



Hind Swaraj and Nonviolence Camp, Patna; 22, 21, 22 March 2015 and Conference of Gandhi Peace Volunteers (Gandhi Shanti Mitra)

19th Hind Swaraj and Nonviolence camp in Patna was extended into a conference on the third day with 58 Community based Swaraj Peeth's Gandhi Peace Volunteers. A sizable group of 22 came from the Naxal hit Banka tribal area who had taken part in one week-5 block Hind Swaraj and Nonviolence Campaign, Feb 22-t028, and many of them who had taken part in Nonviolence camp in Suiya Bazar, Chandan Block of Banka ,11, 12, 13 Dec 2014.



The workshop, held at A N Sinha Institute, was also a yearly conference of senior Swaraj Peeth Peace-volunteers, Gandhi Shanti Mitra. The first day was spent, with a brief introduction to the direction of our work and reporting by each one, raising and presenting issues and questions. Communal, caste and land are common issues of conflicts most of them intervened successfully, while in the Maoist area issues of administrative negligence, apathy, exploitation and high-handedness of the powerful besides land disputes and political divisiveness dominate the poverty stricken life.

GSM s' nonviolent intervention could be roughly categorized into two broad types: one; issues where the challenge is/was to overcome or break false social-cultural practices. Customs, beliefs and stereotypes; reform them; and, second; to reach out with empathy and non-partisanship where there is a dire need to reach out but no one is reaching out. The large participation of the youth from Banka District was testimony of a new direction, different from the trend of taking the path of the jungle. Bhola Prasad and his team members including a few elders who joined the week-long



nonviolence-march described the mind – boggling situation that drives the youth to violence and how they have found finally a liberating path of Hind Swaraj. Their presentation moved each-one; and so did Krishna Kinkar Mandal's who heroically handled most fearsome situation of caste violence and ideological violence, to mention just the two. He said he had become inactive after his mentor and guide the veteran Gandhian late Miss Nirmala Deshpande's demise. He has found in Swaraj Peeth a banyan tree like shade and energized

again with doubled zeal and right vision. Similar sentiments were expressed by each one who felt directionless prior to the swaraj samvad tour of Swaraj Peeth and Hind Swaraj Campaign. Jay Prakash Narayan lives in people's mind and keeps on inspiring, but the Gandhian movement gone or fraught with disarray, directionlessness and infighting, a lot of socially motivated youth and old hands are finding in Swaraj Peeth a platform that is uniting them with a dynamic vision and programme according to Shri Dileep Jha.

However, most important were exposition on the ways and methods they applied in situations of communal tensions (Dileep Zha and Sooryanayan in Arariya dist), fighting liquor menace (Darbhanga villages, Amarkant Lal); Communal conflict in a township in Madhubani (Ajit Kumar); Caste conflict in Sahrsa Villages (Sanjiv Sigh), Direct communal clash in Narayanpur (Krishna Kinkar); and the ways in which Bhola Prasad, Yogendra , Rajendra Sigh and their team of 15 handled nonviolence dialogue in an area far from it.

The next half day was spent on refreshing Hind Swaraj and deepening understanding of nonviolence by Rajiv Vora with context to the questions and issues raised by participants. It may be noted that their question about nonviolence were not about its methods and 'techniques', they were about its deeper conceptual and philosophical understanding. To put it differently, their questions were about the manner a nonviolent person should conduct him/herself in different situation and how can that be a part of his/her personality rather than just outer techniques; how to positively relate to the adversary; individual versus organization in nonviolence.

Decisions:

- 1) At nights participants worked on a suggestion from several of them that a collective Nonviolence and Hind Swaraj Awareness programme may be taken up this year in order to reach out and draw peace cadres from the masses, so that a lot of potential troubles can be nipped into the bud like they have been able to defuse potential violent communal and caste conflagrations in at least ten cases. In lot many cases it is the absence of nonpartisan trustworthy public persons that the social/political engineers of conflict succeed in generating violence and dividing the community. The general outline of the programme they worked out was presented in the morning session of the last day in the conference. Participants discussed various possibilities of extending nonviolence campaign all over Bihar. However it was suggested that a step by step approach would strengthen the organization.



- 2) For regular communication, education and organization some literature and at least a quarterly 8-page magazine is a must. It should not be free of cost. When Rajiv asked how many copies will be distributed by them, the following was the considered response (if the cost is not more than Rs 20/-) :

✚ The Banka group (Bhola Prasad and team) :	1000 copies
✚ Sudhanshu Shekhar	100
✚ Amarkant Lal	100
✚ Panchambhai	100
✚ Sanjiv Singh	100
✚ Krishna Kinkar Mandal	100
✚ Ajeet Kumar	100
✚ Dileep Jha	50
✚ Vibha Kumari	25
✚ Sujeet Kumar Jha	25
✚ Pappu Mody	25
	Total 1725

- 3) Organize in some selected places grassroots Ahimsa and Hind Swaraj campaign.
- 4) Concentrate in Banka. Banka team decided to cover Panchayats in at least two blocks, namely Chandan and Katoria, and cover 6 remaining block for similar grassroots campaign that they did in February in 5 blocks.
- 5) Strengthen civil society group's involvement in constructive action and nonviolent intervention.
- 6) Have at least six monthly review and planning meetings of the GSM core group.

Resource Persons:

We had invited Shri Sanjay Mishra, Editor Prbhat Khabar Bihar editions; and ProF D M Diwaker, director of A N Sinha Institute of Social Studies to speak on **Violence and Nonviolence with Reference to Bihar/ Jharkhand**. Shri Sanjay spoke in the post lunch session on the second day. He brought out the inner conflicts of rural life and explained how the impact of modernism has vitiated life at the grassroots. He emphasised on the need to begin at the personal level. He generated much interest as the discussion turned to defects, weaknesses and strength of the village as against the city life. Prof. Diwaker in pre-lunch session on the last day of conference began by systematically explaining Gandhiki's definition of violence and nonviolence with examples. After drawing a frame work he brought the case of Bihar, both in terms of structural violence and class, caste and communal violence. The land issue was put in a perspective of a peasant society. AN Sinha Institute is engaged in holding camps in rural areas for those who have no house or home-stead land. He explained how having no home is a total loss of identity and existence for all practical purposes. The Bihar Govt has constituted a mechanism under Chairmanship of Prof Diwaker, where by such homeless peasants can get 5 decimal of land. Prof Diwaker asked Swaraj Peeth GSM s to help the committee organize such camps/meetings of the landless in their areas. Both, Prof Divaker and Shri Sanjay Mishra were much appreciated by all as they engaged the participants with the living reference to their life and problems.

Prof Diwaker observed that this was the only Gandhian gathering out of so many he has attended which was full of youths. He could see that this dialogue on Hind Swaraj, violence and nonviolence is only of its kind, very unique in its approach, understanding and implication, and is looks promising. He said he could sense that it has its inner power of sustenance and growth.