

Gandhian Approach

Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948) has been acknowledged as one of the greatest figures of human history. An indefatigable fighter for India's independence, an outstanding mass leader, social reformer, pacifist and, above all, a prophet of non-violence and truth - there are several facets of Gandhi's personality and contributions. He lived, fought and died for the ideals of non-violence, peace, brotherhood and tolerance. He employed the innovative techniques of non-cooperation, civil disobedience, fasting, strikes etc. against the British rulers in India and added new dimensions to the theory of political mobilization. Although Gandhi's ideas on society and politics are well-known, his views on peace and other international issues are not known as widely. It is believed that he did not take much interest in world affairs, preoccupied as he was with the conduct of the Indian national movement and resolution of the problems of Indian society and villages. However, this is a mistaken view. Gandhi never ignored world affairs and reflected frequently on the contemporary international events and expressed his vision of the new world order clearly and keenly. Indeed, he conceived of and carried out India's struggle for freedom in the larger international context. However, as he was not a theoretician or a systematic writer, he did not explain his thoughts on international relations at length or provide any specific theory of peace. His ideas on war and peace were scattered in his writings and in his comments made to various individuals. Due to the thematic inconsistency of these writings, it is difficult to structure an organized theory out of it. Nevertheless, the totality of his views on international relations does constitute a distinctive approach to the understanding and resolution of the problem of inter-state violence. The Gandhian vision of peace is eclectic in nature, derived from suitable sources and traditions. It was influenced as much by the pacifist and anarchist writings, especially of the Russian writer Leo Tolstoy and the American anarchist Henry Thoreau, as by the philosophical traditions of Hinduism, Jainism and Christianity. The following sections explain the key ideas of the Gandhian approach to peace.

In order to understand Gandhian approach to peace, we must comprehend the core of Gandhi's general social and political thought. He had an integral philosophy of life and society applicable to domestic and international situations alike. This philosophy stemmed from his actions as well as his thought. His conceptions about man, society and the state provided the basis for his approach to peace and world affairs. Implicitly, Gandhi enunciates both the epistemology of peace as well as the sociology of peace. In the Gandhian thought, metaphysics and social principles, religious values and political strategy are woven together. The primacy of the moral over the political and of the spiritual over the temporal

is fundamental to Gandhi's thinking. He considered absolute truth as the ultimate goal and non-violence as the best method of achieving it. Absolute truth is omnipotent and all encompassing. It is equivalent to divinity. There could be no beauty and no art apart from truth. Gandhi subtly altered the dictum "God is Truth" to "Truth is God. Purity of means to achieve any end is also fundamental to the Gandhian approach. Rejecting the Machiavellian approach that end justifies means, Gandhi said that ends and means are inseparable. Good begets good and evil begets evil. In fact, 'ends' grows out of the 'means'. In Gandhi's view, the way you fight and the goal for which you fighting are the same. Thus, in the Gandhian scheme, the solution of any, problem is incorporated into the way one struggles against it:

Satyagraha is Gandhi's most original and significant contribution to social thought and movement. This policy of non-violent struggle to fight against injustice, exploitation and domination was conceived and implemented by Gandhi in the anti-racial struggle in South Africa as well as against the British colonial rule in India. The several satyagraha's led by Gandhi were mainly responsible for mobilisation of the Indian masses for the country's independence and the weakening of the British imperial rule. Satyagraha is applicable to all situations: from inter-personal to the group relationships, from the national to international conflicts, from the micro- to macro-level problems. It can also be ecdemite against the problems of injustice, exploitation and war at the global level. Hence, the Gandhian approach to peace relies heavily on satyagraha. In fact, Gandhi considers satyagraha as a moral substitute of war, and as a superior means of redressing the grievances of a state. It relies on persuasion and moral pressure rather than on physical force or other coercive techniques¹ to achieve the goal of peace and justice at the international level. Satyagraha is a compound Sanskrit word that means insistence on truth. Satyagraha means resisting evil and injustice through peaceful and pure means, without coming violence of any kind and generating ill feelings against the evil-doer. Satyagraha is not just as a technique of non-violent resistance but a moral and social philosophy of life. Satyagraha is carried out through several non-violent means: reasoning, persuasion, moral appeal through self-suffering, non-co-operation, civil disobedience, strikes, fasting etc. It is based on the belief that the opponent is open to reason and has a conscience that responds 'to the suffering and problems of other persons, and to any noble and friendly gesture. The objective of Satyagraha is to convert, not to coerce, the wrongdoer. Conversion of the opponent is made possible by the satyagrahi's sincerity and willingness to make sacrifices for the cause. Self-suffering and positive psychological attitudes of a satyagrahi may lead to changes in attitudes of the opponent in the long run. This

might lead to the opponent changing inwardly and reconciling with the non-violent activist, leaving no aftermath of resentment or revenge. Satyagraha aims at liquidating the antagonisms but not the antagonists themselves. In satyagraha, the negative actions of the other party will have to be opposed persistently - and resolutely, at the same time maintaining the feeling of amity for the opponent. Gandhi believed that we must not consider our opponents as our enemies. He wrote: "While we may attack measures and systems. we must not attack men. Imperfect ourselves, we must be tender onwards others and slow to impute motives."