Gandhian Methodology and Conflict Resolution

Dr. Jai Kumar Saroha
Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, S D (P G) College, Ghaziabad, C.C.S University, Meerut, U.P, INDIA

ABSTRACT

In this paper, we shows that 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.

Keywords---- Society, Community, Gandhi

I. 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.

II. 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 shot 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.

III. 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.

IV. 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.

V. 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.

VI. 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 non-violence 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.

VII. 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. [www.theshilllongtimes.com/c-12-Sept.html, 2006] 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. 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.

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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."

REFERENCES

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