



BOOK REVIEW

Pathways to Global Transformation Conversations with BAPU

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It is there in human nature to accept challenges and make efforts to execute them. The book, Pathways to Global Transformation conversations with BAPU is the result of such acceptance by the authors – Vedabhyas Kundu and Munazah Shah as well. In the book, the duo have introduced a unique approach to writing which gives a fresh dimension to how the life and message of the Mahatma can be propagated. This unique approach is the conversational style.

The forte of the book is conversations with Bapu. Vedabhyas Kundu and Munazah Shah have crafted each conversation so beautifully and innovatively that while reading one feels that indeed Bapu is sitting with the duo in 'real' and sharing his guiding principles. Each conversation begins with a dialogue between the authors themselves on the theme of the chapter and then Bapu emerges and joins the duo to guide them. I find the emergence or joining of Bapu is reflective of the turbulence caused by the deficit of moral and human values, ethics, empathy and compassion coupled with increase in violence, hate speeches and hate narratives in today's world. It also underlines the caring nature of Bapu for his children to bring them to the right path. Such is the intensity of conversation that at one point even Martin Luther King Jr. joins the authors and Bapu to reinforce Gandhi's idea of nonviolence as a healer of the society.

The authors have worked hard to identify the areas where they would like Bapu to guide as it might be difficult to fathom "the ocean" of the values and ideas for which Bapu stood for in one go. Yet the book has covered a large variety of issues and concepts. It has twenty conversations starting with the central pillar of the Mahatma's philosophy, truth and then moving on to another key pillar nonviolence. The authors then have covered wide areas like nonviolent communication, love, service, human values in the age of metaverse and algorithms, health, leadership, arms and armed conflicts, satyagraha, education, alcohol, simplicity, reducing inequalities, unity of humankind, journalism, nuclear threat and lastly arriving at "Peace is the Way".

As the authors believe that 'each of us capable of being the catalyst for positive change in this world', they have done an intense and expansive research leading to involvement of a number of luminaries through abundant quotations from their works. These to me, are one sided conversations with a lot of authors, philosophers,

poets, great thinkers and writers. The list includes Natwar Thakkar, Kofi Annan, J.C. Kumarappa, Rudyard Kipling, Rabindranath Tagore, Tulsidas, and Lord Buddha to name a few.

I have an irresistible urge to refer to two ideas of Bapu in specific which have been adequately highlighted in the book. In the midst of India's Presidency of G-20, with its theme "Vasudhaiva kutumbakam" it would be apt to keep Bapu's message in mind:

"I do not want house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any." (Selections of Gandhi)

The last and twentieth conversation has been named - "There is no way to Peace; Peace is the way! Could there be a better winding up than this? Certainly not. As rivers run towards the Ocean, Gandhian ideas and principles ultimately lead to Peace which is or at least should be the target of the mankind for which non-violence can act as a means." Bapu wrote in Harijan (20.7.1947)

"I can say with confidence that if the world is to have peace, non-violence is the means to that end and no other."

I am also reminded of a poem by my grandfather Late Sh. Ram Avtar Abhilashi – a prolific writer of Hindi, titled - "गांधीजी हम इतना पूछें" with its concluding lines as:

गांधीजी हम इतना पूछें, शषियतुम्हारे भटकरहे क्यों
आशाओं के सभी सतिरे, आसमान में लटकरहे क्यों?

The poem was composed on 1-10-82 a day before Gandhi Jayanti of that year, looking at Bapu for solutions of the questions afflicting the world over (No comparison intended). The book is unique in its style of conversations where Bapu appears to participate actively suggesting remedies to be adopted for the malice. Bapu's prescriptions are valid for all places and all times, but what is needed is to actually practice them. Bapu is known to all. But his votaries are few. It is essential that Bapu is kept alive through such conversations. It is heartening to note that the authors have expressed their determination to come out with more such publications.

It is to their credit that they have not made the book cumbersome with heavy jargons. A lucid, interesting expression in simple understandable language is the strength of the authors and the book. All concerned who have contributed in making the book published deserve kudos. New Delhi Publishers, deserve compliments for quality printing. The book is highly recommended for all age groups trying to grasp the significance of Gandhian thought in the modern times.