UNIT 15 SRI LANKA/ PALESTINE

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15.1 INTRODUCTION

"I believe it is possible for a single individual to defy the whole might of an unjust empire to save his honour, his religion, his soul and to lay the foundation for an empire's fall or its regeneration."

"The golden rule is to dare to do the right at any cost."

M.K. Gandhi

The end of Cold War has seen the global resurgence of '*Himsa*' in the form of poverty and inequality within and between nations, intolerance through racial, religious and ethnic outburst, environmental degradation, proliferation in Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs), inhuman treatment meted to women and children, with an ever mushrooming growth of terrorist groups aimed at annihilating the human race. Amid such troubled times, most decision-makers have preferred '*violence*' over 'non-violence,' the use of 'might' to bring down resistance movements, the unwanted division of the globe between "us" vs. "them," "axis-of evil" vs. "axis-of good," and 'clash within civilizations'.

In such troubled times Gandhian techniques of '*Satyagraha*' and '*Ahimsa*' have often been looked down upon as meekly sublime and weak to solve the injustices unleashed on mankind. However, on most occasions Gandhi and his philosophy has been misread and misunderstood. For both his philosophy- that of non-violence (*Ahimsa*) and '*Satyagraha*' was placed not as an abstract principle, but as a practical solution to the largest and smallest problems of contemporary life in particular or political situations. It was, in fact, a constant endeavour at self-purification of the inner-self through the search for truth, love and compassion from 'within.' "To attain perfect purity," Gandhi said, "one has to become absolutely passion-free in thought, speech and action, to rise above the opposing currents of love and hatred, attachment and repulsion. So long as a man does

not of his own free-will put himself last among his fellow creatures there is no salvation for him. For '*Ahimsa*' is the farthest limit of humility. It stands for moral opposition to immorality. It believes in the essential goodness of human nature and aims to overcome evil by good, '*Himsa*' by '*Ahimsa*' and enlightenment through inner purity of the soul" (M.K Gandhi, 1927). From Rev Martin Luther King to Nelson Mandela, those fighting for the just rights have enormously relied on non-violence as primary means.

Aims and Objectives

After reading this Unit, you will be able to understand:

- The relevance of Gandhian techniques worldwide.
- Gandhi's philosophy as applicable to conflict situations today.
- The progressive nature of nonviolence that can be conceived through various stages.

15.2 GANDHIAN TECHNIQUES AS APPLICABLE TO CONFLICT SITUATION

15.2.1 Sri Lanka

In judging Gandhian techniques as applicable to the conflict situation in Sri Lanka underpinned by the ethnic strife between the majority Sinhala Buddhists and the minority Tamils of Indian origin (according to a 1981 census the Sinhalese constituted 74 percent of the population; Sri Lankan Tamils 12.7 percent; Indian Tamils 7 percent concentrated in the Northeast of the country, Moors 7 percent and others 0.6 percent), a few points have to be kept in mind:

One, the systematic exclusion of the Tamil speaking minorities practised by the Sri Lankan government over a decade- following a dual-faced approach of preaching peaceful settlement of dispute (through negotiation and agreement) between the two communities, while allowing the military to operate in a ham-fisted fashion to crack down on the Tamil minorities;

Two, the extra-regional support meted out by the Lankan government through the involvement of United States, Pakistan (for arms supply) and India to address the ethnic problem. Throughout, the Indian government has pursued a two-pronged strategy of persuasion and coercion against the Sri Lankan government and the Sri Lankan Tamils on different occasions. The objective behind such a strategy was to advance a viable political settlement to the ethnic issue through negotiations on one hand, and on the other in deterring the Lankan government's search for extra-regional help from outside. In support of this latter objective, there were allegations that India even trained, armed and extended refuge to the militant Tamil groups (Mayilvaganan, 2007, pp.398-403). However, most believe that the Indian leadership firmly ruled out intervention in the internal affairs of Sri Lanka, while it provided peace-keeping forces to settle the dispute.

Three, there was overriding influence of the Tamil Tigers, under the leadership of Velupillai Prabhakaran. Under him the group had graduated from a moderate militant group to a 'full-blown' terrorist organisation. Started in 1972 as the 'Tamils New Tigers,' and later renamed as the 'Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam' (LTTE) on 6 May 1976, the outfit has been spearheading militancy for the last 37 years, occasionally pausing for peace talks but single-handedly pursuing its goal of a separate state. In its *Eelam* War, the guerilla fighters

acquired conventional military capability, building a loyal network of Tamil cadre—the Black Tigers—whose deadly suicide terror attacks made the LTTE one of the most gruesome guerilla fighters in the world.

Prabhakaran set up a training camp in a jungle near Vavuniya, which raised funds from illicit sources—bank robbery, money laundering, transshipment of arms and ammunition, deadly suicide missions through the deployment of human bombs (women and child soldiers). Prabhakaran even supplemented his ground troops with a naval wing– the Sea Tigers- and managed to build an air wing to fight for the Tamil cause. His expertise lay in his systematic decimation of prominent political figures—the suicide attack on Sri Lankan President Ranasinghe Premadasa in 1993 and the brutal assassination of the Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1991. The LTTE also detonated truck bombs directed to paralyse Sri Lanka's economy, while it decimated Lanka's infrastructure by targeting commuter trains, buses, oil tanks and power stations.

Throughout the 1970s, non-violent methods (often inspired by Mahatma Gandhi) were used to protest against the discriminating politics of the state. The *Sarvodaya Movement* (started in 1958) staged large peace mediations and promoted youth exchanges between Tamils and Sinhalese. NGOs worked for peace with activities both at national and local levels. They included the National Peace Council; research institutions like the International Centre for Ethnic Studies; women's organisations working for peace, movement for inter-racial justice and equality. But all these peace efforts finally succumbed to, a) unbearable 'majoritarian' radicalism unleashed by the Sinhalese; b) it lacked the strength and charisma to run a durable mass movement, and c) the Tamil Tigers 'militancy' stole the region's attention away from peace. At the end of the day it was widely accepted that: "We have tried peace, but it did not work" and now military means are dominating.

15.3 SINHALESE 'MAJORITARIAN' RADICALISM

Sri Lanka attained universal suffrage in 1931 and the island gained independence from its British colonisers in 1948. Soon after independence, the island's political structure enabled particularistic and ethnic-based groups to hold sway- leading to its triumph over interethnic and minority groups to generate adverse political change and illiberal governance. The Indian Tamils, who came here as indentured labourers, were the worst victims of Sinhala 'majoritarian radicalism.' Their systematic 'exclusion' first came to the forefront in the form of the *Swabasha* Movement that made Sinhala the sole national language replacing English (as the Tamil were well-versed in English and held important government posts) as the country's only official language.

The Sinhala-only Bill was passed on 5 June, 1956. This led to widespread protest by the Tamils who wanted equal representation of their respective languages. The Tamils gathered outside the Parliament to non-violently fast and meditate. The Sinhala Language Protection Council attacked the Tamils and soon their violence killed around 150 Tamil minorities. Around this time, the minister of transport issued a directive calling for the Sinhala '*sri*' to be included on all vehicle number plates. When the Tamils started replacing the Sinhala '*sri*' with the Tamil '*shri*' many Sinhalese protested by smearing tar over Tamil lettering on buses, public buildings and street signs (Sahadevan and Neil Devotta, 2006).

A standardised system and a subsequent district quota system for higher education were also designed to lower the number of Tamil students gaining access to higher education. Policies were implemented to ensure that the government hired only Sinhalese for the civil

service. Post 1977—the Jayawardene's government resorted to hand-fisted practices to silence its critics and rein amid a growing Tamil rebel movement. The government passed the Prevention of Terrorism Act of 1979, which retaliated against Tamil insurgency by inciting the August 1977, June 1981 and 1983 anti-Tamil riots. In most instances, military personnel raped, tortured and murdered Tamil civilians. To hurt the cultural sentiment of the Tamils, the SLA even torched the Jaffna Public Library. Successive governments in Sri Lanka (except Chandrika Kumaratunga's regime) have used the Tamil issue as a trump-card to (a) intimidate, harass and murder opponents who ever spoke otherwise, and (b) as a powerful weapon to continue in power in the centre.

Post-1983, the Kumaratunga regime took some bold steps to bring the Tamils closer to her government. She tried to draw a distinction between the Tamil people and the LTTE. War was declared as "against the enemies of peace" and not against the people. She partially lifted the economic embargo, offered a rehabilitation and reconstruction package worth Rs 40 billion to the North-east as a goodwill gesture. Restoration of supply of electricity to Jaffna and reconstruction of the Jaffna Library were also offered. The government proposed to supply food, clothes, medicines and other essentials to the people affected by war. A Human Rights Commission was set up by an act of Parliament in July 1996, while the armed forces were given strict instructions to spare the civilians from their attacks. In a bid to restore the democratic process and grass-roots level administration in the war-torn Jaffna peninsula, the government held civic elections on 29 January 1998. However, Chandrika Kumaratunga's peace initiatives were only short-lived as the peace process dwindled due to several reasons (Sahadevan and Neil Devotta, 2006). Firstly, there had been steady efforts on the part of the government to dilute the original peace proposals under pressure from the Sinhala hard-liners. Secondly, the long-drawn-out delay in giving constitutional status to the proposals due to lack of consensus among the Sinhalese, eroded the Sri Lankan Tamil faith in the proposed constitutional exercise. Thirdly, the continuation of war, persistence of misery, hardship of the people in the North-East after re-imposition of the economic embargo failed to alter the view of the Tamils in favour of the government. The people's continued reliance on the LTTE, as a result of the collective sacrifices made at the behest of its leaders, made it exceedingly difficult for the government to win their support through any political and economic concessions.

15.4 INDIA'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE SRI LANKAN CONFLICT

As far as India is concerned, there are distinctly two phases in India's policy vis-à-vis the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka. The first phase (1983-90) saw India playing a proactive interventionist role, while in the second phase (since 1990) it has been changed to a policy of non-intervention without abandoning its interest in the conflict.

Since 1984, India followed a two-pronged strategy of 'persuasion' and 'coercion' both against the Sri Lanka government and Tamil militants on different occasions. The objective behind such a strategy was to evolve a viable structure of political settlement through negotiations without augmenting one party against another. According to Sahadevan, if India had supplied arms and extended training facilities to the militants, it was to increase the Sri Lankan Tamils' bargaining power vis-à-vis the government. It would also compel the Sri Lankan government to give up its military approach through the strategic

involvement of extra-regional powers- US, UK, China and Pakistan, thereby destabilising the balance of power in the region.

On 29 July 1987, then Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and President Jayewardane signed an accord, whereby they agreed that a) Tamil majority northern and eastern provinces would be merged to ensure distinct Tamil nationality without disturbing the integrity of Sri Lanka; b) to hold election to Provincial Councils of north and east before 31 December 1987; c) To invite an Indian peace-keeping contingent to guarantee and enforce cessation of hostilities in Jaffna; d) India shall ensure that its territory is not used for activities prejudicial to the unity and integrity of Sri Lanka.

However, this goodwill accord was short-lived. The new President Premadasa was opposed to the Indo-Sri Lankan accord from the beginning and he insisted on the replacement of the accord by a friendship treaty and called for withdrawal of the Indian Peace Keeping Forces (IPKF) from Sri Lanka by 29 July, 1989 (the role of IPKF became controversial for its alleged atrocities and ruthless use of force). It refrained from taking part even in the SAARC meeting held at Islamabad in July 1989. On 19 September, 1989 the IPKF unilaterally suspended its military operations.

After the IPKF's withdrawal, there were drastic changes in India's Sri Lanka policy. Since then successive governments in New Delhi expressed their anguish by deciding against any form of direct intervention in the ethnic conflict. Sri Lanka, since the mid-1990s, sought India's direct politico-military role, but the brutal assassination of Rajiv Gandhi on 21 May, 1991 turned the tables against any direct involvement in the conflict. India strongly preferred a home-grown solution to the conflict, reached through a serious negotiation process involving all the ethnic stakeholders. It was strictly opposed to assume the role of a mediator in chalking out a peace process, while it increasingly approved greater international involvement in peacemaking. India now, openly approved the involvement of Norway, Japan and the European Union for engaging the LTTE into negotiations. On the LTTE's demand for a free *Eelam*, India has taken a stand that would enable both the adversaries—the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE—adopt a reasonable stand on the issue of interim administration for the Northeast (Sahadevan and Devotta, 2006).

15.5 LTTE'S WAR-FOR-PEACE STRATEGY

Prabhakaran was the product of a generation that felt Tamil rights and equality could not be obtained through moderate politics and **Gandhian** methods. Based on the level of use of violence and the duration of fighting, LTTE's 'war for Tamil *Eelam*' highlighted all the traits of a *total* war, encompassing:

- Intense regular fighting;
- Heavy deployment of forces (above a level of 50,000 men) and use of sophisticated weapons (tanks, artillery, helicopter, gun-ships);
- A higher level of battle-related deaths (more than 1,000 people per year);
- Large-scale displacement of people and refugees (over 20,000 people per year);
- Extensive damage to property and economic infrastructure (source: Sahadevan and Devotta, 2006).

His entire war-for-peace strategy had six distinct phases: the first phase (1983-87) saw highly intense military confrontation between the insurgent groups and the Sri Lankan Army (SLA) that led to opening up of multiple war fronts. The SLA's counter-insurgency operations during this phase were to wrest control of territories from the LTTE and marginalise the Tigers militarily.

The second phase (1987-90) of the war was solely between the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) and the LTTE: the former with strength of about 70,000 troops supported by heavy tanks and artillery went to the island to implement the bilateral peace agreement signed in 1987. The IPKF through its counter-insurgency operations chased the Tigers out of the Jaffna peninsula to the Vavuniya and Mullaitivu jungles and hideouts in the east. But, the IPKF soon withdrew from the island.

Thereby, the LTTE entered the third phase of its war (1990-94) with the SLA. The Army regained its hold over the eastern region, while the Tigers, in order to maintain their control over the north, engaged in a series of set-piece battles and hit-and-run operations. This was followed by the breakdown in any attempt to chalk out a peaceful settlement to the dispute, the LTTE having entered its fourth phase of Eelam War in April 1995. The Tigers, by this time, shifted their headquarters to Mullaitivu and Kilinochchi and spread their sphere of influence in the east. The LTTE had also developed the Sea Tiger Wing- a daring guerilla Navy that played havoc with the Sri Lankan Navy. With territorial victory forming the core objective of both the rebel group and the government, this phase of war continued till 2002 when the government and the LTTE signed a cease-fire agreement and held peace talks facilitated by Norway.

Although Prabhakaran had demonstrated strategic military capability, he appeared to have failed to analyse two warfront disadvantages: a) there was no factoring the impact of the defection of Karuna, his able military commander from Batticolao on the LTTE's overall military capability; b) the second was in misunderstanding the determination of the Sri Lankan political and military leadership to eliminate the LTTE thoroughly.

Ultimately, in its last two phases (2002-04; 2004-09) when the security forces launched their offensive in the north with huge numerical strength, the LTTE did not have the essential force to face the onslaught. Somehow Prabhakaran failed to use his superior insurgency tactics to overcome his limitations in conventional warfare. By the beginning of the Eelam War VI, Prabhakaran had lost all the 15,000 sq km of land he lorded over in the east and the north. President Mahinda Rajapakse evidently scored better over his opponent, Ranil Wickremesinghe, as he promised in his election manifesto to eliminate LTTE terrorism at any cost.

Prabhakaran's 'aggressive' nature, his monolithic and egocentric leadership style had been a major obstacle in his strategic decision-making process. His manhandling of the international community and violation of international humanitarian laws, post 2002, following recruitment of *child soldiers*, using civilians as human shield, illegal arrests and abduction and suicide bombings, brought it disgrace at home and abroad. By 2005, LTTE was banned in **32** countries across the globe.

At the end of 37 years, what Prabhakaran earned for his people in the name of 'independence,' is the onus of a deceased leader who has left thousands dead (6,432 according to UN report, mostly by LTTE mines and those shot by Tiger's suicide wing, besides Prabhakaran's own demise on 19 May 2009), several injured and homeless, children and mothers brutally tortured and the Lankan Tamils speculative of either a peaceful solution to their decades-old ethnic strife or those juxtaposed with terms that will leave them more physically vulnerable and politically marginalised.

To the world, 19 May 2009 marked a new beginning in the history of counter-terrorism, as it once again proved that violence as a means to peace is bound to **crumble shamelessly**, its fight for claiming the freedom of its people would denigrate to '**outright mockery**,' and as Gandhi said, its success through violent means would only be '**short-lived**'.

Gandhi once said, "Non-violence is not abstention from the real fight against evil. It is, as I understand it, a more vigorous fight against evil. It is, more effective than the eye for eye law which normally leads to the aggravation of evil." (M K Gandhi, Autobiography, 1927). Twenty seven years of Gandhi's non-violent fight for Indian independence (from the launch of the Non-Cooperation Movement in 1920 to our independence in August, 1947) earned us freedom from the British rule, well recognised by the international community. Thirty seven years of Prabhakaran's violent fight against the Sinhalese has earned him and his organisation the epithet of a 'terrorist organisation' and the Tamils speculative about their freedom.

Had the LTTE embraced 'non-violent' means to voice the legitimate cause of the Sri Lankan Tamils, the organisation would have continued with general protests (*hartals*), sustained agitations involving both the rich and poor Tamils, occasional peaceful *gherao* of government institutions, surrender of titles and honorary offices and resignation of nominated post in local bodies, closure of economic and cultural sources which the Sinhala government drew from these Tamil-dominated areas, boycott of Sri Lankan goods and services, draw media (print and electronic) attention through frequent involvement of national and international Press. The organisation would have kept the educated Tamils

living abroad upbeat on the plight of the Tamils at home and seek their help through extensive signature campaigns, written petitions and articles sent to foreign journals and publicists to (a) keep the unity of the community intact and (b) enable the international community to take serious notice of the issue.

The Tamil minority cause is closely comparable to the plight of the Natal Indians in South Africa. The treatment meted out to the indentured Indian labourers through racial discrimination, non-renewal of their contract to stay in South Africa, imposition of a hefty tax and invalidation of all marriages not conducted according to Christian rights, hold similar glimpses of 'soft' discrimination against Tamil minorities in Sri Lanka.

At Natal, Gandhi's techniques of 'moderate' methods of struggle in its initial phase and later the use of civil disobedience through *Satyagraha* stood in good stead as it compelled the South African government to accept most of the Indian demands and to treat the immigrant Indians in a sympathetic manner. Through South Africa, Gandhi inculcated the feeling of Indian-ness among all its proponents- Hindus, Muslims, Christians and Parsis, rich, poor, women and old. He learnt in the hardest way that leadership involves patience to face the ire not only of the enemy but also of one's followers.

The Tamil minority cause lacked the strong leadership necessitated to successfully drive the movement. As the issue involved 'political exclusion' and 'marginalisation' of the Tamil minorities, the leadership should have been over-cautious of violating law that would have given enough reason to the state to further segregate the Tamils (Using the propaganda of the 'war on terror', the Lankan government has unleashed a racist war. According to reliable sources nearly 20,000 civilians face starvation and mass genocide in the North-East of the country).

The LTTE's 'any means to an end' has also seen it denigrating from a moderate separatist group to a militant organisation and finally into a terrorist organisation. The brutal assassination of important political figures, mishandling of the international community, the illicit nexus it wove to procure arms and ammunition, the forcible recruitment of children and women to carry suicide missions only highlighted the arrogance and greed of its leadership. Its central leader, Prabhakaran enjoyed absolute power. Prabhakaran was both the Chairman of the Central Committee of the LTTE and Commander-in-chief of its military wing. Field commanders could have a role in the planning of operations and in the formulation of strategies, but in matters of war and peace, Prabhakaran had absolute discretion. Anyone who showed even the slightest inclination to prescribe peace for the Tamils was condemned as a traitor. Even those who showed reluctance to further continue within the organisation were subjected to abject punishment- ranging from retirement to unpublicised execution. While Prabhakaran had a stable family life, most cadres were debarred from falling in love or leading a *grihastha / family* life (Sahadevan and Devotta, p.12).

Over time, for most, the biggest enemy of the Tamils was the LTTE itself**.** It was the LTTE, which had taken away their democratic rights in the name of winning a victory for the Tamils in the Northeast. The people were not able to express themselves freely especially in matters involving the LTTE. Their oft-repeated declaration that "we are representing the political aspirations of our people," who are "solidly behind" them, and their assertion that they constitute the "vanguard of- revolutionary armed resistance movement" were part of their consciously designed strategy to build up opinion in favour of themselves and their claim of an extensive support base in Tamil society in the

Northeast. A part of LTTE's claim to Tamil support was artificially created- actually created by means of coercion and sustained by propaganda. What the Tamils needed was a leader like Gandhi and a policy that persistently adhered to non-violence and *Satyagraha* that could have turned world opinion in their favour.

15.6 GANDHI AND PALESTINE

Several letters have been received by me, asking me to declare my views about the Arab-Jew question in Palestine.

My sympathies are all with the Jews. I have known them intimately in South Africa. They have been the untouchables of Christianity. The parallel between their treatment by Christians and the treatment of untouchables by Hindus is very close. But my sympathy does not blind me to the requirement of justice.

The cry for the national home for the Jews does not make much appeal to me. The sanction for it is sought in the Bible and the tenacity with which the Jews have hankered after return to Palestine.

Why should they not like other people of the earth make that country their home where they are born and where they earn their livelihood? ***Palestine belongs to the Arabs in the same sense that England belongs to the English as France to the French.*** *It is wrong and inhuman to impose the Jews on the Arabs.*

If the Jews look to Palestine as their national home it is wrong to enter it under the shadow of the British gun. A religious act cannot be performed with the aid of the bayonet or the bomb. They can settle in Palestine only by the goodwill of the Arabs.

Gandhi's view on Palestine, 1938.

The Jewish people settled in the region of Palestine about 1,200 years before the birth of Christ. From about 70AD to 700 AD, the region was under the control of the Romans who dispersed most of the Hebrews from the region. With the collapse of the Roman Empire, The Ismaelites (Arabs) settled in the region and remained there until the Turkish (Ottoman) Empire subjugated them in 1516.

By the later part of the 1800s, the Ottoman Empire, controlled by Turkey, was in total disarray and internal factional disturbances as Turkey's influences waned. The Turkish Empire bordering Persia was under the imperialistic control of the Russians and the British. During the First World War as Turkey was fighting on the side of the German Empire against Britain and France, it suited Britain to turn the Arabs against the Turks, while it also promised the Jews a homeland of their own (Balfour Declaration) to win the economic and political support of the Jews in Europe and elsewhere. After World War I, Palestine was assigned to UK as a mandated territory by the League of Nations. Many of the Arab leaders were willing to render Palestine up to Jews as long as the rest of West Asia was under Arabs' control. But the Arabs who lived in Palestine desperately opposed the Jews' establishing their own nation within their territory. From then on, countless riots have broken out in the territory. The British, who finally found that Palestine would never reconcile with the Jews, proposed 'a two-nation' solution to the problem. They handed the problem to the United Nations. According to Resolution 181, the UN General Assembly proposed the partitioning of Palestine into Arab and Jewish

states, with Jerusalem and Bethlehm as a *corpus separatum* under a special international regime. The UN Partition Plan granted the Jews over 56% of the area at a time when they owned less than 7% of the land and constituted one-third of the population. On 14 May 1948, the State of Israel was declared and the first Arab-Israeli War began. From then, the Arab resistance has continued in the face of overwhelming odds. By the end of the First Arab-Israeli Conflict (1948-49), Israel controlled 77.4% of the land of Palestine, including much of the territory assigned to the Arab states. Jewish military activities, massacre and expulsion orders caused the depopulation of 418 Palestinian villages and the flight of 750,000 Palestinians. The Palestinians found themselves divided into four communities. Some were refugees within Israel, some fled to the West Bank, those who fled to the Gaza Strip lived under Egyptian administration. The rest sought refuge in the neighbouring Arab countries. By the end of the Third Arab-Israeli War in June 1967 (also known as the Six-Day War), Israel controlled the entire Senai Peninsula up to the east bank of the canal. The cost to human life was beyond all apprehension. Negotiations towards a permanent ceasefire began in December 1973 which resulted in the first disengagement agreement of 18 January 1973 and a second agreement signed on 1 September 1975. The agreement provided for a partial Israeli withdrawal from Sinai and limited the number of troops and weapons Egypt could have on the eastern side of the canal.

Even though the ground firing stopped, what fermented underneath was the growth of Palestinian resistance groups—the Palestine Libration organisation (PLO), the Hamas—better traced to the *Intifada* resulting in civilian uprising in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip from December 1987. The Arabs fought the first *Intifada* (1987-1993) with stones and were answered with Israeli bullets. They fought the second *Intifada* (2000-04) with weapons and were answered with Israeli tanks and airplanes. The *Intifada* led to the peace talks in Oslo, but it did not end the occupation, and it certainly did not end fresh Israeli settlements. There were always some fundamentalist Palestinian groups that advocated

violence; these have gained greater credibility in the light of recent Israeli actions and their backing by the United States' government. Paul Wolfowitz, once in his address to the students of Georgetown University, said that terrorism is the greatest obstacle to Palestine. "If Palestine had adopted the ways of **Gandhi,** they could, in fact make an enormous change very quickly." Gandhi, however, counselled non-violence to the Jews. He suggested them to offer *Satyagraha* to the Arabs, not under the shadow of the British but on the basis of their own will and determination. A Gandhi for our times would very likely have told the Palestinians to abandon the methods of Hamas in favour of civil disobedience. To the Israelis, he would have preached *Satyagraha* by discarding the Western (US) support and lend a patient hearing to the Palestinians, make friends with them, and acquire their goodwill (Ramachandra Guha, 2006).

15.7 SUMMARY

Whether it is Palestine or Sri Lanka there is no doubt that it is not possible to abstain from violence altogether. Violence is a fact of life, but it cannot be our ideal or destiny. Violence has been at the centre of human history but there is an unmistakable evidence of the march of mankind from savagery to civilisation, from ferocity to gentleness, from violence to non-violence. Human society, as a whole, has been steadily progressing towards nonviolence. Our remote ancestors were cannibals; then they took to live on chase. Next came the stage of agriculture and industry. Thus from being a nomad he settled down to civilised stable life. All these were signs of human endeavour at progressive nonviolence and diminishing violence.

Nonviolence is not an individual but social virtue. It can be practised by all, not merely individually but collectively as well. India had the privilege to proudly own people who preached and practised nonviolence not as an abstract principle but as a practical solution to problems of daily life. Gandhi was such a gift to mankind. His relevance will resonate again and again whether in war or peace. Since every war is man's lasting penchant for a durable peace and in every peace lays the foundation of a better civilisation bond with love. In his *Autobiography*, Gandhi once rightly said: "I have nothing new to teach the world. Truth and non-violence are as old as hills."

15.8 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. Do you think Gandhi's technique of non-violence would have offered a lasting solution to the Sri Lanka-Tamil ethnic problem?

2. 'Gandhi's non-violent method would have amicably solved the Arab-Israeli conflict.' Justify this statement in your own words.

3. Write short notes on:

   a) Majoritarian radicalism of Sinhalese

   b) India's role in Sri Lanka ethnic conflict

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