Satyagraha as a Peaceful Method of Conflict Resolution by Vibhuti Patel

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Abstract: Conflict resolution discourse of modern problem solving and win-win [as opposed to power-based and zero sum] approaches leading to integrative conflict resolution [as opposed to mere compromise and distributive outcomes] strongly echoes Gandhi's own writings and the analyses of some Gandhian scholars. The Twenty-First Century radical thinkers of environment, human rights and women's movement advocate conflict resolution techniques as potentially being about more than the solution of immediate problems that see a broader personal and societal transformation as the ultimate goal. Gandhian Satyagraha should be squarely located within conflict resolution discourse. In this principle of non-violence, Mahatma Gandhi introduced technique of resistance to evil and untruth. His Satyagraha is inspired by boundless love and compassion. It is opposed to sin, not sinner, the evil, not evildoer. For him truth was God. Truth is not yours or mine. It is neither Western nor Eastern. Many thinkers and activities in the world today have begun to turn to the life, thoughts and methods of Mahatma Gandhi to look for solutions that can take humanity in this direction. Many countries have witnessed popular movements for freedom, equality and peace, which drew inspiration from the life and methods of Gandhi. The Civil Rights Movement, led by Martin Luther King Junior in the USA and anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa under the leadership of Nelson Mandela vindicate application of Gandhian Philosophy in resolving or transforming conflicts in the Twenty-First Century. In the Twenty-First Century, mass struggles of the National Alliance of People's Movement [NAPM], led by Medha Patkar and electoral victory of Barack Hussein Obama have once again brought Gandhian discourse on conflict transformation centre stage. Activities and thinkers of younger generation in the world looking to the alternative path that Gandhi showed, in the belief that his message and testament are of crucial significance to the survival of humankind and they are increasing day-by-day. In the Twenty-First Century, Gandhian concept of forgiveness seems to be central to the theoretical development of the emerging field of conflict resolution. Forgiveness has been a topic of increasing interest both academically and to practitioners. There seems to be a healing and liberating quality to forgiveness that helps both individuals and societies move away from revenge and toward reconciliation. In a word, forgiveness offers hope. In a time of tense conflicts based on caste, class, ethnicity, race, gender, religion and territory forgiveness may have extraordinary value as a daily ethic as well as a practical process. After demolition of World Trade Centre the youth of America have formed an organization, named as we want peace no war and want to start a new dialogue to replace hatred by propagating friendship among the nations and different communities. The UN has declared this decade as the Decade of Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the children of the world. In this context, Gandhian thoughts on conflict transformation, which are the central theme of this chapter, are gaining increasing global popularity.
Introduction

The quest for peace is an eternal pursuit for human fulfillment. Peace or absence of antagonistic, violent, or destabilising conflict is essential for existence to become life, for survival to become human. Human beings can become human and humane only in conditions of peace. Creativity, spirituality, individual and collective achievements attain grandeur and glory only when there is peace. Qualities of compassion, forgiveness, love, sharing and universal solidarity become cherished and sought after virtuous attributes only when a community, society or nation is at peace-within and without. War on the other hand, internal or external, civil or military, declared or undeclared valorises bravery—the capacity to kill or be killed—the destruction of human life and accomplishments; it mocks compassion and conscience; it belittles refusal to erect artificial walls that divide human beings in the name of one identity or the other; it glorifies the destructive principle and devalues the principles of creation and life. The warmongers are invariably persons with few qualms of conscience, ever ready to eliminate and exterminate human life, emotions, thought, ideas, and achievements.

Mahatma Gandhi developed an integrated approach and perspective to the concept of life itself on the basis of his experiences and experiments. His ideas, which came to be known as his philosophy, were a part of his relentless search for truth. [Iyer. 1973, p. 270]. The concept of Satyagraha is related to the social, political, cultural, economic and psychological conditions, which influenced the life and personality of Gandhi. He adopted the non-violent approach to resist all the forces that exerted pressure on him physically and psychologically.

He believed that the supreme law that governs all living things and the universe is nothing but love and non-violence. It was Gandhi's firm belief that the basis of all religions of the world was the law of love. The very purpose of non-violent resistance and upholding the principles of truth was none other than asserting the freedom of oneself over his mind and body.

Gandhi's concept of Satyagraha is an integrated concept and includes truth, non-violence, non-stealing, chastity or Brahmacharya, poverty or non-possession, bread labour, fearlessness, control of the palate [Asvada], tolerance, Swadeshi and removal of untouchability.

Scope of Satyagraha

According to Gandhi, Satyagraha can be adopted by anybody. Gandhi said that Satyagraha was like a banyan tree, which had innumerable branches. Truth-Satya and non-violence-Ahimsa together made its parent trunk from which all the innumerable branches shoot out. [Iyer. 1973, p. 265]

Satyagraha has also been considered as a weapon of soul force to resist any kind of oppression. While Gandhi regarded Satyagraha as a way of life, during the freedom struggle of India, Satyagraha was used as a weapon to resist the authority of the state and to achieve various things for the general welfare of the people.
Gandhi and his chief lieutenant Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel had conducted the Satyagrahas at Champaran and Bardoli not only to achieve material gains for the people, but also to resist the unjust authority of the then British regime. The Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930, which was started with the breaking of the Salt Law at Dandi, and the Quit India Movements were classic examples when Gandhi and his colleagues used Satyagraha as a weapon of the soul force.

Satyagraha as a means of resistance and conflict resolution has different forms. Hunger strike [fasting], Hartal [striking work], hijrat [immigration] etc. are some of the forms suggested. The principles, conditions and qualifications of Satyagraha are relevant to all these forms.

Relevance of Satyagraha in the Twenty-First Century

Is Satyagraha relevant to the present-day society or the Twenty-First Century? The answer is not a simple yes or no.

When we try to decide whether it is relevant to the present day society, the fundamental thing we have to consider is the nature of the present-day individual.

Gandhi was well aware of the increasing influence of materialistic considerations on the modern society and individual. According to Gandhi, the main objective of Satyagraha was to eradicate the evil or to reform the opponent. In the present socio-economic political system, there is a dire necessity to wean the individual away from the influence of wealth, luxuries and power.

In all the educational institutions, right from the lowest level to the level of university, it would be worthwhile to teach the young people the concept of Satyagraha and the principles of truth and non-violence, as the basic factors contributing to the peace, harmony and the welfare of the society.

In all the industrial establishments and other places of mass employment also, Satyagraha would be a viable alternative to other methods for the peaceful resolution of disputes and conflicts. And in all walks of life, wherever there is scope for conflict and disharmony, the practice of the principles of truth and non-violence in the smallest way possible, would definitely make a great contribution in bringing about peace and harmony.

Satyagraha as an ideal and as a great weapon of conflict resolution will always serve as a great inspiration to the people of all generations to come, both in India and elsewhere. It may not be possible for ordinary human beings to practice Brahmacharya, poverty and simple living in the age of scientific and technological development, but the usefulness of truth and non-violence will always be relevant wherever the goal is prosperity, welfare and development, because without truth and non-violence, there cannot be peace and without peace there cannot be development.
Three Pillars of Satyagraha

The Gandhian quest for peace rests on the foundation of non-violence. For conflict resolution Mahatma Gandhi used method of *Satyagraha* [insistence on truth or *Zeal for Truth*] that has three pillars:

1. *Sat*-which implies openness, honesty, and fairness:

   Each person's opinions and beliefs represent part of the truth;

   In order to see more of the truth we must share our truths cooperatively;

   This implies a desire to communicate and a determination to do so, which in turn requires developing and refining relevant skills of communication; and

   Commitment to seeing as much of the truth as possible means that we cannot afford to categorize others or ourselves.

2. *Ahimsa*-refusal to inflict injury on others:

   *Ahimsa* is dictated by our commitment to communication and to sharing of our pieces of the truth. Violence shuts off channels of communication;

   The concept of *Ahimsa* appears in most major religions, which suggests that while most people may not practice it, it is respected as an ideal;

   *Ahimsa* is an expression of our concern that our own and other's humanity be manifested and respected; and

   We must learn to genuinely love our opponents in order to practice *Ahimsa*.

3. *Tapasya*-willingness for self-sacrifice:

   A *Satyagrahi* [one who practices *Satyagraha*] must be willing to shoulder any sacrifice which is occasioned by the struggle which they have initiated, rather than pushing such sacrifice or suffering onto their opponent, lest the opponent become alienated and access to their portion of the truth become lost; and

   The *Satyagrahi* must always provide a face-saving *way out* for the opponents. The goal is to discover a wider vista of truth and justice, not to achieve victory over the opponent.

Conflict resolution discourse of modern problem solving and win-win [as opposed to power-based and zero sum] approaches leading to integrative conflict resolution [as opposed to mere compromise and distributive outcomes] strongly echoes Gandhi's own writings and the analyses of some Gandhi scholars. The Twenty-First Century radical thinkers of environment, human rights and women's movements advocate conflict resolution techniques as potentially being
about more than the solution of immediate problems that see a broader personal and societal transformation as the ultimate goal.

Gandhian Satyagraha should be squarely located within conflict resolution discourse. In this principle of non-violence Gandhi introduced technique of resistance to evil and untruth. His Satyagraha is inspired by boundless love and compassion. It is opposed to sin, not sinner, the evil, not evildoer. For him truth was God. Truth is not yours or mine. It is neither Western nor Eastern.

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**Process of Satyagraha**

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

- That there can always be found some elements of common interest to all the contending parties;

- That the parties are or at least might be amenable to an appeal to the heart and mind; and

- That those in a 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, reasoning with the opponent, then persuasion through self suffering wherein the Satyagrahi [Seeker of Truth] attempts to dramatize the issues at stake and to get through to the opponent's unprejudiced judgment so that he/she may willingly come again onto a level where he/she may be persuaded through natural argument. This is the process of moral appeal through self-suffering in lieu of coercion. Gandhi while he summarizes this process says, "I seek entirely to blunt the edge of the tyrant's sword, not by putting up against a sharper edged weapon, but by disappointing his expectation that I would be offering physical resistance". [Gandhi, M. K. 1925, October 8. Young India]

Hence if the attempts at conversion through these measures fail, the tools of non-cooperation or civil disobedience may be brought into play.

Given this presentation of moral equivalent of War or Satyagraha as a background paper, it is now left open to examine and test the efficacy of Satyagraha by referring to certain recurring points of debate or controversy:

- The role of the individual especially the charismatic personality in Satyagraha;
- Pacifism and Satyagraha;
- Satyagraha as a way of life and as a process or weapon of conflict resolution; and
- Satyagraha against incorrigible violence.
In the Twenty-First Century, Gandhian concept of forgiveness seems to be central to the theoretical development of the emerging field of conflict resolution. Forgiveness has been a topic of increasing interest both academically and to practitioners. There seems to be a healing and liberating quality to forgiveness that helps both individuals and societies move away from revenge and toward reconciliation. In a word, forgiveness offers hope. In a time of tense conflicts based on caste, class, ethnicity, race, gender, religion and territory forgiveness may have extraordinary value as a daily ethic, as well as a practical process.

After demolition of World Trade Centre youth of America have formed an organization, named as we want peace no war and want to start a new dialogue, to replace hatred by propagating friendship among the nations and different communities. The United Nations has declared this decade as the Decade of Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World. In this context, Gandhian thoughts on conflict transformation are gaining increasing global popularity.

Pioneering Contribution of Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti

Today, as the word Satyagraha is used randomly to mean any protest action, the Director of Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti, Savita Singh [2007] tries to trace its evolution; honing it in his South African laboratory and turning it into an effective weapon of non-violence against colonialism. Arguing that Satyagraha is a force that has come to stay, Singh also dwells on how Gandhi's legacy has been carried forward by the likes of Martin Luther King Jr., Nelson Mandela and Aung San Suu Kyi. A commemorative volume, the narrative draws heavily from some of the major works on the subject, and needless to say-Gandhi's own writings. Doubling up as an account of the freedom struggle, the narrative gets wonderful pictorial support; not just in the form of photographs but copies of dated newspaper clippings, Satyagraha leaflets issued by Gandhi, his letters to Tolstoy and Gokhale among others, and government correspondence relating to him. The Annual Report [2004-05] captures Salt Satyagraha: seventy-five years and makes an extremely inspiring reading as it has relevance in the contemporary context. The Annual Report [2005-06] provides an overview of Satyagraha [Hundred Years, September 11, 1906 -September 11, 2006] and shows its relevance in the current context of environmental degradation, pollution, war mongering, violence against women and importance of SHGs. The Annual Report, 2006-07, Kranti to Gandhi: Rajya to Swarajya talks of conservation and restoration, girl child and world peace. The Annual Report, 2007-08, Hind Swarajya: 1909-2009 is dedicated to centenary year of Hind Swarajya which became a rallying point for all peace lovers when on 2-10-09 [138th birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi] became historical milestone in humanity's quest for global non-violence when the United Nations declared Mahatma Gandhi birth day as An International Day of Non-Violence.

Women and Satyagraha

Mahatma Gandhi attached great importance to the status and role of women in society. He advised women to refuse to be the slaves of their own whims and fancies and the slaves of men. He attached the highest importance to women's honour. If a Woman is assaulted she may not
stop to think in terms of *Himsa* or *Ahimsa*. Her primary duty is self-protection. Mahatma Gandhi's ideas and activities contributed a lot to generate unprecedented awakening among Indian women. They came out of their homes and participated actively in the freedom movement and the constructive programme of Gandhi as equal partners of their men folk. Gandhi took the idea of *Satyagraha* from Kasturba, his wife.

He was deeply influenced by Annie Besant [a radical feminist and a Theosophist], Sarojini Naidu [a trusted coworker], Kamladevi Chattopadhyaya [a fiery *Satyagrahi*], Rajkumari Amrit Kaur and Pushpaben Mehta. Geraldine Forbes examines the model that Sarojini Naidu developed in her speech as President of the Indian National Congress, a model with India as the *house*, the Indian people as members of the joint family and the Indian woman as the *Mother*. Naidu, Gandhi and many other advocates of women's and national liberation agreed wholeheartedly that women and India would advance together to the extent this new familial model for India was adopted by the women and men of India.

Gandhi believed women could do much to transform India on all levels. He believed that equal rights for women and men were necessary but not sufficient to create a more just social order. What good does it do to us to have equal rights if we are divided within ourselves and unable to attend true unity with others?

In a letter written to Rajkumari Amrit Kaur from Wardha on October 20, 1936, Gandhi writes, "If you women only realize your dignity and privilege, and make full sense of it for mankind, you will make it much better than it is. But, man has delighted in enslaving you, and you have proved willing slaves till the slave and holders have become one in the crime on degrading humanity. My special function from childhood, you might say, has been to make women realize her dignity. I was once slaveholder myself but Ba proved an unwilling slave and thus opened my eyes to my mission."

The *Satyagraha* method of Mahatma Gandhi has been adopted by New Women's Rights Movement of the Twentieth and Twenty-First century, particularly with the purpose of promoting peace, communal-harmony, sustainable development and environmental safety.

In 1983 the women's movement in India in its currently known phase, was just beginning to mobilize itself. Kamladevi was witness to and part of valiant efforts by women to "...not only push forward their own progress but act as levers to help other oppressed sections, while facing fierce hostility... there were no grants to feed such activities; no awards, titles, national recognition, no press publicity instead a lot of abuse." She defines women's actions of that time to be for equal rights, which could not be described as feminist. "Women's problems were never sought to be treated on a sex basis but as social maladies of a common society, men and alike. What are indeed significant are the danger signals she saw at this time. Habit, complacency and consequent lack of vigilance, which fast undermined women and eventually deprived them of whatever gain they have been able to secure over the years. There are numerous subtle ways of ignoring women and abridging their rights. She lamented that woman had docilely accepted the situation of *helper* and that their work in political parties was only to mobilize support for the party and not to assert their personalities or strength as political entities. Kamladevi concerns for the gains achieved during the freedom movement were well founded if we view the almost
regressive situation in rural and urban society with increasing violence against women, and the
decreasing number of women in the population ratio. Modern technology, consumerism and
lack of effective instruments have allowed, women no real progress even while allowing greater
mobility and visibility to women from the middle and elite classes. Visibility alone is not
empowerment in the real sense.

Mahatma Gandhi believed that Satyagraha was the most powerful weapon in a non-violent
struggle. Satyagraha involves defiance. It involves the willful, peaceful, breaking of laws that
are unjust. It means picketing, protesting, squatting, obstructing, challenging and publicly
resisting wrongs. Since women were the most nonviolent and ardent lovers of peace, it could be
sharpened and extended as a weapon in women's struggles for justice and equality. To him the
ultimate ahimsa and Satyagraha was when women, in vast numbers, rose up to put an end to the
destructive aspects of male dominance in society. Had the momentum of freedom struggle not
been slowed down, such mobilization could have attracted many more women into public life.
Political activity geared towards the transformation of society into the holistic, integrated entity
as Gandhi had visualized has not yet crystallized. Satyagraha is now just a word, a mere
symbol, that serves no purpose for the academic or the elite, or even the middle class feminist
whose dialectic emerges from a theoretical background far removed from Gandhi's poor women
who act because they have no use for words to explain themselves. Among those women who
today have made Satyagraha a mode of struggle for a better world are the meira peibi of
Manipur who stand in clusters on the roadside outside their village with flaming torches to
protest against men who indulge in drugs and alcohol, which are jointly ruining the youth of
northeastern India. These women also raise their voices against the excesses of the security
forces and form a protective shield around their villages against them. They do not quote
Gandhi or term their struggle as Satyagraha but their steadfast, powerful and peaceful picketing
has all the elements of struggle in the manner, Gandhi himself would have wished.

The anti-liquor movement of Andhra Pradesh built up gradually in the minds of poor and
illiterate women who for long years suffered the ill effects of alcohol consumption by their men
folk. For families steeped in poverty, for women who were subject to domestic violence related
to alcohol, for wives who had nothing material to lose by rebelling because they had nothing to
lose, they fulfilled Gandhi's wish of deciding no longer to be slaves of the situation. "No one
can be exploited without his or her willing participation", said Gandhi. Gandhi said that women
"strengthen my belief in Swadeshi and Satyagraha.... if I could inspire in men devotion as pure
as I find in the women, within a year, India would be raised to a height impossible to imagine.
As for Swarajya it was the easiest thing in the world." Gandhi expected them to do battle from
their homes, while still fulfilling their traditional roles. The superior qualities of women and the
intrinsic difference between man and woman were something Gandhi kept highlighting. Since
he believed that women could bring about Swarajya better, women were the very embodiment
non-violence, for him they were greater soldiers and beneficiaries of his Swarajya campaigns.
The three famed spearheads of these campaigns were the manufacture of salt, boycott of foreign
cloth and shunning of liquor which he said, "were specially meant for the villages and the
women would benefit especially." In 1930 Mithuben Petit reported to Gandhi that habitual
drunkards were enthusiastically breaking earthen jars containing toddy and that thousands of
persons in Surat who were given to drinking had started having resolutions passed by their
castes prohibiting drinking.
Somewhere along the way, however, the issues close to Gandhi's heart have been largely left by the wayside by women who became part of the power structure as well as by the emancipated women's groups. Organizations involved in trade union work, social reform and development issues have in part or in whole addressed the issue of prohibition, but neither has women as a group in parliament nor through institutional structures raised this demand loudly and effectively. Prohibition is not accepted when it is presented as a moral issue alone and therefore the argument has to include developmental priorities, revenue collection, and budgetary allocations to social welfare, health and other sectors which rural women are unable to do.

The salt Satyagraha and boycott of foreign cloth emphasizes the indigenous, but the feminist movement has not associated itself with the Swadeshi movement except for the Gandhian elements within the various groupings. The wearing of Khadi and handloom among the younger activists is more as the badge of a progressive liberal rather than as a commitment to the foods of indigenous manufacture. These are no longer taken up as issues of struggle although many women are part of the wider movement against the riceo-colonial pressures of the new world trade regime, which destroy both sovereignty and national resources.

Many institutions and organizations representing women's rights have a high visibility in the cosmopolitan arena and have effectively expressed their concerns. Not only has that, their members decisively moved far ahead of Gandhi's vision of fearless women. Alert, active and bold, they engage in constant discussion and introspection for genuine equality.

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**Critical Evaluation of Satyagraha**

Rai [2000] makes an attempt to study Gandhian Satyagraha in a philosophical way by analyzing the basic principles of Satyagraha with a critical viewpoint. It contents the basic philosophical ideas persisting in Gandhi throughout his life. The book has detailed and elaborates explanation of all the basic thought and practices of Satyagraha, and what are the inherent contradictions. In concluding chapter the author has pluck up courage to find out how far Satyagraha and its principles are relevant now a days and what its negative implications are. This book is not only for the students of Gandhian thought or philosophy but also for general people as well to know Gandhian Satyagraha in its totality in context to modern times.

Satyagraha operates at a level deeper than nationality, politics, military power, book education or socio-economic ideology. It is a process working in the very elemental human nature of mankind as a biological species. As Satyagraha becomes more widely employed, it will, partly by virtue of this capacity as a mirror, help in the development of human self-consciousness and confidence in one's own capacities.

Verma and Bakshi [2005] analyze a very crucial period of modern India under the British Rule because after end of First World War followed by famine, unemployment and magnified sufferings of Indian people and new motivations and impulses, which influenced the character of freedom, struggle. Mahatma Gandhi made it clear that he had no admiration for British Parliamentary system and also declared in a special session of Indian National Congress held in Calcutta [now Kolkata] that Swarajya can be attained in one year provided adequate response
from masses to the Congress. Occurrence of such events in quick succession widened the scope of the fight for freedom. Non-cooperation Movement, nonviolent Satyagraha, participation of women, appointment of the Simon Commission and movement against him, emergence of Lala Lajpat Rai followed by Bhagat Singh and other revolutionaries and their martyrdom shook the roots of the British Rule and they started sensing that their days were numbered.

Krishna [2008] deconstructs the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi in South Africa that was gradually entering a new era, the era of non-racial democracy. Though ethnicity will continue to cast its shadow on politics, as religion and castes do in India even after six decades of secular democracy. The Gandhian Satyagraha can be an effective tool to challenge the unjust order.

Shukla [2008] states that the first Satyagraha Revolutions inspired by Mahatma Gandhi in the Indian Independence Movement occurred in Kheda of Gujarat and Champaran of Bihar between the years of 1917 and 1918. Gandhi established an Ashram in Champaran, organizing scores of his veteran supporters and fresh volunteers from the region. He organized a detailed study and survey of the villages, accounting the atrocities and terrible episodes of suffering, including the general state of degenerate living. Building on the confidence of villagers, he began leading the cleanup of villages, building of schools and hospitals and encouraging the village leadership to undo Purdah, untouchability and the suppression of women.

**War, Peace and Satyagraha**

Peace is threatened generally by three kinds of national or international conflicts. The first and most destructive is the arms race, carrying with it the possibility of nuclear confrontation; the second is that of conventional wars between the states for territory, resources, honour, or ideological supremacy; the third is a consequence of totalitarian or authoritarian rule resulting in oppression and denial of equality, freedom, and justice to the whole population of a state or to distinguishable groups within it.

For the first time in the modern world, we have witnessed that President Barack Hussein Obama managed to convince the house to reduce the defense budget and allocate more resources to the public health. Currently, at 200 geographical locations conflict situations are prevalent. Peace movements are gaining momentum throughout the world. Goal 8 of The MDGs also demands from the nation state mutual cooperation and global peace.

The wars of national liberation in Latin America and Africa are instances of the third type. The second and third kinds of threats can become intertwined, as evidenced in such wars as the one between Ethiopia and Somalia in the late 1970s [in which Somalia put forward claims to the Ogaden region based on traditional movements of the tribes within its own jurisdiction], or the disputes between India and Pakistan over the territory of Kashmir. The war between Iran and Iraq is at once an ideological conflict [where the Shiah fundamentalist Islam of Iran has set itself against the more secularist, traditional Sunni Islam of the Arabs] and a dispute over boundaries separating the two states. The conflict between Arab states and Israel is similarly multilayered. It is about territory, the rights of the Palestinians for a homeland, and Israel's right to exist as a state.
There is very little possibility that in the foreseeable future any state will replace arms with non-violent means to deter aggression. Indeed, all governments believe that nonviolence is irrelevant to the problem of defense, and that therefore armed force must be the ultimate arbiter in human affairs. Against this unqualified faith in the efficacy of force, one must point out that wars do not always obtain their desired ends, nor does oppression ensure true and enduring control over peoples and nations. Indeed, Adolph Hitler did not obtain his objective through force, nor did various imperial nations such as Great Britain and France gain their ends by employing force in their colonies. The wars of national independence have time and again proven the impotency of superior force when matched against massive grassroots violent and non-violent resistance. Thus, there is no reason to believe that force and violence will invariably intimidate others and achieve the ends desired of them. By the same token, non-violence is not applicable in every situation of potential conflict, although Gandhi and his supporters claimed that it was.

Let us take the case of ultimate violence first.

Ever since the advent of nuclear weapons, the world has lived in terror of annihilation. The means of destruction are so lethal that they have rendered largely irrelevant the objectives for which a war could be waged.

There is no real purpose in waging a war if the conflict spells certain mutual destruction within a few minutes and if very little of either adversary's national substance would be left to dominate the other.

Horsburg, however, argues that although Satyagraha is no substitute for deterrence, the spread of nuclear weapons to a large number of states will create a situation in which nonviolent means of resolving conflict will become increasingly relevant. He admits that disagreement and hostilities will persist, "There are bound to be many cases in which negotiations will end in a deadlock". However, he claimed, "it does not seem wildly speculative to predict that in these circumstances an increasing interest will come to be taken in the possibilities of non-violent action."

He defends his position, "If it is said that those optimistic speculations are absurd, I must insist that they are soundly based on the logic of deterrence. If the risks that deterrent policies involve must continue to increase, the use of armed force in the international sphere must become progressively more dangerous and hence it must eventually become too hazardous to use in the most extreme national emergencies."

Unfortunately, the logic of deterrence does not quite work in the way Horsburg describes. Nuclear states often engage in conventional wars and by a tacit agreement refrain from using their most lethal weapons. For instance, in the conflict over the Falkland Islands between England and Argentina, England certainly had the capacity to wage a nuclear war. Similarly, in the 1979 conflict between China and Vietnam, China had an independent nuclear capacity and Vietnam was under the Soviet nuclear umbrella. Indeed, one might point out that the rough parity in nuclear weapons has aggravated the competition for the Third World between the USA and the USSR.
Satyagraha and Nuclear Disarmament

If Satyagraha is impractical in a situation of nuclear war, does it have any relevance in negotiations for nuclear disarmament? In other words, can it act as a preventive? Can the Gandhian principles of steps and stages, sympathetic understanding for one's adversary, formulation of minimal demands consistent with truth, refusal to threaten or intimidate the enemy, and open diplomacy be meaningfully applied to fashion a strategy for gradual nuclear disarmament?

In principle, the Gandhian framework can be an important guide for negotiations on disarmament. Indeed, even conventional diplomacy recognizes the need for confidence building measures and reciprocity. Nor can negotiations be successful unless both sides are convinced of the sincerity of their opponents.

However, today such settlements are seldom arrived at by open diplomacy or via adherence to the idea that mutual demands should be consistent with truth. More often than not, open diplomacy is used to score points with critics at home, to pressure the adversary, or worse still, to camouflage reluctance to negotiate. The usual practice in arms negotiations is to demand the maximum, in the hope that the final agreement will ensure more than what is required for defense.

It is difficult to imagine a situation in which a nuclear power would unilaterally disarm without an effective substitute strategically equivalent to armed strength. Although some scholars have postulated the adoption of nonviolence and gradual phasing out of dependence on arms, it is clear that a nation would have to undergo fundamental structural changes in its society and politics to accept the Gandhian view of human nature and forego the sense of security offered by weapons.

There are, however, elements in Satyagraha that have an important bearing on the question of how to engage constructively in bargaining for disarmament. Let us look at some of the causes of the arms race between superpowers. According to several scholars, the arms race is a result of certain attitudes common to both the USA and the USSR. Each country has dehumanized the other, discounting the fears and concerns of the other's population and characterizing the other's leaders as warmongers. This attitude was evident in Dulles's characterization of the Soviet Union as the diabolical enemy, as it is in the Reagan administration's view of the USSR as the 'evil empire'. And yet, scholars and practitioners of international diplomacy have pointed out that the situation leading to war or peace is one of mutual dependencies. For instance, analyzing the US-Soviet Relationships, Henry Kissinger contended that "both sides had to be aware of this dependency if mutually damaging wars and costly arms were to be avoided." The SALT-I was based on a successful identification of such dependencies.

The theory of power and politics implicit in Gandhian thought rejects this separation and stresses instead a fundamental continuity between two seemingly opposite entities.

The Gandhian strategy of action requires that the protagonist attribute an irreducible minimum humanity to the enemy; to do otherwise is to betray one's own humanity. The significance of
this premise for reconciliation of conflict and for the process of negotiations can hardly be over-stressed.

There is one more possibility of applying the Gandhian technique to the problem of disarmament. This is in mobilizing mass movement against the arms race and building grassroots support for negotiations. The methodology of mass mobilization in this situation, however, would be no different from that of other issues. Critics might argue, and with justification, that peaceful protest would not solve the basic strategic dilemma and might in fact threaten national security by forcing democratic societies to negotiate away their advantages. Against this argument, one may point out that acquisition of arms beyond a certain point is useless, and a peace movement can raise awareness among the masses as well as generate pressures on governments to devote more money to social advancement rather than to defense. Satyagraha and Non-Nuclear Defense.

This brings us to our question under consideration. Can massive non-violent resistance be an adequate means of non-nuclear defense? Several scholars have examined the nonviolent method of defense and concluded that at least theoretically; it is a plausible alternative, although widespread ignorance and prejudice against its methodology have often prevented its being considered seriously.

Military power today does not have the real capacity to defend in conflict the people and society relying upon it. Often it only threatens mutual annihilation. He goes on to say that although non-violent civilian defense will not stop the aggressor at the borders, military aggression does not give the invader political control of the country. He suggests that in civilian defense, the population as a whole can resist military aggression, making it impossible for the enemy to establish and maintain political control. Enemy control can be prevented by massive and selective refusal to cooperate.

For instance, police would refuse to locate and arrest patriotic opponents of the invader. Teachers would refuse to introduce this propaganda into the schools, as happened in Norway under the Nazis. Workers and managers would use strikes, delays, and obstructionism to impede exploitation of the country...Politicians, civil servants, and judges, by ignoring or defying the enemy's illegal orders, would keep the normal machinery of government and courts out of his control...as happened in the German resistance to the Kapp Putsch in 1920...Newspapers could refuse to submit to censorship.... as it happened in the Russian 1905 revolution and several Nazi-occupied countries.

**Gandhi’s Solution to External Invasion Would be to Convert the Conflict from One at the Borders to One Against Occupation within the Country**

A struggle against occupation, rather than defense at the borders, will shift the conflict to the turf where *Satyagraha* has a decided advantage and where the enemy must depend on popular cooperation. However, there are cases where *Satyagraha* will not be feasible. For instance, the enemy may be interested merely in inflicting military humiliation and may withdraw promptly after armed intervention. In some situations, the national population may be too small in
numbers to mount effective non-violent resistance. In other situations, the invader may be interested merely in extracting raw materials, and may not require cooperation of the civilian population to do so. In most other instances, however, the Gandhian theory of power will become operational and give civilian defense a powerful means to foil the ambitions of an aggressor.

The Norwegian resistance to Nazi rule, the Indian community Satyagraha against the Transvaal government, the Chinese boycotts of 1905, and the revolutionary change in Russia were not conducted in a liberal socio-political environment. Draconian laws were in effect, and in each case the government had the means to stamp out opposition promptly. It must be pointed out that with the exception of South African involvement; protestors resorted to Satyagraha without fully understanding its principles or techniques, mainly because arms were not available. Even in South Africa, Gandhi was still experimenting with Satyagraha, and it had not as yet attained the fullness of a strategy for conflict resolution. This was to happen much later.

In India, Satyagraha succeeded, not because British rule was democratic and liberal—the massacre of innocent women and men at Jallianwala Bagh pointed to the opposite—but because the British had ignored Gandhi's early calls for Satyagraha, thinking it to be an entirely eccentric and unworkable idea. The movement gathered force in the meantime, until it became too late to control the nationalists' fervour or the moral elan among the masses.

Indeed, even in the late 1980s there is persuasive evidence that Satyagraha would be an appropriate alternative for conflict as a means of change. As one looks at Central American upheavals, such as those in Nicaragua and El Salvador, a certain similarity of underlying causes becomes apparent. There is not much dispute even among policymakers in Washington that in each case the conflict is a result of long years of oppression, misery, and denial of freedom to the majority. However, in an oppressive environment, tightly knit violent revolutionary movements spring up, plunging the country into civil war. The masses want neither communism not the semi-feudal oligarchies that have been the rule in Central America, and certainly they do not want civil war. In fact, when the revolutionaries succeed, as they did in Nicaragua in 1979, the results may be different only in degree from the oppression of the past. Born in violence, and threatened by great powers like the United States and its surrogates, a revolutionary government has no choice but to enforce austerity and strict rule.

However, in each case the guerilla movement could not have succeeded without mass support. Indeed, in the classic strategy enacted in Cuba and elsewhere in Latin America, the guerrillas first fight for control of the countryside and slowly tighten the noose around the capital. As a final blow, the capital or major metropolis then goes on strike, and the government comes to a halt. In other words, non-cooperation and mass support could not be obtained without organization and publicity. And in every successful case these are quite effectively employed, even when clandestine operations are necessary.

Satyagraha is a better functional alternative to guerilla warfare in the classic strategy scenario, because here Gandhi's theory of power can be operationalized with stunning effect.
The ruling oligarchies cannot remain in power unless they deliver a large portion of the wealth of the country to external powers on whose support they depend for their own survival. In other words, such regimes represent the interests, not of the masses within, but of exploiting forces outside their country. This is the regime's strength; however, if viewed from the perspective of Satyagraha strategy, it is also its major weakness.

A great power like America may intervene on behalf of ruling interests on the pretext that the revolutionary movement is aided and abetted by America's enemies. Because self-reliance and non-violent persuasion are the cardinal rules in Satyagraha, there would be no need for arms from abroad; thus, the United States would look foolish sending an army against unarmed citizens who were simply agitating for human rights, and demanding liberty and democracy. What is more, if Satyagraha were to succeed and political change be brought about, the resulting government founded as it would be on peace and popular legitimacy without ill will, should be able to maintain internal as well as external peace.

Indeed, one of the most critical revolutions of recent times, the revolution in Iran, has many lessons for us in this respect. Admittedly, Islamic fundamentalism has nothing in common with Gandhian Satyagraha; however, we should note several elements that this movement holds in common with other revolutions.

First the masses in Iran were imbued with moral and religious fervour; secondly, they were willing to accept enormous suffering, punishment and even death for the success of their cause; and thirdly, they bravely faced the Shah's troops, displayed enormous courage in the face of superior arms [often only meagerly armed themselves], and staged massive demonstrations, strikes, and rallies despite express warning not to do so. The Islamic Revolutionary Party that came to power was certainly not imbued with Ahimsa; indeed, it proceeded to eliminate all opposition. Nevertheless, it is significant that it had used non-cooperation and civil resistance to topple the Shah. It should be noted that the Shah saw only two choices before him: to plunge the country into a bloodbath or to abdicate. He chose the second, not because he was particularly compassionate and liberal, but because he saw little purpose in pursuing the path of civil war.

Gandhi would have abhorred the goals and methods of the Islamic revolution, but that is not the point here. The point is that moral determination; willingness to sacrifice, and mass resistance can succeed, even in an environment where there is no liberty to organize and no freedom to rally enthusiasts openly around a cause. The Islamic revolutionary used the mosques just as the Solidarity movement in Poland has used the Catholic Church. 'People power' succeeded in the Philippines.

Conclusion

Gandhi advocated Satyagraha not as a new religion but as a superior means for attaining social harmony and human advancement for peace. This alliance of a pragmatic quest for solutions and a deep spiritual conviction also points to the way in which future generations may be educated in the task of struggling for peace. Mahatma Gandhi's teachings
of *Satyagraha* and *Ahimsa* are becoming more popular with the youth of today, said veteran Gandhians Monday as the nation marked the birth of non-violence as a means of resistance advocated by Gandhi in South Africa one hundred years ago. "The day is a sweet reminder of a great movement that is still relevant for any civilization. I think the Twenty-First Century belongs to this ideology, and people especially youngsters must follow the path of the Mahatma to fight corruption and injustice," said veteran Gandhian Nirmala Deshpande.

The concept of *Satyagraha* or truthful passive resistance, took its birth at the Empire Theatre in Johannesburg on September 11, 1906. The meeting was convened to oppose a proposed new legislation on the Indian community in South Africa.

"The ideology that gave us independence is gaining popularity among youngsters and it's certainly a positive indication," Deshpande said, referring to a recent survey that found 76 percent youngsters in India consider Gandhi as their icon. Deshpande, also a Rajya Sabha member, said that from cinematic themes to special educational courses, Gandhi's teachings were making a comeback. "It seems the country is set for a transformation on the lines of Gandhian theories. And the centenary celebration will act as a catalyst to remind us to strengthen our commitment for a better tomorrow," she added. K. K. Mukhopadhyay, a Gandhian and former director of the Gandhi Bhavan in Delhi University, said, "Gandhi's popularity is on the rise. From cinema to dedicated courses in colleges, Gandhi is covering new grounds and the response is quite encouraging."

According to Delhi University authorities, a hundred marks examination paper termed *Understanding Gandhi* in the second year of the BA programme had fetched excellent response from students. Plans are afoot to rope in actors who have played Gandhi in films and theatre to make the course more appealing for students. Several cultural programmes and exhibitions were organized to mark the day in the national capital. The Gandhi Museum held an exhibition on *Satyagraha*, including portraits and write-ups on the life of the Mahatma in South Africa, the *Dandi March* and the *Quit India Movement*.

Minister of Tourism and Culture Ambika Soni released three books - *Satyagraha, Friends of Gandhi* and *Satyagraha*-on the occasion. Anil Dutta Mishra, deputy director of the Museum, said, "We have also arranged for special lectures for the public to understand Gandhi better." The Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti here exhibited rare photographs of Mahatma and his struggle against apartheid in South Africa. The director of the organization said that they have planned yearlong special cultural programmes in different parts of the country to commemorate the historic event. "The year 1906 may rightly be described as a turning point in the life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. It was in this year when he experienced a deep spiritual awakening within and dedicated himself to the service of humanity. We hope the centenary celebration will awaken many such souls."

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**Epoch making Contribution of Gandhi**

*Satyagraha* was the most effective tool that ensured political freedom of India from the British imperialism. Throughout the Twentieth Century, several world leaders and people's movements
used *Satyagraha* to fight against apartheid, racism, colonization and injustices. Many thinkers and activities, in the world today, have begun to turn to the life, thoughts and methods of Mahatma Gandhi to look for solutions that can take humanity in this direction. Many countries have witnessed popular movements for freedom, equality and peace, which drew inspiration from the life and methods of Gandhi. Civil rights movement led by Dr. Martin Luther King in the US and anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa under leadership of Dr. Nelson Mandela vindicate Application of Gandhian Philosophy in Resolving/ Transforming Conflicts in the Twenty-First Century. In the Twenty-First Century, mass struggles of National Alliance of People's Movement [NAPM] led by Medha Patkar and electoral victory of Barack Hussein Obama have once again brought Gandhian discourse on conflict transformation centre stage. Activities and thinkers of younger generation in the world are looking to the alternative path that Gandhi showed, in the belief that his message and testament are of crucial significance to the survival of humankind.

References


*Source: Resolving Conflicts The Gandhian Way'*