CHAPTER - V

THE ROLE OF PUBLIC OPINION IN GANDHIAN STRATEGIES
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The success of non-violent strategies for the resolution of conflicts depends upon public opinion. The modern peace movements, too, seek the support of the people for their programmes of maintaining peace. This chapter, therefore, discusses, the role of public opinion for establishing peace.

It is true that people all over the world are becoming conscious of the military and the non-military threats which surround them. It is also a fact that the recent intermediate nuclear force reduction treaty to cut 3% of nuclear warheads is a step towards world peace. But, then, the operational 97% of nuclear warheads and highly powerful conventional weapons are still available to the powerful nations of the world as a protection against aggression. In this situation, the growing influence of the masses is very necessary and desirable for the good of humanity. "Mass Opinion", wrote the noted American journalist, Walter Lippman, "has acquired mounting power in this century. It has shown itself to be a dangerous master of decisions when the stakes are life and death".¹

The emergence of peace movements has raised the validity and efficacy of the non-violent strategies. For

they have not only used these methods but are trying to develop them in the light of new conditions and circumstances. People all over the world are engaged in discussing issues which are before the framers of the policies of their governments, besides their involvement in directing the foreign policies of the states. Apart from regional issues the debate on atomic energy is also a part of the greater debate which is going on all over the world and in which the United States and Soviet Union are the major protagonists. If the peace activists can win this debate, the statesmen have no choice but to surrender to the will of the people.

The power of public opinion has recently increased as a result of rapidly increasing population; their geographic concentrations in the cities where large mobs, crowds and assemblages have made possible the speeding up of the opinion process; the development of the means of communication especially of printing by which tracts, pamphlets and posters can be duplicated in large numbers.²

Gandhi himself acknowledged the role of press in generating public opinion. Indian Opinion, the Weekly Newsletter which he started in South Africa was a most useful and potent weapon for him in the struggle there. Young India, Navajivan and Harijan played the same role for him in India.

In this context, the press, the radio and the television not only keep the decision makers in touch with public opinion but also play an important role in building up public opinion. However, the role of public opinion, according to Powell, "depends on the distribution, forms and expressions of power and freedom in any society in any place at any time." In Lasswell's view, "the open interplay of opinion and policy is the distinguishing mark of popular rule." An opinion, we will say, is "an implicit verbal response or 'answer' that an individual gives in response to a particular stimulus.
situation in which some general question is raised.⁵

In fact the role of public opinion penetrates deep into our social fabric; it determines how we shall allow our governors to rule; how we shall establish and shape political, social and economic institutions; how we shall have the community function and change with changing circumstances and need.⁶ Some waves of opinion originate with the public at large; a dramatic event will produce a wide and emotional response and a demand for immediate action.⁷

Public opinion in any age is far more powerful than the power of any individual. Machiavelli aptly referred to it as the voice of God. There comes a point, says Rousseau in the 'Social Contract', "at which the obstacles in the way of their (men's) preservation in the state of nature show their power of resistance to be greater than the resources at the disposal of each individual for his maintenance in that state. That primitive condition can then subsist no longer; and the human race would perish

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unless it changed its manner of existence. And so with the movement of decision to Washington and Moscow and with the growth in global foreign policy, it is believed that public opinion can be an effective weapon in easing tension in the world and progressive realisation of disarmament. On subjects like peace, war hazards, peaceful co-existence people think in similar terms all the world over, particularly on issues facing humanity. History holds testimony to the fact that public opinion showed its efficacy in several critical situations. The League of Nations crystallised the idea of the hold of public opinion, one of the leading ideas the League had to work in public and to give wide publicity to its activities, marking the dawn of open diplomacy. This can be read from the draft of its constitution. According to it, "International peace and security could be achieved by the prescription of open, just and honourable relations between nations." Thus, the League relied upon the influence of public opinion on international relations. Woodrow Wilson called the league "the court of public opinion," which further tempted the enforcement of

10. Ibid., p. 30.
Kellogg Briand Pact (1928) and the decisions of the permanent court of International Justice. International law, too, derives its strength from world public opinion. A universal bond of feeling unites all men and all people on the question of peace and welfare. So any violation of the standard of this world public opinion would call forth spontaneous reactions on the part of humanity for in view of the hypothetical similarity of all conditions, all men would fear that what happens to one group might happen to any group. The new technological innovations have shrunk the geographical distances. One explosion of atom bomb on Japan is still remembered by the world over as 'Hiroshima Day' reminding the fellow country about war hazards demanding 'No More Hiroshima'. Willy Brandt quotes in his book "True Co-existence is today the only alternative to atomic war and thus to the suicide of mankind. As we want to uphold world peace, more still, win it, we must make co-existence our own real cause in the consciousness of everybody". Because it shows the spirit of survival in the materialistic world. Though the atom bomb is the ultimate of brute

force, yet, as Gandhi pointed out, "behind the death-dealing bomb there is the human hand that releases it, and behind that still, is the human heart that sets the hand in motion". This means that the final battle for the survival of civilization and perhaps of the human race itself has to be fought in the psyche of man which is, "in the last resort the soul is the place of origin of all action, and therefore, of everything which happens by the will of man". The good spirit of humanity is challenged as never before. It is now a question of existence or non-existence. As Pyarela observes, "If we could control the psyche of the individual, who manipulates atomic power, it should give us the power to control the diabolical power which the run away science of man threatens to unleash".

In fact, the abilities to control psyche is far more important than development of the instrument of war. John Gunther in his Inside Europe points out that "Arms and ammunition, tanks and aeroplanes are destroyed every day in modern warfare at a rate which is incomprehensible.

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New models and designs are invented at such a feverish speed that armaments become obsolete before they are long in use. For it is not enough to manufacture them at a rapid rate or in large numbers; they must also be superior in destructive capacity to the enemy's armament. 16 Even an American authority on serial warfare admits in the words of S. Paul Johnstone, "Military design progress follows a zigzag course — one side or the other obtaining a temporary advantage, shortly followed by improvement of design by the other side." 41** But world public opinion can be very helpful in preventing the nations from adopting such a destructive and doubtful course.

Response to public opinion can be seen in the form of regional groupings or the progress so far made in a north-south dialogue. It acts like "collective non-violence which differs from solitary non-violence in that it can become contagious. The ordinary mortal will admire a saint in so far as he believes himself incapable of adopting the saint's conduct. But the

* Reference in 1937 to the cost of rearmament on which many nations had launched before the war and in anticipation of it.

17. Harijan, September 8, 1946, p. 298.
** Most military officers agree that if Napoleon should return to Europe today with the finest of his troops, he would be defeated by any second rate power, say Hungary or Rumania. Present days armies have pushed Napoleon's style of warfare back to the kindergarten."
example of a whole people will sweep him along with it almost against his will." The efficacy of Gandhi's satyagraha mostly depended upon the force of public opinion. His non-violence generated new enthusiasm among the masses in the nationalist movement. In modern warfare, it has raised new hopes of survival of humanity as preparations are going on for the D-day (Dooms) i.e. Third World War and it would not be wrong to say that 'power' aspect has never brought peace to mankind. It affirms Gandhi's faith that 'Ahimsa never fails'. It has shown the way to the world as is evident from the observation of a European friend who wrote to him as follows a few days before his assassination:

"After carefully studying Roy Walker's thrilling story of your admirable work (Sword of Gold) I was satisfied that, life-long as your struggle for non-violence had been, your unlimited devotion had met with success,

18. Lanza del Vasto, Return to the Source, (New York: Schocken, 1972), p. 120.

* He meant by this, particularly the world as a human totality, and humanity has to be accepted as an ideal totality without exceptions. The ideal of non-violence can be realized says Bharatan Kumarappa, the publisher of many of Gandhi's works, only when individuals feel themselves to be united as the members of a family in a bond of love. Everything that divide or which separates men is harmful for the realization of this goal. (Towards Non-violent Socialism, Preface, p. III). For the non-violent person, all the world is one family". (Tendulkar, op.cit., Vol. V, p. 377), (Bharatan Kumarappa (ed.) Towards Non-violent Socialism (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1957), Preface, p. iii).
at least as far as India's leaders and masses were concerned, and the fact that Britain retired from India in apparent goodwill and friendship, seemed to bear out the hope that appreciation of non-violence was no longer restricted to your own country. The first breach into the thick walls of violence seemed made, and the prospects for humanity seemed to have grown more lucid than ever.\textsuperscript{19} This is what Gandhi wants to communicate as it can't be imposed or preached without feeling the air of it. Hitherto attempts to abolish war have mainly taken the form of endeavours to do away with the implements with which it is waged. But non-violence as a weapon can go deep into the hearts of the people and can raise the conflict to a higher level.

In fact, public opinion represents a vitally important deterrent force especially when united. For, it is known to the parties to the dispute that the threat or the use of force would be universally condemned. For

\textsuperscript{19} Harijan, January 11, 1948, p. 504.
instance, in the case of Egypt or Hungary, the world public opinion exerted so great a pressure that the powers concerned could not remain indifferent. Powerful governments can be compelled for total disarmament, if there is a strong public opinion. In most of the countries people lend their support to their governments in the race of armaments mainly because they have misleading notions of patriotism and also because they do not fully understand the consequences of the race for armaments. Increasing mobilization of opinion has at times tried to prevent conflicts. In response to genocide in East Pakistan in 1971 and the War in Indo-China, there arose a strong public protest in America largely initiated

* Society's most forceful and eloquent voices (i.e. professional actions). During April 1982, 200 doctors met in Great Britain for the second Conference of International Physicians for the prevention of Nuclear War. Focussing on the medical aspects of nuclear war, they called for an immediate halt to further deployment of nuclear weapons, saying there would be no remedy for the foreseeable medical consequences of nuclear war. Such a war, the physicians declared, would kill millions of people, while the destruction of health care facilities and the ensuing chaos would expose others to prospects of prolonged agony and slow death. (New York Times, 4 April 1982), Meeting in Virginia, another group of physicians from eleven nations appealed to presidents Reagan and Leonid Brezhnev to end the nuclear arms race. The results of nuclear war, they reasoned, would be a medical catastrophe impossible to treat (New York Times, 25 March 1981) and recently approximate 1000 physicists from Britain and 500 from America have called for the boycott of nuclear weapon in the coming time.
by a section of society called a 'Movement for New Society' in alliance with other such peace organisations over the shipment of military aid. The peace movements all over the world mostly rely on public opinion for their programmes of resistance to war efforts.

The world-wide organised phenomenon of peace movements starts from 19th century (Though their historic role is traced from eleventh century). Nonetheless, it

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* The historic role of these organisations and movement is traced from eleventh century. They originally began to question the morality as well as the legitimacy of war. They showed the way not only by words but deeds as well. Obviously the need to have peace and ethics has been with society for over two and a half millennia. The truce of God which grew out of the pax Dei and was first put forward at the Synod of Elne in 1027 had prohibited all acts of private warfare for certain period. In the olden times the sermons of prophets, whether Christian, Buddhist or Hindu, held war as absolutely wrong.

In the fourteenth century Dante proposed a world empire for eliminating war which we can well compare with to-day's world Government proposition. To further widen the cult, in 1815, three peace societies were found in the United States, the first in New York by David Low Dodge, followed independently by a Massachusetts society formed by Noah Worcester and one in Ohio by two Quakers. The most action-oriented peace society in America was formed in 1828 which has taken war in broader terms, thus condemning offensive as well as
defensive war. It aroused public attention in 1843 and adopted resolution demanding peace by effective propaganda against war and by putting limitations on the manufacture and sale of armaments. It further got support in 1848 on issues ranging from opposition to the Mexican War to the slavery question, which was a burning issue among protestant middle class communities in the cities and towns during the 1850's. A series of international Congresses were organised to direct public attention to the programme of early peace movement. The first of these Congresses was held in London (1843), Second in Paris (1849). In 1851, the third and the last International Peace Congress was held in London in which eleven countries represented. In addition to the usual declarations, an anti-imperialist note was introduced, in a resolution declaring that nations making war on weak tribes should be designated "Strong but not Civilized".

In 1878, the protest movement gained more relevance with the proposals that peace societies in various countries be federated, it marked a step toward more effective organisation. A conference of representatives from workmen's organisations from England, France and Italy was held in Paris in the same year, to discuss peace movements proposals with added disarmament issues. However, the peace movements had always been a minority movement attracting Protestant Christian Community on the one hand, and the small socialist and radical groups on the other. Their number increased. Van Eck established the Netherlands peace society in 1870. Edward Lowen formed a peace committee in Berlin in 1874. The first Italian E.T. Moneta established peace society in 1878, Dansk Fredsforeningen founded a Scandinavian peace society in Denmark in 1882. An anti-conscription campaign in Belgium was led in 1881 by two pacifists. In 1880 Hodgson Pratt formed the International arbitration and peace association which set up branches in nine European countries. In these hectic years of peace implementation, all the peace movements of the globe were being brought into closer touch with Parliaments and Govts, and had wide influence upon Govt. machinery. New interest awakened with new additions step by step. The first women's peace league was established in 1895. The Nobel Peace Prize was set up in 1897. Thus, the century closed with 425 peace organisations in existence all over the world, if not more.

will not be erroneous to state that the concept of a warless world is a product of the 20th century. The First World War, at the time of which no one could have imagined the power of the bombs that destroyed Hamburg and Dresden (not to mention the bomb that was dropped over Hiroshima), had given enough of an idea as to how much suffering modern-war can inflict on helpless living creatures, and how hazardous it can be to life and civilization as a whole.

During the escalation of World War First, public opinion in Europe changed tremendously. The most active citizen of England to voice against conscription and war was Bertrand Russell.* America tried its best to stay out of the

* His reflections are an eloquent testimony to the unbreakable spirit of human freedom. Even in the preparation of an authentic verdict against atomic weapons Bertrand Russell secured Einstein's consent and cooperation as they had interesting correspondence with each other on this very subject. The interesting valuable piece Russell wrote to Einstein on 5th April 1955, "I have been turning over in my mind and discussing with various people, the best steps for giving effect to the feeling against war among the great majority of the men of science. I think the first step should be a statement by men of the highest eminence ... I enclose a draft of such a statement, and I very much hope you will be willing to sign it...." Einstein's reply was dated 11 April 1955. I am gladly willing to sign your excellent statement. Einstein signed the statement two days before he was fatally stricken and died a week after he had given his signature on 18 April 1955. It was the last public action of Einstein's life. "The Russell-Einstein Declaration" on the grave danger of nuclear arms to humanity was signed by seven scientists of whom five were like Russell and Einstein, Noble Prize winners. (Ronald W. Clark, The Life of Bertrand Russell, Great Britain: Widenfeld & Nicolson, 1975, pp. 539-44).
war due to its isolationist policy. Peace movements tried their best to encourage the sentiment against war. After the war when nations were busy with determining reparation and territorial dispositions at Versailles, Romain Rolland mobilized people and intellectuals to achieve the peace mission. The famous "declaration of the independence of the mind" on June 1919 was welcomed by leading intellectuals of the globe.

Between the two global wars peace movements were involved in propaganda work for the League of Nations and Naval Disarmament campaigns. The War Resisters League was also founded during this period. To enhance international relations for the promotion of peace mission other groups like The Federal Council of Churches along with the protest movements helped to collect 11,000,000 signatures urging the American government to initiate Anti-Armament proceedings.

The outcome of United Nations in 1945 shows the Universal appeal for healthy traditions followed by peace movements. As the technological advances came on the surface with atomic and thermonuclear bombs in late 50's

* The Declaration of peace mission was signed by some of the foremost artists and thinkers of that time, including Albert Einstein, Rabindra Nath Tagore, Anand Coomer-swamy, Maxim Gorky-Benedetto Croce, Upton Sinclair and Stefan Zweig. It stresses on the unity of mind and its unfaltering allegiance was to universal values.
and early 60's there were protests against the construction of such weapons. Scientists, Philosophers and a few bishops protested against nuclear testing in the pacific. Daniel Ellsberg pointed out that 1969 peace demonstration postponed the bombing of the Hanoi three years beyond President Nixon's original plan, and that when the 'Carpet Bombing' did occur, it lasted days not years. It is highly probable, too, that in 1969 the bombing would have been followed by an invasion of North Vietnam, and that the U.S. troops would have been protected by tactical nuclear weapons. Ellsberg, therefore, concluded that those who demonstrated against the war definitely saved hundreds of thousands of lives and probably a nuclear war as well. A former General, General de-Bollardiere actually sailed on a Green Peace Ship into the Mororea Test Zone in 1973 in order to prevent nuclear testing.

* As the weaponry advanced with new destructive innovations there were a drastic increase in the membership and activities of pacifists and radicals in the late 1950's. They developed techniques of non-violent resistance based partly on Gandhi's experience in India and partly on the situation in the United States.

** Carpet Bombing is a bombing which is made in a defined, restricted area.

But it evoked a real popular mass involvement in the summer of 1981 when the American government announced that a small town in Sicily, Comiso, had been chosen as site for the new weapons. It further created public interest with President Reagan's decision to continue the development of the Neutron Bomb. Thus, local protests in Sicily turned into national events. Because of the absence of a strategic debate and the pertinent expertise, the reaction of the public was dominated by emotions and fear. The protest turned into a mass movement with peace marches and peace rallies all over Italy. Certainly the aim of these movements are to eliminate Modern War.\textsuperscript{23} But this in fact is a logical product of a social system based on violence and injustice.\textsuperscript{24} The mere willingness to risk a war that can annihilate civilisation .... is a wickedness without parallel, a blasphemy against creation.\textsuperscript{25}

These tactics of developing a range of protest activities represent a marked shift from those of the late 1960's and 1970's. The significant shift to more direct action and populist politics can in future result in wide

\begin{Verbatim}
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., p. 195.
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scale planned campaigns of mass civil disobedience.
The technique is well reflected in remarks made by
Joan Ruddock, the campaign's national chairperson,
who has said: "CND is a democratic movement and
must respond to where the mass of the membership
wants to go. I can foresee a situation where people
would ask that the whole of the campaign be put behind
a particular form of direct action."26

The most significant new strategic ingredient
in Europe as described by Nigel Young is the European
Nuclear Disarmament, "which campaigns for nuclear free
Europe or a nuclear free Zone or Zones in Europe adding
the new dimension of Transnational linkage and non-
alignment to the nuclear disarmament movement". It
seeks to link the national unilaterist and multilaterist
groups into a common third force, transcending national
boundaries, bridging East and West with slogans like
"No Cruise, No SS-20s", or an end to NATO and the WARSAN
PACT a "Nuclear Free Zone" from Poland to Portugal" (or
"Atlantic to the Urals").27 Along with it a multitude of
local peace groups, such as Women Peace Action, Anti-
Cruise Missile Campaigns, European Disarmament and World

26. H. Devenport, CND Backs Growing Call ....... "The
27. Nigel Young, op. cit., p. 204.
Disarmament Peace groups have arisen. The CND (Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament) has now started the programme of mobilising public opinion behind the 'Ban the Bomb' Motto.

With the founding of the committee of 100 in 1960's, the CND which was earlier working as a pressure group developed into a huge mass movement. The popular will is reflected through the increasing membership due to new range of nuclear weapons, cruise and Trident, which according to the General Secretary, Bruce Kent, has increased from 3,000 national members in the beginning of 1980 to 25,000 by mid 1981. Group membership has also increased during the same period from about 100 to 1,000. These groups have a membership ranging from twenty to many hundreds of people.

The rapid growth of peace camps and campaigns for Nuclear Free Zones of CND in Britain is further evidence of direct action. Greenham Common is the first such most well-known camp. In Britain approximately 140 such zones

have peace camps at a number of existing and future missile sites.

It is believed that the peace movements with their opposition to nuclear weapon represent the idea of peace, equity and social responsibility of the citizens. It is a factual emotional appeal to the whole of humanity on moral grounds which invites public opinion from home and abroad for the transformation of society on social value. The physical scientists in America have long been concerned about the bomb. As a result there has been remarkable growth of an organisation called "Physicians for Social Responsibility". Similarly, there has come into existence American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), Women's International League For Peace and Freedom (WILPF) and the World Council of Churches, the Hiroshima Memorial Committee, The Ohio Peace Conversion Campaign and the Big Spring Peace Push. 30

Gandhi's commitment to non-violence and its technique for resolving all conflicts in society without resort to violence, have exercised tremendous influence over the peace movements. His reliance on non-violent dealings through verbal and action programmes implies

coming in close touch with humanity and listening to the sufferings of the aggrieved party. This is nothing but appeal to reasoning. As a result of the influence of Gandhi's non-violent resistance to any policy leading to war and violence, (which will be discussed in the next Chapter), a set of new groups of activists has emerged who are trying to create a new society free from war and injustice through education and constructive programmes. They made the news whenever they resisted the authorities for their warlike policies. They have shown remarkable resistance against acts pertaining to war that gives a clear picture to the world about hostile acts.

Here, Gandhi's approach to the problem of disarmament and his method of meeting aggression non-violently have received serious attention of the peace activists and peace theorists in Europe and America. Because powerful countries are feeling more disappointed with armament race. Gandhian peaceful solutions, therefore, are acquiring greater validity. That accounts for the greater role of the peace movements and peace activists in the west. Here, the first course of action rests on the values of people or the nation concerned. If these values are confused, contradictory and superficial, the strategy adopted will have the same contradictions and drawbacks. Thus, war can
only be prevented with certainty if mankind is united in setting up a non-violent forum for breaking the vicious circle of hostile moves and counter moves. But this is possible if the decision makers in the powerful countries are committed to absolute non-violence, i.e., when they have finally resolved that they would not resort to violence in any case. Once the fear of violence is removed and level of tension is reduced and more communication is received from the other side, there will be increased ability to perceive the international reality, which will further reduce tension. Joint undertakings are also favoured because psychological experiments have shown that the introduction of shared talks help in reducing hostility. These relations can heighten men's awareness of new interdependence among nations. There is an urgent need to reinforce this sense of interdependence and the essential unity of mankind to evade war efforts. The infinite threads that bind men together stem from their common humanity. We can quote the famous 'Quarantine', blockade of Cuba and war in Vietnam where the only incentive was the expectation of reciprocity otherwise consequences would have been disastrous. The legitimacy of this action can also be seen through association with others. The central task of 'Survival Diplomacy' in the Modern War is to
enlarge the area of cooperation in which both sides recognize mutual advantage and act upon them, otherwise we will have no choice but to live in a state of constant fear of death and destruction. No doubt, the two super powers politically or ideologically may be operating differently. But they do share some common interest not only for the promotion of certain kinds of stability and welfare but also for avoiding direct confrontation with each other so that actual war does not take place. Indeed, it is fair to say that super powers are today pursuing policies with a view to avoid the third global war. It is noted that when intermediate range missiles was the subject of agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union, the question of short missiles was also raised when agreement, on that too, seemed possible, the question of geographical location was brought up. The latest is the total ban on chemical weapons in the coming decade. But this requires one to one relationship to carry the programme in action. In this context, the non-violence of Gandhi is a clean break with the normal habits of mankind. He used it as an advance weapon in the ethical march of human thought to win the goodwill of the masses.