Japanese Pacifist Reports on Growth of Gandhism in Japan

By Yoshiko Hoshino

Having returned home after a year's tour in India to study Gandhism, I feel some obligation to report the growth of Gandhism in Japan in the meantime. When on board ship sailing back to Japan with my mind full of impressions of the work carried on by Gandhi's followers in India, I was not sure that I would find persons or organizations in my country that would hear with pleasure about my Indian experience.

But coming back home, to my pleasure and surprise, I was welcomed by the Ahimsa Association. This association was organized by Mr. Nishizawa and Mr. Miyazima, secretaries of the World Federation movement. The World Federation movement is a worldwide movement, has large funds and can mobilize famous personalities. But the youth from the countryside who gathered to attend its meeting were not satisfied with the official meeting, and sought some guidance with a deeper idea. Thus they came to talk with Mr. Nishizawa and Mr. Miyazima, and have formed the Ahimsa Association (Nonviolence Association—Ed.) When I was invited by them, it was their 90th study meeting. We can see from this fact how strong their faith is. In their study meetings they use Gandhi's articles as texts.

Next I was welcomed by the Ashram of the World Government—founded by Dr. Ozawa, who has been residing in Calcutta since last year. This ashram adopts vegetarian food completely. . . . Youngsters, educated by Dr. Ozawa, are endeavoring to learn the essence of Gandhism. About thirty people are residing in the ashram.

The Peasants Organize

Next I came in contact with an interesting peasant association named the Ai-no-kai, which means association of those who love agriculture. Although other peasant organizations have lost their vitality, this Ai-no-kai, started by seventeen young peasants, has organized 70,000 members, and educated 7,000 active members. It inaugurated its first training Ashram this April. . . .

This association has started its work for the improvement of agricultural techniques. Its motto is to bring together such comrades who have a genuine love for cultivation and for the earth. Its members claim that the reason why all other peasant organizations have failed is due to lack of love for actual cultivation among their organizers. They emphasize that their work should be done without any help from the government or capitalists but only with the help of true peasants. So their idea has already come very near to the Gandhian attitude.

Religious Groups

The leaders of the Nichihonza sect, which is Buddhist, visited India many years ago and were much influenced by Gandhi. It was through their initiative that the World Pacifists Conference was held in Japan in April this year. The conference was a huge demonstration of Gandhism in Japan, because the conference moved daily from one city to another and thus practically went round the country. The merit of the Nichihonza for the propagation of Gandhism in Japan is really incalculable. As a matter of fact, in all important religious sects we have persons deeply influenced by Gandhi, Mr. Paul Sekiya, a highly esteemed Christian minister and president of the Fellowship of Reconciliation (F.O.R.) is working hard for peace. He was deeply impressed, when he visited India in 1948, and came in contact with the comrades of Sarvodaya.

Gandhi and Socialists

But the most important matter for the development of Gandhism in Japan, and at the same time the most important prerequisite for the emancipation of the Japanese people is to establish a secular group of Gandhists and to sponsor a deep and wide social movement guided by its principles. From this point of view, I feel a remarkable resemblance between the Socialist Party in Japan and the Indian National Congress as it was before India's independence, or before Gandhi's marriage.

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