

## Gandhi's Impact on Dr. Vinayan and Mazdoor Kisan Sangram Samiti

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In Bihar, since 1974, Dr. Vinayan was a well-known name among the down-trodden, intelligentsia and state administration. He impressed all these three sections immensely and had few parallels in the country in the way he lived. Vinayan heeded to the call by Jaya Prakash Narayan in 1974 to bring a total transformation of society. He gave up his medical degree to come down to Bihar and worked in Jehanabad. He mentioned once how Jaya Prakash Narayan would make sure that all those responding to his call understood the sacrifice that was being asked. JP would tell everyone they were not coming as guests and should not expect to be treated like a groom in the village. They would have to live like the villagers, sharing their lives and struggle.<sup>1</sup>

A revolutionary in his own right Vinayan had led a chequered life. He was born 11th September, 1947 in Jhansi. Though he was born in Jhansi but his fore fathers belonged to Agra, Uttar Pradesh. He was born in middle class, progressive, Brahmin family which was greatly influenced by the movement of Arya Samaj. His father's name was Vachaspati Shastri and grandfather was Pandit Prem Roy Sharma. His mother's name was Vedabati Sharma. His father and mother was active member of Arya Samaj. They had total ten children. The number of sons was seven and among them Vinayan was in third position. Besides, Vinayan had three sisters. Vinayan's two brothers were involved in communist politics and 'others were high professionals and two brothers were dead in their early life. So from his family history we could understand the progressive atmosphere where he was born and brought up and what influenced his thinking.<sup>2</sup>

Dr. Vinayan got his primary education first from Lucknow and then from Itmadpur village near Agra. That time he lived with his grandfather who was a doctor by profession and an active member in Arya Samaj and Congress. By taking part in freedom struggle many times his grandfather went to jail. Not only the men of his family, but women like his grandmother Sakuntala Devi were also a freedom fighter and actively participated in this programme. Vinayan's grandmother was also imprisoned many a time in Agra and Lucknow, and on one such occasion she spent in jail with her four month older child.<sup>3</sup> This incident gave light from where Vinayan got the fighting spirit against oppression, lawlessness.

Dr. Vinayan got his Madhyamik and College level education from Agra and got Medical degree from S.N. College, Agra. But before sitting down on the final examination he was disgusted with the professional carrier and family life and was attracted towards nomad life.<sup>4</sup>

At the age of twenty-five he went to Himalayas and met many saints to solve the questions and to find out the truth. The thirst of truth led to him in different religious places like Haridwar, Rishikesh, Rudraprayag, Gangotri and then Kulu, Manali, Manikaran, Rotangpass, Ladhakh and the different places of Tarai Himalayas, Shivalik and Himachal.<sup>5</sup> When he went to Gomukh he fasted for 40 days which had a great impact on him.<sup>6</sup>

In his interview Vinayan said that the impact of this fasting was great on him. He believed a strong feeling of desire of life existed among the human being. That was why they always thought about the life after death. But when one fasted, after sometime man can win over the fear of death and that in turn gives birth to a new philosophy in man's thought. Up till the birth of the said philosophy, man is always involved in a conflict with death. This philosophy makes a man to overcome the fear of death. This philosophy makes a man stronger to overcome the fear of death. This ideology makes a man stronger and bolder which is

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necessary to fight against any evils. This was a great realization for Dr. Vinayan. This realization also helped him to arrive at a concrete solution about God. He realized God was not separate from men. He was inside the men.<sup>7</sup>

When he understood the truth, about life, then he came back among the common people to work and create a just and appropriate society, to change the society through struggle. His first step towards politics was at Haryana, after he abandoned the life of an aesthetic. There, with the help of his Arya Samaj influenced family background, he met Swami Agnivesh,<sup>8</sup> and with the help of Agnivesh and Indradev he established a political party named 'Rajarya Sabha'. This political party got some seat in the Assembly election in Haryana during that time. It was a political platform of Arya Samaj and had a good relation with the Congress. Professor Sher Singh was a famous leader of this party. It also got a huge mass-support in the Congress influenced area, which was not tolerated by the Congress leaders. On the other hand gradually difference arose between Agnivesh and Dr. Vinayan on the issues of social change and Vinayan thus abandoned this party.<sup>9</sup> During that time he was also active with George Fernandez.<sup>10</sup> In 1974, Dr. Vinayan first met Mr. Jaya Prakash Narayan. During that time Bihar was flooded by the student movement under the leadership of Mr. Narayan. JP asked Vinayan to come to Bihar and join the movement. It was first meeting with JP and with the call of him Vinayan came to the Bihar and joined the movement. During that time he met the other young leaders of student movement, among them the famous names are Lalu Prasad Yadav, Nitish Kumar, and Sushil Modi, etc. But during that time he found out that these student leaders were opportunist and not very mature.<sup>11</sup>

When the student movement of Bihar reached a high peak, JP invited Dr. Vinayan in Bihar. The student movement of Bihar was mainly a political struggle, but Vinayan tried to develop the social side of the movement. After coming to Patna he engaged himself to establish a mass-government at the village level in Jehanabad.<sup>12</sup> On 1st September he met with Jang Bahadur who was high school teacher. Vinayan came to Vibansikria village with him and after that it became a work place for him till his death.<sup>13</sup> In this village he saw only boys go to high school. The girls studied only up to primary level. The other social issue was that in this village the palanquin was used as a medium of transport and was carried by people known as Kahar. Upon reaching the village Vinayan first protested against these issues which helped him to create a social base for the movement.<sup>14</sup>

As a normal phenomenon the changes in the society was not readily accepted by the people. They protested against Vinayan on these issues, especially the issue of palanquin practice. Vinayan was unperturbed by all this and to give a clear message to the protestors he decided to go on fast, but it was not successful. But Vinayan was very stubborn by his nature and which was constructive. This stubborn nature was very much needed in a future mass-leader because it gave firmness in his thought and action. Gradually he won over this struggle and it forced the villagers to enter into an agreement with him. As per this agreement, villagers agreed to use the palanquin only in the case of illness. From this incident his belief on Gandhian technique of fasting became stronger. This also throws the light about the usefulness of non-violence ideology in political struggle. During this struggle Vinayan got a huge mass support which was needed in the non-violent process of struggle. During this time he got the support of 30 families. With his constructive mentality, this mass support also helped him to appear as a mass-leader. The impact of this struggle also had its effect on other villages which created a strong base in JP movement and increased the participation of masses in the movement. Here another technique which was followed by Vinayan was to create mass involvement in the movement through procession. This technique was applied by him many times. To determine the involvement of masses in the struggle they organized a procession from Jehanabad to Patna. Many people joined him and created a strong social as well as political base for JP movement.<sup>15</sup>

But there were some weaknesses in the JP movement. Gradually the mass involvement in this movement became weak and it mainly concentrated among the city-based middle class people.<sup>16</sup> Dr. Vinayan and his some friends and supporters of JP Movement realized that without change in the economic and production system the caste or class based social structure of Bihar was not going to change. So Dr. Vinayan and some other people started Bodhgaya Movement which mainly concentrated on land based issues. Apart from that there was another issue which was related to this movement. The abbot of Bodhgaya was one of the big



landlords of Bihar. The agitators demanded to confiscate the excess land from the abbot and distribute them among the landless. During that time Vinayan and his colleagues got strong resistance from the abbot and State but surprisingly mostly from their friends. During this time there was stir in the world of the Sarvodaya which also had an impact on the movement. The Sarvodyoists were divided into two sections, one section supported the JP Movement and other supported Vinoba Bhave and they felt there was violence involved in the said movement.

Though Vinayan always believed in non-violence, but he felt in universal life raising the question of violence or imposing the condition of non-violence was in itself treachery. He felt that use of violence in movements should not be seen from the moral point of view. He said that the administrative system was not based on non-violence. To suppress the political struggle State always used police force and bullets. But when the common people went against the State, always it is said to them that violence was not to be used in their struggle. At that time the question of immorality came forward. He believed ignorance of violence or to put injunction on violence, are both treacheries. Because of that Vinayan always explained the uses of violence from the political point of view, not moral. During the time of Bodhgaya Andolan when Dr. Vinayan and his supporters went to the village to awaken the masses, at that time he faced some questions from the masses which were valid and rational. The villagers asked questions to Vinayan that what they should do when the goondas of abbot would attack them for opposing the abbot of Bodhgaya. At that time Vinayan inspired them by telling that they were not weak and knew how to fight against goondas. To drive away the hesitation and fear from the peoples' mind and to imbue excessive excitement among them, he told them to come in the next meeting with cudgel.<sup>17</sup> This was the right action of a mass leader that not only led the masses and directed them in the right way, but always supported them and gave the courage to win. These are the necessary attributes of Dr. Vinayan by dint of his he led mass-movement with elan.

Some Sarvodaya Leaders told Mr. Vinoba Bhave with giving them the special reference of the words of Dr. Vinayan, that the violence emerged in this movement and Naxals took the controlling power to lead the movement. So a five member's team sent from Wardha to Judge the situation and saw the condition. The team came, attended the meeting and talked with Dr. Vinayan. The team did not find any reason behind this allegation and they had no complaint with regard to Dr. Vinayan and their supporters. The team appreciated the activities of agitators of Bodhgaya Movement. Vinayan requested them to join the meeting to make the movement stronger and to give them the support. The members of the team agreed to do that and participated in the fasting occasion which was held on the main gate of Bodhgaya Mandir. The decision was taken that this fasting occasion would continue for an uncertain period of time until and unless their demands were fulfilled.<sup>18</sup> But no result came out from this occasion because in the third day of fasting Emergency was declared. JP and others leaders were arrested and in protest against such arrest, some friends of Dr. Vinayan offered themselves to the police and got imprisoned. But Dr. Vinayan decided to go underground and continued the struggle in his own way.<sup>19</sup>

During the time of Emergency in 1975, he and his Jehanabad associates associated themselves with 'Baroda Dynamite Incident' with amplification in Bihar, but the same was unsuccessful. After the Emergency by the interest of the local people Vinayan took part in the electoral politics. He participated in the Assembly election as an individual. But he lost the election for some votes, because he stood against Satyendra Narayan Singh, who was then President of Janata Party. As because Vinayan stood against Satyendra Narayan Singh, the Janata Party did not give him the permission to take part in the election as their candidate. As a result Vinayan parted company with Janata Party in 1977.<sup>20</sup>

He felt it did not offer any radical solutions to the problems of agricultural workers who were not only under paid but were also denied the opportunity to live with honour. In the same year he founded the Sichai Kamghar Union and Irrigation Workers' Union in Birhar's Rohtas district. He made the Workers' Union Movement much stronger. At that time the Trade Union Movement mainly concentrated on economic issues and there was a general belief that it was not able to challenge or create a situation which Led to the process of social transformation. Vinayan with his great ability made the Trade Union Movement stronger, effective. Another thing that Vinayan was able to do was to break down the caste factors in the Trade Union. The Trade Union made it very sure to keep the caste factor alive by giving the important post to the different



caste people. Union had also a responsibility to establish brotherhood among the Union members, which the Union was unable to do. Here we can see not only the agricultural movement, but the Trade Union Movement was also very much influenced by the activities and thoughts of Dr. Vinayan. He always tried to transform and improve the situation of every section of the society. Because of that he had not confined himself in particular activities.

In 1978 he went to jail for 8 months on this allegation that he snatched the rifles from the police and homeguards during the time of Panchayat election. But the real criminal was CPI (ML) (Party Unity), a Naxalite Organization who entered Jehanabad during that period.<sup>21</sup>

Gradually he was drawn towards the Naxalite movement in Central Bihar because he found it better suited for radical change. During this time Vinayan came in close contact with CPI (ML) (Party Unity) and agreed to work with them from 1979.<sup>22</sup>

The Central Organizing Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) Party Unity, more commonly known as CPI (ML) Party Unity or simply 'Party Unity' was founded on 1982 and dissolved on 11th August, 1998. N. Prasad was the General Secretary of the Party. Party Unity was the official organ of the CPI (ML) which was one of the predecessors of the Communist Party of India (Maoist).<sup>23</sup>

In 1979 during the activities of Trade Union, some people of Party Unity came with closer contact with Dr. Vinayan. But that time its name was Unity Committee. That while working for the union, some people of the then Unity Committee came in contact with Vinayan. Vinayan and his associates entered into a prolonged argument with the Unity Committee members and they ultimately agreed with regard to the importance of the mass movement.<sup>24</sup>

From this controversy an important question was raised by the Unity Committee members. They said that if demand was made to only ponder upon the existing laws and movement was carried out by non-violent means, and even if the said movement became successful, in that case also a strong resistance would be faced from the State power as well as from the goondas of the big landed gentry. The State power and the big landed gentry used their power which was based on violence to stop the movements of activist. The State used policies and the landowner classes used their armed Senas to stop the mass-movements. Vinayan was very much influenced by this discussion and understood the reasonability of their words. Unity Committee influenced him to build up a 'Defence Mechanism' with the help of their organization. Dr. Vinayan partially accepted this proposal.<sup>25</sup>

Here it is mentionable that though Vinayan supported the proposal of establishment of 'Defence Mechanism', but that does not mean that he was supporting the violence or lost the faith on masses. During that time he still believed that violent repression of opposition could be handled with the help of masses. But it was not applicable every time. Upon attending mass meetings, if somebody was returning alone and on his way back he got attacked, then the masses or organization would not be able to protect him. In that case a 'Defence Mechanism' was needed to protect the life of the leader. Dr. Vinayan was very practical. He knew the situation of Bihar and understood that the words of Unity Committee were not irrational.

As a result Dr. Vinayan agreed to take help from Unity Committee for defence and in return they gave shelter to the Committee members. On the basis of this contract CPI (ML) Party Unity Organization had launched a mass organization-the Mazdoor Kisan Sangram Samity (Worker-Peasant Struggle Association') in 1980 under the leadership of Dr. Vinayan. CPI (ML) Party Unity effectively functioned as the armed wing of MKSS.

MKSS waged a relentless battle for minimum wages and met with success in Jehanabad. Poor farmers, particularly the landless were taught to fight for their rights and many of them joined this organization. During that time not only the MKSS, but other mass organizations were built by Dr. Vinayan. These Organizations were Kaimur Mukti Morcha, Carpet Mazdoor Organization, Bihar Colliery Union, Bihar Rajya Laghu Udyog Sangh, etc. Vinayan established a relationship in between MKSS and those organizations.

In 1981 in the Indrapuri Conference of MKSS, Vinayan was made the President of it.<sup>26</sup>



From 1980s onwards cooperation was established between the MKSS and CPI (ML) Liberation which was second largest Naxalite group and competitor of CPI (ML) Party Unity.<sup>27</sup> MKSS and Liberation group joined hands to fight against Bhoomi Sena and State repression. The two parties jointly founded 'Daman Virodhi Sanyukt Morcha' (United Anti- Repression Front). In the year 1982 MKSS participated in the conference, organized by CPI (ML) Liberation. This conference was a 'Nirankushata Birodhi' conference.<sup>28</sup>

In 1983 he was made the President of the MKSS conference for the second time. During the period of 1982 to 1984 he established contact between MKSS and other mass organizations of the different region of the country. He also took an active part in 'National Front to Resist Autocracy' in the year 1982 and closely associated with religious minority community. During this time Vinayan gave help and support in the Punjab Movement with Saint Vindrabale, but it was not a formal support. After the death of Indira Gandhi, when the anti-Sikh riots started, that time also Dr. Vinayan was involved and actively participated in this programme. At this time he came in close contact with the radical section of Christianity and associated himself with their work.<sup>29</sup>

So it could be understood that Vinayan created a strong mass-movement in Bihar, especially the central region of Bihar. But not only in Bihar, the other movement of different region got support and help from Vinayan. He played a positive role in these mass-movements and made them stronger. Because of that, Dr. Vinayan Sharma had become special target of the Bihar Govt. and its law-enforcement machinery. The Government and his Police force tried to stop the process of mass movement by MKSS.

The Government's onslaught on the MKSS began with the Arwal Massacre in 1986. The landlord-administration nexus, bent upon suppressing land reform movements, brutally killed 23 MKSS men on April 19, 1986. Condemned by the media and by the Indian people's Human Rights Tribunal for the heinous act, the demoralized Bihar Government under the then Chief Minister, Bindeswari Dubey, framed a concocted version blaming the MKSS for the event and imposing a ban on it on August 16, 1986. Ever since, Vinayan had been high up on the wanted list. State Government declared an award of Rs. 1,00,000/- on his head. For the next two years Dr. Vinayan was underground but at that time he also actively participated in the process of mass-movement.

The turning point came in the Post-Arwal period, when differences created on some questions, specially the question of violence in between MKSS and CPI (ML) Party Unity and ultimately MKSS split from Party Unity in 1987. It is not clear how the relationship between the MKSS and the Party Unity was, but the association invariably established Vinayan as a Naxal leader seeking to overthrow the government establishment by force. Vinayan himself never participated in any armed action but he did begin to justify armed resistance as a form of defence.

In the same year a group led by Arvind, a hardcore militant who advocated action against the State administration and the landlords, moved away to form the Mazdoor Kisan Mukti Manch (MKMM). Consequently, Vinayan began to lose some of his influence among the radicals.

On 21st December, 1988, Vinayan was finally arrested in Gaya, after the State government had declared an award of Rs. 1,00,000/- on his head. According to Vinayan he was arrested very unexpectedly because shortly before his arrest the Chief Minister of Bihar, Bhagawat Jha Azad met him at a friend's place in Patna and discussed land reform measures.<sup>30</sup> In that meeting Bhagawat Jha Azad asked Dr. Vinayan to suggest remedies to check violence and extremism in Central Bihar. Dr. Vinayan suggested that carnages were abetted by landlords. Since labourers under the MKSS and Indian People's Front banner had been fighting for minimum wages, land and other facilities, the landlords took the help of the government machinery and terrorised the people. At that time Mr. Azad gave assurance to Dr. Vinayan that the Government would tackle extremism through land reform measures. Dr. Vinayan also told Mr. Azad that Harijans must be armed for self-defence because the administration more or less was under the control of landlords who had clout in the State legislature as well.<sup>31</sup>

So after meeting with Chief Minister Dr. Vinayan was quite relaxed. But on 21st December, a Special Intelligence Officer arrested him at the Gaya Railway Station. In Jail he was treated badly. For many days he was confined to a cell, no mosquito net was provided. The authorities woke him up for interrogation



irrespective of the time and at 6 p.m. lights were switched off. Many well-wishers who came to see him were not allowed entry.<sup>32</sup>

The four criminal cases had been clamped against him amongst which three were false. The only true case against him was that he belonged to a banned organization and for that reason he was liable to undergo six months imprisonment. Police Officers told him that the Bihar Police wanted to interrogate him because of the two murder cases (Jehanabad Police Station Case No. 110 of 1981 and 246 of 1983) and one dacoity case that had been fabricated against him.<sup>33</sup>

The Bihar Government was determined to curb Vinayan's movements because he became a rallying point for the poor peasants in Jehanabad after the Arwal massacre. He was harassed in jail for two-and-a-half months; he was bailed out on March. What baffled observers were that Vinayan was arrested even when the then Chief Minister, Bhagwat Jha Azad, had secret discussions with him on curbing the extremist violence in the Jehanabad region? After his release, he heard that two more charges had been fabricated against him. But these cases were not genuine at all because he was in Gaya Jail from 21st December, till 1st March when the alleged offences took place.<sup>34</sup>

After the release from jail and severing of relationship with Party Unity, he avoided the use of violence. This helped him work openly and he came in contact with other thinkers, activists and media.<sup>35</sup> He became a recognized name in academic sessions, conferences and contemplative gatherings, where he impressed everyone with his scholarship and knowledge. He was a fluent speaker and kept his audience captivated. His ability to quote from Marxist scholars to religious texts was noteworthy. But most important was that his talks were rooted in personal experiences with the daily struggles of Bihar's poor and not an academic formulation arrived at in the air-conditioned comforts of Patna or Delhi's seminar halls.

In the year 1988 Dr. Vinayan started a new Organization named 'Jan Mukti Andolan' after MKSS split into two. The next year the first Conference of 'Jan Mukti Andolan' was held from 28-29th November at Anjuman Islamia Hall at Patna. From 1990-91 he played an active role to establish a big mass-organization whose name was 'Bharat Jan Andolan'. In this initiative taken by Dr. Vinayan, B.D. Sharma, who was an I.A.S. Officer turned political activist, actively assisted him. This process was completed in 1992. During this time he was also involved actively in an Organization of Cole Community in Banda, Uttar Pradesh. At Manikpur he had setup an organization of rock-cutters and also established relationship with other active local mass organization.

Dr. Vinayan was strongly opposed to any kind of communal extremism. So he organized an anti-communal procession from Patna to Ayodha in the year 1992 from 1st March to 15th March. Through the procession he strongly opposed the Babri Masjid issue. In this procession he got a huge mass support and realized the internal power of common Indian people. The Indians irrespective of caste, class, religion and gender joined the procession.

In the 1990s Vinayan was attracted towards reformist activities and used his contacts and field knowledge to work with bureaucrats, police officers, thinkers and political activists to draft new policies for the poor. He worked with the policy makers in Delhi, Patna and other cities to develop legal mechanism that could help the 40 percent downtrodden of the country. During this time he associated himself with the activities of administrative centres like Masuri Academy, Planning-Commission, etc. In particular he had played a lead role to extend the Panchayat into the Scheduled Areas Act which was considered as a revolutionary initiative of self-governance for tribal people.

In the same year he established an ashram at Nawada village in Jehanabad. He also worked for the empowerment of women and tried to make policies for them. At that time Dr. Vinayan met with sister Rita and sister Elsmma, who had a close contact with radical Christian Movement. Side by side the activities to organize the poor under the banner of 'Jan Mukti Andolan' continued and extended its boundary nationally. On March 1994, he organized a procession against Dunkol Policy. To protect land and forest rights of the tribals he took active part in the establishment of Rashtriya Morcha (State Front). In 1998 he started National Front of Forest People and Forest Workers. In 2002 he was associated with the society for advancement of



Village Economy in Himachal Pradesh and took active part in its activities. In the year 2004 he played an important role in W.S.F.

From 2005 onwards he played an active and supportive role in the various department of planning commission. He played an important role in the policy making related to the landless and deprived section of the society. He did a great job to spread the awareness of democratic rights of the people among the lower section of the society. He also worked for the establishment of a close relation in between local movement and state authority.

From 2000, he had suffered from some physical problems. He had a spinal surgery in 2000. In 2004 he had a heart-attack and after that the physical condition of Vinayan was gradually on the wane. During this time he also suffered from Diabetics. But his entire struggle ended on 18th August, 2006 when he breathed last at the Patna Medical College at 7.15 p.m. Initially he suffered from normal fever, but gradually it worsened and he was afflicted with Malaria, Typhoid and created respiratory problem in his body and caused his death.<sup>36</sup>

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