

GANDHIAN TECHNIQUE OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION: SATYAGRAHA

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Abstract:

Conflicts are understood as an omnipresent part of human interaction, it is less about the question of their elimination, but it is rather about their regulation or peaceful settlement. From ontological point of view, research into the sources and categories of conflict has usually centred around two conflict approaches: the subjectivist and the objectivist approach. The objectivist approach looks for the origin of conflict in the social and political make-up and structure of society, and considers that the goals at stake can be thoroughly compatible. On the contrary, the subjectivist point of view focuses primarily on the perceived incompatibility of goals and differences. Incompatibility of goals and interests or at least their perception as incompatible by the parties in dispute, is as well the essence of the conflicts analysis. The level of incompatibility is the most important variable that impacts the intensity of the dispute and dynamic of conflict phases. Gandhi expounded the philosophy of Satyagraha hundred years back. The need of the hour is to understand his philosophy of Satyagraha so that we can resolve conflict and manage ourselves in better manner. Non-violence is both a science and an art. Like all sciences, it has a history and philosophy behind it. It is not an invention of the age. The investigator has made an attempt to understand the forms of conflicts and their causes and Satyagraha as a means to resolve conflict. The principle, process and concepts fundamental to Satyagraha are studied. The future of satyagraha is critically analysed.

Key words: Conflict Resolution, Satyagraha, Forms of Conflict, Nonviolence, Truth

Conflict is a natural fact of life. Whether we focus on interactions between individuals, groups, organizations, or nations—conflicts are omnipresent. Of the range of emotions that may arise in

conflict, anger is perhaps the most prominent and pervasive. Almost every academic discipline has its theoretical approach of understanding conflicts. Managing and analysing the conflict in the forms of conflict settlement, conflict resolution, conflict transformation and conflict prevention as a way to reach the state of cooperation. A path breaking method of conflict resolution was born almost a century ago, far away from India in South Africa. The father of the method was Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, a lawyer by profession. Following Tolstoy, he called it passive resistance. But the action that followed was not passive, it was proactive. So he renamed it *Satyagraha*.

Satyagraha, as practised by Gandhi, was a technique of action designed to set in motion a process to achieve lasting peace. It emerged from the realisation that violence breded violence; war fought to end wars and bring peace brought greater and more devastating wars. *Satyagraha* replaced brute force by soul force, also known as love force through self suffering with the sole objective of drowsing hatred in the opponent and arousing in him the inherent capacity, even if muted, to love the 'enemy'.

It is a discovery that has been resuscitated from the debris of violence and materialism of rage and passion, of hatred and competition by which it has been covered over for centuries. Gandhi's struggle called *Satyagraha* was a moral equivalent of war and a deeply spiritual action. *Satyagraha* was an important constituent of Gandhi's programme of national self-purification. When he started campaigning against the racially discriminatory measures in South Africa Gandhi discovered that his countrymen there lacked personal and communal self-respect, courage and the willingness to organize themselves. In a memorable phrase, he urged them to rebel against themselves.

The concept of 'rebel' was something totally new for the people, who up till now were used to take orders and not do any critical thinking on their own. In fact the people did not take any major decision for themselves. It was like a fresh wind, which had blown into their lives, daring them to come out in the open and breath fresh air. The same holds true when Gandhi used the weapon of *Satyagraha* in India. The millions in India were coiled in superstition, poverty, ignorance, and religious beliefs and had no weapon with which to resist the mighty empire. Gandhi provided them the weapon of non-violence, urged them to resist with non-cooperation and shook the foundation of the empire on which the sun was never to set. Gandhi struck a chord with people, talked about their concerns in the language they understood. He also believed that in our land of

millions of destitute and crippled people, if we take to the practice of seeking justice through murder, there would be a terrifying situation. Our poor people will become victims of our atrocities. By making a dharma of violence, we shall be reaping the fruit of our own actions. The only weapon available to the people was a spiritual weapon and that was *Satyagraha*.

Meaning, Need and Importance

Dysfunctional phenomenons like discord, dispute or fighting are associated with conflict. Therefore, with the omnipresence of conflicts it is not surprising that the debate about this topic takes on significance. Although the branch of peace and conflict research owes even a part of its name to this subject, the disagreement over the exact notion of the conflict as a term dominates until today. This is however little amazing because it is about one of the most enigmatic and controversial terms, which itself triggers conflicts very often. Conflict may be defined as a social situation in which a minimum of two actors strive to acquire at the same moment in time an available set of scarce resources.

This definition brings together essential elements from a number of commonly used definitions. It includes the actors or parties which is basic. The word 'strive' is vague term, but the point is that, when parties are acting, they are doing something to acquire resources. It may even include warfare. It covers a wide range of activities. The term 'resources' covers all kinds of positions that are of interest to an actor. This definition demands that something is desired which is scarce, be it position of power, attractive land or access to the airways. Such resources may be estimated in terms of money , square meters or other measures but often they are intangible like demand for recognition, acceptance of responsibility for destructive actions or psychological retribution.

Conflict resolution:

It may be defined as the situation where the conflicting parties enter into an agreement that solve their central incompatibilities, accept each other's continued existence as parties and cease all violent action against each other. The conflict resolution approaches also point out strategies that could be employed to find an exit from the conflict's destroying dynamic and that aim toward achieving satisfying solution for all parties involved.

Satyagraha:

The term *Satyagraha* was coined by Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi in South Africa as a name for the force that Indians there used in their fight to earn respect and basic rights. The root meaning of *Satyagraha* is holding on to 'truth' hence truth force. It is a combination of two words – *Satya* and *Agraha*. The word *Satya* is derived from Sanskrit '*Sat*' which means 'being' or to exist 'eternally'. Nothing really exists eternally except Truth. Truth is also absolute which means God. Therefore, Truth is God. *Agraha* means holding firmly on to truth. The doctrine of *Satyagraha* was an extension of the rule of family life in the political arena. Gandhi held that family disputes and differences were generally settled according to 'Law of Love'. The injured member had so much regard for the others that he suffered injury for the sake of his principles without retaliating and without anger against those who differed with him. As repressing of anger and self suffering were difficult processes, he did not dignify trifles into principles, but in all non- essentials readily agreed with the rest of family and thus continued to gain the maximum of peace for himself without disturbing that of others. Thus, his action whether he resisted or resigned was always calculated to promote the common welfare of his family.

The doctrine of *Satyagraha* was meant to show how the man of conscience could engage in heroic action in the vindication of truth and freedom from all tyranny, in his appeal to justice against every social abuse and sectional interest. Gandhi challenged the conventional notions of authority, law and obligation by appealing to his conception of natural law and self- suffering. *Satya* and *ahimsa* alone could secure an unending basis for social consensus and political loyalty.

In times such as ours when conflict is the order of the day and the potentials of technology offer more to fear than to hope, social and political theories face their gravest challenge. Theoretical and political systems have grown increasingly suspect and intellectual formulations tend less to challenge than to repel. But there is rapidly developing demand hitherto neglected by social and political theory: this is demand for solutions to the problem of the conflict not for theoretical systems of end structure aimed at ultimately eliminating conflict, but for ways of confronting conflict when it arises: ways, which are constructive and not destructive. Such a demand must be met by a theory of process and of means and not of further concern for structure, for pattern and for end; basic to such theory is philosophy of action.

Far from denying the existence or reality of conflicts of interest in human mind and society, Gandhi admitted their existence in every walk of life and sought to make *ahimsa* the basis of a method of action, which could cope with such conflicts by limiting, if not wholly removing, the *himsa* involved. It is part of liberal and democratic doctrine that the method of persuasion is morally and even practically superior to that of pressure; that free discussion and rational argument are better than coercion or brute force. We commonly distinguish between force, which usually means physical constraint; power which implies the use of reason or of other skills, and authority, which presupposes the recognition by those who accept it of the moral and political legitimacy of its exercise by its holder.

Gandhi insisted that force did not change its immortal character according to the circumstances of its use, and denied that the use of force to prevent a greater evil could ever acquire any inherent moral or political legitimacy. His attitude towards *ahimsa* was never literalist, but it was nonetheless absolutist rather than utilitarian. He declared that a votary of *ahimsa* could not subscribe to the utilitarian formula. He would strive for the greatest good of all and die in an attempt to realise the ideal.

Gandhi suggested a moral alternative to violence. The international community, so far, has adopted the method of violence, physical power as the means for resolving conflicts, which accrue due to clash of national interest as well as for other reasons. The achievements of science and technology have proved the futility of war, as in modern times, it means total annihilation of the world. This inadequacy of violence has raised the question of resolving conflicts without inviting disaster and use of physical power? We are in search of a functional alternative to violence.

Gandhi's contribution lies in fact that he dispelled the common place notion that leads to a belief in the unavailability of war. He applied his theory of unity and purity of means and the object for which it is waged is the end. Even if the end of war is to get justice, it cannot be realised through the impure means of war. To get justice through war is unjust for it one cannot give life. Thus he rejects even the concept of just war as a method of resolving conflict.

The suppression of force can only prevent the expression of the evil in acts, but cannot remove the source of evil itself. Further it is an inevitable law that the weapon which is responsible for victory is the only one which can preserve the fruits of victory and win more.

Even the nuclear armament cannot prevent war. In his view, “The atomic weapon might have created a temporary revulsion against war, but world would return to violence as soon as the feeling of revulsion was over.” Thus Gandhi rejects war as method of conflict resolution and suggests a novel technique of *Satyagraha* based on principle of non- violence may legitimately be regarded as moral alternative to war for the resolution of conflicts. The Gandhian technique of conflict resolution consist of principle of struggle without arms and positively speaking, a fight with the help of truth, self suffering, love and moral powers, which is known as the ‘principle of non-violent resistance’.

This technique of *Satyagraha* requires greater courage and training than is required for military personnel. The technique of non-violent resistance not only hold good for resolving the interpersonal conflicts but for the international conflicts also. It is blasphemy to say that non-violence can only be practised by individuals and never by nations which are composed of individuals.

Gandhi firmly believed that life could not be compartmentalised, that actions, and the reasons on which actions are based, whether they be political, economic or social, are interrelated, and that these actions have a direct bearing upon the achievement of the ultimate aim of life. Gandhi himself named this aim as Truth or Moksha, which in a Western perspective can be translated as self-realisation (or the manifestation of one's potential to the greatest possible degree), and claimed that his life including his ventures in the political field are directed to this same end. The ideal of conscientious action which is conducive to the attainment of this aim must, in Gandhi's moral philosophy, continually be borne in mind – and this obviously includes the way one goes about resolving conflicts.

The *Satyagrahi* lifestyle is one which reduces the likelihood of conflicts reaching the grievance stage. It is based on humility yet it is designed to build self-respect, it teaches patience and toleration in the face of insults, it does not threaten opponents, it insists on compromise on all

but fundamental matters of principle, and it acknowledges the truth in the opponent's position. Satyagraha campaigns, on the other hand, are methods of fighting where conflicts have reached this stage. That in this sense *Satyagraha* is effective, but it should be noted that as a method it guarantees no automatic and unflinching success; no method of conflict resolution does.

Gandhi was quite aware that his belief in a better, more peaceful world resulting from the increased practice of nonviolence could not be proved by argument, but this did not overly concern him. His answer was that if *Satyagraha* failed the attempt has not been pure enough.

Forms of conflict and their causes:

Conflict exists whenever incompatible activities occur. An activity that is incompatible with another is one that prevents, blocks, or interferes with the occurrence or effectiveness of the second activity. A conflict can be as small as a disagreement or as large as a war. It can originate in one person, between two or more people, or between two or more groups.

Conflicts can be classified as :

1. **Controversy:** A controversy occurs when one person's ideas, information, conclusions, theories, and opinions are incompatible with those of another and the two seek to reach an agreement. When managed constructively, academic controversy facilitates learning in the classroom and decision controversy facilitates high-quality decision making in the school.
2. **Conceptual Conflict:** A person experiences conceptual conflict when incompatible ideas exist simultaneously in his or her mind or when information being received does not seem to fit with what one already knows. An individual experiences conceptual conflict when engaged in controversy as ideas and arguments are presented that are incongruent with one's original position.
3. **Conflict of Interests:** Interpersonal conflict occurs when the actions of one person attempting to maximize his or her goals prevent, block, or interfere with another person attempting to maximize personal goals.
4. **Developmental Conflict:** Developmental conflict exists when incompatible activities between adult and child based on the opposing forces of stability and change within the child cycles in and out of peak intensity as the child develops cognitively and socially.

Conflict situations are broken down into three distinct evolutionary phrases. First, there is a grievance or pre-conflict stage in which an injustice, or grounds for resentment or complaint are perceived by one party. This is followed by what they call the conflict stage where the aggrieved party opts for confrontation and communicates his feelings to the offending party, that is, both parties are now aware of antagonism. Finally, the conflict enters the dispute stage when it becomes public, and third parties become involved. Conflicts may move from the first to the second phase because of the discovery of a hitherto unknown incident, or the shift could result from one incident too many within a whole string of events, or one that is qualitatively different from the rest. Such trigger events, however, may be only part of the reason for escalation. The role of outsiders in potential dispute situations must also be taken into account.

Ways of dealing with conflict

Disputes are solved in a variety of ways, including coercion, lumping it, avoidance, mediation, adjudication, arbitration and negotiation. Some of these methods are more applicable than others to certain types of conflict or to certain situations. Those attempting to overcome a conflict by unilateral means, for example, by using coercion or withdrawing, may suffer the personal costs of either making a resolution more difficult than it need be by increasing the antagonism of the opponent or by totally failing to resolve the conflict.

(a) **Coercion:** Coercion can readily be resorted to in conflict situations where one party feels powerless to conduct the dispute in any other way; where power disparities are so great that reciprocity need not be considered, where concern over the crucial issues involved gives way to concern over not yielding, or where loss of face becomes an issue. Challenges to beliefs, status and wants continually confront individuals and groups. The usual response to such challenges is opposition, often aggressive, and this can lead to violence.

(b) **"Lumping it" and avoidance:** Many grievance situations do not get to the conflict stage. Rather than being resolved, they are sidestepped by the resignation or exit of one party. This happens either by the process of lumping, that is, ignoring the issues that gave rise to the problem, or "avoidance" which entails removing oneself from the situation giving rise to the grievance – for example, terminating a relationship.

(c) **Mediation, arbitration, adjudication:** When physical aggression (or other coercive measures) or avoidance fails to successfully terminate a conflict situation, or where interpersonal (or intergroup) negotiations break down, the use of third parties to facilitate a settlement through mediation, adjudication or arbitration becomes likely. Although unsuccessful negotiations often result in third-party intervention (requested or otherwise), it is proposed to deal with these latter methods of conflict resolution first, because, when properly conducted, interpersonal negotiations maximise the probability of a lasting resolution with the minimum of cost to either side.

(d) **Negotiation:** When facing a conflict there are alternatives to coercion or the reliance upon the judgement of third parties. Like mediation, negotiation is a search for an outcome that is adequately suitable to both parties, but unlike mediation, the dispute is settled bilaterally, that is, the two parties are themselves the decision makers.

Destructive versus productive conflict

A conflict can be termed destructive when the participants in it are dissatisfied with the outcomes and they feel they have lost as a result of the conflict. It is productive if the participants are satisfied with their outcomes and feel that they have gained as a result of the conflict.

Destructive conflicts have a tendency to expand and escalate, becoming independent of the initiating causes – often continuing after these have become irrelevant or have been forgotten. Expansion can occur in the size and number of the issues involved, the size and number of principles and precedents seen to be at stake, the costs participants are willing to bear, the intensity of negative attitudes to the opponent and the number of norms of moral conduct from which behaviour towards the other side is exempted. The outcome of a conflict is never totally determined by objective circumstances, and that actions of the participants are not inevitably determined by external circumstances: Whether a conflict takes a productive or a destructive course is thus open to influence even under the most unfavourable conditions. If this is correct then the onus is placed on each individual to ensure that rather than the conflict becoming a competitive encounter in which as one gains, the other loses, the encounter remains cooperative and thus maximising the chances of a productive conflict resolution.

(a) **Behaviour promoting destructive conflict.** If parties to conflict undergoing negotiation or mediation go in with a winner-take-all attitude a lasting "resolution", using the term as it was defined at the beginning of this chapter, is well nigh impossible. In these situations "one party marshalls all its forces to compel the other party to do what the first has decided it wants. Confrontation is from a fixed position and seeks to mobilise the power to win."

(b) **Behaviour facilitating productive conflict.** When pressure tactics are employed to seek resolution of a dispute it is often found that they are incompatible with the aim of persuading the adversary to make concessions, and further, such tactics actually subvert the aim of resolving the conflict.

A cooperative process, which is more likely to result in productive conflict resolution, employs the strategy of persuasion and the tactics of conciliation, minimisation of differences and the enhancement of mutual understanding and goodwill. The aim is to maintain open and honest communication of all information relevant to the participants, thus reducing the likelihood of the development of misunderstandings which often lead to confusion and mistrust. The cooperative process entails the recognition of the legitimacy of the adversary's interests and of the necessity to engage in the search for a solution that adequately meets the needs of both sides. Positions, therefore, should be stated in terms of the problem to be solved rather than a solution to be accepted by the adversary.

This process is analogous with the third mode of conducting a conflict is debate. A debate having the objective of convincing the opponent and making them see things as you see them, is composed of three elements. These can be summarised as (a) conveying the message to the opponent that they have been heard, and understood, (b) delineating the region of validity of the opponent's stand, and (c) inducing the assumption of similarity. In order for this to be done successfully the opponent must not be threatened, a relationship of trust and mutual responsiveness must be built up. It should be remembered that it is easier to move in the direction of cooperation to competition than from competition to cooperation.

Satyagraha:

The word *Satyagraha* is Sanskrit in origin. It is compound word formed of *satya* and *Agraha*. *Satya* means truth and *Agraha* means holding fast, adherence, insistence. Thus, *Satyagraha* means

clinging to truth, holding fast to truth, insistence on truth, or firm adherence to truth comes what may. The term *Satya* itself is derived from *Sat*, which means being, that which exists. *Satya* is that which is in accordance with *Sat* or being, that is truth. Thus that is in accordance with correct knowledge of things as they are, is truth. *Satyagraha*, according to Gandhi, is not a method limited merely to conflict situation that subsisted between an alien rule and a subject community. The scope of Satyagraha is wider than that. For Gandhi, “the law of satyagraha, the law of love, is an eternal principle.”

Given that conflicts and clashes of interests will always occur, nonviolent ways of resolving these conflicts have a far greater chance than other methods of falling within "productive", rather than "destructive" conflict. Conducting a conflict in a nonviolent non-threatening way prevents the opponent "from reacting out of fear in the mindless reflex action". A productive resolution of conflict is more likely to be achieved if it is based on nonviolence (and this is further increased if conversion is successfully carried out) because it leaves "no aftermath of resentment, bitterness, or revenge, no necessity for further threats of force

Types of nonviolent action

In conflict situations success through nonviolent action can be achieved in three separate ways:

- (1) accommodation, where the opponent does not believe in the changes made but nevertheless believes that it is best to give in on some or all points to gain peace or to cut losses;
- (2) nonviolent coercion, where the opponent want to continue the struggle but cannot because they have lost the sources of power and means of control; and
- (3) conversion, where the opponent has changed inwardly to the degree that they want to make the desired by the nonviolent activist (or indeed, the nonviolent activist himself has so changed).

The Gandhian technique of *Satyagraha* rests on the belief that the striving for conversion is the most effective method of conducting a struggle on a pragmatic assessment of the outcome, but more than that Gandhi believed that it is the morally correct way to conduct conflict because only through a dialectical process can truth be arrived at, or at least approached, and such quest for truth is, according to him, the aim of human life.

Satyagraha as a means to resolve conflict

Violence to persons and property has the effect of clouding the real issues involved in the original conflict while non-coercive, non-violent actions invites the parties to a dialogue about the issues themselves. Gandhi, therefore, warns that we must "Hate the sin and not the sinner." When opponents are seen as the valuable human personalities that they are and through nonviolent, non coercive means the conflict is conducted in such a way that opponents are allowed or encouraged to realize their own human potential, existential rewards also accrue to the Satyagrahi.

The Principles of Satyagraha

Satyagraha is far more than a set of actions. It is also an attitude, for example, a boycott may be part of a Satyagraha campaign but if the underlying principles of Satyagraha are not present then a boycott alone cannot accurately be described as *Satyagraha*. It becomes "duragraha". Unlike *Satyagraha*, Duragraha starts off with prejudgments aimed at overcoming and destroying the position of the opponent. It is not concerned with the initiation of a dialectical process.

The basic precepts and rules of a *Satyagraha*, as opposed to a duragraha, campaign can be systematized in the following ten points:

(1) Violence is invited from opponents if they are humiliated or provoked. "It is never the intention of a satyagrahi to embarrass the wrong-doer. The appeal is never to his fear; it is , must be always his heart.

(2) A violent attitude is less likely on the part of a would-be satyagrahi if they have made clear to themselves the essential elements of their case and the purpose of the struggle. The sincere undertaking of a conflict along Gandhian lines requires an affirmative answer to the question: "Is my motive when starting this new direct action unmixed - is it just to realize the goal of the campaign, and not also to wish to injure the opponent or due to other deviant motive?"

(3) Opponents are less likely to use violent means the better they understand the satyagrahi's case and conduct.

(4) The essential interests which opponents have in common should be clearly formulated and cooperation established on this basis. This is an extension of Rapoport's idea of "debate" - it explicitly avoids his definition of the "game" mentality. Pelton notes that disputes between friends differ from those between strangers or those who have enmity towards each other. In the former case, the dispute occurs within a framework of much mutual agreement, ties and friendship. In the latter case, the disagreement itself becomes the most salient source of information that one party has of the other. This can "become the primary base of development of inferences and constructs by and about the disputants". Unchecked by further information from other sources "they can balloon into undifferentiated negative images that can only generate fear and distrust". Many times when Gandhi found himself in a deadlocked position, he tried to interview his critic or antagonist personally. In all cases, whether the dispute is between friends or strangers, whether the parties met face-to-face or not, the most important principle in *Satyagraha* is to attempt to see the validity in the opponents position.

(5) Opponents should not be judged harder than the self. The golden rule of conduct is mutual toleration, seeing that we will never all think alike and we shall see Truth in fragment and from different angles of vision. Conscience is not the same thing for all. Whilst, therefore, it is a good guide for individual conduct, imposition of that conduct upon all will be an insufferable interference with everyone's freedom of conscience.

(6) Opponents should be trusted. Satyagraha is based on the principle "that the only way to make a man trustworthy is to trust him and the surest way to make him untrustworthy is to distrust him" Trust begets trust. Suspicion is foetid and only stinks. He who trusts has never yet lost in the world. however, notes that trusting behaviour does not unequivocally beget cooperation, it may in fact lead to exploitation. Experiments in this area tend to support this somewhat depressing conclusion; however, the experimenters gave no values to the important subjective payoffs of living by one's personal morality. This, however, does not imply a martyr complex, for, as Gandhi points out, as a final measure, non-cooperation can be resorted to. The Satyagrahi need not wait endlessly for

conversion to occur. "When therefore the limit is reached he takes risks and conceives plans of active Satyagraha which may mean civil disobedience and the like. His patience is never exhausted to the point of giving up his creed.

An unwillingness to compromise on non-essentials decreases the likelihood of converting the opponent. Satyagraha requires that demands made be the "irreducible minimum"; they should never be lowered just to please the adversary, but both parties should be prepared to "make large concessions on all points except where a principle is involved", in fact in cases short of matters of principle "A Satyagrahi never misses, can never miss, a chance of compromise on honourable terms". Gandhi claimed that he himself was essentially a man of compromise "because I can never be sure that I am right". Fundamentally, however, as Bondurant rightly points out, Satyagraha is a process of synthesis rather than compromise." The satyagrahi is never ready to yield any position which he holds to be the truth", but "he may be persuaded that he is in error in so holding them.

(8) The conversion of an opponent is furthered by personal sincerity. Opponents are more likely to resort to violence if they believe that the satyagrahi's case is unjust and they are more likely to think this if they see their "own point of view distorted and caricatured, and your case described without regard to your actual, far from perfect, behaviour. Genuine Satyagraha, however, by definition being a quest for truth, cannot be used in an unjust cause.

(9) The best way of convincing an opponent of the sincerity of the satyagrahi is to make sacrifices for the given cause.

(10) A position of weakness in an opponent should not be exploited. Intrigue and manipulation of opinion are to be rejected, as is surprise "in so far as this takes the form of exploiting temporary advantages in order to embarrass or to bring undue pressure upon one's opponent" Advantage should not be taken of an opponent's weak moments "if they have not been the result of *Satyagraha*, but due to extraneous reasons"

The process of Satyagraha

The success of a Satyagraha campaign to resolve any conflict rests upon three basic assumptions. They are :

- (1) that there can always be found some elements of common interests to all the contending parties;
- (2) that the parties are, or at least might be, amenable to an "appeal to the heart and mind"; and
- (3) that those in position to commence Satyagraha are also in a position to carry it through to the end.

If these prerequisites are fulfilled the scene is set for the process aimed at the required conversion to be initiated. This can involve several steps, firstly reasoning with the opponent, then persuasion through self-suffering "wherein the satyagrahi attempts to dramatize the issues at stake and to get through to the opponents unprejudiced judgment so that he may willingly come again onto a level where he may be persuaded through natural argument". A moral choice is demanded of the opponent which they otherwise may not even contemplate. If the attempts at conversion through these measures fail the tools of non-cooperation or civil disobedience may be brought into play.

Concepts fundamental to Satyagraha

The concepts which are the fundamental components of *Satyagraha* and the necessary attributes of the satyagrahi have been either noted or implied above. Often these elements, that is, faith in human goodness, truth, nonviolence, self-suffering, the relationship of the means to the end, a rejection of coercion, and fearlessness, take on a particular meaning when viewed from the Gandhian perspective. The interrelationship between them is what is meant by *Satyagraha* - therefore an understanding of *Satyagraha* as a method of conflict resolution and as a way of life rests upon the understanding of these concepts.

(a) **Faith in human goodness:** The entire rationale of a method of nonviolent conflict resolution which sees conversion of the opponent as its aim must rest upon the assumption that the opponent is open to reason, that they have a conscience, that human nature is such that it is bound or at least likely, "to respond to any noble and friendly action"

(b) **Truth:** Gandhi believed in the need for absolutes by which to orient one's life. He explained this towards the end of his life by noting that "A mere mechanical adherence to truth and nonviolence is likely to break down at the critical moment. Hence I have said that truth is God." Truth for him, however, was more than a beacon to keep one on the correct path - Truth Satya) was the very reason for existence, the search for Truth being a search for God, "Truth is that which you believe to be true at this moment, and that is your God." In fact Gandhi came "to the conclusion that, for myself, God is truth. Later he went a step further and said that Truth is God.

(c) **Nonviolence:** Violence arise from ignorance or untruth, truth conversely arises out of nonviolence. Violence and injustice are only committed against others to extent that they are not regarded as fully human. The refusal to use violence indicates a respect for both the personality and moral integrity of the opponent. It aims at establishing a realisation of an existing mutually shared humanity. Satyagraha is capable of, indeed aims at, creating the conditions necessary for such a dialogue in Buber's sense: "There is necessarily a dialogue in nonviolence, because through it you wish to convince the other party and to bring him to discover in you not his adversary, but a man like him."

(d) **Self-suffering:** The role of self-suffering is to break a deadlock, to "cut through the rationalised defenses of the opponent. "Reason has to be strengthened by suffering and suffering opens the eyes of understanding", because an "appeal of reason is more to the head but penetration of the heart comes from suffering. It opens up the inner understanding of man". Self-suffering aims to demonstrate the sincerity of the sufferer as an appeal to the opponent and also aims to purify the sufferer by proving their own sincerity to themselves. Both the sufferer and the opponent are transformed. The opponents by being forced to confront their views on the nature of the truth of the given situation and possibly by being converted, and the sufferer by being morally enriched in not compromising fundamental principles.

(e) **Means and ends:** The theory of satyagraha sees means and ends as inseparable. The means used to obtain an end are wrapped up in and attached to that end. Therefore, it is contradictory to try to use unjust means to obtain justice or to try to use violence to obtain peace. As Gandhi wrote: "They say, 'means are, after all, means'. I would say, 'means are, after all, everything'. As the means so the

end Gandhi rejected the idea that injustice should, or even could, be fought against “by any means necessary” — if you use violent, coercive, unjust means, whatever ends you produce will necessarily embed that injustice. To those who preached violence and called nonviolent actionists cowards, he replied: “I do believe that, where there is only a choice between cowardice and violence, I would advise violence....I would rather have India resort to arms in order to defend her honour than that she should, in a cowardly manner, become or remain a helpless witness to her own dishonour....But I believe that nonviolence is infinitely superior to violence, forgiveness is more manly than punishment.

(f) **Reflection of coercion.** Because perceptions of truth vary from person to person and no one can be absolutely certain that their perception is the correct one, Gandhi cautions against the use of coercion. He makes it clear that "there is no such thing as compulsion in the scheme of nonviolence. Reliance has to be placed upon the ability to reach the intellect and the heart"; and makes the policy statements that "nonviolence is never a method of coercion, it is one of conversion", and that "coercion is an offspring of violence. Conversion is the fruit of nonviolence and love.

(g) **Fearlessness.** A certain amount of courage is obviously necessary to endure self-suffering and to Gandhi it was an axiom that "nonviolence and cowardice are contradictory terms". The path of true nonviolence", he points out, "requires much more courage than violence"; however, he firmly believed that it was possible for a violent person to some day become nonviolent, there being no such hope for cowards. The possession of arms was, for Gandhi, a sign of fear and cowardice.

The Essentials of Satyagraha in Action:

- (1) Self reliance at all times. Outside aid may, in proper circumstances, be accepted, but should never be counted upon.
- (2) Initiatives in the hands of the Satyagrahis. Through continuous assessment of the conflict situation Satyagrahis should by means of constructive efforts where possible, by positive resistance where indicated, or by tactics of persuasion and adjustment, press the movement ever forward.

- (3) Propagation of the objectives, strategy and tactics of the campaign. Propaganda must be made an integral part of the movement. Education of the opponent, the public and participant must continue apace.
- (4) Reduction of demands to a minimum consistent with truth. Continuing reassessment of the situation and the objectives with a view to possible adjustment of demands is essential.
- (5) Progressive advancement of the movement through steps and stages determine to be appropriate within the given situation. Decision as to when to proceed to a further phase of satyagraha must be carefully weighed in the light of the ever changing circumstance, but a static condition must be avoided.
- (6) Examination of weaknesses within Satyagraha group. The morale and discipline of the Satyagrahis must be maintained through active awareness of any development of impatience, discouragement, or breakdown of non violent attitude.
- (7) Persistent search for avenues of cooperation with the adversary on honourable terms. Every effort should be made to win over the opponent by helping him thereby demonstrating sincerity to achieve an agreement with rather than a triumph over, the adversary.
- (8) Refusal to surrender essentials in negotiation. Satyagraha excludes all compromise which affects basic principles or essentials portions of valid objectives. Care must be exercised not to engage in bargaining or barter.
- (9) Insistence upon full agreement on fundamentals before accepting a settlement.

Conclusion

When Gandhi claimed that an individual's highest duty in life is to serve mankind and take his share in bettering its condition he added that this could not be done unless one understands and respects the self. True morality, that is, life based on following ethical rules, then, for Gandhi, consists not in conformity but in discovering the subjectively true path and in fearlessly following it. It is noble voluntarily to do what is good and right. The true sign of man's nobility is the fact that, instead of being driven about like a cloud before the wind, he stands firm and can do, and in fact does, what he deems proper.

Gandhi wondered how this true morality that disregards loss or gain, life or death, and is ever ready to sacrifice the self for an ideal, could be practised without the support of religion. He

concluded, in a rather circular fashion, that in order to survive the difficulties in its path such true morality had to be grounded in religion – it had to be a living creed rather than a policy of expedience. He included the non-orthodox religions in his definition by explaining that this in fact meant that morality should be observed as a religion.

The highest form of morality in Gandhi's ethical system is the practice of altruism. The rewards for altruism/self-suffering are external to the extent that they aid the satisfactory resolution of conflicts, but even independent of these there are subjective rewards. From the view of existentialist philosophy even selfless self-destruction may provide a dramatic avenue for self-affirmation. Gandhi was firmly convinced that to suffer wrongs was less degrading than to inflict them, and he felt that degradation was most complete when injustice provoked individuals to fight back with further injustice.

In the Gandhian analysis whether altruism is a function of sympathy and empathy or whether it occurs out of self-interest (even where the cost is self-destruction and the only benefit a prior enhanced self-image) is not important. Sympathy and empathy are tied to self-interest. The ability to feel them shows that one is near the Truth, and one becomes nearer the Truth by feeling them.

For Gandhi it was never enough that an individual merely avoided causing evil; they had to actively promote good and actively prevent evil. The problems of the minority could never be overlooked, the individual was of too great an importance to be disregarded in favour of the abstract good of the many. His philosophy diverges from the utilitarian principle of striving to maximise the happiness of the majority. Gandhi's answer that happiness, religion and wealth depend upon sincerity to the self, an absence of malice towards, and exploitation of, others, and always acting with a pure mind, possibly does little to solve the dilemma.

An analysis of Gandhi's metaphysical thought shows that, for him, the reasons for being moral (that is, leading a satyagrahi lifestyle) are directly related to his views on the nature and meaning of human existence. Although Gandhi placed the individual at the centre of his moral thought as a free acting being, he strongly stressed that the nature of human nature was one of cooperation rather than individualism. In order to fulfill their nature the individual had to exercise their individualism for the good of all, and this included working towards the reformation and

reorientation of society to enable a greater scope for the self-realisation of all individuals. Gandhi's approach to conflicts is, therefore, a major part of the quest for self-realisation, because

- (1) Self-realisation presupposes a search for truth.
- (2) In the last analysis mankind is one.
- (3) Himsa against oneself makes complete self-realisation impossible.
- (4) Himsa against another is himsa against the self.
- (5) Himsa against another makes complete self-realisation impossible.

This does not mean that at its heart Gandhi's philosophy is only applicable to monists. The concept of universalisability, of acting only in a way that one could publicly advocate all others should act, serves the same purpose. If morality is to move from the order of merely doing to that of being it presupposes in an individual the need to develop the ability to perceive others as persons as important to themselves as we are to ourselves, and to have a lively and sympathetic representation in imagination of their interests and the effect of our actions on their lives. This does not depend on one's ultimate theological beliefs.

The freedom can be read to mean the existential freedom that comes with the dignity of being one's own person, of making a commitment to live ethically, of standing up to the dictates of one's psychological masters and pressures to conform. In this sense satyagraha was, for Gandhi, mainly educative helping to train the soul and develop character so as to aid the quest for perfection.

In the area of conflict this means straightforwardness, sincerity and acting from inward conviction. The opponent always knows where the satyagrahi stands and the satyagrahi becomes increasingly aware of the innermost drives that often dictate the course of conflict because they have taken pains to confront reality and face the truths that are relevant to the situation.

Happiness in Gandhi's metaphysics is expressed in a similar vein; as an enlightened realisation of dignity and a craving for human liberty which prizes itself above mere selfish satisfaction of personal comforts and material wants, while the meaning of life is based on striving to actualise what he calls the law of love in action. The core of Gandhi's philosophy in action when he noted that with an extraordinary persistence he made and kept himself one of the few free men of our time.

The basic principle on which the practice of nonviolence rests is that what holds good in respect of oneself equally applies to the whole universe. All mankind in essence is alike. What is therefore possible for me, is possible for everybody. Gandhi maintained that eventually we would become what we believe ourselves to be. If we offer *Satyagraha* believing ourselves to be strong, two clear consequences result from it. Fostering the idea of strength, we grow stronger and stronger every day.

If the world is going to be destroyed by war then a study of a Gandhian mode of conducting interpersonal conflict is irrelevant. This of course is true in the sense that if the world is destroyed there will no longer be inter-personal conflict because there will be no persons. Hopefully it has been demonstrated that by conducting these smaller conflicts in a Gandhian way, larger ones may be prevented. From the point of view of Gandhian ethics, however, it should be stressed that if the world is to be destroyed that makes it all the more important for the individual to retain his or her dignity by adhering to a personal belief in soul-force regardless of the odds. To the degree that this is achieved even the destruction of the world becomes irrelevant.

A study of Gandhi's *Satyagraha* points to a well laid down plan, a system and it was implemented in all *Satyagrahas* that he had undertaken. 'In all his *Satyagraha* Gandhi observed certain basic principles. They were preceded by a careful study of the situation, patient gathering of facts, a reasoned defense of the objectives, a popular agitation to convince the opponent of the intensity of the satyagrahi's feeling and an ultimatum to give him a last chance for negotiations.

Throughout the *Satyagraha*, the channels of communication with the opponent were kept open, the attitudes on either side were not allowed to harden, and intermediaries were encouraged.' In *Satyagraha*, the opponent is not an enemy to be destroyed or defeated. He is a person who is to coexist with the satyagrahi. He is, therefore, to be helped to become a better man for himself and for the society. The satyagrahi is therefore obligated to enter into reason and discussion with his opponent in order to awaken the sense of justice and fairness in him. If the satyagrahi fails in discussion, then he is to undergo self-suffering instead of inflicting suffering on the latter. Voluntary self-suffering results in change of heart. At the same time he also does not expect man to stretch himself beyond a limit. If *Satyagraha* is a new way of life, then the application of this principle to every walk of life and all human affairs, and especially the use

of this principle on a mass scale to fight evil and injustice, to establish truth and justice, certainly a new feature. Gandhi's *Satyagraha* as such is a 'Dharma Yuddha' and only in a state of utter helplessness utters darkness, does a *Satyagrahi* resort to it. Nevertheless, once the *satyagrahi* resorts to this principle, he will refuse to compromise on the basic moral issues in the face of the punishment, persecution and infliction of suffering. *Satyagraha* presents the force, which is ever progressive and endless. Gandhi also realized that to rise the morbid generation from their slumber the key lies in the Constructive Programme in building a different nonviolent human community going on, growing, and keeping up the momentum all the time. Constructive Programme is an active method of attacking and removing social evils. It can be purer than a non-violent struggle because it leaves no room for hypocrisy, compulsion or violence. The programme gradually builds up the structure of a new non-violent society-it leads to sarvodaya of all – welfare of all.

In conclusion, Gandhi who has called *Satyagraha* 'A science in the making' and insisted that it was still growing and there was nothing like finality. He insisted that all can use the weapon alike. In Gandhi's hand *Satyagraha* got its metaphysics, its philosophy, its technique and its dynamic as well as its positive function in individual and social life.

Satyagraha – Its Future

To speak about the future of *Satyagraha* may be a journey into the reasons of speculation. Those who think about the future of humanity have also to think about the way humanity will decide its disputes. A human community without wars is the only hope of survival for mankind, but it may yet take centuries before such an order comes into being.

The ultimate section in group life and social conflicts is still violence. Even if negotiations and arbitration seem to succeed many times, they do so because of the fear of war and destruction, rather than as a result of reason or love of peace. It is in a world like this that Gandhi passionately pleaded for the abolition of all violence and duplicity in the affairs of man and nations. He declared with uncompromising firmness that if truth and non- violence were good for the individual, they were good for the group as well.

Truth was his greatest love. He called Truth his God. He saw no safer and better approach to it than through innocence, non- violence, love. This arose out of his perception of the truth that all life

is one. Moreover, he argued, erring mortal as man is, he ought not to be dogmatic about the truth he sees. But even when other do not see eye to eye with him the lover of truth fights a winning battle if he takes to the path of love and suffering and refuses to force it down the throat of others by infliction of pain. He does not merely meditate, on love or non- violence but lives it. His love translates itself into service, suffering and sacrifice for others. His love does not stop at saying, "Love thy neighbour as thyself". It goes beyond that and makes him look upon all creatures as his neighbours and makes him Love the neighbour more than himself. He would not perhaps die for himself because that would take away the very motive for dying. But he would for die for others. Thus, his life becomes consecrated in the pursuit of truth through loving service and sacrifice with good will into all.

Out of this kind of life of Gandhi arose the doctrine of *Satyagraha*, the doctrine which seeks to solve social conflicts through self suffering. For the first time he applied what is called Christian ethics by European writers to public affairs and political conflicts. Whether the Christian masters in Africa and India appreciated it or not, He stuck to his methods to the last.

Even before India attained success in achieving her objective of Swaraj, through the use of *Satyagraha*, she travelled a long way towards it. *Satyagraha* achieved many a signal and unqualified success in fighting local wrongs, some of them very old and obstinate. Some who speak with doubt and hesitation seem to think that once Gandhi was removed from the scene, *Satyagraha* had no future. It was his immense faith, his remarkable personality that had been responsible for the success of *Satyagraha*, they would say. It is too a great extent true that his personality was the base on which *satyagraha* stood for years. But at the same time, the stature his personality attained was itself due to his having been a staunch Satyagrahi. It was not Gandhi who made *Satyagraha* but it was *Satyagarha* which made Gandhi. His personality was not something separate and foreign to *Satyagraha*. It will not be right to say that Gandhi was, as it were, a patron of *Satyagraha*. If it was a matter of obligation between the two, it is *satyagraha* which obliged Gandhi rather than the reverse. Saytagarha would stand or fall by its own merits only the extent of its application and popularity would depend upon personalities from time to time. The main question is whether it supplies a really felt human need. If it does; it is bound to live and prosper, Gandhi or no Gandhi. The principle is always greater than the person who discovers it or applies it. So too is *Satyagraha* far greater than all

Christ and Gandhis. *Satyagraha* is eternal. Gandhi too would be eternal only to the extent that he was able to reflect it and live it in his own life.

Another argument that the sceptics put forward is that it is only the helpless and weak that would think of *Satyagraha* and not the strong one the mighty are concerned. Thus, they would not accept the statement of Gandhi that *Satyagraha* is a weapon of the strong. Even so, if according to them it has a great future only with regard to weak peoples, it is not a small thing, because it is often the weak that require a way out. The world is full of weak. If they were feeling helpless for so long, and if now they feel they can do something to improve their lot and add to their self respect, it is a great achievement. It is like finding a remedy for the anaemic of the earth. Hope and faith are always tonics and if in addition people have a weapon with which to fight and come out of their helplessness, such a weapon is bound to have a great future. Nor it can be said that the strong and the mighty who have weapons and who can wield weapons would never take to it.

The adoption of *satyagraha* does not and should not merely and always depend upon strength or weakness of body or mind. One has to weigh its use from the point of view of the ultimate good, of ends and means, of higher culture, of human trends, of practicability, of profit and loss. If one feels, after full consideration, that violence is the better way then one is free to use it, nay it is one's duty to take to it. But if one feels that non-violence is a better way then whether one is weak or strong, armed or unarmed one has to prepare oneself for that path and follow it at all costs.

There is no doubt that the past of *Satyagraha* is brilliant, its present is interesting and its future is promising.

Unless the world is really war weary and the people disgusted with the barren results of mutual slaughter, and until they are free from the spell of war mongers, they are not going to be interested in the doctrine of love and peace. The main attraction in *satyagraha* is that it is able to give results, better results than war and at a lesser cost and with a high moral coefficient. But unless there is hunger for peace and peaceful methods this attraction is likely to prove fruitless.

Once there is real demand for peaceful direct action, then the spread of doctrine is easy. If one were to look at human evolution and the evolution of human institutions, one sees that the man has been averse to violence and is proceeding progressively towards non-violence. If that trend continues, there is no reason why in the next few decades *Satyagraha* should not get a more honoured place in the institution that go to solve human conflicts.

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