



An Ethical Analysis of Gandhian Concept of Conflict Resolution

Dr. Sujatha. K., Guest Faculty, Centre for Yoga and Naturopathy, Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam. Kerala, India.

Dr. C.R. Harilakshmeendrakumar. Assistant Professor, School of Gandhian Thought and Development Studies, Mahatma Gandhi university, Kottayam. Kerala. India.

Abstract

Today the world is facing violence and terrorism in every walk of life. The entire world is passing through uncertainty and insecurity. Modern world is full of multidimensional and multidisciplinary conflicts involving the use of physical and psychological tools. Though everyone aiming at the conflict free-world, but conflicts are at the higher level. In this context, the ideas and moral thoughts of Gandhiji are very much relevant. Conflict Resolution aims at the domination of the source of conflict. According to Gandhiji Satyagraha is nothing but soul force in action. Nonviolence implies moral resistance, through fasting, picketing, civil disobedience, strikes etc. which are evolved out of the philosophy of non-violence of Mahatma Gandhiji. It is to be remembered that the method of non-violence is evolved, out of Gandhiji's life. His whole life and his entire teachings cannot be separated. Satyagraha is the soul force or the truth-force in action. Satyagraha way of Conflict Resolution help individuals to become to resolve its conflict and become good man. Gandhiji advocated Non-violence as a weapon for solving all types of disputes in society. Non-violence has the power to integrate societies and providing opportunities to people for their growth and prosperity. Gandhian concept of Satyagraha was an efficient tool to deal with all types of conflicts. This Article is attempted to explain ethical analysis of Gandhian concept of conflict resolution and his vision of ideal society.

Key words: Conflict, Resolution, Non-violence, Satyagraha, Moral, Integrate, Soul force.

Introduction

Mahatma Gandhi played an important role in the freedom struggle in India. His non-violent ways and peaceful methods were the foundation for gaining independence from the British. Conflict is a norm in human life, man has attempted conflict resolution since immemorial as well. Conflicts can be resolved either through violence or non-violence. Gandhiji's ideas and moral thoughts are applicable to establish a new social order based on love and non-violence. His non-violent and peaceful methods led to the freedom of our country. Gandhi proved that non-violence is the authentic way of solving all conflicts, whether it be social, economic, or political. Gandhian concept of Satyagraha is the most effective solution in various problems that existed in our society.

According to Gandhi's views on peace, there must be the absence way, injustice and exploitation in society. Mahatma Gandhi is the only hope of survival for the what of humanity from terrorism, violence and religious fundamentalism. Every citizen of the global family today wants to live with peaceful atmosphere which to live with peaceful atmosphere which can attained only by following Gandhian Philosophy and his teachings. For Gandhiji, Satyagraha is a moral weapon against corruption exploitation, imperialism, social and economic and political injustice.

1. Conflict and its Causes

Conflicts have been described as existing whenever incompatible activities occur, when two people wish to carry out acts which are mutually inconsistent, when there is a state of tension between two actors irrespective of how it has originated or how it is terminated. Conflicts can occur between many varying combinations of parties and for a great many different reason. When there is "the active striving for one's preferred outcome which if attained, precludes the attainment by others of their own preferred outcome, there by producing hostility, and "when one individual, community, nation, or even supernatural bloc desires something that can be obtained only at the expense of what another individual or group also desires ¹. Conflicts can occur between varying combinations of parties and for a great many different reasons. And they may also take various forms. From personal quarrels, through family plan and community disagreements; disagreements between individuals and larger groups, disputes between political parties or workers and management, religious and ideological conflicts, to various forms of international disputes.

Conflict is a natural fact of life. There are different types of conflicts, social, religious, regional, national or international. How we resolve conflict without war? Everyone can give a common answer that Mahatma Gandhi was one of the persons who had solved peacefully. Whatever be the type of conflict, it can be resolved only through peace and non-violence. Satyagraha, as practiced by Gandhi, was a technique of action designed to set in motion a process to achieve lasting peace. Gandhiji recognized the potentiality of these various kinds of conflict as occasions to contemplate over the confirmed problems and also as opportunity to search peaceful means to resolve them, because of his positive attitude. Gandhiji's concept of conflict resolution is unique. If we talk about the conflict resolution without any war then it seems that it will be dream but this dream was coming into true only due to Mahatma Gandhi. Conflicts may arise from differences in information or belief may reflect differences in interests' desires or values-----may occur as a result of scarcity of some resource such as money time, space position which includes success, pride, authority, status, recognition etc. or may reflect a rivalry in which one person tries to outdoor ondo the others².

2. The Gandhian Philosophy and Technique of Conflict Resolution

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. Gandhiji clarified the difference between passive resistance and Satyagraha. Satyagraha is a more dynamic force than passive resistance because, it contemplates prolonged mass action in resistance to injustice. In Satyagraha there

is no attempt to coerce or terrorise the opponent³. The concept of satyagraha and Conflict Resolution are closely related. Satyagraha the Gandhian principle based on truth and non-violence is itself a conflict resolving mechanism. Satyagraha is a method of conflict resolution based on non-violent resistance directed against injustice, corruption and unjust laws of the society and state. It provides for peaceful resistance to social and political authority. His Satyagraha was designed not only for India, but for the whole world, it could transform the relation between individual as well as between communities and nations. The Gandhian Philosophy and technique of conflict resolution Gandhi evolved satyagraha as the most pragmatic and potent technique of conflict resolution and as the morally correct way of life, based on the dialectics of 'conversion' through which alone can truth, human life's ultimate mission, be approached. Satyagrahi involves himself in act of "ethical existence". Nobody is out of the reach of satyagrahi's appeals especially if one's good will and willingness to suffer for truth are clearly demonstrated.

Violence to persons and property has the effect of clouding the real issues involved in the original conflict while non-coercive, nonviolent action invites the parties to dialogue about the issues themselves. Gandhi, therefore, warns that we must "Hate the sin and not the sinner"⁴. 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 realise their own human potential, existential rewards also accrue to satyagrahi. The objective is not to assert propositions, but to create possibilities. In opening up choices and in confronting an opponent with the demand that he makes a choice, the satyagrahi involves himself in acts of "ethical existence". The process forces a continuing examination of one's own motives, an examination undertaken within the context of relationships as they change towards a new, restructured, and reintegrated pattern. The Gandhian technique of resolving conflict satyagraha rests on the belief that striving for transformation of heart has been the most effective method of conducting a struggle. Gandhian Satyagraha is the effective weapon for prevent violence and tackles the conflict. Satyagraha inculcates agraha or moral pressure for the sake of truth. Gandhi states 'The world rests upon the bedrock of Satya or Truth'. A Satya, meaning untruth, also means non-existent, and Satya or Truth means 'that which is. If untruth does not so much as exist, its victory is out of the question. And truth being 'that which is can never be destroyed. This is the doctrine of *Satyagraha* in a nut shell⁵. Satyagraha aims at seeking truth in any situation and uses only nonviolent means to reach the goal. This enhances of 'productive solutions. Satyagraha is itself a movement intended to fight social and promote ethical values. It is a whole Philosophy nonviolence. Any violence inflicted by the opponent is accepted without retaliation. The opponent can only become moral upliftment if violence continues to be inflicted indefinitely.

3. Gandhian Principle and Ethics

Conflict Resolution literature focuses on strategic and tactical considerations, generally learning aside psychological, and especially ethical ones. The literature on law and society and the Gandhian literature are generally interlinked in political theory concerning civil disobedience but not in other areas such interpersonal conflicts or the role of the legal system as a general mechanism of conflict resolution. The Gandhian way of conflict resolution should relieve the individual of feelings of helplessness in conflict situations. But more than that, Gandhi clearly states that living within moral and humanistic grandeur of satyagraha as a method of resolving conflict and securing justice has been appreciated by several thinkers, politicians and social workers.

Gandhi emphasized the need for adopting pure means for achieving goals in life. His approach was indeed moral transformation of the individual heart, which is the basis of all social dynamics. He believed that the duty of renunciation differentiates mankind from the beast and held that “man becomes great exactly in the degree in which he works for the welfare of his fellow-men”⁶. The means proposed by Gandhi are based on voluntary conversion of the exploiting class to the cause of socio-economic justice by moral appeal to their conscience. His emphasis on moral conversion not only includes the moral transformation of the explorer but also the awakening of the workers and peasants to realize their moral strength. He felt that most of the evils of the modern economic system existed because we co-operated with them or tolerated them. Co-operation with good and non-cooperation with the evil should be the duty of every citizen. The exploiters would be deprived of their power of exploitation if the labourers realized that exploitation could take place only with their cooperation. Gandhi accepted the potentiality of various kinds of conflicts as occasions to contemplate over the confirmed problems and also as an opportunity to search for peaceful means to resolve problems. Gandhi accepted the potentiality of various kinds of conflicts as occasions to contemplate over the confirmed problems and also an opportunity to search for peaceful means to resolve problems. Gandhi accepted the potentiality of various kinds of conflicts as occasions to contemplate over the confirmed problems and also as an opportunity to search for peaceful means to resolve them, because of his positive attitude. Gandhian thought cannot altogether be separated from ethics. His ideas are generally satyagraha: It is the continuous realisation for truth. It mainly includes sacrifice, peace and non-violence. Only a person with will and determination can follow satyagraha. Trusteeship-wealthy people should act as trustees of trust that look after the welfare of the people.

To achieve simultaneously the negative aim of conflict resolution and the positive aim of establishing peace, Gandhi propounded his philosophy of peace. Our need is to proclaim again and again the significance of Gandhian pacifism to solve crucial problems of conflict and violence. Gandhi’s approach had always been holistic as human life is a synthetic whole, which cannot be divided into watertight compartments of social, religious, political life ect. The most fundamental principle of his philosophy of peace is “Ahimsa” or non-violence which is the law of love, life and creation as opposed to violence or Himsa, the cause of hatred death and destruction. The birth of non-violence as a political theory is seen as a seminal contribution of Gandhi to conflict resolution.⁷ Gandhi always emphasized on purity of means. Improper means cannot be adopted to achieve proper ends. As a wrong path cannot take you to the right destination.

If we want to peace, we have to replace the humanity negating Indus trial consumerist culture by idealistic humanism. Belief in the spiritual constitution of man led Gandhi to affirm quality of all human beings and declare innate goodness of man. Humanism as the philosophy of globalism or global philosophy implies non-discrimination with regard to race, sex, language, region, religion, political ideology social and economic status of the country ect...since the basic structure and nature of human beings all over the world in terms of maps and markets, we should think of it in terms of men, women, children that is, in terms of mankind behaviour through self-suffering. The method of Satyagraha is purely moral and humanistic as it involves faith in the inherent goodness and good sense of the opponent coupled with good will towards him and readiness to come towards him and readiness to come to an understanding and compromise. A well-conducted campaign of satyagraha, absolutely untouched by violence in word and deed, makes the opponent suffer as his own moral consciousness

exposes the immortality of his action. Gandhi believed in the technique of satyagraha because he had faith in the goodness of human nature. Gandhi's approach is ethical, as he believes, the moral degeneration is the root cause of all evils including conflicts. So, he recommends acquisition of moral values such as truthfulness, non-violence or love, self-control, forgiveness, non-enmity or friendliness, compassion, mercy etc. In fact, values are the best equipment's discovered by human beings to escape various types of conflicts.

4. The Role of Gandhian Ethics in Conflict Resolution

Ethics can generally be defined as the realisation of the need to justify one's life and the decision to be ethical entails the choice of a particular value: "the sense of satisfaction derived from knowing that one may judge his own life as he would judge another's and find it good. This requires some critical self-analysis and for Gandhi the quest for truth largely depended upon the truth about the self. 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 practiced "without the support of 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 in independent of these there are subjective rewards.

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 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. Conflict Resolution aims at the satisfaction of basic human needs, as it believes that the non-fulfilment of basic human needs is at the root of violent conflicts. Conflict is essentially subjective phenomenon and therefore its resolution is basically human centric. The aim of the study is to explore the Gandhian method of non-violence and peace which are the corner stones of Conflict Resolution. The mechanism of conflict resolution is to be carried out by the Gandhian method of non-violence and justice. Dedicated action based on transparency, co-operation, and discourse are inevitable elements of the method of non-violence.

5. Nonviolence

The term Ahimsa, or non-violence, has a broad connotation for Gandhi. It's a positive concept that necessitates action rather than merely avoiding hurt. Gandhi was a firm believer in the unity of all life and, as a result, in the non-harming of all living creatures. When one eats, though, some harm occurs, but this is a necessary evil. Nonviolence on the other hand, had to become a way of life, not just a policy that could be "put on and taken off at pleasure". The practise of satyagraha requires self-suffering. It has a number of advantages. First and foremost, it appeals to an opponent's logic. Second, it transforms both the suffer and opponent: the suffer is morally enriched since he or she does not compromise essential ideals, while the opponent is compelled to confront his or her views on the nature of the truth of the situation, which may result in conversion. Self-suffering has both practical and existential rewards, according to Gandhi "Suffering injury in one's persons is..... of the essence of nonviolence and it is the chosen substitute of violence to others.

Man as a social being understands that mutual assistance and cooperation with his life fellow beings may render his life easier and happier. So, he has been able to build up his civilization and culture with the cooperation of his fellow beings. Human species by applying reason and judgement have been able to make astonishing progress. When the bestial part of human nature is tamed, the scope of non-violence tendency increases and human society will be elevated to a higher plane. A civilization may be said to have advanced as far as it has succeeded in controlling the animal passions of man. Violence is counter-productive resulting in anger, hatred, jealousy, revenge, and bloodshed. Therefore, non-violent means is the only alternative to eradicate the beastly and anti-social tendencies from the human mind and to elevate human to a superior plane where in all humanity can live in peace and harmony.

Gandhian concept of Conflict Resolution is a remedy to various types of conflict that are existing in the contemporary world. Now a days we have been facing lot of challenges in various parts of the world. Every country faces a lot of internal and external threat. In the 21st century, serious problems like ethnic, religious conflict, terrorism, ecological destructive form a threat to human survivals. Gandhian concept of conflict resolution is a peaceful method with a nonviolent outlook. Satyagraha is a method of conflict resolution based on nonviolent resistance directed against injustice, corruption and unjust laws of the society and state. It provides for peaceful resistance to social and political authority. His satyagraha was designed not only for India, but for the whole world, it could transform the relation between individual as well as between communities and nations. Gandhiji evolved Satyagraha as the most pragmatic and potent technique of Conflict Resolution and as the morally correct way of life, based on the dialectics of 'conversion' through which alone can truth, human life's ultimate mission be approached.

6. Gandhiji's Vision of Rama Rajya

The ideal society of Gandhi's concept is based on the moral evolution of individuals. Gandhi was of the opinion that his ideal society may not be possible in the present state, but it can be realizable in future in the course of evolution of human society. If people become genuinely nonviolent, morally elevated, mutually affectionate, learn to cooperate voluntarily among themselves, and become averse to anti-social activities then society will be elevated to a higher plane of culture. Gandhi's vision of ideal society is nothing but an expression

of his striving for a just and perfect society, that is. the kingdom of righteousness on earth. Gandhi accepted man's animal ancestry and. said "in our present state, we are partly men and partly beasts"⁸. He also admitted Darwinism and said "we have become men by a slow process of evolution from the brute"⁹. The evolution of species has made man the highest creature in the cycle of creation. Though man is a rational animal, his nature is still dominated by qualities of the beast in him because the human species is still in the process of evolutionary development. Man is distinguished from the beast in his ceaseless striving to rise above the beast on the moral plane.

Gandhi's concept of Ramarajya stands for an egalitarian, nonviolent, and democratic social order, wherein moral values pervade all spheres of human life. Politically it is a form of stateless society, socially it is a form of classless society where all persons are equally treated irrespective of caste, colour, religion, sex etc., and economically it is a form of socialist society in which inequalities based on possession and non-possession vanish because all wealth belongs to the society as a whole. The law of "dharma" and the inward morality of the individuals bind together the members of the society and make them fulfil their social obligations. Dharma or social ethics exerts strong moral pressure on the individuals and sustains social cohesion. Each individual works for the "greatest good for all" and the society will provide maximum opportunities to all individuals to develop their potentialities.

He used to follow the path of peace and non-violence. Satyagraha is the weapon of the strong one who is capable of self-suffering can use it. That strength can come only by following the path of truth with non-violence as is emphasized in Satyagraha. Just as love, for Gandhi was the other side of Ahimsa, courage for him was the counterpart of self-suffering. Truth plus non-violence plus self-suffering constitute the essence of Satyagraha.¹⁰ Gandhiji devoted his whole life for the betterment of wellness of society. He used to work only on this principle that is follow the path of peace and non -violence. Mahatma Gandhi believed that only with the help of non-violence we can establish peace in the world. In any conflict Mahatma Gandhi always keep himself in talking and discussion process for resolving the conflict.

Conflict is a natural and it can be arisen between any individuals if their interest on any particular topic is not matching. Where there is a society then there will be conflict, either it may be in hidden form or it may be seen to everyone. For resolving conflict, it is not compulsory that there will be war. It can be resolve peacefully by adopting different techniques. Gandhiji played an important role in developing different ways of conflict resolution, of which satyagraha is the main weapon. Satyagraha means holding truth, fighting non-violently and on the principle of truth. In resolving conflict Mahatma used to talk only truth and control himself in maintaining peace. Gandhiji emphasized truth and peace no target can be attained, so that truth and peace are very important. Maintaining peace is the positive approach. Peace is a virtue a state of mind, a disposition for benevolence, confidence and justice. The comprehensive nature of peace touches upon many issues that influence reality of life including personal growth, freedom, social equality is economic equality.

Mahatma Gandhi said that every human being should do their work on the platform of peace of truth. He used to say that love is big weapon for enquiring any type of conflict. For the world's present and future generation, the whole life of Mahatma Gandhi has been set as an ideal example of peace, non-violence social

harmony and communal unity, simplicity and firmness. The Gandhian Philosophy of peace and harmony is based on the concept of unity in existence. Gandhian philosophy of peace, truth, justice, love can be traced to Yajurveda. Vedic idealism is the basic of Gandhian teachings. Ahimsa according to Gandhiji ought to be cultivated of personal, social national and international levels to, avoid all types of conflicts. Injustice is to be resisted through self-suffering and sacrifice. Gandhiji developed as a method of non-violent unarmed resistance to fight against the injustice and to bring harmony in any society.

Conclusion

Gandhi believed that as human beings, men can never reach the perfection of divine virtues. Still, they should strive with all their strength to follow the virtues of truth, love, nonviolence, tolerance, fearlessness, charity and service to mankind. Men have to uphold the right, regardless of the personal consequences they may face. He urged Satyagrahis to adopt to these virtues. Conflict Resolution practices/skills by themselves, do not attempt to impose any preconceived resolutions to the parties in conflict, but they only try to facilitate a peaceful solution through dialogues, discussions, negotiations and other collaborative processes. While dialogues alone, might not lead to an eventual settlement of conflict but it certainly is a necessary pre-requisite and will remain a compound for a resolution of any conflict. Today there are many issues that are to be solved only through mass movements. Gandhian teachings have great relevance in this context people have to rise into a level of thinking were equality, justice, love, truth. Prevailing for which Gandhian teachings or non-violence and conflict resolution have very much to contribute.

REFERENCES

1. Deutsch, "Conflicts: Productive and Destructive", P.7; Albert "competition and Dissensus", P. 26. Likert and like new ways of managing conflict P.7; and Curie, Making Peace, P.3.
2. Deutsch, "Conflicts; Productive and Destructive", P. 8.
3. M.K Gandhi. Vykam Satyagraha, young India, May 1,1924.
4. Gandhi, Autobiography, P. 230.
5. M. K Gandhi. *Satyagraha in South Africa*. Part II, Chapter 16 on 'Women in Jail. (Ahmedabad; Navjivan press,1968), P. 323.
6. N.K. Bose, selections from Gandhi, (Ahamadabad: Navajivan Publishing House,1972), P. 25
7. Antonino, Drago "The Birth of Non-Violence political Theory". Gandhi Marg,29,3 October-December 2007, PP.275-295.
8. Young India,9 March 1920, P. 286.
9. Harijan,2 April 1938, P.65.
10. S.P. Venna. Modern Political Theory. (Delhi, Vikas,1975), P. 411.