like Marathi, Telugu, Gujarati, Kannada, Hindi, Urdu, apart from English and Sanskrit. He also translated various scriptures written in Sanskrit to more common languages. He was also sent to jail several times by the Britishers for participating in non-violent Satyagrahas. During his time in jail, he wrote many books, taught himself many languages, and taught Bhagavad Geeta in Marathi to his fellow Satyagrahis.

Mahadev Desai, Gandhi's close associate observed -“Perhaps none of Gandhi's followers, have created so many worshippers of Truth & Non-violence, so many genuine workers as has Vinoba Bhave. In Vinoba, as in very others, thought, speech & action work in harmony, so that Vinoba's life is like a melodious song”.

In 1940 Bapu chose Vinoba to be the first Satyagrahi, to offer non-violent resistance to the British rule. Vinoba's social activism was founded on a lifetime's study of the other major world religions. Vinoba had an unwavering commitment to the practice of non-violence, to an engaged spirituality, and the universal power of love. He promoted Gandhian principles all his life. These included the promotion of Khadi, new-education, woman power, and Santi Sena, also known as the Peace brigade.

Vinoba's life was not without criticism. He was severely criticised for supporting the state of emergency imposed by the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. It was quoted that Bhave advocated that the emergency was required to teach people about discipline, but some of his followers rejected this as a conspiracy and misquoting of words.

"My aim," Vinoba once declared, "is to bring about a three-fold revolution. Firstly, I want a change in people's hearts; secondly, I want to create a change in their lives; and thirdly, I want to change the social structure." He truly did bring a change in the social structure and helped India progress in a positive way. He was also the first recipient of the international Ramon Magsaysay Award for Community Leadership in 1958. He was also awarded the Bharat Ratna posthumously in 1983. Vinoba's bold solutions to the problems faced by his fellow countrymen, his commitment to his ideals, and his way of life, practising and preaching Gandhian principles makes him one of the most courageous and fearless Satyagrahis that our country ever witnessed.

He always encouraged and guided the younger generation without any discrimination. His life is ideal for those who wish to follow the path of righteousness and non-violence. His teachings are relevant even in the present turbulent times. To quote him, "These days absence of war is regarded as peace. But peace connotes the absence of fear. There would be peace only when no part of the world is afraid of or exploited by any other part."

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“There can be no Satyagraha in an unjust cause. Satyagraha in a just cause is vain, if the men espousing it are not determined and capable of fighting and suffering to the end; and the slightest use of violence often defeats a just cause. Satyagraha excludes the use of violence in any shape or form, whether in thought, speech, or deed. Given a just cause, capacity for endless suffering and avoidance of violence, victory is a certainty.”

Young India 27.4.1921

MANASI PRADHAN- TRUE WARRIOR FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS

- Diwita Reddy Mosali

Mahatma Gandhi believed that a Satyagrahi is an 'exemplary or true warrior'. What was the idea and path to be followed by this true warrior is a question that begs to be answered. In a simplified sense, *satyagraha* is a path of ahimsa, followed to achieve the truth. But what exactly is this truth that a satyagrahi strives for?

Mahatma Gandhi worked towards achieving universal truth. The essence of this universal truth lies in the principle of universal equality in which people are not to be looked down upon, based on their caste, creed, color, religion or gender. Women have not been considered equal in society, for a major part of history. They have faced violence, lack of rights and have been exploited since time immemorial. Crime rate in India (registered per lakh women population) was 62.4 per cent in 2019. There is one such person who has fought for the rights of women and against violence against women. She broke the taboo of female education in her village and went on to become a winner of the Rani Lakshmi Bai Stree Shakti Puraskar by the President of India. In 2016, the New York-based Bustle magazine named her among 20 most inspiring Feminists Authors and Activists along with Nobel Prize winners Shirin Ebadi, Rigoberta Menchu, Malala Yousafzai, Betty Friedan and , Naomi Klein, Angela Davis, Kate Millett and Gloria Steinem ("Activist Manasi chosen for Women of Wonder award", 2018).

Manasi Pradhan, is an eminent women's rights activist and author. She was born on 4th October, 1962 in Odisha. She came from a society where girls did not receive more than middle school education. Female education was a taboo in major parts of her place in Banapur, Odisha. Not just college, but high school education was never imparted to girls in her region. However, with the support of her parents, Manasi Pradhan broke the societal norm to continue her education after middle school. She became the first female to complete high school examination in her village.

After completing her B.A. in Economics from Government Women's College, Puri she went on to do M.A in Odia literature from Utkal University. She also obtained a Bachelor of Law from G.M. Law College, Puri later on. After leaving the job in the finance department of the Government of Odisha and Andhra bank, Manasi started her own business of a printing press and became one of the

few successful women entrepreneurs. Her impact goes beyond business and has managed to change the lives of girls and young women through her campaigns and ideas.

Violence or Himsa should be a weak spot eating away the fruit of life. Manasi, started a nationwide movement called 'Honour for Women National Campaign' to fight violence or Himsa against women. The primary aim or goal of the campaign was to end, violence committed against women.

Manasi sought to fight violence through a three-step strategy which was implemented in Odisha, her home state. "The drinking habit destroys the soul of man and tends to turn him into a beast, incapable of distinguishing between wife, mother and sister. I have seen men who forget this distinction under the influence of liquor"; these were the words of MK Gandhi from the Harijan, 9-3-'34. Manasi Pradhan sought to fight this very evil which was condemned by Gandhiji, in her first step. She identified alcohol as one of the grassroot reasons for the majority of violence caused against women. Through pressures built by her campaigns, the Odisha government had to cut down liquor licences to half its present number within a year and secure a complete clampdown on illicit liquor trade. "During the last three years since the inception of our campaign, we have found liquor to be a predominant factor in violence against women," said Pradhan according to Indian Express.

The second part of her strategy was to speed up the process of justice by setting up fast track courts in all districts to wrap up cases related to crime against women in a time bound manner. The final part of her strategy was to integrate self-defence for girls as a part of the regular curriculum in schools, colleges and universities.

OYSS was an initiative started by Manasi Pradhan in 1987. It is a non-profit body; an initiative to educate and develop girls and women to become leaders of tomorrow. Vocational training, leadership development, women's rights enforcement etc., are imparted here.

Manasi Pradhan's work has had a deep effect in the society, with regard to women's rights and violence. But why should she be called a '*Satyagrahi*'? Ms. Pradhan's fight was against violence, through the non-violent campaigns launched by her. Her fight was for universal equality; for women's rights. Universal equality was a truth which Mahatma Gandhi fought for through his religion of resistance to achieve Unconditional equality. Manasi Pradhan's fight or resistance was not just against laws, but also against the society, she was a part of. MK Gandhi had given

tremendous importance to the status and role of women. He wrote, "If you women only realize your dignity and privilege, and make full sense of it for mankind, you will make it much better than it is. But, man has delighted in enslaving you, and you have proved willing slaves till the slave and holders have become one in the crime of degrading humanity. My special function from childhood, you might say, has been to make women realize her dignity. I was once slaveholder myself but Ba proved an unwilling slave and thus opened my eyes to my mission." Thus, Manasi Pradhan took on herself to continue Gandhiji's fight for women's rights, status and violence committed against them. A true satyagrahi or a warrior who impacted the lives of many girls and women in Odisha and India.

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“Non-violence for me is not a mere experiment. It is part of my life. Satyagraha, Non-cooperation, Civil Disobedience, and the like, are necessary deductions from a fundamental proposition, that Non-violence is the law of life for human beings. For me it is both a means and an end“

Gandhi to M. Asaf Ali, 26 June 1933, Gandhi Papers, SN no. 19108.

CHANDI PRASAD BHATT- THE PIONEER OF ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENTS IN INDIA

- Kesiraju Sanskruthi

Mahatma Gandhi once said, “Earth provides enough to satisfy every man's needs, but not every man’s greed”. While the men of the greedy corporates sharpened their axes to cut the trees in the Himalayan forests, the men and women of the villages rushed to the forest to save their beloved trees. They embraced the trees, ready to sacrifice their life to save the forests, as a mother would embrace her child to save him or her from the pangs of a tiger and take the wrath herself. (Agarwal, 1975). The villagers of the Himalayan valleys were led by Shri Chandi Prasad Bhatt, in the movement, which would be called the “Chipko Movement”. It would be no exaggeration to call this, the “Birth of the Environmental Movement” in India.

Born on 23 June 1934, Chandi Prasad Bhatt is the pioneer of the Chipko Andolan, which literally means “movement to embrace”. Chandi Prasad Bhatt, born and bred in the Himalayan valleys, came from a family that struggled to make ends meet. Upon completing his education, he joined the Garhwal Motor Owners’ Union (GMOU) and became quite popular there for his honesty and hardwork. During his employment at GMOU, he had the opportunity to interact with eminent Gandhians and social activists who had made visits to the hills. One interaction that left an everlasting impact on Bhatt was with Jayaprakash Narayan. His Sarvodaya movement was at its peak then and he ruled the hearts of the young (Pant, 2011). He was greatly influenced by Jayaprakash Narayan; however, a major source of inspiration was Man Singh Rawat, a prosperous businessperson in Garhwal, who resigned his government job to join the Sarvodaya movement. Bhatt gave up his job in 1960 after months of exploring the hills and forests, as part of the Sarvodaya movement. He dedicated his life after many exhilarating experiences, to the service of people.

In 1964, he instituted the Dashauli Gram Swarajya Mandal (Society for Village Self-Rule) to organize fellow villagers in Gopeshwar for employment near their homes in forest-based industries; making wooden implements from ash trees and gathering and marketing herbs for ayurvedic medicine (Bhatt, Chandi Prasad, 1982). His understanding of the hills and forests deepened. He was aware of the hardships

of village life, but experiences through Dashauli Gram Swarajya Mandal increased his awareness about the issues related to forest produce and people's rights. He knew what the forests meant to the people of the Himalayan region, but activities conducted through DGSM exposed him further to the populations' dependency on the forests for livelihood and also preservation of their culture and traditions (Chipko Movement: An excerpt from the film "Reviving Faith", 2018). He believed that everyone has the same right to enjoy unfettered sunlight, fresh air and unpolluted water.

The Dashauli Gram Swarajya Mandal, led by Bhatt, played a seminal role in the origins of the Chipko movement; the technique itself was suggested by Bhatt (Guha, 2007). The DGSM undertook several environmental restoration activities, organized men and women in tree planting and protection programmes. One among these movements was the Chipko movement. This movement first began in March 1973, when representatives from a sports goods factory marched into Gopeshwar to mark and eventually cut down 10 ash trees, which were allotted to the company by the State Forest Department. The representatives went on with their plan, in spite of the villagers' polite requests. That evening, Bhatt proposed to the villagers an idea, which would protect the forests from deforestation. Inspired by the Gandhian principle of non-violence, the villagers moved to the forest and embraced the trees. "Should anybody try to fell a tree, the Chipko agitator threatens to hug it" (Agarwal, 1975). This unique, simple and admirable movement spread to other areas, giving rise to more Chipko agitators. The movement reached its peak when contractors who reached the forest near Reni, taking advantage of the fact that men folk of the village were away protesting against the auction of forests were faced by the women of Reni, led by Gaura Devi. The Chipko movement transformed into not just an environmental movement but also, a movement for women empowerment.

During the Indo-Chinese conflict in 1962, Indian engineers built a network of roads through the hills, for ease in transport and communication. The people of the hills welcomed this and the increasing commercial and economic opportunities, with hopes of achieving economic development. Contrary to their expectations, contractors who had their eye on the forests with rich timber and deodar began the process of deforestation. The roads that promised freedom from economic backwardness became a matter of concern for the people of the hills. Deforestation led to increased likeliness of landslides, climate change, drying up of perennial streams and decreased productivity of land. For the people living in the plains, deforestation increased the silt deposits in reservoirs and the incidence of floods. Another reason

that inspired the movement, was the massive floods in the Alakananda valley, in 1970 that affected an area of 400km, owing to large-scale deforestation. This, along with the slow replacement of broad-leaf forests (by economically important species like pine) which led to the disastrous effects on cultivation and water supply, inspired the villagers to join the movement (Agarwal, 1975).

Chandi Prasad Bhatt has said, “Saving trees is only the first step in the Chipko movement. Saving ourselves is the real goal.” (Agarwal, 1975). When the Chipko movement started, one of the main demands made

to the Government was for the Government to accept an industrial policy that favoured the forest-based cottage industries. They demanded that the stages of processing forest produce like timber and herbs be handed over to the cottage industries in the region since large-scale industries are not ecologically and economically viable in the area. The capital-intensive technologies aping the western developmental models have deprived the people of the forests and hills in India from development. The model leaves the cottage and small-scale industries in a wreck and the hills become exporters of labour to the plains, either as domestic aides or recruits to the army (Agarwal, 1975).

Chandi Prasad Bhatt’s non-violent movement exemplifies the highest traditions of Gandhian constructive work (Guha, 2007). His courage to stand up for the forests and hence, the people whose lives depended on the forests paved the way for environmental movements in India. Him and his fellow villagers did not sit in hope that the government would correct their policies, but “embraced” the spirit of Satyagraha and acted on their own. The Ramon Magsaysay Award Foundation awarded Bhatt, the prestigious Ramon Magsaysay Award for Community Leadership in 1982 recognizing “his inspiration and guidance of Chipko Andolan, a unique, predominantly women’s environmental movement, to safeguard wise use of the forest.” (Bhatt, Chandi Prasad, 1982). In the year 2005, the Government of India conferred upon him the honour of Padma Bhushan.

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