

Gandhian Method of Conflict Resolution: Perception of Educated Youths

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Gandhiji's method of conflict resolution was based on truth and non-violence. Truth was for him the image of God. He did not believe in personal God. For Gandhi truth is God and God is truth. Life is a laboratory where experiments are carried on. That is why he named his autobiography "My Experiment with Truth", without these experiments truth cannot be achieved. According to Gandhi, the sayings of a pure soul which possesses non-violence, non-stealing, true speech, celibacy and non-possession is truth.

The truth of Gandhiji was not confined to any country or community. In other words, his religion had no geographical limits. His patriotism was not different from the service of human beings but was its part and parcel (Mishra:102). Gandhiji developed an integral approach and perspective to the concept of life itself on the basis of experience and experiments. His ideas, which came to be known to be his philosophy, were a part of his relentless search for truth (Iyer:270). The realization of this truth is possible only with the help of non-violence

The negative concept of Ahimsa presupposes the absence of selfishness, jealousy and anger, but the positive conception of ahimsa demands the qualities of love, liberalism, patience, resistance of injustice, and brutal force. Truth and non-violence are complementary to one another. He regarded every human soul as the secretary of truth (Jain:91)

There are many vital weapons used by Gandhiji, such as non-co-operation, civil disobedience, passive resistance and Satyagraha. Truth, discipline, sacrifice, love and non-violence are the essential elements for the success of Satyagraha. Satyagraha does not only change the heart of enemy but also purifies the heart of its practitioner. It destroys his evil qualities. But to keep the country ready for Satyagraha is really a tedious task. Undoubtedly is the utility of Satyagraha but its successful operation demands a great deal of sacrifice and plenty of patience. According to Mahatma Gandhi, the country was not ripe for Satyagraha without abolishing the social inequality, untouchability, and unemployment.

Satyagraha is nothing but soul force in action. It had its origin in the programme of passive resistance which Gandhiji first tried in South Africa in fighting injustices done to Indians settled there. Gandhiji believed that self-suffering was the best way to win over the adversary, for this made a direct appeal to his heart and untimely his conscience. It was not the weapon of the weak as might be supposed. It could be wielded only by the truthful who had an undying faith righteousness of his cause and was ready to undergo any amount of suffering, even death, in defence of it. This is what made a Satyagrahi fearless in the face of most violent and brutal repression.

It follows that Satyagraha and non-violence go together. They are two sides of the same coin. One who wanted to fight tyranny with soul force should be pure in word, deed and thought. Gandhiji regarded non-violence as the law of our species, as violence is the law of brute. Non-violence implies putting of moral resistance to wrong by self-suffering as through fast, picketing, Civil Disobedience, strikes regardless of any hardships or repression from authorities. When Satyagraha in South Africa was successful. Tolstoy affirmed, this was the first attempt to apply principle of Satyagraha to masses or bodies of men and Gandhiji achieved notable success. Gandhiji's method consisted in negotiating with the government entreating it to redress the grievances and failing settlement, forewarning the govt. of his intention to advice people on the course of civil disobedience from a specified day.

Gandhi said that Satyagraha is like a banyan tree, which has innumerable branches .Truth-satya and non-violence-Ahimsa together made its parent trunk from which all the innumerable branches shoot out(Iyer:265) The technique or method he used was evolved out of his pilosophy of non-violence. It is important to remember that the technique is evolved, not artificially built. His whole life and his entire teachings continue to be a steadily perfected system. Non-violence is the soul force or the truth force. In contemporary India Gandhian legacy of Satyagraha has tended to be a liability rather than an asset. It has been used to exercise coercion on the Parliament, State Legislatures, University authorities and the State executive. Their decisions have to be modified under the pressure of hunger strike, threats of self-immolation, picketing and similar other coercive measures. Their appeal is seldom to the conscience of their opponents. The "righteousness" of their cause is evident to few besides themselves. It becomes quite- after a physical combat in patience and endurance. Their strength is not soul force but mass hysteria. Passive resistance is reduced to a sheer physical weapon. The result is a subversion of Parliament as authority and discarding of democratic process. In fact, Gandhian Satyagraha has been completely perverted in what is known as the "Gherao" method of coercing the decision-maker. The "Gherao" is patently immoral in as much as it amounts besieging seldom peacefully, unarmed, reasonable and helpless men or body of men and not lifting the siege until the "demands" have been fully conceded. To prevent structural violence Gandhi proposed the theories with the ideals of Satyagraha, Sarvodaya, Swaraj, Swadeshi, Buniyadi Talim,

Decentralisation of Power and Wealth, Trusteeship, Social Harmony and Communal Unity, Economic Equality, Sarva Dharma Sambhav, Democracy of Enlightened Majority, etc.

Satyagraha, as used in inter-personal conflicts, often depends upon the degrees to which its values are internalized rather than on a conscious adoption of tactics. Gandhiji claimed that there is no royal road to achieve this. He said, "if you are weak and not able to vanquish your enemy with might, you can have victory with the help of the force of your soul channelized through non-violent revolution." (Mishra, 100). In dyadic conflicts of which the domestic quarrels are a good example, non-cooperation, civil disobedience of the orders of the offender if he happens to be in exercise of authority, suffering of hardships that came as a result of this resistance, fasting, etc." are appropriate methods. As mentioned, the resolution of interpersonal conflicts along Gandhian lines depend to a large degree on how for the principles of Satyagraha have been internalised; however, there are various techniques that can be learnt which will aid in the cooperative solution of such conflicts. These conflicts are in keeping with the Gandhian ideal of non-violence, that is, treating the other as a "you" rather than as an "it".

When interpersonal conflict arises whether they be between parties having differing degrees of authority (For example, parent/child in the home or teacher/student in the school) or between parties having theoretically equal power (friends, marriage partners, etc.) the general way of bringing conflicts to an end are for the parties to attempt to impose their will on each other for authority figures to exercise their authority, or for one party to give in. Another technique that can clarify the real issues in an interpersonal conflict and thus aid its solution is the role reversal technique of switching viewpoints while the other listens. These techniques are applicable in domestic situations or with friends and neighbours where there is a sufficient degree of rapport.

Gandhiji firmly believed that the home was the training ground of Satyagraha-that it was the world in microcosm-and how we reacted to aggression from strangers or handled our disagreement with them depended upon that training. The care and attention paid to small seemingly unimportant conflicts is as important as that given to larger disputes. For it will be by these small things that you shall be judged.

The application of Satyagraha can also be examined in respect of the industrial conflict. In the adversary system of legal dispute settlement, there are two areas to be examined in detail (i) alternatives to courtroom adjudication in simple civil cases and (ii) the position of defendant facing a criminal charge. Some clues as to the conduct, along Gandhian lines, of such traditional areas of court disputes as the issue of conflict between consumers and manufacturers or disputes arising between individuals and large organizations can be inferred from the areas examined and from the general rules of Satyagraha.

Regarding industrial conflict, he ideally, not one of zero-sum, or even of compromise, but one leading to the truth through mutual problem solving conflict within industry that often lead to strike have been seen as having economic and/or social determinants. Gandhi is his role as a union organiser dealt particularly with the former, but as a social critic he addressed himself to the later explanation also. Although industrial relations is concerned with more than the individual in conflict dealing with the adjustment of power within and between groups, here too Gandhi stresses the personal morality of the individuals making up the groups over political expediency.

Very close to the end of Gandhi's long life, despite the bloody upheavals following the portion of British India, Gandhiji was still able to claim quite emphatically that " Satyagraha can rid society of all evils, political, economic and moral". Satyagraha being a resistance to evil, in the context of social conflict, includes as its most visible form opposition to unjust laws. In the political field, where most of the Satyagraha campaigns in pre-independent India occurred, struggles generally consist " in opposing error in the shape of unjust laws....Hence Satyagraha largely appears to the public as civil disobedience or civil resistance". Regarding this civil disobedience Gandhi agreed with western thinkers like Thoreau and Plato's theory. For Gandhi, the rules of morality, that ought to guide the lives of individuals, should likewise guide the interactions between nations. The rules governing means and ends, truth and non-violence were for him equally applicable in the international sphere. There are, however, other factors beside effectiveness to be taken into account when assessing the usefulness of Gandhi's alternatives to war as a means of solving international conflicts. Horsburgh makes the point that, although the achievements of non-violence in India owe as much to Gandhi's moral greatness as to the techniques of Satyagraha themselves, the right method, if persisted in, can do much to produce the right man. Gandhi emphasised that this is something that training for violence cannot do. In the Gandhian model the individual comes to a conflict situation as one who is not innately aggressive and has the freedom of will to resolve conflicts in a non-violent way, freely chosen. Satyagraha then, from the Gandhian perspective, is a viable autonomy producing method of conflict resolution (Weber, 121)

OBJECTIVES OF THE PRESENT STUDY

Keeping in view the aforesaid theoretical perspective, it was considered pertinent to know the perception of the educated youths towards the relevance of Gandhian method of conflict resolution in the twin cities of Cuttack and Bhubaneswar. It is pertinent to mention here that Gandhiji had immensely influenced the people of Odisha by his charisma. His timely courage and inspiration had rescued Odia people the crucial conflicts which they experienced at the time of Freedom Movement (Chand, 88-89)

The following objectives were formulated in the present study:

1. To know the opinion of the educated youth in the study area regarding the possibility of the Gandhian method of conflict resolution in the political arena.
2. To extract the direct opinion of the respondents relating to the applicability of Gandhian methods for resolution of industrial conflict in the present scenario.
3. To examine the practicability of Gandhian method of conflict resolution in the social field on the basis of the opinion of the respondents.
4. To assess the opinion of the educated youth concerning the effectivity of Gandhian approach to maintain communal harmony.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The present study appears significant due to the following reasons:

1. Gandhi has shown the world how non-violence could be a powerful weapon in dispelling the mighty British colonial regime from India and, therefore, it is always desirable that opinion of the Indians regarding their faith in Gandhian method of conflict resolution should be assessed from time to time .
2. Indian youths are future torch bearers of the cultural face of the country which boasts of Mahatma Gandhi. At present, India possesses a rich youth dividend and, as such, it is deemed proper to assess their faith in the Gandhian methods of conflict resolution.
3. After the assassination of Gandhiji, the country has witnessed a series of conflicts in the political, industrial, social and communal areas. The state of Odisha is not free from it .Hence it quite pertinent to undertake such a study so as to investigate the perception of the educated youths in the heart land of Odisha.

RESEARCH UNIVERSE AND SAMPLING

The research universe of the present study comprises all the educated youths of the twin cities of Cuttack and Bhubaneswar, the old and the new capital of Odisha respectively. Whereas Cuttack has been the cultural and commercial nerve centre of Odisha, Bhubaneswar has got the reputation of being the citadel of political leaders and intellectuals. Cuttack was Gandhiji,s main centre of activities.He visites Odisha eight times and his visits gave a tremendous fillip to the non-co-opreation movement.Students from school and colleges also responded to Gandhiji's call and joined the Freedom struggle by giving up their studies, The most prominent among them being H.KMahatab, Nityananda Kanungo, N.K.Choudhury, R.K.Bose, That apart, G.C.Choudhury also resigned from the

post of Deputy Collector to join the freedom struggle (Sahoo, 463). Even women Satyagrahis joined the struggle in large numbers. The most notable among them are Rma Devi, Malati Devi Choudhury and Annapurna Devi. Gandhiji's visit to Odisha had a great influence on Khadi, Untouchability, Hindu-Muslim unity, Truth, Non-violence, Satyagraha etc. The major Gandhian organisations located in Cuttack are Sarvodaya Mandal, Kasturba Gandhi National Memorial Trust, Swaraj Ashram, Utkal Gandhi Smarak Nidhi, Hind Sevak Sangh etc. Thus the study area is characterised by adequate Gandhian impact and activities.

In this study proper care has been taken to draw representative sample. The sample size is two hundred, hundred each from the two categories of graduates and post-graduates and above. In the absence of source list, essential for drawing a random and representative sample, the researcher was compelled to make a purposive selection of units. Purposive sampling means selecting the items of the sample in accordance with some purposive principle. Here the probability of the inclusion of some units of the universe in the sample is very high, while the probability of the inclusion of other is very low.

TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES

Different tools and techniques of data are used in social research, such as observation, interview, questionnaire, case study, etc. Keeping in view the problem under investigation suitable tools are used by different researchers. When the problem under study is quite subjective and is about the opinion attitude and values of respondents, interview is usually chosen as the most effective tool.

In the present research work, the research tool used for gathering accurate information from the respondents is interview method, which contains a set of relevant and useful questions based on various techniques of Gandhian method.

The interview schedule consists of socio-economic characteristics of the respondents, opinion regarding Gandhi's philosophy of spirituality and religion, opinion regarding Gandhi's economic philosophy, opinion regarding Gandhi's political philosophy, opinion regarding Gandhi's social philosophy and opinion regarding Gandhi's philosophy on peace study.

The schedule contains maximum number of structured and few open-ended questions which are predetermined by the researcher and are filled up, after getting proper information from the respondent.

The schedule was prepared after thorough reading of the available literature in the field. The people who have worked on the problem were also talked with a pilot study of the universe was also undertaken to know the exact nature of the problem in empirical situation. After the preparation of the tool interview schedule it was put for protesting.

Necessary changes and amendments were made in accordance of the feedback from the field.

Our technique of data collection has been the narrative interview. The respondents were contacted after the sampling. Prior appointments were taken from them.

RAPPORT

A state of rapport exists between the interviewer and the respondents when the later accepts the research goals of the interviewer and activity seeks to help him in obtaining the necessary information (Young, 220)

Thus establishment of rapport is very important for any interview, as it is very tedious job to collect information from the respondents who are unknown to the researcher. So in order to win the confidence of the respondents the researcher had to establish rapport with the informants at first by convincing them about the usefulness of the study and its impact on the welfare of the people.

MAJOR FINDINGS

The findings of the study are quite pertinent in the context of the present day society, corrupt polity, cut throat economic competition and increasing communal and ethnic violence. Majority of the respondents (55% below 25 years of age and 68% above it opined that the Gandhian method of conflict resolution might be possible in the political arena and the rise of Anna Hazare and the formation of AAP is a landmark in this regard. Similarly most of the educated youths (62% below 25 years of age and 74% above it also believed that Ahimsa is applicable in each and every sphere. However, 82% of the first category of youths and 76% of the second category perceived that Gandhian principle had been distorted in respect of decentralisation of power. A large number of respondents (84% in total) have held that "Gandhian concept of an ideal state is practically feasible. However, an overwhelming majority of youths (86% in total) are of the opinion that Gandhiji's concept of secularism was contrary to the belief of people. 8% of the respondents from both the categories of youth are of the perception that Gandhiji's concept of secularism was neither appealing to the majority nor to the minority.

A majority of respondents(58%) believed that Gandhiji's theory of trusteeship is an appropriate method to avoid conflict in the economic field. Similarly most of the youths (52%) expressed that every man must have to do physical labour to earn his own bread to live. Gandhiji's views on Swadeshi were supported by 58% of the youth. As Gandhian methods of strike, rally and fasting were successful in those days, it was desired to collect data in this regard and it is revealed that these methods continue to have contemporary relevance as 76% of the youths under investigation uphold it. Most of the educated youths

78% under investigation maintained that the Chipko Movement is a constructive Gandhian method to settle the conflict between the people and Government.as regards the communal conflict during partition,32% respondents stated that communal conflict during partition was an indicator of irrelevance of Gandhian method.However, the majority (68%) opined that Gandhian method is relevant in spite of the riot.In the like manner,58% of the respondents maintained that Babri Masjid-Ram Mandir issue can be solved through the Gandhian method of Ahimsa. Data regarding border terrorism revealed that 48% of the educated youths under investigation were hopeful of solution of border terrorism through Gandhian method of negotiation.

CONCLUSION

Gandhian methods of resolution of conflict have a far broader and deeper significance in the present day society. Gandhiji's methods and principles, although are more spoken, are still widely used and frequently followed in industrial and other sectors. Even though, now a days in the name of non-violence incidences of violence are evinced in every sphere , every walk of life of the individual as well the group, we still have the Gandhian ideas and principles with us pertaining to our foreign policy which is based on our ideas of Panchasila and peaceful co-existence.

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