
UNIT 14 SATYAGRAHA AS A MEANS OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION

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14.1 INTRODUCTION

During his stay in England, where he had been to study law, Gandhi was influenced by Christian moral precepts like the *Sermon on the Mount* and the idea of civil disobedience of Henry David Thoreau. He was also influenced by Edward Carpenter's critique of modern industrial civilisation and Leo Tolstoy's views on non-violence, where the two were much in agreement. Gandhi advocated and emphasised nonviolent direct action because India had had a strong tradition of Ahimsa. Ahimsa had been a central principle in both Jainism and Buddhism. The notion of Ahimsa was based on the tenet of unity of all life, which was a key feature of Hinduism as well. All these cultural and spiritual ideas had been a major influence on Gandhi. These influences were instrumental in the formation and development of Satyagraha- the most systematic and developed mode of nonviolent action and conflict resolution.

Aims and Objectives

This Unit would enable you to understand

- The meaning and techniques of Satyagraha;
- The application of Satyagraha as a tool of conflict resolution; and
- The relevance and applicability of Satyagraha in the 21st century.

14.2 MEANING OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION

The term 'conflict' has a range of applications. It ranges from the individual person who tries to allocate scarce resources (e.g., time and money) to competing ends between individuals and groups to two nations/states pursuing the same value, for instance, world hegemony.

There are several mechanisms for dealing with conflicts across all levels – interpersonal disputes to international armed engagements. These processes make use of a variety of problem-solving methods to resolve incompatibilities in needs and interests; they also embrace overlapping methods and activities. However, variations in both the methods used and outcomes achieved characterise the differences between conflict resolution and other processes, such as conflict prevention, conflict management, and conflict settlement.

Conflict resolution generally refers to a process for ending disputes. It is a nonviolent process that comprises a range of approaches and tools, such as those of negotiation, mediation and facilitation, to resolve conflicts, to promote mutually acceptable agreements and to build new and lasting relationships between hostile groups.

Conflict resolution is rooted in a normative framework that sees conflict as a normal part of human interactions. A successful conflict resolution process is one that is productive and maximises the potential for positive change at both the personal and structural level. The resolution strand sees conflict as essentially a subjective phenomenon that focuses on subjective relationships between parties by emphasising on improving communication and by facilitating the development of trust and cooperation. Resolution must, therefore, involve analysis and reconstruction of perceptions of beliefs about, and attitudes towards, the other side.

Conflict resolution emphasises on participatory processes and integrative solutions that will be controlled by parties and can be self-enforced. Typical aspects of the conflict resolution process include getting both sides to listen to each other, providing opportunities for parties to meet each side's needs, and finding the means to address both sides' interests to reach a mutually satisfactory outcome.

The term “parties” is defined broadly. This includes people directly impacted by the conflict, or those who could be impacted by potential solutions (referred to as stakeholders). Narrow definitions of parties, limited to decision-makers or power-brokers, are insufficient because they ignore parties who can block decisions or who, if excluded, may choose to wage their own round of the conflict.

Getting to resolution also requires the use of participatory processes in which parties have both voice and vote. Third parties may help facilitate a process, but parties should maintain control over both the development and selection of viable solutions. Conflicts may be settled or regulated when powerful third parties dictate or enforce solutions, but this seldom results in eliminating the causal factors. Conflict resolution also requires addressing the deep-rooted causes of the conflict. Processes that address symptoms rather than underlying causes may temporally manage a conflict, but they do not result in resolution. Although there can be significant trade-offs in the agreement, these must not sacrifice the key issues and needs. The final criterion for achieving the resolution of a conflict is building of integrative solutions. Both parties must have at least some, if not all, of their underlying needs and interests satisfied.

14.3 MEANING OF SATYAGRAHA

Satyagraha is a compound word that consists of two words- *Satya* and *Agraha*. The word *Satya* “is derived from *sat*, which means being, abiding, right, wise, self-existent essence, as anything really is, as anything ought to be.” *Satya* does not simply mean truth or veracity. It has a variety of connotations such as real, sincere, existent, pure, good, effectual, and valid. *Satya*, thus as derived from the root *sat*, was taken by Gandhi to mean that “nothing

exists in reality except Truth, everything else is illusion.” Truth, for Gandhi, was a higher law that was just. The word *Agraha* is derived from the root *grah* which means “to seize or to grasp, to get hold of, to grapple with”. Literally, these refer to the “insistence on Truth” or “holding on to Truth”.

Satyagraha combines the concepts of firm and truth to mean, factually, “standing firm for truth” or “a relentless search for truth and a determination to reach truth.” In March 1921, Gandhi declared that Satyagraha is literally holding on to Truth and it means, therefore, “truth-force or soul-force.” To hold on to the truth, it is essential to first discover the truth. Thus Satyagraha is an active technique of action in a conflict situation which consists of a search for the truth and a struggle for its vindication. In simple terms, the Gandhian method of conflict resolution is known as Satyagraha. Satyagraha, however, has been variously translated as ‘passive resistance’, ‘nonviolent resistance’, ‘nonviolent direct action’, ‘nonviolent action’, and even ‘militant nonviolence’. For the resolution of conflict, Satyagraha resorts to institutional means (e.g. petitions, courts etc.) if possible, or to non-institutional means (e.g. protests, demonstrations, sit-ins, strikes, civil disobedience etc) if necessary.

14.4 GANDHI AND SATYAGRAHA

Gandhi had a holistic vision of human life that could be lived only morally. This morality permeated all aspects of his life- the individual, political and social. Satyagraha is Gandhi’s technique of nonviolent activism. However, for Gandhi it was not only a method of conducting conflict but also a way of life, of living in Truth, a birth-right as well as duty. It was not just a political technique but a complete programme of existence, which included proper food, dress, vegetarianism, celibacy and sanitation among others. Gandhi used the technique of Satyagraha to bring about social and political change.

In elaborating his theory of Satyagraha, Gandhi placed heavy emphasis on the fundamental unity of the universe. He viewed human beings as basically ‘good’ and endowed with divine powers. True Satyagraha can ignite the divine spark which will awaken the conscience of the opponent leading to his moral persuasion. However, this is possible only when the satyagrahi confronts the opponent with non-violence by conviction (Satyagraha) rather than non-violence by expediency (Passive Resistance). This is the distinction that Gandhi made between what he calls the ‘nonviolence of the strong’ (Satyagraha) and ‘nonviolence of the weak’ (Passive Resistance). The latter did not exclude the use of physical force of violence to gain one’s end. Satyagraha, on the other hand, was a weapon of the strong and excluded the use of violence in every form.

The principle of self-suffering is central to the Gandhian conception of non-violence and thus to his approach to conflict. In *Young India*, Gandhi wrote on August 11, 1920, ‘Satyagraha is self-suffering and not inflicting violence on others.’ It is essential for the satyagrahi to be willing to suffer the violence of others without inflicting ‘himsa’ (violence) either by word or deed and suffering in return. This will not only result in less loss of life but will also be morally enriching for humanity as a whole. Elaborating further on this point, S. Shridharani said in 1962 that suffering by protesting citizens would influence the entire atmosphere within which the conflict takes place:

‘The basic assumption of Satyagraha (is) that self-sacrifice releases psychological and physical energies which influence the sufferer’s surroundings and contemporaries.’

The satyagrahi must endure self-suffering for a just cause. S/he must do so without hatred

toward anybody and in the belief that the opponent can be converted to seeing the truth by touching his or her conscience. The perpetrator of violence generally makes a life-or-death judgment on the assumption that s/he has knowledge of the truth. However, writing in *Young India* on 23 March 1921, Gandhi had said that Satyagraha excluded the usage of violence because no one is capable of knowing the absolute truth and is, therefore, not competent to punish.

Self-suffering has to occur in the appropriate context and thus Gandhi warned the satyagrahi from treating the opponent roughly by compelling them to inflict punishment as this would “drag down” the satyagrahi too. The satyagrahi must show “exemplary self-restraint” regardless of provocation and repression, “even at the risk of being charged with cowardice.” Thus, Satyagraha was essentially a self-purification process which sought to inspire a sense of justice in the adversaries by subjecting the “self” or the “spirit” in the human body to suffering. This made spirituality central to the idea of Satyagraha. Gandhi constantly strived to bring justness even in the British policies and legislations. For him, these political acts were spiritual too, for they uplifted the human spirit of every person offering Satyagraha.

Gandhi saw an inherent relationship between just demands and the absence of violence. Satyagraha can be successful only if the demands are right and just; if the demands are unjust, Satyagraha cannot succeed. Moreover, if the demands were unjust, the cause could still be weakened or it could be lost by resorting to untruth, violence or coercion.

A real grievance is a fundamental prerequisite for Satyagraha. The satyagrahi is required to openly and civilly break a law because it is unjust and obedience to it is dishonourable. However, s/he must be willing to submit to any penalty for this course of action.

One of Gandhi’s soft used tactics was to undergo fasts to compel his opponents to act quickly or else have his death on their hands. By doing so Gandhi committed himself to a course of action while the responsibility for his life rested with the opponent. Thus, the opponent was compelled to choose not just issues and their ‘pay-offs’, but also life or death for Gandhi (and obviously being a well known and widely respected man, the opponent could not risk Gandhi’s death). This affected the opponent’s pay-offs. However, Gandhi once said, ‘You cannot fast against a tyrant.’ This is so for the simple reason that the tyrant “will act from his own principles, deducing his actions from them and not from changes in pay-offs.” Moreover, Gandhi could not put his death in the hands of an opponent who is a tyrant “because to him Gandhi’s death and its consequences would mean nothing.”

Therefore, for Gandhi, even a few protestors of sufficient ‘purity’ could guarantee success of the Satyagraha movement. What actually mattered in such circumstances was the firmness of the satyagrahi.

Certain characteristics or components are necessary for the success of Satyagraha. First and foremost, the Satyagraha movement must have a large popular base. In 1906, he said in a mass meeting in Johannesburg:

“... I can boldly declare and with certainty that so long as there is even a handful of men true to their pledge, there can be only one end to the struggle – and that is victory.”

Second, the movement should comprise of true believers. Gandhi’s Satyagraha had its origin in several sources, one of which was Hinduism. Hindu texts such as the Vedas and the Bhagavad Gita contained notions of non-violence and sacrifice. Satyagraha hence had a religious origin and this not only gave it credibility but also attracted “a large popular

following of true believers by connecting the tactics with the religion of the masses.” Thirdly, the Satyagraha movement must act as a single player. Unity of will is necessary along with firmness in principles and composition. This would require not only ‘pure’ and steadfast satyagrahis but also a dynamic and charismatic leader like Gandhi. Lastly, personal purity of the satyagrahi – chastity, poverty, autonomy and disinterestedness are imperative.

Gandhi recognised the fact that violence does not entail only bodily or physical harm to the opponent. He therefore wrote in *Harijan* on April 13, 1940, ‘There is surely often more violence in burning a man’s property than doing him physical injury’. Thus Satyagraha tactics like boycotts, sit-downs, marches, and other non-cooperation measures could end up inflicting property damage even to innocent third parties. Moreover, tactics employed in Satyagraha movements could even result in massive lawlessness and violence. Gandhi was well aware that nonviolent resistance could have disastrous consequences as is evident from the following passage he wrote in *Harijan* on 8 July 1939:

“This narrative clearly shows that the atmosphere is surcharged with violence. I hope it also shows that non-violent mass movement is an impossibility unless the atmosphere is radically changed. To blind one’s eyes to the events happening around us is to court disaster... If any mass movement is undertaken at the present moment in the name of nonviolence, it will resolve itself into violence largely unorganized ...”

The campaign to secure basic human rights for Indian labourers in South Africa in 1906 was Gandhi’s first experiment with Satyagraha. This was the first time that the term Satyagraha was used by Gandhi. This Satyagraha campaign was directed against a bill which imposed a £3 tax on indentured Indian labourers by the Transvaal government, which demanded the registration and fingerprinting of all Indian residents. The bill required ex-indentured Indians to leave for India on the termination of the indenture (agreement) or enter into further indenture. For Gandhi, the bill was intended to make people continue to live as slaves or force them back to the country from which they had come, only to avoid starvation. Describing the tax as a “blood tax,” he argued for civil disobedience against the bill.

In India, the events in Champaran, the Ahmedabad Mill incident, the agitation against the Rowlatt Act of 1919, and the Civil Disobedience Movement highlighted the practice of Satyagraha as a means to voice protest against the tyranny of laws. The agitation against the Rowlatt Act was the first occasion in which Gandhi experimented nationally with the philosophy of Satyagraha. The Rowlatt Act extended wartime powers and sought to restrict civil rights by providing for a system of special courts, arbitrary arrest and detention without trial for a period of two years. This was deeply resented by Indians. Gandhi then proposed a practicable form of protest, which initially involved volunteers courting arrest by public sale of prohibited items but later took the form of a nationwide strike. There were peaceful but massive strikes in different parts of the country and the British found it difficult to control them.

From 1920 to 1922, Gandhi directed a Non-Cooperation Movement. He believed that the continuation of British rule was based on the cooperation of Indians and therefore the thrust of the present movement was to oust the British by withdrawing the cooperation of Indians. The Movement included non-cooperation activities such as resignation from the army and bureaucracy and the boycott of foreign cloth, elections, law courts, and government schools. It had a remarkable impact on the masses. However, Gandhi withdrew the Movement in 1922, when a mob led by Congress volunteers killed twenty-two Indian police constables. On the other hand, the British also retaliated with force and ruthlessness- indiscriminate

arrests, torture and special tribunals. Nevertheless, Gandhi was unmoved in his faith in abstention from violence and reaffirmed his commitment to non-violence being a core tenet of Satyagraha.

Gandhi started the civil disobedience campaign when Congress's demand for dominion status was rejected by the British. The tax on salt was chosen by Gandhi as symbolising colonial injustice. He led a march to Dandi on the Gujarat seacoast, drawing massive crowds on the way to protest against a law that gave the British a monopoly on the production of salt. The British government arrested Gandhi but the protests continued with thousands going to jail. These protests were met with brutal reactions on the part of the British authorities, which further created mass support for Gandhi's cause. This was exactly what Gandhian Satyagraha intended to achieve.

Gandhi reiterated his conviction in Satyagraha towards the end of his life. He wrote in *Harijan* in 1946 that Satyagraha is a law of universal significance as well as

“a process of educating public opinion such that it covers all the elements in the society and, in the end makes itself irresistible. Violence interrupts the process and prolongs the real revolution of the whole structure.”

14.5 TECHNIQUES OF SATYAGRAHA

During his life, Gandhi gave much thought to the tactics as well as modes of Satyagraha. Satyagraha can be practised by several methods such as fasts, cessation of work, protests, and public demonstrations and can be used by people, either singularly or jointly, to resist unjust laws. Gandhi's Satyagraha varied from small labour strikes to nonviolent demonstrations to secure better sanitary conditions for entire cities.

Describing the various methods or techniques of Satyagraha, Raghavan N. Iyer wrote in 1973:

“The methods of *satyagraha* may be broadly classified into four categories: purificatory, penitential devices; forms of non-cooperation; methods of civil disobedience; the Constructive Programme.”

There is an overlap in theory as well as practice between the four categories. All four can be employed by individuals, groups or mass movements in the political as well as social sphere. Moreover, the elements of truth, justice, morality, non-violence, and self-suffering are common to all the four categories.

The purificatory, penitential devices include pledges, prayers and fasts. “The pledge is a solemn public declaration of one or more *satyagrahis* that he or they will abstain from, or perform certain acts to combat untruth (in themselves or others) or recognized injustices.” Prayers involved “the invocation of “soul-force” or of external spiritual agencies as an act of “purification and self-surrender.” A pledge could take the form of a prayer or a prayer could precede pledge-taking. Besides, short duration fasts could be undertaken “for the purpose of atonement or introspective meditation over a specific issue.”

Non-cooperation means renunciation of the benefits of a system with which we are associated. It involves voluntary suffering in the process of resisting evil. Forms of non-cooperation include *hartal*, boycott, strikes, fasting unto death, and *hijrat*. *Hartal* is a temporary strike with advance notice about its duration. It involves “closing down of shops

and businesses and sometimes the halting of the work of administration.” Boycott of public institutions such as government schools, colleges and law courts is intended to protest against or even paralyse an unjust political system. It can also be employed against a particular institution indulging in corrupt or discriminatory practices. Strikes are declared with the aim of redressing a wrong so as to cease to take part in the wrong and enable the wrong-doer to see the folly of continuing the wrong. Fasting is to be undertaken voluntarily and it should have no trace of coercion over others; fasting unto death is a Gandhian weapon for self-purification and atonement of sins. *Hijrat* is voluntary migration or temporary withdrawal out of the boundaries of a State. Gandhi advocated it to the peasants of Bardoli in 1928. However, by 1931 he changed his mind and did not consider it to be a necessary part of the purest form of Satyagraha.

Civil disobedience consists in defying and disobeying laws that are unjust. It is an act of civility since it is opposed to all forms of violent and uncivilised behaviour. Methods of civil disobedience constitute picketing, marches, non-payment of taxes and deliberate defiance of a specific law. Gandhi considered the non-payment of taxes as one of the quickest methods of overthrowing a government; however, it should not be undertaken without the necessary discipline.

Gandhi stressed on the Constructive Programme and saw it as the most novel mode of Satyagraha. He wanted the satyagrahis to engage in silent, active, constructive work of reform and social service. Taking over of the government machinery was just “a shadow” for Gandhi; it was only through the “Constructive Programme that a system of nonviolent self-rule could emerge,” and a new social order could be built. The Constructive Programme involved “working toward communal unity, the removal of untouchability, a program of adult education and village improvement, peasant uplift and the development of nonviolent labor unions, economic and social equality, decentralized economic production and distribution through the promotion of cottage and small-scale industries, and the abolition of various social evils.” A couple of days before his death, Gandhi emphasised that political freedom was meaningless to the individual citizen without the attainment of economic, social and moral freedom.

14.6 SATYAGRAHA AS A TOOL OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION

In 1992, Galtung, a pioneer in the field of peace and conflict studies, summarised Gandhi's conflict norms, which are a part of the integrative approach to conflict resolution as well. The first norm is that one should act in conflicts, define the conflict well and have a positive approach to conflict. Gandhi thus sees conflict as a positive thing, as an opportunity to transform the self and the society. Secondly, one should act nonviolently in conflicts and act in a goal-consistent manner. Further one should not cooperate with evil; neither polarise the situation nor escalate the conflict. Gandhi's statement reflected these norms, for he wrote in *Young India* on 8 August 1929, “A *satyagrahi* must never forget the distinction between evil and the evil-doer.” Finally, conflicts should be solved by insisting on essentials (rather than non-essentials) or principles or basic human needs; one should admit mistakes and be aware that one may be wrong; be generous with opponents and most of all aim for conversion rather than coercion. On 25 March 1939, Gandhi wrote in *Harijan*, “The Satyagrahi's object is to convert, not to coerce, the wrong-doer.” In conflict situations, Gandhi advocates the adherence to non-violence in thought, word and deed. The goal here is to reach the truth by undergoing self-suffering.

In 2001, Thomas Weber enlisted the following propositions as key aspects for those wanting to work with conflict through the method of Gandhian Satyagraha. First, humiliation or provocation of opponents will lead to violence. Secondly, a would-be satyagrahi is less likely to have a violent attitude if he or she is clear about the essential elements of the case and the purpose of the conflict. Next, opponents should be provided with a full understanding or information about one's case and conduct. Additionally, common interests between opponents should be clearly formulated and cooperation should be established on this basis. Besides, opponents should not be judged harder than the self- one must show love towards them. Further, opponents must be trusted. In addition, the likelihood of converting the opponent decreases if one is unwilling to compromise on non-essentials. However, in 1928 Gandhi said that one should be prepared to "make large concessions on all points except where a principle is involved." Thus the satyagrahi should be willing to negotiate a settlement which does not compromise basic principles. Next, personal sincerity can further the conversion of an opponent. Then, if one wants to convince an opponent of sincerity, the best way to do so is to make sacrifices for the given cause. Finally, one should not exploit a position of weakness in an opponent or take advantage of an opponent's weak moments.

The above propositions of Gandhian Satyagraha are in tandem with the essentials of the field of conflict resolution that aims to achieve win-win solutions. In fact the Gandhian Satyagraha goes beyond the process of conflict resolution to conflict transformation as it advocates integration at a deeper level and the transformation of the self and the other. Satyagraha entails the process of achievement of self-realisation and the unity of existence, for human beings are interrelated with each other.

Gandhian Satyagraha and conflict resolution seem to disagree on some issues. One such issue is the usage of third-party intervention. Conflict resolution involves the usage of problem-solving methods and third-party intervention tools such as negotiation and mediation. Gandhi opined that third party intervention should generally be rejected. He saw conflict as a medium through which the parties could develop a higher degree of awareness of themselves as well as of the other party and third-party intervention would rob the opponents of this opportunity. Moreover, resolution was just one of the desired outcomes of conflict; establishment of a new social structure and 'higher level of self-purification in both actors' or 'conversion' was much more desirable. Besides, the discovery of the Self is the most important task of life in Gandhian thought. However, this cannot happen if parties go for third-party intervention instead of being responsible for the disputing process. Additionally, Gandhi wanted the negotiation process to be a bilateral one, where the two parties are the decision-makers.

The modern conflict resolution process also stresses on a bilateral approach in negotiation and mediation for it gives the parties the opportunity to maintain control over both the development and selection of viable solutions. So ultimately the parties are the decision-makers. Besides, it emphasises on improving communication and developing trust and cooperation. This would then involve analysis and reconstruction of beliefs about, and attitudes towards, the other side. Change in attitudes would lead to change in behaviour- in Gandhian terms, this would lead ultimately lead to 'conversion'. In the field of conflict transformation, empowerment of the disputants is a key aspect and the third-party's role is more of a facilitator (responsible for the process rather than the outcome) than a mediator (a much more active role in comparison to that of a facilitator).

The field of conflict resolution had not developed during the days of Gandhi and therefore he may not have been aware of all the techniques, methods, tools and approaches of

conflict resolution that we have the privilege of knowing today. However, essentially the aim of the Gandhian method of Satyagraha was the resolution of conflicts at the individual, social and political level – the ultimate purpose being transformation of the individual and the social and political structure.

14.7 SATYAGRAHA IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Post-Gandhi, Satyagraha method has been applied in India and in different parts of the world. In India, the Sarvodaya and Bhoodan movements were organised in the 1950s. In the 1970s, Jayaprakash Narayan led the 'total revolution' campaign against several issues, corruption being one. There were anti-liquor movements in several parts of India such as in the present state of Uttarakhand in the late 1960s and early 70s, in Maharashtra in the early 1970s and in Andhra Pradesh in the early 1990s. Another significant movement was the Chipko Andolan against deforestation led mainly by women and Sarvodaya workers like Sunderlal Bahuguna. Since the 1980s, Narmada Bachao Andolan, a campaign led by Medha Patkar, has been protesting against the construction of a huge dam on the Narmada River. The campaign met with partial success in 1992 when the World Bank withdrew financial support. However, the struggle continues as the construction of the dam has not stopped.

Outside India, several campaigns have been inspired by Gandhi. Notable among those are the African-American struggle in the USA led by Martin Luther King Jr. King adopted the methods of Satyagraha in his fight against racial discrimination and in favour of civil rights in the 1950s and 60s. Another major campaign was against Apartheid in South Africa led by Nelson Mandela. Here, however, the campaign was not entirely non-violent – there was a separate underground military wing as well. Although, Mandela was not in favour of strict non-violence, he, however, "understood that a struggle that created bitterness between opponents made it harder in the long term to reach a lasting solution to a problem." A new era ushered in South Africa in 1994 with the transition to black rule. Once in power, Mandela worked towards healing and reconciliation rather than seek revenge against the whites.

Most nonviolent campaigns in the post-Gandhian phase had charismatic moral leadership. These leaders had uncompromising honesty of politics and moral activism and exhibited tact and strategy. Most of them understood that it was a slow process, but would eventually succeed. However, violence, oppression and exploitation also took its toll several times, leading to the murder of the moral activist. But that has not been a deterrent – David Hardiman wrote in 2003, "There is hope, however, for people of such ethical power have again and again merged to pose the questions in new ways and to suggest new answers..."

Gandhi has influenced and continues to influence new social movements in India – of environmentalists, anti-war campaigners, feminists and human rights activists among others. As mentioned earlier, some prominent figures led nonviolent campaigns in the 20th century; some others continue to do so in the 21st century. Prominent among the latter is Aung San Suu Kyi. Since 1988, Kyi has led a sustained non-violent protest against the ruthless military junta of Myanmar. She has been under house arrest for several years and was the first person to receive the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991, while still in detention. The Dalai Lama too continues to wage a nonviolent resistance against the Chinese occupation of Tibet.

The 21st century Satyagraha campaigns like those led by Kyi and Dalai Lama have not met with success. This does not mean that Satyagraha is irrelevant or non-applicable in the 21st

century. The shortcomings do not lie in the principle of Satyagraha but rather in the people who practise it and who have to do so in an imperfect world. Perfect non-violence is in any case not possible in this physical world as life itself entails violence. Life is in essence a choice between violence and less violence; the latter sometimes expressed through the medium of nonviolence. Satyagraha was “designed as an effective substitute for violence.” Therefore, in Gandhian terms, nonviolent struggle is an effective (it can resolve conflict) and ethical (it does not subvert the moral autonomy of the opponent) way of exercising political power in an imperfect world. However, we all must endeavour towards the ideal of non-violence.

14.8 SUMMARY

Conflict resolution is a nonviolent process that aims to forge lasting relationships between hostile groups. Gandhi’s Satyagraha is essentially a unique conflict resolution method based on the principles of non-violence, truth, justice, morality, spirituality and self-suffering. Gandhi dealt with practical problems as they arose and sought solutions for them within the context of these principles. He formulated and demonstrated the major tenets of Satyagraha in action in South Africa, in India in Champaran, against the Rowlatt Act of 1919, the Non-cooperation Movement from 1920 to 1922, the Civil Disobedience Movement of 1929, to name a few. During these Satyagraha campaigns Gandhi employed the various techniques of Satyagraha such as prayers, fasts, boycotts, strikes, picketing, marches, non-payment of taxes, deliberate defiance of laws and constructive programme and demonstrated that Satyagraha could be used to deal with conflicts in both the political as well as the social (includes economic) sphere. There may be doubts about the efficacy and applicability of Satyagraha in the 21st century but Gandhi has inspired and continues to inspire individuals and movements fighting against the tyranny of violence, oppression and exploitation.

14.9 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. What is conflict resolution? What are the essential features of the process of conflict resolution?
2. What are the principles and features of Gandhian Satyagraha?
3. Gandhi demonstrated the applicability of Satyagraha in various scenarios. Substantiate your arguments with examples.
4. Satyagraha is essentially a tool or method of conflict resolution. Elaborate.
5. Discuss the relevance, efficacy and feasibility of Gandhian Satyagraha in the 21st century.

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