**Gandi & Godse**

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On October 2, 2023, the United Nations observed the ‘International Day of Non-Violence’ which was also the birthday of Mahatma Gandhi. The day was established on June 15, 2007, according to United Nations General Assembly Resolution A/RES/61/271. The UNGA resolution states that the day is an occasion to disseminate the message of non-violence through education and public awareness and to reaffirm the desire for a culture of peace, tolerance, understanding and non-violence.
Mr. Antonio Guterres, the Secretary General of the United Nations said that we should remember Gandhi’s wise counsel that our ability to reach unity in diversity will be the beauty and the test of our civilisation, reiterating that we should heed his words today and re-commit ourselves to this essential purpose. President Joseph Biden said during G20 meeting that Mahatma Gandhi’s message of non-violence, respect, and truth matters today more than ever and should continue to inspire the world and be the basis of the bond between countries. President Biden also said on August 15, 2022, that the United States joins the people of India to honour its democratic journey, guided by Mahatma Gandhi’s enduring message of truth and non-violence. Professor Gene Sharp, a leading scholar on non-violent resistance articulated it the best when he said that nonviolent action is not an attempt to avoid or ignore conflict and it is one response to the problem of how to act effectively in politics. He further said that there are three main categories of non-violent action: (1). protest and persuasion, including marches and vigils; (2). non-cooperation; and (3). non-violent intervention, such as blockades and occupations.
We do not doubt for a minute what both Mr. Guterres and President Biden meant when they paid tribute to Mahatma Gandhi. We simply want to say that both leaders must also heed to ‘wise counsel’ of Mahatma Gandhi when he said on July 29, 1947, that he was not going to suggest to the Maharaja to accede to India and not to Pakistan. Adding that the real sovereigns of the state are the people, and the ruler is a servant of the people.
Mahatma Gandhi also said that if the people of Kashmir are in favour of opting for Pakistan, no power on earth can stop them from doing so. But they should be left free to decide for themselves. When Mahatma Gandhi was asked during his visit to Kashmir, what would happen to Kashmir after independence, he responded that what would happen to Kashmir would depend on you, the people of Kashmir. When Pandit Prem Nath Bazaz, one of the most prominent Kashmiri historians and journalists asked Mahatma Gandhi in 1934, what the Maharaja of Kashmir should do when the majority of his subjects were Muslims, Gandhi responded via letter on May 5, 1934 that while knowing that Kashmir is predominantly Musalman (Muslims), it is one day bound to become a Musalman State. Therefore, a Hindu prince can rule it only by not ruling i.e., doing as the Musalmans want him to do or by expedient is more than one can judge.
Secondly, we would like to remind Mr. Guterres and President Biden that the assassin of Mahatma Gandhi, Nathuram Godse was a member of Rashtriya (RSS) the host of G20 summit and the Prime Minister of India, Maranda Modi is also a member of RSS. What a commonality between the two! Thirdly, Ms. Sadhvi Pragya Singh Thakur, member of RSS and elected BJP member of Parliament said in December 2022 without any ambiguity that Mahatma Gandhi’s assassin Nathuram Godse is a “desh bhakt” (Nationalist). She said that Nathuram Godse was a patriot, is a patriot, and will remain a patriot and those who call him a terrorist should look within and they will get a reply to this election.
From the above discussion, it becomes clear that the Modi administration discreetly wants to put its foot on both camps. Image of Mahatma Gandhi to the world community and that of Nathuram Godse to the Indian public. What an art of subterfuge!
Lastly, the reports of various international NGOs and United Nations Special Rapporteurs show that the killing fields in Kashmir continue to be sown with the blood of women, children, and young boys. The United Nations and the United States cannot simply stand by and allow India to continue to kill, torture and maim the people of Kashmir in this way. This must not stand. Perhaps now is the time for Antonio Guterres and President Biden to act on the vision of Gandhi and bring peace to the region of South Asia in general and Kashmir in particular. They should realise that the time to merely try to defuse the tension between India and Pakistan is over. Now is the time to address the root cause of the tensions between New Delhi and Islamabad — the unresolved dispute over Kashmir.