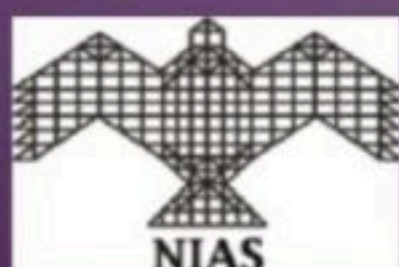


Anshuman Behera
Shailesh Nayak *Editors*


Gandhi in the Twenty First Century

Ideas and Relevance



 Springer

Editors

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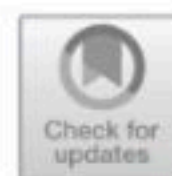
Abbreviations

| | |
|--------|---|
| AIHB | All India Handicrafts Board |
| AISA | All India Spinners Association |
| AIVIA | All India Village Industries Association |
| CAA | Citizenship Amendment Act |
| CAPART | Council for Advancement of People's Action and Rural Technology |
| CPI | Maoist-Communist Party of India-Maoist |
| CWMG | Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi |
| DPSP | Directive Principles of State Policy |
| GDP | Gross Domestic Production |
| GS | Gandhian Science |
| HDC | Handicraft Development Corporation |
| IIT | Indian Institute of Technology |
| INA | Indian National Army |
| J&K | Jammu and Kashmir |
| JNU | Jawaharlal Nehru University |
| KVIC | Khadi and Village Industries Commission |
| LDC | Less developed countries |
| MNREGA | Mahatma Gandhi Rural Employment Guarantee Act |
| NEP | National Education Policy |
| NPM | New Public Management |
| NRC | National Register of Citizens |
| OBC | Other Backward Caste |
| PSM | People's Science Movements |
| PWG | People's War Group |
| RTE | Right to Education |
| S&T | Science and technology |
| SASS | Swaraj, Antyodaya, Sarvodaya and Satyagraha |
| SBM | Swachh Bharat Mission |
| SDG | Sustainable Development Goals |
| ST | Scheduled Tribe |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Program |

| | |
|--------|--|
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| UNICEF | United Nations Children's Fund |
| UN | United Nations |
| WHO | World Health Organization |

Chapter 14

Dissent and Protest Movements in India: Revisiting Gandhi's Ideas of Peaceful Protest



Ambikesh Kumar Tripathi

Abstract For the last few years, dissents and protests are being seen almost everywhere in the world. Some of them were violent and occupation movements against consumerism, traditional institutions, and capitalism, with little success; while some were peaceful protests against racism, corruption, and the state's policies. Peaceful protests are often characterized as Gandhian movement; but many of such peaceful movement turns violent or disrupted from the notion of Gandhian dissent, for instance, Black Lives Matter movement—a protest against racism—in the US. Many peaceful protests are being organized in the name Gandhian way of dissent across the world without understanding Gandhi's eternal spirit of Satyagraha, and this has led to the flood of critiques against limits of success about it. Scholars of subaltern studies criticize Gandhian Satyagraha as surrender and subordination of poor and oppressed that can never pose real challenges to India's elites. But this is not reality. Gandhi's Satyagraha is based on the purity of soul and theory of persuasion. There is a kind of social construction, not enmity in Gandhian dissents. This research paper attempts to redefine the Gandhian notion of dissent and protest in the twenty-first century. It also analyses some contemporary so-called peaceful movements in India that have been labelled as Gandhian movements—whether they were or not?

Keywords Gandhi · Peaceful protest · Dissent · Satyagraha · Sedition · Non-violent resistance

Introduction

Anthologies on dissent and dissidence are not new; however, one could still comment and reflect on their timing and tonality. Going back to the early-twentieth century, when the choice was between 'a future or no future' (Hobsbawm, 1995) (An eminent Marxist historian from Britain, Eric J. Hobsbawm (1917–2012), having seen the rise of European Fascism in the early-twentieth century summed up the choice of every

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thinking individual, and thus his choice of being a Communist, as between ‘a world or no world’). George Orwell, a man of the Left, was learning to fragment the Left with capital L into several other lefts. This ‘othering’ was spatial, ideological, and even dissenting! Orwell, in *Homage to Catalonia* (1938) persistently makes observations that show his gripping disturbance with the Soviet action against Spain, and how in Soviet ‘totalitarian certainty’ of their worldview, nothing they did, could go wrong. The arrogant coherence of a worldview, which might or might not, accept that there are rival articulations of the world, distinct articulations of social order, regime, and political action, may end up collapsing different categories of dissent and dissidence into activism, crowd action, and sometimes, majoritarianism (Orwell, 1945, 1949). It is important to highlight that Orwell extends the observations of Catalonia in *Animal Farm* (1945), and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) which are about the dangers of arrogant coherence in worldviews. One led to the Stalinist purge, and the other to dystopian censorship and surveillance. Going back to the anthologies on dissent and their timings, let us gaze on the Indian case. In recent years, we received a flood of essays, compilations, and titles that suggested a celebratory tonality of dissent (Roy, 2020; Thapar, 2020; Vajpeyi, 2017). The implicit and explicit idea in this manifested authorial intent was to suggest that the Indian state was becoming ‘intolerant of dissent’. It started with a debate on ‘Indian Nationalism’, with original contributions on ‘what, when and how of Indian nationalism(s)’ appearing, while many anthologies were also slated (Thapar et al., 2016; Habib, 2017) The publications on universities as a site of dissent and public action debating nationalism and other categories were also at the foreground at the same time (Nair, 2017; Apoorvananda, 2018). The emphasis on timing is crucial here because dissent has been understood in different ways throughout the long political history of contemporary India, and before. For instance, historians like Romila Thapar would show a lineage of dissent and resistance from the times of Buddha, to date. Of course, they would also accentuate different phases, characteristics, and temporalities of dissent in its long history, but we need to ask why as an operative category and as an instrument of public action, dissent, and peaceful protests become more important in certain times than others? With the advent of political theorizing, at least in the Western school of political thought, in elite Greek intellectual tradition is typically believed that ordinary men are inadequate to rule themselves (Ober, 1998). Therefore, the persistence of Athenian popular rule presented a problem that how to explain a regime’s outward success based on the inherent wisdom and robust viability of non-elite citizens’ decisions? (Ober, 1998). Are we facing the same problem in modern parliamentary democracy today? It is only pertinent to ask the question because right at the forefront of any organized dissent, which presents itself as a Gandhian peaceful protest, dubbed as ‘*Grammar of Anarchy*’ (phrase used by Dr. B R Ambedkar in the Constituent Assembly in 1949) otherwise, elite intellectuals are omnipresent to make a case for the same. After all, who adjudges a protest as peaceful, or organized? Is it only the public action of the participants at large, or is it something else? Intellectual designs, may be? On the ‘*Grammar of Anarchy*’, as rightly articulated by Ambedkar, it is important to revisit his ideas. Bhimrao Ambedkar said in his speech to the Constituent Assembly on November 25, 1949, ‘We must forsake revolution’s deadly techniques. It entails that

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