

GANDHIAN PRINCIPLES AND THEIR RELEVANCE FOR WORLD PEACE

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Abstract

Gandhi was a contemplative man of action seeking truth for the eradication of evil, injustice and exploitation in human relationships and public affairs. He wanted to devise ways and means which would be consistent with the principles he had laid down for himself as being the best. He was as heroic in fighting the evil and injustice in the world outside as in conquering the evil and weakness in his own mind. The means he adopted satisfied the double demand, namely, that they should be truthful and that they should be pure, moral and constructive. Thus, in a world where science and technology have put into the hand of those in possession of wealth, power and authority weapons of coercion and destruction beyond ordinary conception, Gandhi's weapons of satyagraha and non-violence were a boon. Though its use in an international conflict has yet to be tried, one can hazard the statement that non-alignment, moral pressure by non-aligned powers, and the economic and other sanctions which the international institutions often think of are along the line of nonviolent resistance to evil and injustice. The important aspect of Gandhi's teachings which can be taken note of here is his insistence on 'Sarvodaya' or welfare of all and resolution of all conflicts by peaceful means. It is clear that Gandhi's life, thought, teaching and action are ever relevant for all pacifist and practitioners involved in struggle for achieving world peace.

Key Words: Truth, Sarvodaya, Satyagraha, Non-Violence, World Peace.

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Introduction

Gandhi was a contemplative man of action and his philosophical formulations were inspired by and directed towards, the solution of immediate problems that beset the country, the society, and the people of his time and age. He put forward his views in response to those who sought his advice more often than not. But more than his spoken and written words, the testament of his life reveals fully and comprehensively all that he stood for. So, in seeking a perspective on Gandhi's principles of peace-making, we must turn to his life, understand what he stood for, and on what values and principles he based his actions. 'My life is my message', this avowal of Gandhi was not a mere statement. It suggests that Gandhi was not inclined to abstract theories. Gandhi was an activist and a practical philosopher.

An ardent investigation of Gandhian concept of peace reveals that the philosophical root of Gandhian peace emanate from his seminal work 'Hind Swaraj' which he wrote in 1909, where he criticized the modern model of development as inherently violent. One who scrutinizes Gandhi's speeches, writings and actions will understand his deep commitment for the cause of peace and non- violence which was a part of his philosophy of life and his world view. In the ideal society of Gandhi's vision, the organisation and relationship of the members of the society must be based on the law of non-violence or love. The real task before those who dream a peaceful and non-violent society is to practise the ideals of peace and non-violence which were placed by Gandhi before humanity and contribute towards transformation of the existing society into peaceful non-violent one.

2. Principle of Non Violence

In his penchant for integral humanism, Gandhi evolved his world view of non- violence from a concept of 'self' and human nature. Acknowledging the inherent goodness of human beings, Gandhi emphasized the capacity of all human beings to develop their full potential of non-violence. The path of violence was seen by him as a downward path away from our humanity and closer to that of brute while the path of Non-violence was closer to humanness. He believed in the unity and oneness of all including the sentient and non-sentient beings. He believed that all human beings are part of the divine and they are interdependent and interrelated. If one person gains in Non-violence, the entire humanity gains with him and vice versa. In such an interrelated

and relational framework, Non- violence becomes the cardinal principle governing human relations.

Gandhi subscribed to non- violence on the basis of a deep trust in it as a creed or an article of faith. Although he was not unaware of its strategic value. He had complete adherence to non- violence was based on principles rather than opportunism or cost benefit considerations, For Gandhi, it was not a weapon of expediency. It was a spiritual weapon and he successfully employed it at the regular level. He made it clear that non violence is not a weapon of the weak and the coward. The application of this principle needs greater courage and moral strength. He believed that Ahimsa or Love has a universal application and it can be employed in one's own family, society and the world at the larger level. Through the technique of non-violence a seeker of Truth tries to convert his opponent by the force of moral character and self suffering. A practitioner of non-violence has to undergo suffering to penetrate into the heart of the opponent. Gandhi looked upon selfless suffering as the law of human beings and war as the law of jungle.

Gandhi's concept of non-violence is closely linked with his understanding of truth. Truth was fundamental in his philosophy of life. He also wanted to make truth discovery as the principle around which the differences among human beings could be sorted out. Throughout his life he was experimenting and perfecting his notion of truth. For him,

truth is a sovereign principle and it includes numerous other principles. Gandhi called truth realisation as the realisation of the God. This quest for truth can be carried out not through any means. Violence is based on a notion that the person who employs it has the sole possession of truth. Gandhi was of the view that the truth known to human beings is never absolute but relative. Therefore a seeker of truth has to adhere to the path of non-violence because unless he uses the method of Non-violence, he will not be able to be receptive to the notions of truth held by others. Gandhi wanted that all struggles and conflicts should be approached as a contestation between the notions of relative truth held by the conflicting parties. Only through a non-violent method you will be able to pursue a struggle of this kind because in it truth contestation becomes a joint effort of both conflicting parties. In other words it becomes a joint search for truth by the conflicting parties. There is no imposition of your notion of truth. Just as

you envisage the possibility of the conversion of other side to your position, the reverse possibility also cannot be ruled out.

Non Violence and Satyagraha

Gandhi believed that ahimsa or non violence takes account of dynamic and non-final state of relationships among human beings and seeks to heal, to bring together, because it springs from an inner realisation of the sense of unity, a 'oneness'. He called this technique, or the way of life, Satyagraha: Gandhi emphasised that 'the active state of ahimsa requires you to resist the wrong doer.'" It is a matter of principle, not expediency. By identifying ahimsa with positive love, Gandhi underscores creativity and reconstruction as essential in satyagraha; inter-personal relationship as important and urgent. It is not just a slogan that 'all men are brothers'. It is a universally sound basis for understanding suffering and for the recognition of the fact that human beings have the capacity to change. Gandhi did not consider nonviolence as a matter of tactic, although it certainly was effective in liberating India's people from an alien rule; as it enhanced the black movement in the USA, under Martin Luther King, Jr., in the 1960s, or as it became the basis of the liberation of the under privileged movement under the leadership of Danilo Dolci in Italy in the later years. On the contrary, Gandhi believed, as a result of the experiments he carried on in his personal life, and historically in India, that nonviolence is as much a means of achieving 'oneness with the other' as the fruit of the inner unity already achieved. Violence is wordless, and arises out of a bankruptcy of love and compassion. It begins where thinking and rational communication have broken down, inhibiting all desire to communicate with the 'other' in any other way than

through destructive and negative means. Gandhi's concept of non-violence was neither a sentimental religiosity, nor a denial of the reality of evil. The first duty of a real Satyagrahi is to bring to light the evil, the wrong, the injustice that she/he knows of, or sees, even if she/he has to suffer by so doing. But nonviolence must always be the means, because, ultimately, truth is the end, and because love is 'the law of our being'. 'If love, or nonviolence be not the law of our being, the whole of my argument falls to pieces. 'Love, or nonviolence, triumphs not by eliminating evil at once and once for all, but resisting and overcoming it anew, every day. Nonviolence takes account of the reversibility of evil, of change in relationships; what is more, it seeks to change relationships that are evil into 'others' that are good, or at least, less bad.

Nonviolence thus implies a certain kind of courage quite different from the loudness that is seen in violence. It recognises 'the need of forgiving... dismissing... releasing men from what they have done. Only through this constant mutual release can men remain free agents.' This integrative mode of approach does not depend upon an ideal view of mankind. This belief of Gandhi is based neither on the social context of India, nor on particular features of the Indian society. It is based upon the knowledge of the deeper, the uniquely basic needs common to every human being. Gandhi repeatedly warned of the dangers involved in focussing upon the misdeeds of the opponent.

How you can avoid pain and suffering is based on a utilitarian thinking, which is the basis of the much of the liberal thinking of the West. Suffering for a worthy cause in non- Western culture is often seen as liberating, even if it emerged as the result of the application of violence against an oppressor. The redemptive character of self-suffering was emphasised by Gandhi and it constituted a key element of his Satyagraha technique. In understanding the Gandhian perspective on peace, it is important to understand that in the satyagraha mode of action, 'self-suffering' is the chosen substitute for violence to others. To punish and destroy the oppressor is to initiate a cycle of violence and hatred. The only real liberation is that which liberates both the oppressor and the oppressed. For self-suffering, inner strength is an imperative which can bear the burden. It is moral bankruptcy if one is able to remain unmoved by imagining the guilt, or the evil, as exclusively one's adversary. Self suffering, Gandhi held, enables life and morally enriches the world. There is an engaging paradox in this that one can overcome evil by suffering it. The only way truly to overcome the adversary is to help him/her become other than an enemy. In the Gandhian perspective of peace, one finds this depth of wisdom. A true Satyagrahi refrains from using violent means not because he is unable, but because he chooses to invite suffering upon himself, if suffering

must be the price. 'He who harbours violence and hatred in his heart and would kill his enemy if he could, without being hurt himself, is a stranger to nonviolence.'" Submission can never be any part of self-suffering, nor does it seek to elevate individual ego. Thus non violence extends the area of rationality. It generates a high level of responsibility toward the 'other' who is not an 'enemy', but who could become an 'opponent', the one who 'disagrees'.

3. Concept of Ends and Means

The relationship between ends and means is utterly important. Ends alone can never justify the means. Gandhi's firm conviction was that means are as important as, and often even more important than, ends. The combination of truth and nonviolence in Gandhian principles forms the basis of the Gandhian solution to the problem of means. He was convinced, as he experimented with truth which is the story of his life in essence, that truth and nonviolence are so intertwined that it is almost impossible to say where one begins and the other ends. Gandhi wrote: "They are like two sides of a coin, or rather of a smooth, un stamped metallic disc." No action is worthy of human effort if it degrades man, even if the outcome is a spectacular success. Nowhere is the problem of means and end more challenging than in the consideration of the conduct, or resolution, of conflict. The Gandhian experiments throughout his life and work in South Africa, in India, and in England suggested to him irrevocably that if a human being is to free himself or herself, from fear and threat alike, he must set himself to the task of conquest of violence by means that must conform to the test of truth (satya) and nonviolence (ahimsa). In today's world, a separation of ends and means is taken for granted. Success, in the material sense, has become the touch-stone of ends eclipsing means- consideration and over emphasising the concern for ends. Means not conforming to the test of truth and nonviolence corrupt a person, and no good can come out of it even if the end is declaredly noble, such as defending one's country, religion, or freedom.. The cornerstone of the Gandhian basis of ends and means stands upon the utter necessity of reconciling ends and means consciously through a philosophy of action deeply rooted in truth (satyagraha) that is able to face the penetrating test of the highest ethical value

Sarvodaya

Sarvodaya was not only Gandhi's primary objective; it became a part of his principles necessary for the achievement of peace and maintaining harmony. Sarvodaya calls for self-giving in socially beneficial labour. It reaffirms the concept of trusteeship, and the imperative of service for all. It is also a means for working for economic equality and abolishing room for conflict. Gandhi said: 'I adhere to my doctrine of trusteeship in spite of the ridicule that has been poured upon it. It is true that it is difficult to reach. So is non violence difficult to attain.' Recognition of 'Sarvodaya' and the concept of trusteeship have the corollary of ruling out exploitation of any kind, and inequality of wealth. Gandhi saw in Sarvodaya economic equity in society, reaching down to the last and the least without ruthless compulsion and violence. The supreme test would be the material and moral growth of a human being, balanced one with the other. Gandhi did not accept that the greatest good of the greatest number was a valid proposition, or that the ultimate good of mankind lay in the endless possession of more and more material goods and in their acquisition without reference to moral values. Gandhi offered a practical way to a social revolution, radical but through peaceful means which guaranteed improvement in the quality of life, making possible an unprecedented output of free, collective initiative and endeavour as witnessed in the Bhoodan (Land-gift) Movement in Mangroth village in India in 1952. What was Gandhi's future is now our present. Yet our work today is fundamentally faced with the same problem of achieving community as it was in Gandhi's time. This is still an age of conflicts; conflict within the nation, conflict between nations, between peoples. Within nations there are still problems of castes and economic class-distinctions, of the haves and the have-nots, of the rights of religious and racial minorities. In the international arena, there are still the problems of colonialism of the old and the new varieties, of countries made divided and kept divided. This half of the twentieth century has taken on dimensions as far as violence is concerned that threaten annihilation. There are more violent weapons today than there were in Gandhi's time. If operated, these have the potency of destroying mankind overnight. The ancient, time honoured solution of problems through violence and war seems to be a spent-out device. War and violence have emerged as a totally destructive force with no record of righting wrongs, and establishing justice and equity, although such justifications may be flaunted. Rather, it is now an indisputable fact that war and violence, nationally and internationally, create more problems than they even begin to solve. Yet we continue to rely on them to solve conflicts, I think, because of our

preconceived notions and utter reluctance toward adopting nonviolence as the means. It is true that the complexities of the modern world, progress in the technique of human organization, and the intensifying pressure created by the human mind must bring conflicts on different levels of human experience. But destructive wars and uncontrolled violence need not be the normal conditions of human circumstance. An understanding of the Gandhian perspectives on peace, Gandhian philosophy of Satyagraha, of truth, nonviolence and morality in ends-means relationships will bring into focus how these factors have been allowed to go by default because there is a cruel contradiction in the situation of human beings (of spirit, mind, and body) living in an amoral social, economic and inter-national world. It would be wise to consider and reflect upon the contemporary situation within the framework of comparison and contrast with the Gandhian experiments which actually took place in India in our time and yielded fruitful results. It would be unwise to state that those fruitful results under Gandhi's leadership occurred in India because the principles, strategies, and the methods suited the particular features in Indian society. As Milovan Djilas said in 1969, writing on Gandhian teaching in his book "The Unperfect Society", 'They are a proof of the intuitive truth that our age has lost, fallen entirely under the curse of demagogues and still greater despots...' The Gandhian experiments and the resultant perspective underscore that mere flight from violence will not suffice. It is not enough to condone violence and advocate peace. The task of the conquest of violence with moral means is an imperative of our time. But as Gandhi warned, 'Peace is unattainable by part performance of conditions, even as a chemical combination is impossible without complete fulfilment of the conditions of attainment thereof. Not to believe in the attainment of peace and conflict resolution by nonviolence is to underestimate the potentiality of human mind and human spirit everywhere.

4. Conclusion: War, Peace and International Institutions

Gandhi resembled a Realist in so far as he was primarily concerned with war in the international system. In fact, he "looked upon the problem of war as the most important problem which faced the contemporary world". Further, Gandhi didn't accept distinctions between "just" and "unjust wars" - in his mind every war was unjust. Gandhi was firmly of the opinion that "war is not a morally legitimate means of achieving anything permanent". War was never a just means to attempt to create peace or to achieve a so-called noble goal. This contrasts the Marxist view that

"every war should be judged by the historical ends it serves and that certain wars are justified insofar as they destroy extremely pernicious and reactionary institutions". For Gandhi the ends never justified the means, and war was always an immoral means.

Gandhi insisted on examining and attacking the root causes of war and, in fact, stated: "all activities for stopping war must prove fruitless so long as the causes of war are not understood and radically dealt with. And what are these causes he is referring to? Gandhi considered a world system built on inequality, racism and exploitation to be the cause of war. He saw the manifestation of this exploitation in the form of imperialism, and viewed imperialism and greed as two of the greatest enemies of peace. As Gandhi states "there can be no living harmony between races and nations unless the main cause is removed, namely exploitation of the weak by the strong. Not surprisingly, Gandhi's prescription for peace rests on attacking these root causes of war, not simply applying temporary remedies to a conflict. He strongly argued that peace is not just the absence of war; it is "the elimination or destruction of all kinds and forms of tyranny. Further, peace is never the end in itself; it is "a means to a nobler goal - that of a just world order". Yet, to eliminate greed and create equality "in the world, the Marxist idea of banishing private property is not enough. For Gandhi the road to peace requires a spiritual revolution, harking back to the ideals of aloofness at the heart of Satyagraha. He contends that "to banish war we have to do more. We have to eradicate possessiveness and greed and lust and egotism from our own hearts."

Gandhi adopted a skeptical approach towards the ability of peace treaties and international institutions to create peace in world affairs. He saw many peace treaties like the treaty of Versailles as being punitive and vindictive.. He contended that the vindictive nature of this treaty actually led to World War II. Just as peace treaties are often signed out of fear and distrust, Gandhi also perceived world organizations as being built upon a foundation of suspicion and fear of other nations. In Gandhi's mind, to actually contribute to a lasting peace, an international body should not simply be created to protect one's interests, or to end a war. Gandhi's other main contention about international institutions was that they simply perpetuated an unjust world order and served the interests of a minority of powerful states. Gandhi criticized the League of Nations for wielding no real power and merely acting as a tool of Britain and France. As well, Gandhi

was cynical of the Kellogg-Briand Pact of 1928. Signatories renounced war as an instrument of national policy, but Gandhi noted that they still continued to exploit and colonise nations around the world. In his mind, it was ridiculous to renounce war, yet at the same time perpetuate a system that makes war inevitable.

Gandhi was equally critical of pacifist and anti-conscription movements' approaches to achieving peace. In light of his conception of the causes of war, and the path to true peace, it is easy to understand his discontent. His problems with the Pacifist movement arise on two levels: one, on the issues they addressed, and two, on their mode of expression. Gandhi viewed the Pacifist movement as limited simply to an antiwar posture, based on the assumption that, by boycotting wars, they would be contributing to world peace. Gandhi however viewed this as narrow-minded and criticized Pacifists for not attacking the real problem - an unjust, oppressive world order that caused war. On a second level, Gandhi went as far as to question the Pacifist movement's commitment to the ideals of nonviolence. Gandhi perceived that many pacifists supported pacifism in a half-hearted way. They did so "with the mental reservation that when pacifism fails, arms might be used. With them, it was not nonviolence, but arms that were the ultimate sanctions. This is not the full spiritual commitment to nonviolence required by Satyagraha. Gandhi further criticizes the lack of action by many pacifists and those opposed to conscription. As alluded to in the first part of this essay, nonviolence for Gandhi was not simply being passive; it was an active form of disobedience.

Although Gandhi was critical of the pacifist movement and of the international institutions of his time, he did believe that peace was possible. He believed that humanity's urge for peace is innate and insatiable, and that humans have the potential to achieve peace. Gandhi was confident that "we can certainly realize our full destiny and dignity only if we educate and train ourselves to be able to refrain from retaliation. The peace that Gandhi aspired to create was a durable peace that would weather the ages. This peace must address the root causes of war and would be firmly based on the nonviolent principles of Satyagraha. For Gandhi the road to world peace began with a free India, and proceeded to include an attitude of internationalism, or even the promotion of a world government, and the absolute necessity of total worldwide disarmament.

Gandhi led a nonviolent campaign for the freedom of India not solely on the grounds of ceasing the oppression of the Indian people, but also because he believed that a free India would be a first step towards world peace. The freedom of the oppressed was essential to Gandhi and thus his "whole life became ... a fight, a totally nonviolent fight, against imperialism, for that was in his thinking the only way to peace". For true peace to be possible, imperialism must end, and there must be a world system based on equality. But how could the oppressed be convinced to free themselves from their colonial powers without using violence? The answer, Gandhi was convinced, lay in India. If India could free itself through Satyagraha, it would serve as an example that nonviolent means of resistance are effective and would inspire others to fight non-violently against imperialism. It was Gandhi's hope that "a free India would be a haven of nonviolence and a beacon for peace in the world, setting the stage for peaceful revolution and eventually a just world order. Clearly the civil rights movement in the United States, which will be discussed in more detail in the latter section of this essay, is an example of a group of individuals using Gandhian principles as the basis for peaceful protest.

In addition to India becoming free and becoming a model of nonviolence, Gandhi prescribed three other important concepts in his blueprint for durable peace: internationalism, world government and disarmament. For Gandhi, nationalism was an essential prerequisite of internationalism. Gandhi considered it essential for countries to be self-sufficient, a concept he termed 'Swadeshi', before they could be equal and productive players in the international scene. Nationalism was not narrow or exclusive in Gandhi's mind, nor inherently dangerous. It was greed and selfishness that caused nationalism to get out of hand and threaten international cooperation. In Gandhi's world, healthy nationalism was essential in creating a spirit of international understanding. Gandhi was not concerned that internationalism would threaten national identity, for he believed true internationalism can function only if nations maintain their individuality while working together.

Gandhi dreamt of a world government, preceded by a world federation. The federation would be based on voluntary interdependence. The first step to further integration would be the freedom of exploited nations and once this was accomplished with India leading the way, a World State could replace the federation. The World State "takes its place in which all the states of the world

are free and equal ... no state has its military.' It would be composed of one central governing body, and while it retained no permanent army, if required, it would have a police force during the transition period to complete the nonviolent evolution towards the World State.

His idealistic vision of world peace ultimately pointed towards a total disarmament of all nations. Nations are armed out of fear and mistrust of each other. They would have to dispel this fear and discard their defensive persona. Gandhi realized that it would be difficult to start the process of disarmament and therefore argued that unilateral disarmament was necessary even if others do not follow. Gandhi was adamant in stating that, for the survival of the human race, nations must disarm even without the promise of reciprocity by other nations: "if even one great nation were unconditionally to perform the supreme act of renunciation, many of us would see in our lifetime visible peace established on earth."

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