

Nakshalbari College



Department of Political Science
Topic: Gandhian Theory of State
Presented by: Mampi Khatun

- ▶ In Gandhi's assessment, the state (Western type) was the symbol of violence
- ▶ in concentrated form. In order to ensure allegiance from the citizens the state
- ▶ (which means its authority) applies coercion or violent measures mercilessly.
- ▶ Once he said "the individual has a soul but the state is a soulless machine,
- ▶ the state can never be weaned away from violence to which it owes its
- ▶ existence". In other words, Gandhi treated both state and violence or
- ▶ coercion synonymous. He further says that there is a state but not violence
- ▶ or coercion in any form cannot be imagined.

- ▶ He gathered experience in South Africa that more and more power to the
- ▶ state meant more and more violence or greater amount of coercion. In the
- ▶ name of the maintenance of law and order the South Africa's white
- ▶ government acquired enormous power and this led to the ruthless
- ▶ administration, exploitation and curtailment of individuals' liberty.

- ▶ He once said that a political organisation based on violence would never
- ▶ receive his approval. Rather, he is always afraid of such an organisation.
- ▶ What he felt about the Western state system is quite explicit in a comment
- ▶ which he made, “I look upon an increase in the power of the state with
- ▶ greatest fear, because although while apparently doing good by minimising
- ▶ exploitation, it does the greatest harm to mankind by destroying individuality
- ▶ which is at the root of progress”.

- ▶ From the above analysis it is absolutely clear that Gandhi rejected the state
- ▶ of Western model on the ground that it represented violence or coercion.
- ▶ Now the question is why did he oppose violence so much? The modern state,
- ▶ according to Gandhi, was about to destroy individuality—that individual
- ▶ freedom and spontaneous urge to work.

- ▶ Here Gandhi appears to us as a great individualist philosopher. The two
- ▶
- ▶ great utilitarian philosophers—Bentham (1748-1832) and J. S. Mill (1806-
- ▶
- ▶ 1872)—wanted to put curb upon the activities of the state to enhance the
- ▶
- ▶ quantum of freedom of the individuals. The state, prescribed by Bentham
- ▶
- ▶ and Mill, is called limited state. Both Bentham and J. S. Mill did not
- ▶ approve
- ▶
- ▶ coercion for demanding allegiance from the individual's.

- ▶ But Gandhi appears to us as more aggressive. Under any circumstances the
- ▶ individual's freedom cannot be sacrificed. Gandhi's love for individual's
- ▶ freedom ranks him with the great anarchist philosophers (we shall discuss
- ▶ his anarchism later on). The central idea is that to Gandhi state is an
- ▶ undesirable political organisation because of its close connection with
- ▶ violence.

Sovereignty of State:

- ▶ Gandhi was not interested at all in building up a comprehensive and well-
- ▶ argued political theory. He was a mass leader, philosopher and freedom
- ▶ fighter. On various issues and situations he expressed opinions which
- ▶ constitute certain aspects of political theory and state sovereignty is such a
- ▶ theory. In Western political thought, state sovereignty is a much talked theory
- ▶ and large number of scholars and philosophers has dealt with this concept.
- ▶ Bodin and Hobbes are chief among them.

- ▶ Mahatma Gandhi was an effective leader in India. He was a progressive
- ▶ thinker also. Gandhiji always always wanted to adopt different cultures. He
- ▶ supported western and eastern both cultures and tradition. So in this way
- ▶ this thinking off course effect in every states also. Because India is an huge
- ▶ country so there live different cultures different traditions and different
- ▶ religions also. So, Gandhian this theory is very very important for a state.
- ▶ Gandhi ji also supported freedom, equality, justice for each and every
- ▶ persons so it does effect on a state, because there lives several persons and
- ▶ every person needs to be free.

Thank You

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