



The global need of non-violent struggle around land rights: a path for change?

Synthesis of the online discussion.



From September 10th till October 1st, Ekta Parishad held on online discussion leading up to dialogue on non-violence at the global level, with 35 persons from 12 countries from September 27th until September 29th. The discussion was held on the Land Portal and several contributions from grassroots activists and researchers were received.

While focusing on non violent struggles, contributions to the discussion included **theoretical thoughts** and aspects as well as **examples of innovative applications of non-violence** in a campaign context.

Ekta Parishad National Office
Gandhi Bhavan, Shyamla Hills,
Bhopal 462 002
Madhya Pradesh, India
Tel: + +91 / 755 422 38 21

www.ektaparishad.com
info@ektaparishad.com

The online discussion was hosted by:





Theoretical aspects of non-violent action

Some contributors stress the fact that the nature of resistance is historically linked to the nature of oppression. In the case of land rights and access to natural resources it was suggested, that the structural violence cannot be fought with violence and that only non-violence provides a sustainable solution.

At the same time, numerous strengths of non-violence were identified. To begin with, non-violence is a way of action in which everyone can get involved. Especially, with regard to land rights which affect a community as a whole, non violent action allows everyone to be part of the struggle. In this context..many discussants emphasized that the empowerment of women is a necessary condition for non-violence to succeed. The by-product of such struggle is that women begin to hold leadership positions, and this is an important steps towards achieving equality between women and men..

Nevertheless, there were also critical contributions considering non-violence as an ineffective and passive way of acting. However the majority of activists and researchers, who contributed to the discussion, have themselves have experienced the methods of non-violence as useful. Rajgopal gave a useful aphorism: “between silence and violence, there is active non violence”. People who wrote in on the activist page and who contributed to the workshop agreed that dialogue is an important method in a democratic state, and this requires a lot of time and determination. The other point that was highlighted was the importance of non-violence as a way to give common voice to the marginalized in the society. Not only in relation with land issues but also regarding global struggles for social, economic and political justice in general active non violence has been considered to be a very important way to bring about change.

Ekta Parishad National Office
Gandhi Bhavan, Shyamla Hills,
Bhopal 462 002
Madhya Pradesh, India
Tel: + +91 / 755 422 38 21

www.ektaparishad.com
info@ektaparishad.com

The online discussion was hosted by:





Another essential point highlighted was the interconnection of all beings and how non-violence allows us to act on this connection. It has been suggested that violence and oppression emerges when we forget this interconnection. Non-violence connects us in contrast of violence which sunders us apart.

Finally, it has been argued that there is a discrepancy between the western and the non-western understanding of non-violence in a movement's context. The western point of view has been criticized for not thinking beyond tactics and strategy when it comes to non-violence. The superhuman effort to remain deeply non-violent, that is not to have anger or malice towards the one against who the action is being carried out seems to be missed out. Anger is of course the ferment of this attitude as it is normal that injustice causes anger and sometimes despair but the philosophy of non-violence requires channelizing this anger in a positive manner.

Examples of non-violent action

Jal Satyagraha, Madhya-Pradesh, India

The water level in Omkareshwar and Indira Sagar dams in the Narmada Valley has been illegally raised by the government causing submergence of large areas of land. For over two weeks, those people in Khandwa affected of the Omkareshwar project had been offering jal satyagraha by standing in neck deep water, demanding proper rehabilitation, compensation and a reduction in the level of dam waters. Finally, the Madhya Pradesh government agreed on compensating the villagers and meeting their requirements.



Ekta Parishad National Office
Gandhi Bhavan, Shyamla Hills,
Bhopal 462 002
Madhya Pradesh, India
Tel: + +91 / 755 422 38 21

www.ektaparishad.com
info@ektaparishad.com

The online discussion was hosted by:



Anti-nuclear struggle in Koodankulam, Tamil Nadu, India

The people in Koodankulam in Tamil Nadu fight for the control of the coastal area and its related resources. This anti-nuclear struggle offers a range of innovative non-violent popular actions. To begin with, people sitting and fasting in front of the church of the village. Recently they held a protest on the beach where they were standing in sea water and digging themselves in the sand. Furthermore, people continue to fence their village with the support of the youth to prevent police intrusion. The children from the villages write letters to the fellow children in countries from which nuclear technology is being exported to India. Additionally, children are holding press conferences on their right over coastal land and they raise questions of nuclear safety.

Land rights of the Adivasis in Bangladesh

Experiences from the non-violent movement for land rights of the Adivasis in Bangladesh show that change is possible through non-violent action. Much can be achieved through bringing the members of civil society into the discussion and dialogue. As the media, members from lawyers associations, academics and community organizations began to join the movement; the issue of land rights began to gather momentum. Very recently, such collective effort of the civil society has become partially successful. The government of Bangladesh has passed a land mark bill to repeal the act of Vested Property and has taken initiative to return those lands to its original owners.

Non-violence versus US Imperialism

In their article about non-violence versus US imperialism Jørgen Johansen, Brian Martin and Matt Meyer argue that armed struggle against US imperialism have been largely unsuccessful. On the basis of six case studies they demonstrated that non-violent popular action is a much more promising strategy. They have chosen the cases of the Vietnam War, nuclear weapons, East Timor, Iraq, Puerto Rico and the so-called Arab Spring to illustrate the potential of popular unarmed resistance to facets of the US imperial system.



Ekta Parishad National Office
Gandhi Bhavan, Shyamla Hills,
Bhopal 462 002
Madhya Pradesh, India
Tel: + +91 / 755 422 38 21

www.ektaparishad.com
info@ektaparishad.com

The online discussion was hosted by:





References for further information

- Burrowes, Robert J (1996): **The Strategy of Non-violent Defense: A Gandhian Approach** (Albany,
- Chenoweth, Erica and Maria J Stephan (2011): **Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Action** (New York: Columbia University Press).
- Epstein, Barbara (1993): **Political Protest and Cultural Revolution: Nonviolent Direct Action in the 1970s and 1980s** (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press).
- Fukuda, Chisako M (2000): **“Peace through Non-violent Action: The East Timorese Resistance Movement’s Strategy for Engagement”**, Pacifica Review, 12 (February): 17-31.
- Gelderloos, Peter (2007): **How Nonviolence Protects the State** (Cambridge, MA: South End Press).
- Johnstad, Petter Grahl (2010): **“Nonviolent Democratisation: A Sensitivity Analysis of How Transition Mode and Violence Impact the Durability of Democracy”**, Peace and Change, 35(3), July: 464-82.
- Lynd, Staughton (1966): **Nonviolence in America: A Documentary History** (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill).
- Martin, Brian (2008): **“How Nonviolence Is Misrepresented”**, Gandhi Marg, 30(2), Jul-Sep: 235-57.
- Meyer, Matt (2008): **“Negating Nonviolence: A Review Essay”**, WIN Magazine, Winter.
- Meyers, William (2000): **Nonviolence and Its Violent Consequences** (Gualala, CA: III Publishing), <http://www.iiipublishing.com/nonviolence.pdf>
- Sharp, Gene (1973): **The Politics of Nonviolent Action** (Boston: Porter Sargent).
- A Pedagogy of Non-Violent Social Action** Based on the work of Ekta Parishad, A Resource Manual for Trainers, September 2010, Ekta Parishad
- <http://www.nonviolent-conflict.org/>

Ekta Parishad National Office
Gandhi Bhavan, Shyamla Hills,
Bhopal 462 002
Madhya Pradesh, India
Tel: + 91 / 755 422 38 21

www.ektaparishad.com
info@ektaparishad.com

The online discussion was hosted by:

