Rights, violence and Indian

Has non-violence lost ground to violent protests in the land of Mahatma Gandhi?
Paritosh Chakma

I

n India everyone has
the right to protest
peacefully. But such
protests often turn vio-
lent. The recent violent pro-
test by Gujjars in Raj as than
demanding tribal status is
one example. The protests hit
the headlines of very national
newspapers and the electron-
ic media in particular the TV
news channels were covering
almost every bit of the news
of Gujjars.
The Justice Jasraj Chopra
Committee set up by the Ra-
jasthan government and the
Union Law Ministry have
stated that Gujjars of Rajas-
than do not qualify for inclu-
sion as a Scheduled Tribe.

Yet, the government of Ra-
jasthan has recommended to
the Centre for providing "4 to
6 per cent reservation" to the
Gujjars under the category of
denotified tribe. The Gujjar
leaders have been almost im-
mediately invited for talks.
The Gujjars are fortunate
enough to be residing in
states which are bordering
New Delhi. They are at stra-
tegic advantage to be able to
block all roads to Delhi and
can trouble the government
at the Centre. Else, if the Guj-
jars were, for example in the
far away North East India,
New Delhi would not have
cared so much about them
despite all their efforts to
create instability and unrest.
They would have never got

the limelight that they are
getting.

More brutal protests
Many ethnic communities
in the North East have been
trying unsuccessfully to draw
the attention of the Centre
towards their miserable
plight, injustice, and under-
development due to the pol-
icies of the Central
government. Many other mi-
nority communities are op-
posing their respective state
governments' discriminatory
policies. Many communities
have taken up arms against
the government of India.
Thousands have died, fighting
goes on regularly; yet, who
cares? It requires the demon-
stration of some brutality in

the North East for the inci-
dent to find a small place in
the front page of newspapers
in mainland India.
In the land of Mahatma
Gandhi the method of non-
violence is fast losing grounds
and support. Gandhigiri may
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concept, but it certainly does
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democracy
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Non-violent methods

Irom Sharmila of Manipur
can rightly be called the
greatest living Gandhian. She
has been fasting for more
than seven years seeking re-
peal of the draconian Armed
Forces Special Powers Act
from Manipur. Even the colo-
nial British Empire shook
when Gandhiji fasted to pro-
test British government's
policies. But the government
of India has responded by de-
taining the "iron lady" of Ma-
nipur while throwing the
recommendations of the Jus-

tice B.P. Jeevan Reddy Com-
mittee, appointed by the
Prime Minister himself to re-
view the AFSPA, out of the
window. The committee rec-
ommended for repeal of the
Act. If you do not implement
the recommendations of a
commission/ committee why
do you set up that commis-
sion/committee in the first
place and waste so much of
tax payers' money?
While India and Indians
may criticize the military jun-
ta of Burma for continued de-
tention of Nobel peace prize
winner Daw Aung San Suu
Kyi, leader of the non-violent
movement for human rights
and democracy in Burma,
how is the Indian govern-
ment different?

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