



International Journal of Political Science and Public Administration

Publisher's Home Page: <https://www.svedbergopen.com/>



Case Study

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The Quest for Justice from a Gandhian Perspective: A Case Study of Ekta Parishad

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Article Info

Volume 1, Issue 3, December 2021

Received : 12 August 2021

Accepted : 19 November 2021

Published : 05 December 2021

doi: [10.51483/IJPSPA.1.3.2021.15-21](https://doi.org/10.51483/IJPSPA.1.3.2021.15-21)

Abstract

The quest for justice is universal and is part of every person's being. We have seen many countries, communities', cultures and individuals finding or losing their existence in the name of justice and injustice respectively. The world has also noticed an inextricable link between injustice and conflict in the economic, social, political, religious as well as environmental spheres. In the liberal framework that primarily talks about individual justice, these realms are seen in isolation from each other leading to a narrow view of injustices. The conflicts due to injustices in the present liberal capitalistic world have been escalating also because of a rising eschewing of morals and ethics along with increasing chasm between reason and emotion, mind and soul, science and art and individual and community. It is because of such binaries embedded in the liberal framework that a truly just order is difficult to be established.

Keywords: Conflict Transformation, Gandhian Social Movements, Swaraj, Ekta Parishad, Liberal Justice System

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1. Introduction

As the title of the paper suggests, it primarily aims to understand the concept of justice from a Gandhian perspective. It asserts that when seen from Gandhian lens justice encapsulates a deeper, complex and substantive sense of what is just. It focuses keeps morality and humanity at its core. The paper further argues that the present liberal framework of justice limits itself to conflict resolution rather than conflict transformation which the Gandhian understanding of justice focuses upon. To present an empirical example of how the seeds of Gandhian conception of justice are being sowed in the present century, the paper elucidates the findings made by the research during the field work on a Gandhian social movement called Ekta Parishad.

2. Analyzing the Loopholes in Liberal Justice System

This section explains that justice system in a liberal capitalist context is influenced by values that promote dualism, monolithic rationality, and individualism, and state supremacy, suppression of dissent and restriction of collective consciousness. All these indicate towards how liberal justice system is limited to conflict resolution that gives primacy to procedural and material basis of justice only eschewing the substantive and moral premises of the same.

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The present justice system influenced by liberal capitalism indicates towards dividing the entire society on the basis of dualism. Gandhi could foretell that how modernity, capitalism and western framework would ultimately be leading to a nasty game of power introducing hierarchies, dependence and a kind of submission and slavery in the name of freedom. In this context, Gandhi writes that,

This civilization takes note neither of morality nor of religion. Its votaries calmly state that their business is not to teach religion. Some even consider it to be a superstitious growth. Others put on the cloak of religion, and prate about morality. But, after twenty years' experience, I have come to the conclusion that immorality is often taught in the name of morality.Civilization seeks to increase bodily comforts, and it fails miserably even in doing so.¹

Today, we see Gandhi's apprehensions coming true. Stark binaries are visible between human and nature, mind and body as well as between modern and traditional values. Hierarchies in every sphere have been normalized either implicitly or explicitly. In the name of 'national interest', 'development', 'welfare', people are being forced to submit silently and accept injustice without any dissent. Putting the matter more explicitly Prof. Anuradha Veeravalli argues that,

As a consequence of the necessary surrender of self-governance for security and peace, dissent is not merely a suspect but a criminal act under the law of the modern nation state. All pretensions of 'deliberative democracy' evaporate as soon as the state is challenged with the possibility of self-governance, whether individual or communitarian, economic, political or social.²

The above argument highlights that what we have achieved is formal freedom and there is a long way to go, till we realize true Swaraj. I believe that it was in his project of Swaraj, that Gandhi had visualized a holistic form of justice balancing the material as well as spiritual aspect. It focused on an inclusive and pluralist conception of justice. But, the modern state has tried to focus on homogenizing the differences in a way that they serve its own interests. It has suppressed plurality of voices and conscience so as to give ascendancy to a "monolithic rationality with the vision of a caricaturized civil society resounding with the din of political correctness in the midst of a violent war fought by the self-proclaimed angels of rationality and the equally self-proclaimed defenders of the faith."³ The matter of monolithic rationality can be better understood when the rational choice theory that the liberals adopt.

Adherents of rational choice theory claim that through only a few relatively simple theoretical assumptions, this theory can explain actions across a wide range of situations. It is such 'relatively simple theoretical assumptions' that are appropriated by the dominant, capitalist Western forces in a liberal framework in order to divide different choices into 'rational' and 'irrational'. Such an appropriation is not just to this simple end of dividing the choices into two different categories but the ulterior motive behind it indicates towards a process of inclusion and exclusion, recognition and domination of various sections of society and different countries in the world.

Rational, Self-interested, utility maximizing human individual forms the primary actor of rational choice theory. Such description of an individual fits perfectly with the definition of the individual in a capitalist liberal framework as well. In rational choice theory such an assumption is argued for by saying that it saves from the domination of overarching social structures. It is assumed that human individuals are creative subjects, freely constituting its actions and thereby constituting and reconstituting social relations in the process. This presumption clearly shows the undermining of the influence of social relations in the choice-making by the creative individual subject.

Such an intolerance towards different ways of thinking, means of action and basis of techniques in making choices that does not fit better into the rational choice framework is due to the assigning of a paradigmatic status to the assumption of an actor being rational. As already mentioned, the rational choice theory view world from the lens of rationality and irrationality only, due to which any deviations, inconsistencies from the narrow assumptions of rationality are simply put under 'non-rational'. By taking optimizing behavior of an individual to be rational, it does not mean to deny the existence of other forms of behavior but recognizes them as 'deviations'. It tries to push such deviations which can be considered as something not normal towards the model of ideal rational actors. From this theory, it can be observed how the liberal system relies on a certain meaning of power that is hierarchical, exclusionary and coercive in the sense that it explicitly or implicitly forces people into following already given ways and choosing from the limited range of 'available choices' that are considered to be rational. The framework of justice that is based upon this theory perpetuates the same limitedness and employs the meaning of power that the liberals have been espousing.

¹ M.K.Gandhi, Chapter 6. *Civilization*, in M.K.Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj*, Navjivan Publication, Ahmedabad.

² <https://www.india-seminar.com/semframe.html> as accessed on 20/9/2019.

³ *Ibid*.

Two of the definitions capture the liberal understanding of power very aptly. The first is given by Robert Dahl. According to him, 'A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do.' This definition clearly highlights the cold logic of power where B is under compulsion to follow A, and is aware of the adverse consequences of not complying. This meaning of power also underlines that liberal power has its foundation in a hierarchical structure embedded in inequality and coercion. A, in this case, represents that powerful section which has access to defining what is just, rational and who have the power to manipulate the actions of those that are at the lower rungs of the hierarchical structure or that simply lie out of the 'rational' structure. This powerful section has control over material resources, social, political and economic institutions and even has a sort of monopoly over wealth, status, education, influence, knowledge, and even raw muscle. The inequality inherent in power relations are maintained through different means, the judiciary and legislative system being one.

At this point, Johan Galtung's understanding of how power is exercised today becomes significant. Galtung explains that the power is exercised in three ways in a liberal society- through ideas, inducements and punitive action. Just like Dahl, Galtung also elucidates how those who control material resources rule over those that do not hold such resources and thus, could not wield power. This section that Galtung considers to be disempowered is expected to follow and contribute to this hierarchical ideology. The catch here is that though, the latter is rewarded and remunerated when it contributes to maintaining the status quo. But, in case this disempowered section refuses to participate, it has to face punishment, which again is a way of expressing power.

In no way does this mean that the justice system intentionally aims at retribution of those that are disempowered but it is to say that their lower status in the hierarchical structure keeps them deprived of accessing justice. They are considered to be on the sidelines of justice system. Moreover, in the liberal justice system, we still witness that how there are minimal or no means at all to address the issue of the collective, of indigenous, religious minorities in a substantive manner. The other shortage of this system is that justice is made to be a monopoly of the certain institutions only. This has suppressed the agency of the individual as well the collective of defining what is just? How to build creative ways for accessing justice? Also, how to resist against injustice?

Prof. Anuradha Veeravalli analyses the reasons behind such a situation. She is of the view that there is a common thread which ties both the disempowered who dissent and demand justice and the state that wields political power. She argues that both the state and the dissenters follow the same logic of power due to which there is no rupture in the status quo ultimately. To quote her, "Ironically therefore, the explanation for all social evils—hegemony of class, caste and state, is provided by the same theory of power that fuels the system from which we seek redressal. Gandhi saw that within this framework, the state and its citizens, perpetrators and victims, are bound in a single and necessary system of power that empowers and disempowers, while each places, replaces and displaces the other in a tireless unending game of musical chairs, as it were."⁴ She asserts that this game of 'musical chairs' between the power and disempowered can be ended only when Gandhi's project of 'poorna swaraj' is adhered to.

3. Looking at Justice From a Gandhian Lens

Conceding with Prof. Anuradha Veeravalli, the paper argues that Gandhi's vision of swaraj encapsulates the idea of a justice that is based on moral, spiritual values and aims at conflict transformation. In the contemporary times, John Paul Lederach is the one that comes very close to Gandhi's understanding of transforming conflict. According to Lederach, "conflict transformation is to envision and respond to the ebb and flow of social conflict as life-giving opportunities for creating constructive change processes that reduce violence, increase justice in direct interaction with social structures, and respond to real-life problems in human relationships."⁵ This definition offers to see conflict as an opportunity for positive or constructive change that can be achieved through a variety of creative responses which help treating the root cause of conflict in a manner that forges and strengthens human relationships, transforms social, political and economic structures and reduce violence. Gandhi's swaraj which makes self-rule, self-realization and self-dependence to be primary seems to be giving sovereignty to the individual for creating ripples of substantive change for the larger society.

In a similar manner, Prof. Veeravalli also emphasizes that swaraj gives primacy to sovereignty of people. It did not take power to be central. She explains that, "Poorna Swaraj" would be achieved only when every unit, including the humblest, of the nation became sovereign, i.e., had the resources—moral, spiritual, economic and physical—to rule itself."⁶ From her analysis, it can be deciphered that instead of getting trapped in the whole web of power and empowerment, Gandhi was more concerned about how to make each unit sovereign.

⁴ https://www.india-seminar.com/2014/662/662_anuradha_veeravalli.htm as accessed on 17th July,2021.

⁵ <http://restorativejustice.org/10fulltext/lederach.html> as accessed on 1st August,2021.

⁶ <https://www.epw.in/author/anuradha-veeravalli> as accessed on 17th July,2021.

Focus on 'self' opens avenues for many creative ways of accessing justice. He supported mediation, arbitration, reconciliation and compromise in resolving conflicts. At this point, it needs to be reminded that Gandhi came to South Africa to work on a case on behalf of Seth Dada Abdullah, a businessman in the same country. He was able to settle the case outside the court and claims that it was then that he realized the true practice of law. He learnt that the true function of a lawyer was to unite the parties involved. He further adds that the arbitration that he led made him see the better side of human nature and enter men's heart. This instance also brings to the front the significance of love between the parties involved in the conflict. Instead of making revenge to be the central objective, the process of arbitration helps in ensuring how both the parties can be brought to justice.

The potential of love, Gandhi realized from his childhood experience that made him acquaint with ahimsa. This experience which was jolting and personal was about the day on which he wrote a letter of confession, for stealing, to his father. Asking for a fitting punishment, Gandhi pledged to never steal again. He narrates the reaction of his father as follows: "Those pearl drops of love cleaned my heart, and washed my sin away. Only he who has experienced such love can know what it is." The tears in the eyes of his father taught him the potential of love with respect to purging an individual of his wrongdoings. The force of love, that later, Gandhi realized was pure Ahimsa, sparked due to his pure repentance and his pledge to never repeat the same, had a greater consequence. Later on, he understood the significance of 'law of love' from Tolstoy. In 1909, Gandhi read Tolstoy's *Letter to a Hindu*, which impacted Gandhi to great extent. In this letter, Tolstoy introduced the 'law of love' that can conquer the evil. In his letter he stated the reason for India's subjection to British rule and also put forth the ways of fighting against the oppression.

Tolstoy strongly condemned the use of violence and asserted that "the truth that is to be realized is love, which is an attribute of the soul that has an irresistible power over the body, and over the brute or body force generated by the stirring up of evil passions in us."⁷ He considered the law of love and the belief in resisting violence by violence to be diametrically opposites. The significance of love, makes Gandhi understand his passive resistance as Satyagraha which means 'truth-force' or 'love-force.' Gandhi believes that a satyagrahi would fight for justice but with nonviolence, love, suffering and belief in Truth. Thus, it can be said that his justice system would be premised upon these values.

Gandhi saw a bond or relationship between Truth and God. Gandhi opined that human beings are fallible creatures and cannot know the ultimate truth and therefore, they are not competent to punish. When one uses violence against another person considering him to be worthy of punishment that signals a problem of pride and, at the same time, of weakness and cowardice. Use of violence as a means makes a person egoistical as he starts taking himself to be infallible. This blinds him to the irreversibility of the consequences of violence. Such irreversibility compels the user of violence to justify his choice of means, which he cannot and often avoids, thus indicating his feeble position. According to Gandhi, when we confront that truth is incomplete, we become humble and open-minded.

He asserted that no one should impose his version of truth on anybody else and should be prepared to re-examine his own situation when he comes across different interpretation of truth. If he disagrees with the different interpretations of truth then he must try to put forth his version. While doing so, he must be persuasive and convincing, but should not be violent or coercive in his approach.

Gandhi argued that it is more apt to say that 'Truth is God' than the traditional 'God is Truth'.⁸ According to David Cortright, this twist in the statement proves to be liberating as "When pastors or religious teachers assert "God is Truth", we stumble over the meaning of the first part of the sentence, "Who or what is God?"⁹ According to him, reversing the order makes it easier for people to relate, as truth is something familiar to them. Focusing on the search for truth offers a way of reaching God, of grasping the imponderable. Such an interpretation by Cortright brings back to how Gandhi gave emphasis to sovereignty of people in judging what is true in a nonviolent manner and resolving the conflict in a way that helps in the best possible understanding of Truth based upon consensus of the parties involved. This process of consensus-building was not to be on the basis of some rules, regulations that procedural justice focuses upon. It was to be on the basis of 'conversion of heart' which could only be on the basis of removing the duality between 'us' versus 'them'.

Gandhi's roots of understanding the search for Truth as equivalent to accessing God and his emphasis on diluting the difference between 'us' and 'them' can be traced back to his love for the sacred scripture, Gita. For Gandhi, Gita stood for the real human nature. He considers that, within humans, too, there is an eternal battle between the baser impulses

⁷ Leo Tolstoy, *A Letter to a Hindu : The Subjection of India:Its Cause and Cure* , London, 1963, p. 2.

⁸ M.K. Gandhi, *History of the Satyagraha Ashram* in M.K.Gandhi, *The Life and Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Ahmadabad, 1932, p. 157,158.

⁹ David Cortright, *Grasping Gandhi* in M.K.Gandhi, *Gandhi and Beyond, Nonviolence for an Age of Terrorism*, Brookline, 2007, p. 16.

and the higher impulses just as in Gita that shows Duryodhan and his side to be representing the former while the latter is being symbolized by Arjuna and his party. For Gandhi, Krishna dwells in the heart, guiding the heart towards purity, failing which the “Dweller ceases to speak.”¹⁰ Krishna’s teachings in Gita like ‘be not moved by the fruits of works’, the one who ‘casts off all desires....comes unto peace’, equanimity in the face of pleasure or pain, success or failure, proves to be the surest path to wisdom and spiritual attainment and other such valuable lessons formed the basis of Gandhian nonviolent principles of attaining justice. One of the important points that needs to be highlighted here is that Gandhi considered that the conflict is a part of life and justice is a natural quest which can be satiated only when we look within and try to win over our baser self with our higher self. Thus, justice is a spiritual quest first which begins from within.

Relating to Arjuna’s pain and conundrum regarding the war with his own brethren, Gandhi explicates that how even the sense of pain proves to be worthy is the acquisition of knowledge about the right from wrong and about truth. Discussing further, he compares the battlefield of Kurukshetra as the human heart, calling it as a ‘dharmakshetra’ (the field of the righteous)¹¹.

He points out that on this field of heart many a battles arise due to the distinction we make “between ‘mine’ and ‘thine’, between ‘kinsmen’ and ‘strangers.’”¹² Following the advice by Lord Krishna to Arjuna, Gandhi follows that attachment to a person or thing as ‘mine’ creates attraction (raga) and when the person is viewed as a stranger, repulsion (dvesha) grows. Two points that are getting reflected from these few sentences is that, first, for Gandhi, conflict is an opportunity to learn how to identify the right from wrong and second that Gandhi considers the process of reaching towards justice as a process of personal growth or self-development. It is because of this reason that he dwells more on the spiritual aspect of the quest for justice more.

Gandhi did not make the spiritual quest for justice in an ideal or metaphysical framework. Anthony Parel, who elucidates how Gandhi understood even moksha to be a goal that could be achieved in this very life, becomes pertinent at this point. Looking at Gandhi’s politics from the lens of *purusharth*, Anthony Parel’s ‘Pax Gandhiana: *The Political Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi*’, direct attention to a critical question, which is as follows: “whether politics and economics can deal with the real issues of daily life, and whether the material basis of life can be maintained without undermining life’s ethical basis and spiritual aspirations.” It presents the possibility of answering this quest by focusing on a political philosophy based not on disjointed political ideas but on an organic whole of ideas. Anthony Parel’s endeavor is towards presenting a holistic picture of Gandhi’s political philosophy. He asserts that Gandhi emphasized on building up Pax Gandhiana. “Pax Gandhiana stands for a peaceful and nonviolent political order, both domestically and internationally.” Parel explicates that such a peaceful order cannot be placed in reality with political means alone. It calls for the confluence of the four canonical ends of life—ethics (dharma), economic pleasure and democratic politics (artha), forms of pleasure (kama), and the pursuit of spiritual transcendence (moksha). By reviving *purusharthas*, Gandhi emphasizes on the need for a plurality of life-goals. According to Gandhi, *Purushartha* is what makes humans different from animals. It is the intelligent purpose associated with human life that distinguishes our struggle from the struggle of animals. This purpose seeks much more than bodily material well-being; it seeks moral and spiritual well-being as well. Pursuing *purushartha* helps in making such a transcendence from our mere bodily conditions towards achieving the moral and spiritual.

A few examples of how Gandhi balances the spiritual as well as material quest for justice are listed as follows:

For a bowl of water give a goodly meal; For a kindly greeting bow thou down with zeal; For a simple penny pay thou back with gold; If thy life be rescued, life do not withhold. Thus, the words and actions of the wise regard; Every little service tenfold they reward.¹³

This Gujarati didactic that gripped his heart and mind indicates towards his conviction that morality is the basis of things, and truth is the substance of all morality. Second,

The verses, ‘But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man take away thy coat let him have thy cloak too,’ delighted me beyond measure and put me in mind of Shamal Bhatt’s ‘For a bowl of water, give a goodly meal’, etc.¹⁴

¹⁰ Discourse on Gita, page 55.

¹¹ Discourse on Gita, Chapter 2.

¹² Discourses on Gita.

¹³ M.K.Gandhi, *Glimpses of Religion* in M.K.Gandhi, *An Autobiography or The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, Ahmedabad, 1927, p. 31.

¹⁴ M.K. Gandhi, *Why I Am Not a Convert to Christianity* in M.K.Gandhi, *What Jesus Means To Me*, Ahmedabad, 1959, p. 6.

Gandhi considered Christ to be a supreme artist as “he saw and expressed truth”¹⁵. He understood the teachings of Christianity to be that of non-retaliation, or non-resistance to evil. He considered Jesus to be creator of a new law, “not an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth, but to be ready to receive two blows when only one was given, and to go two miles when you were asked to go one.”¹⁶

These teachings of Christ are often misunderstood as being a mere submission to the oppression. But actually Gandhi illustrates how to defeat and resist the opponent while walking on the path of human dignity and the spirit of love. Christ did not mean acceptance of blows without resistance. His instructions to turn the other cheek, give the other garment, or walk an extra mile are not to be taken literally, according to Wink, but are “examples to spark an infinite variety of creative responses.”¹⁷

Turning the other cheek subtly indicates that the first try of the opponent failed in humiliating and overpowering the other person. Such a response morally disarms the opponent and this turns the tables. This strong challenge to injustice remains within the confines of nonviolence. Gandhi understood the transformative power returning love for hatred, good for evil and used this understanding for social change. He claims to look at the teachings of Gita, the light of Asia and the Sermon on the Mount with an attempt to unifying them. One of the major aspects of religion that made an indelible print on Gandhi was that of renunciation as shown in the above quote. Lastly,

I will give you a talisman. Whenever you are in doubt, or when the self becomes too much with you, apply the following test. Recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man [woman] whom you may have seen, and ask yourself, if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him [her]. Will he [she] gain anything by it? Will it restore him [her] to a control over his [her] own life and destiny? In other words, will it lead to swaraj [freedom] for the hungry and spiritually starving millions?

Then you will find your doubts and yourself melt away.¹⁸

This is one of the last notes left by Gandhi in 1948. In this note, he explicates swaraj in the simplest terms. These sentences form the core of Gandhi’s system of justice that emphasizes on reaching the depth of a human in spiritual terms first and then, supplement it with material justice.

4. Ekta Parishad Building the Way for Gandhian Justice

Ekta Parishad began as loose grouping of NGO training institutes for creating a large base of community development work. It was in 1991 that it finally evolved as a federation for mobilizing people by nonviolent resistance. It stands for its literal translation ‘unity forum’ as it visualizes a unified world on the lines of nonviolent resistance. It believes that application of Gandhian principles of nonviolence would ensure respect for fundamental rights of the marginalized and vulnerable sections. It also envisions a land reform policy and a development model that is inclusive, democratic so that the rights of every citizen are protected including the poorest communities. Following this vision, Ekta Parishad carries out its struggle for introducing and strengthening three concrete models: community-based governance (gram swaraj), local self-reliance (gram swawlamban) and responsible government (jawabdehsarkar). *Jal, Jungle, zameen, ye ho humare adheen* and *andhere mein teen prakash Gandhi, Vinoba, Jayprakash* are the two slogans that can be said to be encapsulating the core spirit of this movement.

In order to strengthen human solidarity and substantive justice system, Ekta Parishad emphasizes on understanding the significance of people in the movement. It believes in giving significance to the people who form the core of the movement. Unlike, conventional political system that follow a top-down approach, Ekta Parishad employs a bottom-up approach. Following this approach, people’s will, their demands and their participation is given significance. Apart from mere participation, Mr. Aneesh, convenor of the Bhopal centre of Ekta Parishad, points out a far-sighted step that Ekta Parishad takes. He explains that this movement empowers people who mostly belong to the marginalized and deprived sections of the society. Instead of perpetuating the image of being a victim to the injustices, Ekta Parishad instills in them confidence by making them walk on the Gandhian path. Adhering to this path, they begin seeing themselves as strong enough to question the unjust structures and lead those that are suppressed.

Adding to the discussion, Mr. Ramesh Sharma, one of the national convenors of Ekta Parishad, states that Ekta Parishad believes in ‘*jiski ladai, uski agwaa*’ (those who struggle are those who advocate their fight). He, further, says that in Ekta Parishad there is an emphasis on transforming the contours of leadership so that those at the grassroots

¹⁵ M.K. Gandhi, *The Sermon on the Mount* in M.K.Gandhi, *What Jesus Means To Me*, Ahmedabad, 1959, p. 6.

¹⁶ M.K. Gandhi, *The Jesus I Love* in M.K.Gandhi, *What Jesus Means to Me*, Ahmedabad, 1959, p. 13.

¹⁷ Walter Wink, *Engaging the Powers: Discernment and Resistance in a World of Domination*, Minneapolis, 1992, p. 185.

¹⁸ *Mahatma Gandhi - the Last Phase*. Navajivan Publ. House, 1958, p. 65.

could be raised to become leaders. This process, he explains, is not an easy one because it demands de-learning and de-orientation from the side of those already equipped to become leaders, so that the people who have hidden potential of becoming leaders could be respected. In Ekta Parishad, those from the bottom layers of society are not only respected but considered as assets. In the context of respecting people from the grassroots, he points out that in Ekta Parishad, two things that remain prohibited are asking any information related to caste and qualification of the people. Such a rule helps in accepting everyone as equal, placing them in a horizontal relationship than in a vertical relationship.

Following the lines of Gandhi, the struggle can be meaningful only if it is understood that it is for building a constructive and sustainable future for all rather than targeting a particular institution, state or individual. In this context, Mr. Ramesh Sharma views dialogue to be a major factor in driving democracy in the right direction. He explicated that re-exploration and dialogue is supported by Ekta Parishad. He says that, "Nobody is 'enemy', it is 'opponent'. Democracy moves through dialogue with the opposition, while enmity stops this."¹⁹ From these sentences it is clear that how Gandhian social movements, like Ekta Parishad today, have succeeded in erasing the difference between the 'self' and the 'other.' Taking the discussion further, Mr. P.V.Rajagopal, asserts that the three premises based on Gandhian values on which the politics of Ekta Parishad rests are *samvad* (Dialogue), *sangharsh* (Struggle) and *rachna* (Constructive Work).

Discussing Vinoba's teachings at this point, Mr. P.V.Rajagopal explains that the nonviolent path and the violent path are different. While, the former emphasizes on moving from *namra* (kind), *namratar* (more kind) to *naratam* (most kind), the latter leads from being *ugra* (aggressive), *ugratar* (more aggressive) to *urgatam* (most aggressive). It is clear from this explanation that the one following the path of violence rarely switches on to nonviolence. Once the violent path is adhered to, the degree of violence keeps on getting multiplied. The irony here is that, though, those who walk on the violent path do not aim to switch over to the nonviolent way, but the one who chooses to adhere to the nonviolent path, in the beginning, often digress from this path, as they start losing patience in the course and become violent. To put it in other words, while the violent activists stick to the path of violence, the nonviolent activists, being challenged by the other, shift to the violent path just to equate themselves with the violent opponent. Such a practice defeats the purpose of nonviolent activism on one hand and on the other, pleases the violent opponent that becomes aware of the weak faith in nonviolence, which could be shaken through a few trials only. He emphatically suggests that such a tendency to shift towards violence needs to be treated from the roots by strengthening the power of ethics that a nonviolent path offers.

5. Conclusion

In the conclusion, it needs to be understood that the quest for justice has always been a matter of debate. Many scholars right from Socrates till today have endeavored to find the best way to understand what is just? In every context, a new meaning of justice arrives which raises a new debate altogether. It also needs to be noted that how we define justice also depends on the ideological set up that the society is following. Therefore, it can be said that the discourse of justice is not very easy to capture and is very much dynamic as well as volatile. The concept of justice intersects with many other concepts like power, equality, representation, identity, dignity, liberty and so on. As the latter concepts converse with justice the meaning changes. For instance, the policy of affirmative action explains how 'historical injustices' could be reversed by ensuring differential treatment. This example presents that we need to keep a balance between procedural and substantive justice so as to arrive real intention of the concepts mentioned above. Similarly, the power nexus in every society plays a primary role in defining what is just? And what is unjust? Customs, culture, religious as well as moral values inform the principles of justice. Thus, it is very pertinent to argue here that justice is to be seen not in isolation from the rest of realms. It is also to be understood in holistic terms with other spheres of life. From this argument it can be deciphered that justice is a part of life. It is a natural demand embedded in human as a natural calling. If, it is not met, then, the world has witnessed resistance, conflicts, wars and revolution at all levels. Therefore, it can be claimed that deliverance of justice is not just the deliverance in material terms but also in spiritual terms. Such a comprehensive, cohesive, complex and substantive understanding of justice can be seen only in the Gandhian frame of justice. It is important that we realize the significance of this framework and help Gandhian movements like Ekta Parishad in paving the way in this direction.

Cite this article as: Priya Sharma (2021). *The Quest for Justice from a Gandhian Perspective: A Case Study of Ekta Parishad.* *International Journal of Political Science and Public Administration.* 1(3), 15-21. doi: 10.51483/IJPSPA.1.3.2021.15-21.

¹⁹ In an interview with the researcher, Priya Sharma, in Tilda, Chattisgarh, as on 26 July, 2018.